



## Couple Communication:

### SPEAK/HEAR Skills

**Speaking Skills:** Use SPEAK skills when you are sharing your thoughts, feelings, or concerns with your partner.

**Start with a positive:** Start by saying something positive about your concern. Long-lasting relationships have \_\_\_\_ positive interactions for every 1 negative interaction; really good and happy relationships have \_\_\_\_ positive interactions for every 1 negative interaction.

**Pay attention to what you say and how you say it:** Be careful about the \_\_\_\_\_ you use, your \_\_\_\_\_ of voice, and your \_\_\_\_\_ language. You are more likely to be listened to if you speak in a gentle, non-threatening way.

**Explain how you feel, using details:** Share how something makes you feel and what specific situations have upset you. Use an “I” statement to take charge of your own feelings. Name the specific \_\_\_\_\_ that concerns you and how that behavior makes you \_\_\_\_\_. For example: I feel frustrated when you say that you will clean the house and you don’t.

**Avoid trigger words, like *always* and *never*:** Trigger words are words that can quickly turn a conversation into a fight. These include words like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Everyone has their own set of trigger words as well. Recognize these words and avoid using them.

**Keep it brief, then give your partner a chance to paraphrase:** Briefly share your concerns with your partner, then allow your partner a chance to \_\_\_\_\_ what you said.

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### SPEAK/HEAR Skills

**Listening Skills:** Use HEAR skills when you are listening to your partner share thoughts, feelings, or concerns. When using the HEAR skills, you are only listening to your partner's viewpoint, not sharing your own.

**Honor your partner's thoughts and feelings:** Honoring your partner is about making your partner feel valued and showing \_\_\_\_\_ for his or her thoughts and feelings. Show your partner that you value him or her by \_\_\_\_\_ and focusing on what your partner is saying, not what you want to say next.

**Empathize: Put yourself in your partner's shoes:** Empathizing with your partner means that you recognize your partner's feelings, you can \_\_\_\_\_ how your partner might be feeling, and you respect your partner's feelings as being real and valid.

**Allow a difference of opinion:** Even if you disagree with your partner, your job as the listener is only to \_\_\_\_\_ to what your partner is saying and to \_\_\_\_\_ back what you hear. Don't judge your partner or share how *you* feel.

**Repeat respectfully:** After your partner is done sharing his or her feelings, \_\_\_\_\_ what your partner said as closely to his or her words as you can. Repeating your partner's words helps you to really focus on what your partner is saying.

#### Remember:

- Take turns talking.
- If you think you are going to have a discussion about a difficult topic, plan a time and a place where you can talk.
- Don't rush into trying to solve the problem before each person has had a chance to share feelings and feels he or she has been heard.

For more information about parenting or relationships, please visit <http://ncfamilies.com/jitp/>.