

COUPLES IN CONVERSATION

Introduction

One linguistic anthropologist says couple conversation is “cross-cultural communication.” There are general, but not absolute, differences between male and female cultures. Women think: “Men never get it. They are dense.” Men ask “What do women want? I can never please her!” The solution to this predicament is found in two words: love and respect. Couples need both these needs met. The male culture is respect-centered and the female culture is love-centered.

- A. A woman wants to be unconditionally loved by her partner. Women fear being alone and unloved.
 - 1. Women seek emotional closeness through considerate words and actions.
 - 2. A woman wants her partner to be open about his feelings and thoughts. Women interpret silence as hostility.
 - 3. A woman wants her partner to be an active and sympathetic listener. A man misses this point when he tries to fix the problems his partner shares.
 - 4. When there is a conflict, a woman wants a partner who can say, “I’m sorry if I hurt you. I want you to know I will always love you.” A man’s attempt to win every argument frustrates a woman.
 - 5. A woman needs to be reassured of her partner’s love and faithfulness. She needs to hear him tell her why she is special to him.
- B. Men want to be unconditionally respected. Men fear being inadequate and disrespected by everyone.
 - 1. A man wants his partner to appreciate his efforts to provide for and protect her.
 - 2. A man desires his partner’s respect for his leadership in the relationship.
 - 3. A man wants his partner to listen to his advice and ideas and thank him for his concern.
 - 4. A man wants to share his life with a partner who wants to be a good companion.
 - 5. A man wants a woman who is responsive to him romantically. Men fear sexual rejection.
- C. The Vicious Conflictual Cycle
 - 1. A man feels disrespected by what a woman says or does and he withdraws emotionally or becomes outwardly angry.

2. A woman feels unloved by a man's response and responds by being disrespectful.
3. A man is hurt more deeply and responds in a variety of unloving ways.
4. When a man interprets a woman's words or actions as disrespectful, he tends to respond in unloving ways.
5. When a woman interprets a man's words and actions as unloving, she tends to respond in disrespectful ways.

D. Getting Out of the Vicious Conflictual Cycle

1. A man says, "I am feeling disrespected by you when.... I want you to know I really love you and I want us to be close."
2. A woman says, "I am feeling unloved by you when.... I want you to know I really respect you and I want us to be close."
3. You must assume your partner is a person of goodwill and needs forgiveness and understanding.
4. Recognize you may be incorrectly decoding his/her other messages to you. Put your energy into understanding what your partner meant.

E. The Virtuous Cycle of Respectful Love

1. Men should focus on communicating unconditional love to their partner. Assume this is usually the central issue.
2. Women should focus on communicating unconditional respect to their partner. Assume this is usually the central issue.
3. This does not solve everything automatically. Each couple needs to develop some good conflict resolution skills. But when you create an environment of respectful love, then this is easier.

Conclusion

Couples get caught up in feeling unloved or disrespected. Then every issue, whether great or small, becomes a part of this negative world of misunderstanding. Keep it simple and remember it is about communicating love and respect.

Recommended reading: Love and Respect and Cracking the Communication Code,
Dr. Emerson Eggerich