

# American beauty – paper

[Health & Medicine](#), [Beauty](#)



American Beauty In the movie " American Beauty" there is a list of interpersonal conflicts. Lester and Carolyn Burnham are a seemingly ordinary couple in an anonymous suburban neighborhood, whose marriage and lives are slowly unraveling. They both have become so distant but remain together to keep up appearances. This relationship shows all the factors that Daniel Dana considers being a conflict. Two people are independent; they each need something from the other, both parties blame the other or find fault with them for causing the problem, one or more of the parties is angry or emotionally upset, the parties' behaviors are affecting their relationship with each other and/or their relationships with others. "(Dana, 2000) In the movie there are many conflicts but the interpersonal conflict that stands out is that between Lester and Carolyn. The conflict between Lester and Carolyn is hard to ignore. They have stopped communicating effectively to one another. Lester is a middle aged man, whom sees no satisfaction in his life anymore.

Carolyn is a middle aged woman, whom only shows her satisfaction, but it is a mask; to make it seem that she is happy. Lester, at first, seems to have a passivecommunicationstyle, compared to Carolyn's aggressive communication style. In the narration from Lester in the beginning of the film; he seems to be tired of his life and how it is going. They live in a big white house with a red door and a white picket fence; living theAmerican dream. Unfortunately it is anything but. They have a daughter Jane who Lester believes he has failed. One night, Lester and Carolyn go to one of her work functions.

Almost immediately they go their own ways at the function. Carolyn is being entertained by the “ King” of real estate, drinking. While Lester has found himself outside with the new neighbor boy Ricky Fitts, smoking the illicit drug marijuana. When they go home and are in bed, their problems come to fruition. At this point the “ blame game” comes into the picture; with much negativity. They fight back and forth sarcastically, saying hurtful things, until Carolyn jumps up out of bed and bursts out “ This isn’t a marriage”. Then Lester finally speaks up and tells her what he has been feeling for years.

One factor is the lack of sex between them. Also, he states that he has been her puppet for years; since she received her realtors license, and finally that he has been extremely unhappy. Then he continues saying that the only reason she is mad and saying anything is because he is finally fighting back. His dramatic and angry speech makes Carolyn silent. At this point in the film, I am more aware that they haven’t had effective communication to resolve their conflicts, for many years now. This situation escalated from their root cause of both of them becoming withdrawn, and not resolving their conflicts. When conflict erupts, emotions are involved, and the relationship can be threatened if the conflict is not resolved amicably. ”(Sole, 2011) I think what started their downfall, years ago, is that they avoided conflict. This can be destructive in any relationship and/or marriage. If you don’t have the skills of resolving conflict; you run the risk of ruining your marriage, separate friendships, and shatter your family. Since both parties did not obtain the skills necessary to resolve their conflicts, it resulted in Carolyn stepping out of their marriage; to have an affair with her real-estate rival, Buddy Kane the “ King”, of real-estate.

Also, resulting in Lester acting out, quitting his job, smoking marijuana, buying a 1970 Pontiac Firebird, and working out to impress a 17 year old girl; what some may call a mid-life crisis. Amazingly enough, this could have all been resolved, as long as they both are willing with positive emotions during their conflicts. Research has shown that interjecting positive emotions, along with negative emotions, during discussions result in happier marriages.

I think that is Lester and Carolyn would have used some basic elements like humor, light-hearted fun, or some playfulness during their conversations, their marriage could have remained happy. Then if they could know and understand one another's communication style, they would be better at resolving conflicts between them. Lester started out having a passive communication style, and then it quickly moved to a passive-aggressive communication style. I believed this happened because he was fed up with how his life was going and started to display resentment.

With negative feelings, this indirectly sabotaged his life. If Carolyn held an assertive communication style, rather than an aggressive communication style, I believe they would have been able to eventually resolve their conflicts. All in all, if they had effective interpersonal communication, they would have continued to go down the path, to be a happily married couple.

References Sole, K. , Making Connections: Understanding Interpersonal Communication,(2011), BridgePointEducationInc. Retrieved From: <https://content.ashford.edu/books>