

## Exercise

Effective communication involves allowing our husband or wife to talk about their feelings.

- Take turns spending one minute telling your husband or wife about a happy memory of something that happened to you before you met.
- The listener should then summarize what he/she has heard, taking particular care to describe their partner's feelings. This will show that he/she has been listening and empathizing with what his/her partner felt.

**Principles for Effective Listening** Learning to listen is for some people a foreign language, but we must learn in order to grow closer to our husband or wife.

1. **Pay attention and do not interrupt.** Allow your partner to finish what he is saying. Research indicates that the average individual listens for only 17 seconds before interrupting. Maintain eye contact and do not do something else at the same time.
2. **Put yourself in your partner's shoes.** Put your own views to one side and really appreciate what it is like for your partner to be feeling the way he/she does. This takes patience and compassion on the part of the listener. Do not ask a lot of questions. Try to tolerate silences.
3. **Acknowledge their feelings.** When you have listened to what your partner wants to say, reflect back what you heard without deflection or interpretation. It is important to try to summarize accurately the main facts but to reflect back the feelings in full. This helps your partner to know if you have understood.
4. **Find out what is most important.** Then ask you husband or wife: "*What is the most important part of what you have been saying?*" Wait quietly while your partner thinks about what he wants to say. When he has spoken, reflect back again what you have heard.
5. **Help her determine what she might do.** Now ask: "*Is there anything you would like me/us to do about what you have said?*" Again give your partner time to think quietly. When he has finished, reflect back what your partner has said, enabling him to hear his own decision. The listener then asks, "*Is there anything more that you would like to say?*" If there is anything more, this should also be reflected back to the speaker.

## The Power of Listening

Discuss the following questions as a couple:

- How does it feel when you are listened to?
- How does it feel when you are not listened to?
- To whom would you go to if you needed a listening ear?
- What makes that person a good listener?