

Tip for Your Response: Make it a habit to seek the Lord on her behalf when she asks you for guidance. God offers great wisdom that we could not hope to figure out on our own.

If you're uncomfortable with your wife seeking your advice, or unsure about your ability to give quality counsel, here are a few tips to get started:

- 1. Seek God with her.** Find time to pray about things together. Ask her to begin praying with you and asking God for insight in your individual quiet times.
- 2. Ask for time to think.** Jen likes to mull over a decision for days, sometimes weeks, then come to me, lay out the topic, and receive my immediate inspired wisdom right there on the spot. Most people can't offer sound advice like that, I know I can't. Don't hesitate to ask for time to think. Sometimes I ask other counselors in my life for feedback before I offer my thoughts.
- 3. Pay attention to entry level concerns in her life and ask if you can offer suggestions.** Is she having a problem at work? A relationship issue? Do you excel at time management or planning and see that you may be able to help her out with some current projects? Come to your wife and gently ask if you can offer some thoughts.

If this area represents a pain point in your marriage, give yourselves time and grace to grow into it. Giving counsel is an opportunity to express your love for your wife and to consider what is best from her. If you frame these conversations from the perspective of "how can I love her?" and "how can I do what's best for her?" then you'll put her in a position to receive your words well.

12 Healthy Habits of Constructive Communicators

Words are powerful. Sometimes so much, that a passing comment can throw off a whole evening. Wouldn't it be great if we could just blurt out whatever we want to say without repercussions?

In *A Wife's Secret to Happiness* chapter five, my wife, Jen, talks about a few constructive habits of healthy communicators. This bonus document helps fill out that list with a few more painful, but helpful, lessons we've learned over the years—and adds some bonus details from a guy's perspective.

1. Using "I feel" instead of "You always/never" statements.

Unhealthy: "You never stop talking."

Healthy: "I feel like you're not listening, you're thinking ahead to the thing you want to say."

2. Asking for change versus demanding something different.

Unhealthy: "From now on, I expect my dinner to be on the table when I get home."

Healthy: "Is there something we can do differently to make sure our family eats meals on time?"

3. Addressing the root issue instead of attacking the action.

Unhealthy: "I hate that you always have headaches the nights we were going to have sex."

Healthy: "I feel like you use headaches as an excuse not to be intimate with me."

4. Setting unity as the goal not conformity.

Unhealthy: "This is important to me so get on my page."

Healthy: "I want us to find the same page so we can both be comfortable with this decision."

5. Communicating with her in advance not last minute.

Unhealthy: “Hey, Babe. I’m on my way home from work and my boss is coming by for dinner tonight.”

Healthy: “Hey, Babe. My boss would like to have dinner with us, is there a night this week that works well?”

- 6. Repeating back what you heard instead of assuming you heard right and moving on.**

Unhealthy: “I can’t believe you’d say that. Well, let me tell you ...”

Healthy: “I heard you say that because I got home late from work, that means I don’t care about our family. Is that right?”

- 7. Leaving room for thinking and listening instead of thinking ahead to your comeback statement.**

Unhealthy: “—Seriously?!” *If she talks about last Thanksgiving again I’m going to ...*

Healthy: [Listening.]

- 8. Explaining yourself a different way instead of just repeating the same thing. This helps if she’s not understanding you, or if she is struggling to believe what you say or to believe that you mean what you say.**

Unhealthy: “I keep telling you that I love you but you’re acting like you don’t believe me.”

Healthy: “Let me try explaining it another way. I love you. You are my best friend. The idea that you couldn’t trust what I say makes me sick to my stomach. I hate that I hurt you. I’m invested in us.”

- 9. Refusing to entertain hurtful words instead of dwelling on them or brainstorming ways to push your spouse’s buttons.**

Unhealthy: “Susan from work would never treat me this way.”

Healthy: “I really don’t want to say things just to hurt you. Let’s take a break from this conversation and come back to it in a few minutes.”

- 10. Choosing to pause the conversation instead of talking it all out until you share every detail. This tends to be a female tendency, so sometimes you may need to advocate this for the both of you so the situation doesn’t get out of hand.**

Unhealthy: “We’ll discuss this until four in the morning if we have to.”

Healthy: “I’m feeling tired and not thinking very clearly, which isn’t helping me understand what you’re saying. Can we pause this conversation until tomorrow?”

Side note here: Ephesians 4 warns us not to let the sun go down while we’re still angry. This doesn’t mean you can’t go to sleep, it means you need to choose not to be angry. [Click here to read more about it on Jen’s blog.](#)

11. Closing the conversation by affirming each other and your relationship instead of leaving feeling uncertain.

Unhealthy: “I’m tired of talking about this. Can we be done?”

Healthy: “I think we found a good resolution. How are you doing?”

12. Taking responsibility where you can and leaving the rest up to God instead of burdening yourself with finding the resolution or fix things solo.

Unhealthy: “If you’d just listen to me then we’d be fine. I have it all figured out.”

Healthy: “I know this is a recurring issue for us. I am going to keep working on this and will ask God for help.”

I know these tips are not easy or fun to practice. Over time, each approach will feel less forced as it becomes part of your communication style. Of all the recommendations above, #12 may be the most important. Sometimes, we can see the role of a leader as having to find the fix by ourselves, or coming in with a finalized game plan. But that’s not our job. When it comes to constructive communication, our role is to help build our relationship in the way we communicate. We get to guide the conversation in healthy ways.