



In Their Own Words

by Christine Siefers

Our couples are the best voice for sharing the benefits of the Marriage for Keeps program. Each month we'll give some couples an opportunity to highlight the effects that Marriage for Keeps has had on their relationships and their families. This month we hear from **Katherine and Justin** and **Lacy and Kenton**.

Katherine and Justin have been married for eight years, but since enrolling in the Marriage for Keeps program last September, they have seen a remarkable improvement in their relationship. They have been pleasantly surprised at how much they have learned and how much they genuinely like the program.

"We've really enjoyed the whole experience," said Katherine. "It's made such a profound impact on our lives. I never imagined going into this what we'd receive from it. It gives me such hope."

Because of the skills and tools learned in

the program, Katherine has realized that she has some bad habits. "Seeing my own bad habits on display has really helped me become more aware of how better to deal with them," Katherine said.

Justin credits the Speaker Listener Technique with helping he and Katherine to have more meaningful conversations. "Before when we argued there was no point," he said. "There would be no resolution. Using the Speaker Listener Technique you're discussing, not just yelling or arguing."

They have started using these skills with their kids, ages 10, seven (twins) and four. "If we can instill this in them at their ages, they'll have better quality in life and relationships because they are able to communicate efficiently. That's one way we can make a positive difference in their lives," said Katherine.

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Fun on a Budget

www.GreenCandy.com

Before you know it, you will be sweating profusely. In your Marriage for Keeps workshop you learned that having fun together is important for the health and happiness of your family. But will financial issues cramp your family's summer fun? Not when you follow these tips.

Rediscover your city. No matter how lame you think that your surroundings are, there are still great things to discover about your own stomping grounds. Plan a fun weekend in your hometown. No airfare, no gas guzzling trips, no getting lost.

Throw a mega pitch-in party. Nothing makes you feel richer than time with good friends. Parties don't have to be elaborate shindigs. Get a large group of friends together and split up the costs.

Exercise. Exercise is very important to your financial health. There is nothing better than just getting outside and working out. A regular workout routine adds discipline to your life, and discipline is good for your finances. You don't need a fancy personal trainer, you just need the outdoors.

Use your vacation wisely. Do you have a week's worth of vacation? Why not recharge with some three-day weekends? This will keep your mind fresh for a longer period.

Look out for dining deals. This could be the summer of economic recovery, and restaurants could lead the way. Make sure to check out the various "happy hour" deals that can get you full for cheap.

Two words: Garage Sale. How will you fund some of these fun summer activities? Sell the stuff you don't use, need, or want. This will organize your life, and put money in your pocket. Don't have a garage? Sell your junk on Craigslist or eBay.

Use the library. You know that big building you pass and say, "what's that?" It's the library, and it is full of fun free stuff. You can check out videos, music, and books.

Take a summer class or workshop. Green Candy is all about investing in yourself. Develop your skills and talents by taking a summer class. You should always be learning, and you should constantly be trying to improve yourself.

"Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain, but it takes character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving." ~Dale Carnegie

Mother's Day is May 9 and it's a good idea to take this time to make sure your mom knows how much you love and appreciate her. These are some ideas on how to make a gift for her that she'll cherish for years. Be sure to get help from a family member before tackling any of these projects.

- Mix plaster of Paris and fill a paper cup until it's about 1/2 full. While it's still wet, put a plastic fork in the middle with the prongs sticking up. Wait for the plaster to dry (may take several hours or a full day) and then peel away the cup. Paint or decorate the base. Put a recipe, poem or a photograph in the prongs of the fork to finish.

- Decorate a jar (any kind of jar will do, just remove labels by soaking in water) with some ribbon or pieces of tissue paper applied with glue. Write down favorite memories of your mom or things about her that you love on individual slips of colored paper. Fill the jar with the papers and you've made mom a beautiful memory jar.
- It may seem simple, but mom will love it if you write her a note or letter telling her why you're glad she's your mom.

Let your imagination help you create a special keepsake for mom this month. Remember that you don't have to spend a lot of money to make a big impact!

Avoid Communication Fouls

www.TwoOfUs.org

When communication between a couple breaks down, it's often because they have committed what can be called a "foul." When this happens, the whole team loses, because the course of communication becomes about winning an argument instead of finding a mutually favorable resolution. As you practice communication skills, be careful to not commit these mistakes:

Foul 1: Criticism. Criticism is not always a negative thing, however, if it is not constructive, it can lead to partners verbally attacking each other. Using criticism in communication implies that a problem or issue is the other person's fault which may, in fact, be the case. But assigning blame to the other person places the listener on the defensive. Some might think a criticism and a complaint are the same thing. A complaint can describe

a particular issue, situation or behavior in a non-threatening way and therefore is preferable to criticism.

Foul 2: Sarcasm and Cynicism. Sarcasm and cynicism in communication go beyond criticism by adding put downs or demeaning sentiments that are directed to the listener. Together, they convey what appears to be dislike or contempt for the other person. This is likely the worst foul to commit because it can lead to a poisonous cycle of increased, hurtful conflict. Not only does the receiver feel attacked or blamed, they can also feel rejected because of the negative emotions that are conveyed.

Foul 3: The Counter Attack. It's natural to want to fight or try to escape when feeling threatened or attacked. Scientists call it the fight or flight response. When on a communication team, the counter attack further fuels an

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Lacy and Kenton have seen the impact of their participation in the Marriage for Keeps program through their six-year-old son. "He calls us out when we don't follow through with something," said Kenton. Their son will say, "You're not doing your part," and that holds them accountable to him and to each other.

"It encourages me when I see him using the tools," Kenton said.

Being part of the program has "made us stop and evaluate our marriage and the importance of nurturing it instead of living day to day and thinking it will just take care of itself," said Lacy. "It's almost like new glasses you put on to view the world."

They've seen other couples struggle in their relationships and they see the three keys and the other tools of the program as a great resource for them to fall back on when things do get difficult.

It didn't take long for Kenton see the value of The

Floor that's used for the Speaker Listener Technique. He uses The Floor in business meetings to give everyone an opportunity to share their opinions.

Lacy and Kenton found the workshop phase of the program to be the most intense, but say that meeting with their Family Support Specialist throughout has kept them accountable and reinforced what they learned during those 12 weeks. "In three months, 90 percent of what you learned in the group would be forgotten [without that contact]," said Kenton.

Even though the couple wasn't experiencing problems in their eight-year marriage before entering the program, they feel they now have a more valuable relationship and have moved from a plateau in their relationship to an upward trend.

"People might be hesitant to sign up in the beginning, but if they just get a fraction of what's offered, they'll be so much better off," said Lacy.

Upcoming Events

May 2010

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------------|
| | | | | | | 1 Community Wellness Fair |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 Big Brothers and Sisters Gala |
| 9 Mother's Day | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 Armed Forces Day |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 Memorial day | | | | | |

Do you and your spouse need a getaway from the business of life?



MARRIAGE EDUCATION GROUP

Coming in June! Call to reserve your spot. 620-272-0010

Coming Soon: SUMMER

These websites have lots of ideas for fun and educational Activities to keep the kids occupied when school is out. We'll have more ideas in the June newsletter, but this should get you started.

www.activities-for-kids.net
www.activitiesforkids.com
www.pbskids.org
www.crayola.com
www.mommysavers.com
www.allkidsnetwork.com

Have fun!

Communication Fouls (continued from Page 2)

already burning fire. It can prolong a conflict by preventing the real issue from being discussed. Avoid the temptation to issue a counter attack by using your turn as the speaker to raise an issue that is important to you.

Foul 4: The Silent Treatment. You are likely familiar with this negative tactic. The silent treatment describes when one person makes a conscious decision to stop talking to their partner. In conflict, this is often done out of spite. As the saying goes, silence can be deafening! Because communication is a team sport, when one person stops talking or listening, no communication can happen. Sometimes the silent treatment can signal that one person has had enough of the conversation or that they've reached their limit. This can be

a signal that it's time to take a break from the discussion. Taking a break isn't a bad thing—but it has to be a mutual decision. At other times, the silent treatment can be viewed as a way to avoid an argument or conflict. Avoiding or removing yourself from communication can actually cause more conflict in the long run. It triggers the other person to continue, often in vain, to initiate dialogue.

Like learning any new skill, practicing and incorporating these "rules" may seem silly, or unnatural at first. The key is to keep trying to incorporate the techniques into your communication, particularly when things are going well. That way you'll be well-practiced when you need to use the rules during a conflict.



Marriage for Keeps Announcements

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Lilianna Zuniga



Do you and your spouse need a getaway from the business of life?

**MARRIAGE FOR KEEPS
10-WEEK WORKSHOP
ONCE A WEEK
STARTING TUESDAY JUNE 1
6:00-8:00 P.M.
Garden City Community College**

**Provides couples quality time together to learn great ways
to strengthen their marriage**

Includes evening meal starting at 5:30

\$50 in gift cards

All AT NO COST

Make your reservation today! 620-272-0010



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catholicsocialservice.org

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