

# COMMUNICATION

## Getting Ready

*Here's what you'll talk about:*

- knowing and being known
- creating a safe zone
- empathy, listening, and expressing feelings

## Survey Says...

Take a quick look at the Communication section of your Couple Checkup report. Notice whether this is a “strength” or “growth” area in your relationship.

## Selfie

*Taking a Snapshot of Where You Are Right Now*

Please complete the following survey in three minutes or less. Quick, “off the top of your head” responses are the best here. The point isn't to come up with “right” answers, but to start thinking about where you stand on some of the issues addressed in this session. You and your spouse-to-be should fill in your answers separately so that you can compare and discuss them later.

1. Which of the following messages would you want to communicate via e-mail or text? Why?

- "I'm sorry I forgot to take out the trash this morning."
- "Could you pick up some milk on the way home from work?"
- "Your mom called; your dad just had a heart attack."
- "We need to talk about our sex life."
- "I love you."

2. When it comes to communicating, which two of the following are your future mate's greatest strengths?

- tone of voice
- clarity
- honesty
- eye contact
- not interrupting
- body language
- listening
- other \_\_\_\_\_

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being superficial and 10 being deepest), at what level are you and your spouse-to-be communicating these days? Circle a number to indicate your answer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was it when you started dating?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When you became engaged?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What would you like it to be the day you're married?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Which of the following games is most like your communication style as a couple? How?

football

Pictionary

Taboo

*The Hunger Games*

chess

Words With Friends

Angry Birds

Would You Rather...?

other \_\_\_\_\_

5. In each of the following pairs, which would you rather do with your future spouse? Why?

change a diaper or

talk about your worst fears

discuss your in-laws or

suffer through the flu

go to the dentist or

talk about "what God is teaching you these days"

go shopping for underwear or

discuss politics

## WeTube

### *Getting the Most from the Video*

After watching the Session 4 video on the DVD, discuss the following questions.

1. What do you and your future spouse talk about most these days? How do you feel about that?

- wedding plans
- the relationship
- work or school
- parents
- politics
- favorite TV shows or movies
- God
- social media
- news
- other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you find it easy or hard to believe that the average married couple spends less than four minutes a day in “meaningful” conversation? Why?

How would you define and differentiate these three types of communication that happen in a marriage?

- administrative (“to-do” lists, schedules, budgets, etc.)

- conflict (working through an argument, frustration, hurt, or disagreement)
  - meaningful (talking about feelings, needs, dreams, fears, etc.)
3. If you had to tell your future mate how you feel about him or her—but couldn't use the word *love*—what would you say? Try it for about 30 seconds. When you see how hard that is, does saying “I love you” sound easier than it did before?
4. How do you think each of the following affects the way couples communicate? How do you want to handle that in your marriage?
- texting
  - the high cost of going out to eat
  - shows like *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*
  - social media such as Facebook and Twitter
  - TV, video games, and the computer
  - busyness
5. First Corinthians 13:12 says, “... then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (NIV). The key to great communication in marriage is to spend time every day “knowing” your spouse and allowing him/her to “know” you. A way to do that is to learn to ask great questions and to be curious.

Ask your fiancé(e) to give you four questions that you could ask on a regular basis to stay current and updated. Write these down in the space below:

Here are some ideas to prime the pump:

- How are you feeling emotionally?
- How are things going at work?
- What is your favorite thing that I have done for you lately?
- What is one thing that God is teaching you?
- What are you most grateful for recently?
- What are you dreaming about currently?
- What can I do to make you feel loved?
- When do you feel most protected and taken care of?
- What can I do to help you feel safe with me?
- How are things going with your friends?
- How are things going with your family?
- What has had the biggest impact on you lately?
- What was your favorite book, movie, or TV show in the past month?

6. Are there ever times when you don't want to be "known" by your spouse-to-be? How does that affect your communication? Is it okay not to be completely open all the time? Why or why not?
7. When you and your future mate are together, what happens when things go silent for a while? Do you assume it means something? If so, what? How would you like to handle silences?
8. What are some specific ways that your fiancé(e) can help create a safe environment for meaningful conversations? Here are some examples:
  - give good eye contact
  - validate what you are saying instead of judging you
  - use a tone of voice that is soft and inviting
  - limit distractions (turn off the TV or cell phone)
  - don't debate how you feel or tell you your feelings are "wrong" or "stupid"
  - go for a walk or drive
  - empathize—feel "bad" with you
  - seek to understand
  - don't try to fix how you are feeling or solve the problem
  - be quick to listen and slow to speak
  - other \_\_\_\_\_

9. Look at the following sayings. Let's say you're having dinner in a restaurant, and your spouse-to-be announces that he or she is getting cold feet about the wedding and wants to postpone it. How could these sayings help you get through the ensuing conversation with your relationship more or less intact?

- Proverbs 15:1
- Proverbs 15:2
- Proverbs 15:4
- Proverbs 15:7
- Proverbs 15:23
- Proverbs 15:28
- Proverbs 15:31

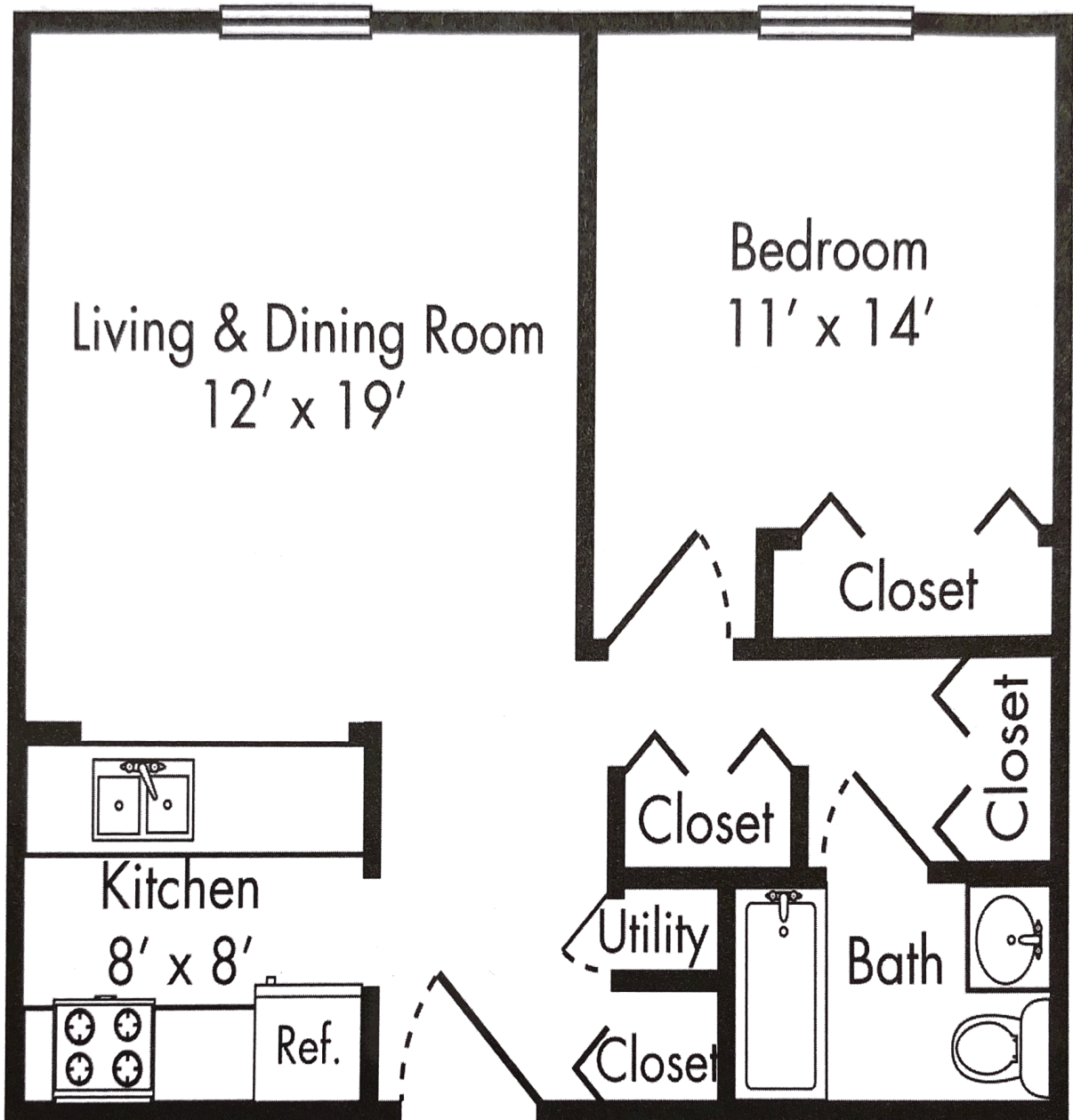
10. Which of the following do you think you might need to work on first? Why?

- knowing and being known
- listening
- recognizing gender differences in communication
- going beyond "business meeting" conversations
- focusing on changing yourself, not the other person
- not blaming each other
- building emotional safety

## *Application*

### *Taking Things Personally*

Here's one way to follow through on what you've just discussed.



Check out this floor plan. Let's say it stands for the place you're going to live when you're married, even if it has different features. Take a look at each room. How can you make it an easier place to communicate? Would it help to rearrange some furniture? Create a "conversation area"? Put TVs or computers in less prominent places? Do a little soundproofing? On the floor plan, draw where you'd like to put things.

If you can, it might be a good idea to do a walk-through this week of the place you're going to live, sharing ideas. You could even pray together while you're there, asking God to help you communicate openly, honestly, and safely in each room.

## Face The Book

*Going Deeper with* Ready to Wed

To learn more about—and apply—the principles you've just discussed, please read the following in the *Ready to Wed* book during the week:

Chapter 7, "Communication: The Language of Love," by Josh Straub, PhD