

Drive Through Communication

McDonalds and other fast food chains spend a great deal of money each year refining the techniques used and training personnel to work at their drive through windows. The goal is fast and accurate service by improving the communication skills of their workers.

Gary Smalley uses a similar process to help couples do a better job of communicating with each other. He calls this Drive Through Listening. You can read more about it in his book SECRETS TO LASTING LOVE.

I find that this process is especially helpful for dealing with tough topics!



1. Inviting Communication--When you approach a drive through, the attendant assumes by your behavior that you would like to communicate something. Their first step is to invite communication from you. In the same way, our partner often reveals that there is something wrong by their behavior. When we notice that something is different about our partners actions, the first step is to invite communication from them.

2. Give Time Till They Are Ready—Imagine driving up to a McDonald's menu sign and hearing, "Welcome to McDonald's. May I have your order please?" At this point you are not quite ready, so you tell the person you need a minute. What if they said, "No way, you either tell me right now, or get out of line!" It would probably be the last time we gave them our business.

We need to be willing to give our partner a reasonable time to prepare to talk about difficult subjects. Always leave the door open. If your partner says they are not ready to talk about "it", take their word at face value. Let them know that when they are ready, you are too.

3. Listen, listen, listen—At the moment you begin to give your order at the drive through window, the person inside the store is listening carefully. He or she is often making notes to record what you are saying accurately.

I need to really say something about this part. Often, when our partner is speaking, we are doing many things other than really listening. If I were to pick one of these steps that matters most, it would be this one. Do not work to formulate your answer. You will get to do that later. Work hard at not becoming defensive, but instead put a great deal of effort into identifying with your partner's perspective and understanding the reality of the problem presented. See yourself as someone who is focused on finding a solution rather than finding an excuse. Listening does not mean agreement, but it does show a great deal of respect.

4. Inviting Further Communication—When you pause in giving your order, the worker asks, "Will that be all?" or "Can I super-size that for you?" or some other question to invite you to tell them more. This is an important and often overlooked step. When your partner has stopped, ask, "Is there anything else you want to tell me about _____?" The reason for this is human nature. Many times people will "test the waters" of their partner's ability to handle issues by telling a small thing before bringing out the major problem. An

inviting atmosphere assures a person that you care and are genuinely interested in hearing and solving problems.

5. Repeating Back What Was Said—Once you let the attendant know that your order is complete, attendant repeats your order back to you. This is their method of allowing you to *confirm* or *correct* what she/he has heard. This practice is often mentioned in Active Listening training and allows the listener to be sure he/she has understood the message correctly. This is really important. It affirms to the speaker that you really care about understanding what they are saying. It also shows that you know people often struggle saying things just right under stress and will allow them to correct your misperceptions.

6. Giving Feedback—The worker inside the store now says something like, “That will be \$14.95. Please pull around to the second window.”

Giving the speaker feedback allows him/her to know your thoughts and feelings about the topic. This is where you can offer encouragement, a different perspective, your ideas for a solution, or whatever will help.

Don't wreck this chance. Speak the truth in love as we are instructed in Ephesians 4:15 so growth can take place. Either one—dishonesty or an unloving attitude—can hinder growth of any relationship.

Scripture on Listening

Mark 4:24-25 - "Be careful how you listen," he said to them. "Whatever measure you use will be used towards you, and even more than that. For the man who has something will receive more. As for the man who has nothing, even his nothing will be taken away." Phillips Translation

Matthew 11:15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Ephesians 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

Ephesians 4: 25 "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.

Ephesians 4:29-32 "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.