

• **COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO INCREASE INTIMACY** •

1. **Give full attention to your partner when talking.** Turn off the phone, shut off the television, make eye contact.

2. **Focus on the good qualities in each other and often praise each other.**

3. **Be assertive.** Share your thoughts, feelings, and needs.

A good way to be assertive without being critical is to use "I" rather than "You" statements. (e.g. *"I worry when you don't let me know you'll be late"* rather than *"You are always late"*).

Phrases to Avoid: "You always" "You never" "You should" "You don't ever"

4. **Avoid criticism.**

5. **If you must criticize, balance it with at least one positive comment.**

(e.g. *"I appreciate how you take the trash out each week. In the future can you remember to also wheel the trash can back from the end of the driveway?"*).

6. **Listen to understand, not to judge/or respond.**

7. **Use active listening.** Summarize your partner's comments before sharing your own reactions or feelings. "What I hear you saying is..."

8. **Avoid blaming each other and work together for a solution.**

9. **Seek counseling.** If you are not able to resolve issues, seek counseling before they become more serious.



SHARING STRENGTH AND GROWTH AREAS

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control . . . — GALATIANS 5:22-23

Check what areas you agree or disagree most with your partner.

- **Select three Strength Areas** (most agreement and positive aspects of your relationship)
- **Select three Growth Areas** (most disagreement and areas you want to improve)

	STRENGTH AREAS	GROWTH AREAS
1. COMMUNICATION <i>We share feelings and understand each other.</i>		
2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION <i>We are able to discuss and resolve differences.</i>		
3. PARTNER STYLE AND HABITS <i>We appreciate each other's personality and habits.</i>		
4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT <i>We agree on budget and financial matters.</i>		
5. LEISURE ACTIVITIES <i>We have a good balance of activities together and apart.</i>		
6. SEXUALITY AND AFFECTION <i>We are comfortable discussing sexual issues and affection.</i>		
7. FAMILY AND FRIENDS <i>We feel good about our relationships with relatives and friends.</i>		
8. RELATIONSHIP ROLES <i>We agree on how to share decision-making and responsibilities.</i>		
9. CHILDREN AND PARENTING <i>We agree on issues related to having and raising children.</i>		
10. SPIRITUAL BELIEFS <i>We hold similar religious values and beliefs.</i>		

COUPLE DISCUSSION:

1. Take turns sharing what each of you perceive as your relationship strengths. Verbally share one strength at a time, until you each have shared three.
2. Use the same procedure to share and discuss growth areas.
3. Now have a discussion around these questions:
 - a. **Did any of your partner's responses surprise you?**
 - b. **In what areas did you mostly agree with your partner?**
 - c. **In what areas did you mostly disagree with your partner?**