

# Hints for Effective Sexual Communication

“Good Sex is the outgrowth of good communication”

**Safety** (The foundation of all open communication; ESPECIALLY important with sex! Without safety, there’s little or no chance your partner will open up and risk intimate self-disclosure.)

**Good timing/voice tone** (no sneak attacks or “launching”; avoid “jet lag moments”)

**Stay with ONE topic/concern at a time**

**“I” vs “You” messages** (delete “you always, you never”)

**Acceptance and encouragement** (VS Shame/blame/sarcasm/criticism; Criticism is corrosive—a harmful and ineffective way to express one’s preferences; it rarely ever brings satisfaction or facilitates positive change.)

**Be specific & direct vs “fill in the blanks”** (Many people give their partners global or vague hints abt their sexual needs, but don’t offer enough details. Our partners are not mind-readers, as much as we’d like them to be!)

**Curious vs furious** (adopt a “Tell me more about that” attitude)

**Recap facts and feelings** (Practice reflective listening; especially recap FEELINGS)

**Signal difficulty of topic** (give partner fair warning--a “heads up:” no sneak attacks)

**Signal/ask for desired reaction** (eg. “please listen w/o jumping in to fix/solve.” The goal is to generate more understanding, illumination; anxiety invites the tempting pull to fix.)

**Acknowledge own discomfort/ignorance** (Talking about sex can start with talking about any anxiety/discomfort either/both of you feel. Don’t let anxiety hold you hostage. An effective conversation is possible despite your discomfort/awkwardness. Breathing is good!)

**Check out (your own/your partner’s) meanings/assumptions**

**Identify (your own/your partner’s) expectations**

**Risk self-definition** (Here is what I think, feel, value, prefer. Not only is it OK to ask for what you want--it’s imperative! Toxic to a relationship to over-accommodate, over adapt, or be silent!!)

**Examples: (positive VS negative/“I” VS “you” msgs/be specific w/o blame/risk self-definition):**

“I like 15-20 minutes of cuddling and kissing before we have intercourse” VS “You always start intercourse before I’m ready!”

**(To acknowledge discomfort):** “I really don’t know HOW best to do this. I’ve never talked about these things before....& I don’t feel comfortable. But I’m willing to try because I want so much to be close to you...and to work this out.”

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