SERIES F



# Improve Your Relationships and Marriage

*Love is the joy you share when you can both let your spouse's way become your way.*



SERIES F: Topic 1

# Relationship Tools

Even when both people want to do everything they can to have a good relationship, feelings still get bruised.

> **Often the way you say something can be more harmful than what you say.**

## Some Basics

Keep your voice, tone, and emotional volume turned down as low as possible.

Always seek to understand before being understood.

Before you bring up a controversial subject, ask yourself, "How can I phrase this so no part of it can be taken the wrong way?"

Make sure you know what the other person intended before you retaliate. Ask something like "Can you rephrase that?" or "Did you mean to suggest that...?

How and when you open a subject usually has a big bearing on getting your point across; wait for the right timing to get started.

You can't expect others to reveal their innermost feelings unless you have made sure they are positive they will be treated with respect and their feelings kept private.

Always leave a safe way for you and the other person to revisit a sensitive subject in the future.

Don't try to fix an additional problem during a nice outing or celebration, or while making up from a previous difficulty.

As much as possible present ideas for consideration—not for immediate action.

When people react too forcefully to a situation, it usually suggests a much bigger issue is bothering them on the same or a different subject. If you can gently get them to reveal what that problem is, it's helpful; otherwise, let them tell you in their own time. You may not be able to find a permanent solution to the initial problem until you deal with the hidden problem.

When the topic you want to discuss is likely to be sensitive, tell the other person in advance that you want his input on the subject. It may be good to let him choose the time for the discussion.

When it is necessary to correct people, first reassure them (let them know this is not something that is going to damage your relationship), tell them what you have to say, and then reassure them again.

People feel betrayed when you get them to reveal personal information about themselves before they were ready to give it. Let them reveal their information in their own way and time.

When someone else is talking, especially your spouse, stop what you are doing to listen intently, even though you know the matter can wait. It will save you time and improve your relationship in the long run if you do.

The best approach is to write out your arguments. Make sure you have covered every point of everyone concerned. Deliver your thoughts verbally. Be prepared for unexpected reactions or new information so you can fix your arguments "on the fly."

Usually, phrases like "I'm not sure," "What do you think?" or "You are right" will win you more friends than being right.

Never speak poorly of a spouse in front of others, even if everyone else is spouse-bashing. That's often the best time to mention some of your spouse's good points.

Deal with the failures of others graciously. People will attempt bigger and better challenges if you react to their failures with understanding and encouragement rather than cautions, criticisms and "I told you so."

> *The easiest way to get things to change is to change the way you look at them.*
>
> —Byron Katie



**ASK YOURSELF**

Which of the basics do I have the most trouble with?

What do I do or say that I can fix on the fly?