Communicating With Your Partner

Effective communication is a requirement for effective problem solving in an intimate relationship. While most of us communicate effectively with our friends, effectiveness has a different meaning in an intimate relationship. How we communicate is the problem more often than what we communicate. If the ways we communicate do not work with our partner, then our messages of concern, hope, and love may not get through. Without clear communication, we cannot make our needs known and we cannot negotiate to meet them. In an intimate relationship there are ways to communicate that are useful and ways to communicate that are harmful.

1. Tips
   - **Tip #1: Be direct, clear and precise.** It is useful to be direct, saying what needs to be said. It is harmful to be indirect, with subtle hints and ambiguous statements out of context. It is useful to be clear and precise, spelling out exactly what you mean. It is harmful to be vague, leaving our partner to figure out exactly what we mean.

   - **Tip #2: Be specific and honest.** It is useful to be specific, giving concrete details or examples. It is harmful to be general, leaving plenty of room for our partner to misunderstand. It is useful to be honest, to say what is really in our heart. It is harmful to be dishonest, to say half of the truth or to lie outright.

   - **Tip #3: Be respectful and tactful.** It is useful to be respectful, to recognize the right of your partner to their own beliefs, feelings and decisions. It is harmful to be controlling, using communication to bend your partner to your will. It is useful to be tactful. It is harmful to be insulting, damaging our partner’s sense of self-worth.

In the end, the only useful ways to communicate are those that actually lead to a successful resolution of the issues in question. This means communication based on mutual acceptance, respect, openness and trust.