

## **Are You Listening To Me!**

LWCC Marriage Ministries Email for Dec.2022

*Greetings from the LWCC Marriage Ministries Team:*

*Stan & Ronnie      John & Karen*

As we come to the end of this crazy year, we trust that you and yours have a sensational Christmas / New Year season. Whether you are spending these next few weeks at home, working through, or heading away somewhere to relax with family and friends, we trust that in the midst of all that goes with this season, you will have time to spend in the Presence of The One who is 'The Reason for the Season', and be truly refreshed and uplifted in Him.

We include with this greeting, our final Marriage Article for 2022. It comes from the team at Prepare/Enrich and is entitled 'Are you even Listening to me?' Now, I don't know if you've ever been challenged with such a statement, but it's not the most comfortable comment our spouse can challenge us with. But in the article you will find some helpful tips that we trust will help you to avoid being caught out again. We trust that as you share this article together, you can go a little easy on one another, and in the process have some laughs about 'past failures', and discuss how some of these tips would work for you going forward.

Guys, go the extra mile and create an atmosphere – get your wife her favourite coffee or cold drink, provide some chocolates or some popcorn – and go for it. Enjoy folks!!!!

### ***Are You Even Listening to Me?!***

Have you ever been on the receiving end of this question? It's not a great feeling. Especially if you weren't really listening!!! Maybe you were focused on something else – a game on the phone, Facebook, sport. It may be that you just weren't expecting it, and your response wasn't the best. You might feel like you're justifiably getting called out or you might get a little indignant because you *were* actually listening! Whatever the case, we've all missed the boat on this one at some point.

*It's so important for us to be active listeners: it's so foundational to good communication.*

So here are five tips to make sure your partner feels heard:

#### **1.Avoid Multi-tasking:**

When your spouse wants to talk, **put** down your phone, close the laptop, stop loading the dishwasher, take the remote and press the pause button. Focus your full attention on your partner. You might be perfectly capable of listening intently while folding laundry, but if

they're trying to tell you something important *let them know you're ready to hear* what they have to say by focusing solely on them.

## **2.Be Mindful of Their Body Language:**

You might not be doing other tasks, but if you're sitting with your arms crossed defensively and looking off into the distance, you're not going to come across as very open to listening. Relax your body, look them in the eye, and make some kind physical contact. Such cues let your partner know that *you're there in the moment* with them, both physically and mentally.

## **3.Let Them Speak:**

This seems somewhat obvious, but in the moment it's natural to want to interject with your own responses. *Try to avoid interrupting* until they give a cue that they're done sharing. This is especially important during conversations where emotions are running high, but it's a considerate habit to adopt for lighter exchanges as well.

## **4.Restate What They've Shared:**

One of the tenets of active listening, *restating what your partner is conveying to you* helps ensure that nothing is getting lost in translation, and sends a clear message that you are engaged and focusing. Instead of just parroting back what they say verbatim, focus on hearing and restating the true meaning in their words. If you're slightly off mark – that's okay. This gives them the opportunity to provide clarification and you the chance to increase your understanding, and engagement.

## **5. Ask Good Questions:**

Be curious! Following up with questions to learn more about your partner's thoughts, feelings, and perspective not only *shows that you were really listening*, but also that *what they're saying – and the person saying it – is important*.

***Bonus tip for the speaker:*** If you've got something that you really want your partner to *hear*, let them know in advance. Give them a heads up, either, when you are wanting to speak, by saying, "Hey, do you have a second?" or "Can I talk to you about something important?", or maybe, if they're in the middle of something, or their mind is on other things, let them know you need some time, some-time soon, to share something with them that's important to you. Maybe you could say something like, "Hey, sometime in the next hour or so, could I talk with you. There's something I'd like to run past you". You're making it easier for them to drop what they're doing to pay attention, or giving them a heads-up that something important is on your mind that you would like to talk through *SOON*. You're creating a win-win situation for both of you.

Good communication is such a basic component of a strong relationship that we sometimes overlook the smaller components that go into it. They might seem minor, but by being proactive in creating good habits, you can go a long way to nipping bigger issues in the bud. It has a compounding effect in improving the other areas of your relationship that rely on solid communication. Let us know how these habits have benefited your relationship!

Have a wonderful Christmas, everyone.