LWCC Marriage Ministries Email for September - 2026

How Can I Stop My Spouse From Interrupting Conversations?

Greetings once again from your marriage ministries Team. Congratulations to those of you who took on board our NZ Marriage Week challenge. By the sound of things a few of you had enjoyable evenings connecting, as did Ronnie and I, whilst visiting family in Wellington, and connecting with two cousins and their spouses.

I think, by way of introduction to this moth's email, most of you will not have a problem with what follows, but more than once this year I've had folk talk to us about an issue that can be really challenging.

So, here's a question for you: **Is your spouse a chronic interrupter?**

You're in the middle of a conversation, either in person or on the phone, and it seems like your spouse just cannot help themselves. Maybe it's got so bad that you dread talking on the phone when your spouse is nearby, because they just have to jump in in the middle of your conversations—or worse, even dominate them? Even if it’s a chat with friends in person, they still interrupt and derail your chat?

There's interrupting conversations and there's Interrupting Conversations. There’s no easy way to say this: interrupting to the point of taking over, or totally wrecking the conversation you were having, is simply *Bad Behavior.* In fact, if it happens on a regular basis, it boarders on Control Freak behavior. Even if it’s a seemingly small quirk among your spouse’s many good qualities, it needs addressing. While you want to avoid becoming controlling too, there are a few things you can do to call your spouse’s attention to the problem.

Perhaps we should first define what a Control Freak is: A control freak is a colloquialism for describing someone who seems to have a psychological need to constantly be in charge of things and (or) the people around them. They seem to have this compulsive need to manage, dictate, or even micromanage situations and tasks, so that they align with their specific expectations.

That's rather heavy, and for some of you, you are asking 'Does my spouse's issue go *that* far.' Possibly not!!! However, whether it's a tendency towards being a control freak, or just a quirky piece of their mannerisms, it is a): worthy of taking a moment to consider how far your spouse's behavior goes, and b): being aware that it is possible that your spouse’s anxiety or insecurity, kicks into high gear when they see or hear you having a conversation they’re not part of, and it needs addressing. Everyone deserves to be able to have uninterrupted conversations with friends and family.

Interruptions Can Be Irritating:

Perhaps the first thing we should do is ask how this behavior impacts on you. How does it make you feel? In the past, have you tried to bring it to their attention? If it has continued, maybe it wasn’t received very well, or they have simply not respected your perspective enough to change! It can be a very irritable habit that needs addressing. Before you do, figure out why it irritates you. Yes, it’s bad behavior, but you need to be able to express how their behavior makes you feel, and the impact it has on your conversations and friendships.

Now, let's have a look at a tip that may give you the opportunity to have that much needed discussion.

Interruptions Must Have Consequences:

First, there must be consequences when your spouse interrupts. You certainly don't want to fight with them, or intentionally humiliate them in order to create effective consequences, because it isn't about escalating things into conflict, but Bad Behavior needs to be addressed. The solution though, could be quite simple.

One great consequence is simply to hand over control, to thereby highlight the disruption. For instance, if your spouse interrupts a phone call, hand the phone to your spouse. This kind of response says, "All right, if you want control, here it is." They'll get a bit of a shock, and may even get a bit agitated when you do so. But hey, your past attempts seem to have gone unhindered, so now it's time for some shock treatment. Your spouse cares so much about being in the middle of the conversation, let them take ownership of it. To add insult to injury (as the saying goes), and to continue to highlight your annoyance at the disruption, walk away and leave them with the phone.

If this behavior happens in person, let them continue the conversation and quietly walk away.

Natural Consequences Force Self-Reflection:

Sometimes, it's okay to do things that perturb your spouse. It might be harsh, but it can be said that natural consequences for their actions ultimately block their goal. But, in time, consequences can force self-reflection and could help them to realize their need to reduce interruptions. Naturally, after a moment like this, there is a huge opportunity for reflection and discussion.

This scenario reminds me of a real-life story relayed by Dr. Les & Leslie Parrott from early in their marriage. They'd just purchased a new car, and Les was a hyper-vigilant passenger the first time Leslie drove the new car. He was so anxious about protecting the car that he gave endless unwanted advice from the passenger seat. Finally, his wife pulled over, exited the car, and refused to get back in until he took the wheel. He knew immediately what he'd done, and felt awful about it. He tried to take back his comments, but she insisted he take over. As you can imagine, that moment taught him a valuable lesson, and it goes without saying, that he stopped criticizing his wife's driving.

Don't leave the moment. Yes, one would hope your spouse will be apologetic, but take the moment to make your point. Point out how these interruptions make you feel. Maybe even come up with a plan together: if you see it beginning to happen again in the future, you simply hold up your hand towards your spouse, indicating that they are starting to do it again, and hopefully that is all they need to stop. If they persist, as earlier mentioned, give them the phone *again, and walk away, or in conversation with others, leave.* If you are the spouse doing the interrupting - *Get The MESSAGE*!!! Seriously, get the message and change your behavior. It's not rocket science - Stop It. If you have experienced this issue over some length of time, it may take a few goes to get the behavior corrected, so persist.

We trust this is helpful to someone out there.

Blessings from your Marriage Ministries team; Stan & Ronnie, John & Karen, Phil & Mel.

(Adapted from an Article from Les & Leslie Parrott)