

Letter of advice

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Letter of Advice COM 200 Interpersonal Communication Letter of Advice

Dear Chris and Jennifer, Thank you very much for asking for my advice on your personal relationship as you enter the realm of matrimony. It is a great complement that you want me to share what I have learned through study and through my own life experiences with you. My advice to you for a successful relationship is to always maintain effective interpersonal communication. One of the most important elements of any relationship is the quality of communications, which requires a commitment to actual listening, a willingness to participate in self-disclosure which promotes intimacy and not just talking to be talking. Effective interpersonal communications requires a knowledge of the principles and misconceptions in communication, understanding the barriers to communications, recognizing how words create and affect our own and others attitudes, behaviors and perceptions, recognizing how perceptions, emotions and nonverbal cues affect relationships and realizing that gender and culture impact interpersonal communications. In any relationship, it is very important to understand the basic principles and misconceptions that take place in communications. This is essential to be sure that we are communicating and not just talking. In an online book " Making Connections: Understanding Relationships", Kathy Sole explains the role of many terms related to effective communication. In communication there is always a sender, a receiver and the message itself. She further emphasizes that listening is a very important part of communicating (2011). In fact, listening is the largest part of any communication. Listening can be verbal and/or reading. Listening and providing feedback are the ways we can determine

that we understand what is actually being sent. While it is very easy to just talk, it is not as easy to actually communicate in a way in which we can discover things about the person with whom we are in a relationship. Communication is a two way street in which each person needs to participate in open and honest self-disclosure. When you first started this relationship with each other, I am sure you were cautious of what you shared. You used every effort to present only positive information about yourselves. In my studies, I have often noted that researchers believe that one reason new relationships are so pleasant and friendly is that new couples place more emphasis on their similarities and tend to ignore their differences. I am sure that you did the same thing. First your interpersonal relationship was the two of you talking, maybe, on the phone or through e-mail, as friends, obtaining knowledge and a basic perception of each other; then you started dating to further that knowledge. Now you have progressed into a couple, a lovely couple I might add, with marriage on your mind. If you have not already, you will go through some ups and downs and many disappointments. Marriage is a social union but also a legal contract between two people that creates kinship. Just remember you are in this relationship together and it takes both parties to make it be the wonderfully emotional and intimate relationship that it can be. Hopefully, you are marrying your best friend. In an article from the Houston Chronicle, Nara Schoenberg discusses the research of Terri Orbuch, a research scientist at the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan. Ms. Orbuch describes self-disclosure as " sharing your private feelings, fears, doubts and perceptions with your partner." (2011). Ms. Orbuch further stated that it takes as little as

ten minutes everyday to participate in actual self-disclosure in which you ask each other about things like a favorite book, a best friend or a dream vacation. Her research found that partners who used her 10-minute rule either by phone, e-mail or in person were happier in their relationships. She feels " every single day is a good starting point for couples seeking to reconnect" (2011). As you start your married life, you will be enthusiastic and excited about just being with each other and will be constantly communicating. This enthusiasm may continue but the opportunities to truly communicate may be lost in the day to day action of just living our lives. I would like to interject some important in-site into self-disclosure. In information from an article published by the National Council on Family Relations reference is made that identifies a possible issue that can arise after reaching a certain level or quantity of self-disclosure. The article brings up the point that self-disclosure can digress into negative aspects. As you more actively participate in self-disclosure, you both need to be honest, but should remain conscious that too much negative disclosure could have a less than positive impact on your relationship (Schumm, Barnes, Bollman, Jurich, & Bugaighis, 1986). While some self-disclosure may be of a negative nature, you should not dwell on the negative but place emphasis on the positive. Again let me state that honesty and good common sense are the keys. In my current course on interpersonal, I have discovered that one of the most effective ways to communicate is face to face where the channel is the air around you that carries the message. Sometimes the channel is medicated in one way or another, which means that someone or something is between the sender and the receiver in the communication process (Sole, 2011).

There are a number of barriers to effective interpersonal interactions such as friends, family, and even each other if you become silent and refuse to communicate, if you just try to placate each other or play a role that is not honest. Interpersonal communication requires two individuals actively participating. There is no communication if there is no feedback. Silence is deadly to a relationship. You cannot learn about someone if they will not talk and you cannot resolve any differences or misunderstandings if they are not discussed. By just saying what you think your partner wants to hear without really saying what you feel and mean is as dishonest in its own way as not telling the truth. You cannot truly develop an intimacy with each other, if you do not know what the other person truly thinks and feels. Miscommunication and differences cannot be resolved without open discussion between the parties involved. Trying to guess what someone wants us to say is just playing an unfair mind game whether it is intended or not. Two people cannot learn about each other if one has put on a facade or is just playing a role. Role playing in a relationship is dishonest. People often assume a facade to be accepted, but in a close personal and intimate involvement it is almost impossible to maintain the facade. To overcome barriers, find a place that is free of noise and other people so you can insure that you have each other's undivided attention. You don't need outside influences, whether it is family, friends or just the television. Talk and listen until you both understand what the other is saying, this will leave no room for misunderstandings and obstacles later. If possible, communicate verbally rather than using body language or non-verbal actions which can be misinterpreted. For their to be a strong and lasting intimacy between the two

of you, no middle person or outside influence should be allowed to undermine your relationship. You should always listen when the other person talks. If you do not understand, ask questions. If you do not both honestly and actively communicate, there will be no way to develop a more intimate relationship. If you have a good relationship you will find security in the fact that you will trust each other and know that you can depend on each other to be responsive when the need arises. This will be crucial to your happiness (Sole, 2011). A relationship cannot develop if the partners refuse to participate in a conversation, if you only say what you think the other person wants to hear of if you are not your real selves. How would each of you feel if someone refused to talk to you, condescendingly tried to placate you and/or was not honest in the way they act around you? Words have power and it is important for you to realize they can create and affect attitudes, behavior and perception. Words are not in actuality things but are symbols representing things. Words can have denotations and connotations in relation to the symbols that they represent. Words are symbols for physical items as well as feelings and emotions. Since words can mean different things to different people and may even symbolize very different things to each of you, it is important to be sure that you both strive to understand what each person means by the words you utilize. The more you communicate the more information and ideas you will share. You will learn more about each other's likes and dislike. If you foster a strong communication environment, the marriage will stay strong. If the communication environment weakens, your marriage may also become weak and the relationship may not survive. Emotions can run high at times,

but remember to always use words that express your feelings without hurting what you two have created together. When you use words you are expressing yourself to each other. When you use negative tones and derogatory words to belittle the other, you will only cause more anger and resentment in your marriage. If you let anger and resentment fill a relationship, the man or women may start looking outside the marriage for comfort and understanding. Perceptions, emotions and non-verbal expressions affect interpersonal relationships. Find ways to break silences and start interpersonal conversations with each other. A hug, kiss, or wink are non-verbal expressions, which can be crucial when repairing hurt feelings. When you have misunderstandings, if you just sweep it “ under the rug” in hopes it will all go away, be aware that it will not. It will only get bigger. Unexpressed feelings tend to accumulate. One of the benefits of a good relationship is that you have the opportunity to express your feelings safely. Most research supports the concept that people who have relationships where they can be open and share feelings are healthier and happier than those who do not. Burleson and Denton in their research published by the National Council on Family Relations state that: "Communication behavior refers to the verbal and nonverbal actions that the speaker actually emits and that are observable by others. Observed behavior is the product of the individual's motivation (or intentions) in a particular situation and the skills the individual has available to assist in pursuing those intentions" (1997). Both verbal and non-verbal expressions are the product of a person's intentions. Since non-verbal expressions have to be observed and the person observing uses their own personal perceptions, life

experiences and understanding of the speaker to interpret them misunderstandings can easily occur. In order to truly communicate, you both must understand how gender and different cultural experiences can impact personal communications. Moods are different in men than in women, you will need to learn to deal with these emotions effectively. You should be aware if either one of you is in a bad mood, the best way to deal with the situation may be to not take the mood too seriously and, if the situation allows, wait a little while until one or the other is in a better mood or at least a less emotional state of mind to have any discussion. Most men have been taught to be strong and not show their emotions and feelings, especially problems in their relationships or marriage. Jennifer, if this is true in your and Chris's relationship you will need to figure out his emotions and feelings from the nonverbal clues he sends you. If you take the time to learn to read each other and understand the different gender roles that each of you will take on, it will help with your interpersonal communication with each other.

Schoenberg in her article for the Houston Chronicle about communication in marriage, references Terry Orbuch research into "affective affirmation" and her belief that men need it more than women (2011). When dealing with each other it is important to understand that different individuals have different levels of need for positive re-enforcement of their position in your affections. You will be leaving your mother and father to become one. Your parents and friends will want what is best for you both, but when you have issues which you will, work them out together, don't bring them to family or friends. If you bring in outsiders, it will only cause more conflict, the outsider will only hear one side of the story. To ensure an open and honest

relationship, rely on each other, communicate and keep everything out in the open between you. In another article published by the National Council on Family Relations, there is a very good quote that states, " Marriages naturally decay unless we put energy into them" (Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, & Willoughby, 2004). Marriage is a give and take relationship and to maintain a healthy marriage requires effort. The old adage that states that any thing worth having is worth working for is very true. Each of you will have to be willing to compromise and to openly communicate to keep your marriage vital. In the book, 10 Lessons to Transform Your Marriage, the authors state that " Every marriage has perpetual issues - that is conflicts based on personality differences or preferences in lifestyle that never go away". The authors stress that research " shows that the happiest couples can live peacefully with their perpetual issues as long as they keep talking about tem in an open, productive way. However, perpetual issues that become gridlocked conflicts can be harmful to a marriage". As emphasis of some points already covered in this letter, there are several other points that the authors believe are very important to highlight. One point is that happily married couples " act like good friends" and handle their " conflicts in gentle, positive ways. They believe that " learning to express feelings, state needs and address conflicts will help to build intimacy and strengthen" a marriage. The authors go as far as to advise that couples " practice telling each other what they are feeling and what they need - eve if such expression brings conflicts to the surface, where they have to be acknowledged and managed" (Gottman, 2007). As you start you life together as husband and wife, communicate openly, honestly and often. I hope this advice, which only

scratches the surface of interpersonal communications will help you to do some of the right things when communicating and avoid many of the pitfalls that face every relationship. Just remember, quality communication is an essential element in developing and maintaining a relationship. Partners need to effectively communicate not just talk. Each person must be open to self-disclosure. To sustain effective interpersonal communication each partner needs a knowledge of the principles and misconceptions in communication, be able to identify the barriers to communication, learn to recognize how words create and affect our own and others attitudes, behaviors and perceptions, understand how perceptions, emotions and nonverbal cues affect relationships and be aware that gender and culture impact interpersonal communications. Long term relationships are build on many things, however, effective interpersonal communication can be an integral factor in developing an intimate, satisfying involvement which benefits both partners. Relationships are often complicated and require hard work but are well worth the effort. Wishing you the best in years to come. Your desire to understand interpersonal communications bode well for the success of your marriage. Sincerely, References Burleson, B. & Denton, W. (1997, Nov.). The relationship between communication skill and marital satisfaction: Some moderating effects. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 59, No. 4, pp. 884-902. Retrieved September 16, 2011 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/353790>. Hawkins, A., Carroll, J., Doherty, W., & Willoughby, B. (2004, Oct.). A comprehensive framework for marriage education. *Family Relations*, Vol. 53, No. 5, pp. 547-558. National Council on Family Relations. Retrieved on September 26, 2011, from <http://jstor.org/stable/20456772>.

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