

## 4 REASONS YOU'RE MISUNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

PREPARE-ENRICH BLOG - JANUARY 26, 2022

"Why would you say that?"

*"That's not what I meant. I never said that!"*

"Well, that's what it sounded like to me!"

Have you ever found yourself in a similar argument with your spouse? You were trying to communicate with each other but somewhere along the way, wires got crossed. Now someone is frustrated or got their feelings hurt. Where did things go wrong? Here are a few reasons for the misunderstanding – and how to cut through the noise.

### **You're thinking about your reply.**

We're all guilty of this. Your spouse is telling you something, but instead of truly hearing their words and the feelings behind them, you're mentally crafting your response, not listening to understand. Think about it: because you're not listening, your response might be way off base, causing your partner to have a negative reaction. This is where **active listening** can turn things around. Before you reply, repeat back what you heard your partner say to be sure that you accurately understand. This gives them a chance to confirm or correct your interpretation so you can respond appropriately.

### **You're making assumptions.**

Before your spouse has even finished speaking, you know exactly what they're going to say and the intention behind it. **At least you think you do.** You call them out on the thing they haven't even said yet and now they're feeling attacked and misunderstood. Don't put words into each other's mouths. Yes, sometimes you *might* know what they're going to (*or trying to*) say but be patient. Let *them* explain. You both deserve that respect.

### **You're taking things personally.**

*"I wasn't a big fan of that movie last night."* A seemingly innocent comment from your spouse but wait – you picked the movie! And now you feel defensive. *"Next time you pick the movie then."* Instead of a fun conversation about the movie you watched, things just got snippy. Maybe it was your mood or their tone. Whatever the reason, we **infer** some sort of personal dig. If you feel reactive, fight the urge, take a deep breath and respond to their words at face value.

### **You're being cryptic.**

Sometimes it's tempting to let ambiguity seep into what we're trying to say. Clearly articulating our thoughts and feelings isn't easy. If you've been married for a while, you might *think* they should just *"get it"*. But this forces your partner into reading your mind, and the chances of misinterpretation go up. Instead, be straightforward and **assertive** – the companion of active listening. If you're having trouble finding the right words to express yourself, don't be afraid to let each other know. It takes the pressure off both of you.

*Misunderstandings are part of being human. We don't always say exactly what we mean. Sometimes we misinterpret each other's words and intentions. Being aware of the ways that we exacerbate the problem can help you break those habits, avoid unnecessary conflict, and ultimately understand each other better.*