

Expressing Your Feelings

(revised 2016)

PREFACE

The divorce rate continues to climb each year. Presently, 40 to 50 percent of marriages end in divorce¹. Masters and Johnson estimated that 50 to 60 percent of relationships experience sexual dysfunction. Arguments, conflict, lack of communication, and frustration are common in most marriages. In spite of these unfavorable statistics, new relationships continue to form. Human beings, in search of intimacy, trust, and companionship, seek each other out, hoping to become happier.

What do these figures suggest? Are human beings emotional lemmings destined for disaster? We don't think so.

Individuals are raised without being taught to communicate, cooperate, or deal with relationship problems productively. Ironically, the more intensely two people care for one another, the more likely they are to experience stress in their relationship. Hurts are deeper, arguments scar more, and resentments nourish.

One of the greatest frustrations is being unable to get along on a day-to-day basis with someone you know you love. This work book is intended for motivated, caring individuals in distress. It is also designed for sound relationships that would like to nourish and realize their full potential.

The purpose of this work book is to develop a practical, workable method to reduce anger, minimize relationship stress, and increase pleasurable experiences within the relationship. Two people are often more different than alike. These differences do not usually need to cause arguments and friction, but can be one of the most valuable aspects of a relationship. If these differences are dealt with productively, they will enhance a relationship significantly more often than they will stress it.

¹ American Psychological Association. (2016, May 7). Re: Can This Marriage Be Saved? Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/04/marriage.aspx>

INTRODUCTION

This work book is designed to help you begin to communicate more effectively. After completing this text, further improvement and success will depend upon whether you continue to practice what you have learned here. Some of the methods and attitudes we teach may feel awkward at first, but with practice and experience you will feel more comfortable and natural with them.

What we want you to be able to do after completing this work book is exercise self-responsibility in your everyday life. We want you to be able to examine your daily experiences and reactions to discover the scope, sequence, and intensity of your feelings. We hope you will be able to deal more constructively with anger. In expressing your feelings, desires, and thoughts, we want you to be able to use "I" language and avoid defensiveness. We want you to be able to recognize when those you love are vulnerable. We want, ultimately, for you to be able to express yourself as effectively and constructively as possible with those you care about.

There are eight chapters, each of which is designed to help you work toward improving your interpersonal communication. Below is a brief description of each chapter.

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| Exercising Self-Responsibility | Here you'll be learning what we mean by self-responsibility. This is a central concept. |
| Exploring the Scope of Feelings | In this chapter, you'll become aware of the vast number and variety of feelings you may experience in any given situation, but that you may not have recognized previously. |
| Identifying the Sequence of Feelings | In this chapter you'll learn how to identify as primary or secondary the feelings you explored in the previous chapter. You'll learn why expressing primary feelings tends to be more constructive. |
| Dealing with Anger | Here you'll learn about how feelings vary in intensity. You'll learn a strategy for dealing more constructively with anger. |
| Using "I" Language | This is a critically important chapter in which you will learn a language that will help you say things in a more accurate and constructive way. |
| Identifying Defensiveness | Here you'll be learning how to recognize when you are behaving defensively |
| Identifying Vulnerability | In this chapter, you'll learn to recognize when you or your partner are being vulnerable. |
| Effective Personal Expression | In this final chapter, you'll be putting together the skills you have learned in the previous chapters. You will be able to distinguish between effective |

and ineffective expression. This will help you become more aware of your own communication habits and improve your ability to communicate effectively

Appendix

Recommended Approach

To get the most out of *Expressing Your Feelings*, we recommend that you set aside some time each day for yourself - enough time that you can get through the book in one week. Read the first four chapters in the first two or three days. Don't discuss your feelings about what you've read with your partner until after you've read the chapters. Then complete the last four chapters in four days. Each chapter may require approximately 45 minutes each to complete. Try to do a whole chapter in one sitting - avoid stopping in the middle. We believe you will get the most out of this workbook by concentrating your efforts in this way.

IMPORTANT!

You may be tempted to just think through the practice items without writing your responses. However, the act of writing out your responses is critical to absorbing the material so that you can actually use the skills you learn. If you just read this book and don't respond actively, you will know more about communicating, but chances are, you won't actually be able to communicate better.