# Couple Communication

**What is Couple Communication?**

- Couple Communication is a structured course for couples aimed at helping partners talk, listen and effectively resolve conflicts. These program include:

- **COUPLE COMMUNICATION I**, helps you understand yourself and your partner better as you learn skills to communicate effectively about day-to-day events and important issues.

- **COUPLE COMMUNICATION II**, the advanced program, extends the use of skills taught in COUPLE COMMUNICATION I into processes for you to take charge of your relationship, manage anger better, and build a collaborative partnership.

- **Great Start**, a pre-marriage or early marriage program, combines COUPLE COMMUNICATION I & II with the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories to help you and your partner build a happy life together. It is designed to be adapted to any faith tradition.

**Who designed Couple Communication and why?**

- Couple Communication was created to give couples the tools and skills they need to become their own problem solvers. Sherod Miller, Elam Nunnally, and Daniel Wackman conducted research that led to the development of Couple Communication. This research team was motivated in part by their own clinical practices and their awareness of the limits of marriage counseling which focuses primarily on repairing relationships.

- Sherod Miller, Ph.D., is Chairman of Interpersonal Communication Programs (ICP). ICP includes Couple Communication I, Couple Communication II, and Great Start.

- Phyllis A. Miller, Ph.D., is President of ICP. She manages certification of instructors, materials development, and the editorial process. She also conducts training.

- Daniel B. Wackman, Ph.D., is Professor of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota. He also serves as a consultant to business, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies.

- Elam W. Nunnally, Ph.D., is Professor (Emeritus) of Social Welfare at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is a marriage and family therapist specializing in communication and in brief therapy. He teaches in the United States as well as in Scandinavia.

**What are the founding principles of Couple Communication?**

- Couple Communication is based on the theoretical framework of systems-theory.

- Systems theory suggests that human systems are not static, but instead are dynamic entities that experience change and seek to resume balance.

- Couple Communication applies systems theory to examine and understand relationship development and dysfunction.

**How long has Couple Communication existed?**

- The program can be traced back to the late 1960's at the University of Minnesota Family Study Center.

- In 1972, the team began Interpersonal Communication Programs, which included Couple Communication I and Couple Communication II.

**How many people have participated in Couple Communication?**

- To date, over 600,000 couples worldwide have participated in Couple Communication since its development.

**Who attends Couple Communication?**

- Couple Communication is appropriate for a wide range of couples including: couples of different ages, couples of various socioeconomic groups, distressed couples, and well-functioning couples.

**Who facilitates Couple Communication?**

- Instructors in this program come from a variety of human services professions, including: psychology, social work, counseling, psychiatry, family life education, and pastoral studies. Not all instructors hold a graduate degree and education levels vary. Most are active practitioners in one or more settings.

- Individuals teaching Couple Communication must be trained and all instructors are encouraged to complete their certification which includes:

    - A 2-day instructor training workshop
    - Study the Couple Communication Instructor Manual, and the Talking and Listening Together Workbook
    - Teach 20 couples and subsequently conduct a participant evaluation and self-evaluation
    - Pass a written exam
    - Adhere to a set of ethical guidelines

**What skills and knowledge are taught in Couple Communication?**

There are 4 major objectives in Couple Communication:

- Increase awareness of self, partner, and the relationship
- Teach skills for talking and listening
- Expand options for enriching the relationship
- Increase satisfaction with outcome of issues and the relationship

**What type of format(s) is Couples Communication offered in?**

For **Couples Communication I**, you and your partner may choose one of two learning formats:

- In a group with an instructor and 6 to 12 other couples (four 2-hour sessions)
- By yourselves as a couple with an instructor (six 50-minute sessions)

For **Couples Communication II**, you and your partner may choose one of two learning formats:

- In a group with an instructor and 6 to 12 other couples
  (five 2-hour sessions, over 5 weeks, 5 months, or a weekend retreat)

- By yourselves as a couple with an instructor (eight 50-minute sessions)

For **Great Start**, you and your partner work with a person certified in both COUPLE COMMUNICATION and PREPARE/ENRICH who helps you launch your marriage successfully. The Great Start instructor provides the feedback for the PREPARE/ENRICH inventories and teaches the COUPLE COMMUNICATION program. Later, the instructor offers follow-up marital review plus skill reinforcement and extension from the two programs.

**What research findings support the effectiveness of Couple Communication?**

Research on Couple Communication has found that the program contributes to the following positive outcomes:

- Increased relationship satisfaction (Burnham, 1984; Miller 1971; Nunnally, 1971; Sarnoff, 1988; Trost, 1985)
- Improvements in self-esteem and self-concept (Burnham, 1984)
- Increased ability to constructively solve relationship problems (Glander, 1985; Happert, 1984; Smith, 1989; Trost, 1985)
- Increased self disclosure between partners (Busick, 1982; Coleman, 1979; Dillon, 1976; Flemmin, 1977; Valenti, 1989)

### *Couple Communication I and II - Testimonials*

"Participating in this course was the best investment we have made so far in our two-plus years of marriage. I expect this investment to improve our marriage in the years ahead."

"It was absolutely liberating! Our arguments were literally mine fields. Now we know where all the bombs are buried, and which ones are duds. These are life skills."

"It is a crossover to every area of life and relationships in general - business, friends, church, and family - all worthwhile."

"Of all the premarital counseling and marriage education programs we've participated in, COUPLE COMMUNICATION is head and shoulders above the rest. Where most programs are long on theory, COUPLE COMMUNICATION is all about practical, simple, highly effective skills. Those skills allow us to untie "communication knots" easily, and keep our relationship free from tension build-up."

**What is Couple Communication's contact information?**

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