

COUPLE TALK TIME

[Karen E. Sumi, LMFT ~ www.karensuni.com]

Schedule regular times to talk and make setting this time aside a priority. Be conscious and mindful because a positive attitude is key – avoid being critical, defensive or inattentive.

Some tips:

- The time is private
- No interruptions or multi-tasking – no TV, phone, computer, chores etc.
- Do not schedule more than an hour – start with 20-30 minutes
- Take turns expressing what is on your mind, **alternate roles as Speaker and Listener and stay in role until you switch**
- Be mindful and use good communication skills
- Take a break if emotions get over-heated and agree on a time to resume

Basic Communication Skills:

- Discuss one well-defined topic at a time which is introduced by the Speaker
- Use “I statements” – express how you feel
- Listen carefully when the other person is speaking
- Do not interrupt
- As Listener, reflect back your understanding of what was said, if possible include the feelings your partner is expressing. Check for accuracy.
- You may feel closure on this topic or you may need to table it for further discussion. Do not expect to get closure on everything – there are times you will see things differently and decide to “agree to disagree”

If you have the time and energy, switch roles. Now it is the Listener’s turn to speak and introduce a topic or concern. If you’re feeling depleted, schedule another time and give the Listener the opportunity to raise an issue or concern.