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# *Women of Witness*

TIPS TO BETTER YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS



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## **DO THIS When a Miscommunication Happens**

**By Dr. Gary Chapman**

Let's face it: miscommunications happen all the time.

Things are going well in a relationship. The day is turning out wonderful. But then, it happens. You inadvertently say something in passing and, KABOOM, you find yourself in the middle of a heated argument.

"I didn't mean it that way."

"Yes, you did."

"No, I didn't. Really."

You get the gist.

So what can you do when you find yourself in the middle of a communication mishap? Here are three suggestions:

**1. Stop talking.** Defending yourself may be your instinctual response, especially if the conversation starts to descend into personal attacks and generalities (i.e., you never, you always). Take a moment to breathe. This relationship is obviously important to you, so remember that and let your guard down. Choose your words wisely. Do you really want to argue, or do you want to resolve the conflict?

**2. Start listening.** If you want to resolve the conflict, you need to be curious as to what may have triggered the rise of emotions in the first place. Was it a fear of disconnection, a past trauma that may have surfaced, stress at an all-time high and a rather small comment just pushed them over the edge? When you are curious to really understand what is happening in them, you are less likely to put up the walls of defense. Listening opens the door to empathy.

**3. Express understanding.** When there is a miscommunication, often no one is really at fault. You don't have to admit you were wrong if your motives and intentions were right. However, it is helpful to say something like, "I can certainly understand why you might have been hurt by what I said, but I want you to know that I care deeply about you and would never intentionally hurt you like that." The goal is to open the door of communication so you can resolve the conflict in a healthy way.

Miscommunications are inevitable, but with some self-awareness and genuine concern for the other person, you can work to resolve the conflicts that arise and grow stronger in your relationships.

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