



ISSUE# 11

Article 3 : Talking and listening - communicating with your partner

The childbearing years are certainly very rewarding but can also be extremely challenging.

There is no doubt that the extra demands on your time and energy can place new strains on your relationship with your partner and you may find that communication is affected by this.

It's very helpful indeed to be aware of this and to plan time and make space to share your thoughts and feelings in a focused and constructive way

This can help to make life a lot easier. Even the most trying circumstances can be survived when you can communicate well with each other and you both feel that you have been heard and understood. This exercise is an aid to open communication and will help you to develop the habit of talking to each other about your feelings.

It can be done by a couple working together or you can do it with a friend or relative, or in an ante natal or parenting class. After a while it will seem less like an exercise and will come naturally, enhancing your relationships as well as your daily life.

Start by sitting down comfortably in one of the easy sitting positions you have learned. Spend three to five minutes becoming aware of your breathing. Then turn to face each other- preferably close enough to touch if you are a couple working together.

In a group or class, divide into pairs and sit at a comfortable distance facing each other, then start by introducing yourself to your partner and telling her a little bit about yourself, your pregnancy and your plans for the birth.

The basic principle of this exercise is that when one person talks the other listens without interrupting. Allocate a maximum amount of time for speaking - say, between one and five minutes, take turns at listening and talking.

It is a good idea to begin by letting your partner know about something you appreciate and feel good about, then go on to say how you are feeling at the moment. Then you can use the time to exchange information, to ask questions, to let your partner know if you have any special request or needs.

This simple talking and listening technique can be used in many situations and is especially useful if conflict arises or there is a disagreement in a relationship.

If you can develop the habit of sitting down and talking to one another and listening to each other in a calm and balanced way, you will find that most problems can be solved and you can cope with anything that may turn up. It is also a lovely way to share your excitement and pleasures, your wishes, hopes and dreams.

In a group it is an enjoyable way to get to know each other better and to make new friends. You can also use this exercise at home within your family and later on it will help you to communicate successfully with your child.

It also gives you a positive strategy for talking with your birth attendants, listening to and appreciating their suggestions and also letting them know how you feel and what you want.

Sit on the floor on a cushion or on two chairs facing each other with your knees touching. One of you is A while the other is B.

Relax your arms and shoulders and rest your hands gently on your partner's knees - or on your own knees, if you prefer, when

working with a friend or in a group.

In a relaxed way, maintain eye contact as you take turns to talk and listen to each other.

Decide who is going first. During the allocated time, A speaks while B listens without interrupting. It may help to use an egg timer!

Then when A has completed B speaks while A listens. Continue like this until the conversation is over and remember - don't interrupt when your partner is speaking. If you are dying to say something, make a note and come back to it when it's your turn.

End by sharing your wishes, hopes and dreams.

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