



I offer you five simple tips to keep peace in the family and make your love connection grow. You might be surprised to find that I am not going to tell you to talk more as many experts insist; instead I am going to show you how to use just a few minutes a day to talk better.

**1. Pick the Right Battles.** Your spouse comes home from work drenched from the rain because he forgot an umbrella. You told him to take one that morning after you heard the weather report. Before you start criticizing him while he's soaked, ask yourself this wise question, "Does this affect me?" In this example, it doesn't. He arrived home drenched, not you. So don't pick that battle. In the future, when your spouse makes a mistake and it doesn't affect you, rather than using a "fight line" like "I told you to take an umbrella, you should have listened to me!" use a compassionate love line like, "You're all wet. Do you want a towel?" And, if you find it hard to say those words, just say nothing.

**2. Give a Character Compliment.** In researching my book we did an on-line survey and found some interesting results that can help us understand how to have a better marriage. There is a specific type of compliment that people want to receive. When we asked individuals "Would you rather your mate compliment you for being kind or good-looking?" the result was that 84% said "kind." The lesson: find daily opportunities to compliment your mate's character (such as his/her generosity to a friend, compassion to a relative, etc.). Offer up character compliments to your children, too. Share this research study with your family and ask them to join you in a character compliment challenge.

**3. Avoid Premature Arguments.** My clients are smart people, who often have dumb arguments with their spouse. One type of these unnecessary battles is so common that it threatens almost every relationship. I call it the "premature argument." Look out for those times when you and your mate get into a brawl about a decision that doesn't have to be made for weeks, months or years, such as where to go for Christmas Eve... the following year, or who to invite to your 10-year anniversary party when you're only married eight years. When you realize you're arguing about something prematurely, stop yourself and say, "Hey, we're having a dumb argument. Let's stop talking about this now and continue the

conversation when we have more information.”

**4. Follow-Up.** A little bit of remembering shows a lot of love. If you know your spouse has an important meeting, doctor’s appointment, job interview etc., be sure to follow up with your mate that day. Call, email, text or ask in person, “How did it go?” This sends a clear message: I care about you and you are important to me. Make it a habit to do this whenever something unique happens during your mate’s day. And if you seldom have anything to follow up on, that’s a telltale sign that you don’t know or care about what is going on during your mate’s days. So start asking, listening and remembering. It’s also a great idea to follow up on your children’s daily activities. But be sure to teach them to reciprocate and ask you about your day too.

**5. Disagree without Being Disagreeable.** An easy way to start a fight is to quickly jump in to say “You’re wrong” or “That’s a stupid idea!” Meanwhile, a better, more loving way to make the same point is to use a wise question. The moment you know you disagree with what your spouse said, stop and ask the powerful question, “Why do you think that?” Listen to the answer (you may uncover some new information to alter your opinion), then feel free to disagree without using judgmental words. By holding your tongue and listening first (even if it’s only for a minute), you show respect. And when your children overhear you, they learn an important lesson about how to turn a disagreement into a conversation.

The values we hold dear to us—respect, appreciation, compassion, loyalty and companionship—are fostered or destroyed every day by our word choices and actions. If you resolve to use these five simple communication tips, you will discover that your love will be stronger and better than ever