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## CONTACT

Cornerstone Counselling  
(South West) LLP  
28 South Street  
Wellington  
Somerset  
TA21 8NS



01823 765065



[contact@cornerstonesw.co.uk](mailto:contact@cornerstonesw.co.uk)



[@cornerstonecsw](https://twitter.com/cornerstonecsw)

## 5 WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

BY CHRIS WALLWORK (MBACP)

According to research carried out by Albert Mehrabian for his book 'Silent Messages', the wholeness of our communication can be classified as follows:

Body language – 55%  
Tone of voice – 38%  
Actual words – 7%

One of the most common concerns raised in the therapy room is how clients feel they communicate (or don't) with their partner. So often we can fall in to a trap of assuming we know our partner well, and therefore we almost don't need to communicate because we know what they are thinking or feeling.

But what if we're wrong?

What if we think we know, but in reality we don't know at all?

And looking at the percentage figures above, what if we are simply thinking that communication is only about the words we say and not the other 93% of our expression?

Below are five tips to set you on the road to opening up, maintaining, and enhancing communication channels with your partner.



### Put your phone down!

If the two of you are sat down of an evening and are checking Facebook, Twitter or other social media whilst not engaging with each other, then what is this saying? Dedicate time to putting the phones away, remove all distractions and take an interest in your partner. Check in on their day, ask them how they are. Take an active interest.

### Allow conversational space for one another

If a pie chart were to be drawn of the time you and your partner each spent talking in your conversation, how would it look? Maybe you've got a healthy chunk of that pie and your partner has a small slither, maybe it's the other way around. It seems logical that an equal share of the pie means equality in the conversation, but maybe this is a struggle for you as you like to listen more. Maybe it's hard because you've become used to finishing sentences for your partner and ensuring that you get your point across. Really try to focus on allowing space for both parties, it's easier to do as a collaborative exercise!

### Dedicate time

It may sound cheesy but the concept of a date night can be excellent for couples who are busy and have little free time. Set your night, write it in your diaries and stick to it, you may even look forward to it! Okay so it may feel forced and contrived at first, but this is time set aside to spend with the person you love, surely that has to be a good thing? If a date night isn't your thing there are plenty of alternatives. You could go for a walk together, take up a class as a couple, anything! Why, you ask? Well giving some time to your partner is an active expression of love and commitment to them as a person, as a mutual exercise it seeks to reinforce the relationship boundary from which you both sit inside, and will boost communication as a consequence.

### Increase physical contact

Becoming more tactile with your partner is another way to reinforce those relationship boundaries and promote healthy attachment between you both. Hold hands when you're out, sit next to each other on the sofa, in



fact any outward signal of wanting togetherness in that regard will act as a form of communication in its own right. With body language being the major contributor to how we communicate, this is an excellent way to non-verbally interact with your partner.

### Remember your tone

Tone accounts for 38% of our communication. So what is your tone? Are you directional? Are you commanding? Maybe you're passive and the impact of your words becomes lost in the softness of the way you speak. Perhaps you say the loveliest of words but their meaning is squashed by an unintentionally aggressive tone. Either way, it is good to be mindful of the tone you use. We all have different communication styles, and tone carries a purpose. But consciously try to ensure that the meaning of the words you use is matched with a tone appropriate for the situation – that way, you increase your chances of being heard.

As an exaggerated example, [click here](#) to watch this guy get his tone all wrong.

*This list isn't exhaustive and not all of these practices are easy to put in to play. If you feel you are struggling to both listen and be heard in your relationship, then maybe therapy is for you. Why not contact Cornerstone and see if we can help.*

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