

# The Top 10 Communication Mistakes People Make in Their Relationships... and What to Do About Them

(based on our [Communication Magic](#) course)

By  
Susie and Otto Collins

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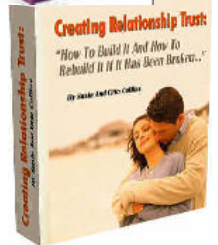
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## It really got Jeff's attention when his wife told him "I'm really angry with you right now!"

Not only did it get his attention, but it really took him aback for a moment. At first he didn't understand. But then he got it.

For Jeff and everyone else he has told this story to, it is a lesson in communication (or how not to) that we won't easily forget.

Jeff is the local store manager of a major department store chain. As is the case with most retail store managers, he works long hours and it seems that there's always more to do than time in the day to do it.

But this night when he called his wife at home to see how she and the kids were doing, he wasn't really there--not just physically, but emotionally as well. His mind was in a hundred different places other than talking to his wife on the phone.

As she was talking, he would give her an occasional "uh-huh" or "oh really" and she felt it.

That's when she became angry and blew up.

In that moment she didn't care about how much work he had left to do or when the "corporate clones" were coming in for their quarterly inspection or anything else.

What she wanted was his undivided attention.

In that moment, she wanted Jeff to be fully present with her and not "somewhere else."

She became angry when she didn't feel important to him and so in that moment, she just exploded and let him have it.

Jeff discovered, in that moment one of the most important keys to communication magic in any relationship --the importance of being fully present with the people in your life.

As we were listening to Jeff tell us this story, we too understood this very important truth about effective communication in relationships.

Like Jeff, we've all developed communication challenges along the way and they inevitably show up in all of our relationships, especially in our intimate, family and work relationships.

Most of us avoid communicating what we are honestly feeling in certain situations, we don't listen to understand, we aren't clear about our intentions and we communicate from fear not love.

Most people might not consciously label these communication challenges as coming from fear. But we've discovered in our own lives that it is always fear of some kind or another that gets in the way of our true expression with another person, whether it's with our intimate partner, family member or with a co-worker.

We are authors, speakers, Relationship Coaches and married partners who decided when we came together that we wanted a passionate, connected, growing, alive relationship. As we began our relationship, we consciously began to learn how to create and keep this type of connection.

Prior to getting together, we both had been in marriages where there wasn't much honest communication and these marriages had ended in divorce for each of us. We knew that learning to communicate from our hearts was an important key, not only in keeping our marriage vital, alive and growing, but also important in every relationship we were in.

We put our efforts into learning how to communicate with each other and then applied what we learned to every aspect of our lives.

Now we share this information and much more with thousands of people all over the world in our books, "[Creating Relationship Magic](#)", "[Should you Stay or Should you Go?](#)", "[Communication Magic](#)", "[No More Jealousy](#)," "[Creating Relationship Trust](#)," and "[Attracting Your Perfect Partner](#)" audio-tapes and free weekly online newsletter available from <http://www.collinspartners.com>

In this special report, we'll share with you information about 10 top communication mistakes people make and then what you can do about them so that you may begin to create the relationships and communication that you want in your life.

## Old Patterns Creep Into New Relationships

It doesn't matter whether you are beginning a new job with new co-workers, a new intimate relationship, or making new friends, those old communication challenges tend to crop up after awhile in those new relationships.

Even though we were consciously learning new ways to communicate in our relationship, we still lapsed into old patterns that we had carried with us from our family of origin and through our other relationships.

Susie was afraid to speak her truth if it was something that might be unpleasant for someone to hear.

She was taught in her family of origin to not "rock boat" by telling someone how she was feeling if it would upset them. She realized that in previous relationships of all kinds, she would agree with someone for the sake of keeping the peace.

Many times she would feel resentment and it would come barreling out at an inopportune time, usually magnified and maybe not even directed toward the appropriate person. She did not know how to clearly ask

for what she wanted and usually put other's desires ahead of hers.

Otto came from a family where his father's word was the rule and many times growing up, he felt like he had no voice in family decisions that affected him. He had developed the pattern of withdrawing when there were communication challenges and not speaking about what was bothering him.

He let resentments build until he would explode periodically. Because he hadn't felt safe enough to listen with an open heart and ask questions if he didn't understand, he ended up making assumptions, being fearful of the future, and resorted to "black and white" thinking—it's either this or that, nothing in between.

We, like many other people, have made lots of communication mistakes in our relationships and we have helped many people who are unhappy and want to do it differently.

What are the mistakes that people make most often that keeps them from having the relationships that they want?

## The Top 10 Communication Mistakes People make in their Relationships

1. Allowing your mind and attention to wander when someone is talking with you
2. Being afraid to say what you are feeling for fear of causing problems or because you don't want to hurt the other person
3. Thinking that everyone else wants what you want and thinks the way you do
4. Being defensive and having your own agenda when you listen to another person
5. Being unclear in your communication and not clearly asking for what you want
6. Taking too much or not enough of the responsibility for a situation

7. Allowing problems/misunderstandings to simmer until you explode
8. Running away either physically or emotionally when things get tough
9. Assuming that you know what someone is thinking or feeling
10. Judging and blaming the other person as they are speaking and you are talking

## What are your Communication Challenges?

It's been said that awareness is the first step to healing any situation and becoming aware of what you are doing to sabotage your relationships is where we suggest you begin. Take a moment now and write down the communication mistakes that you make in your relationships. In the next section, we'll give you some pointers on what to do to transform your relationships into what you want them to be.

## The "Rules" for Creating Communication Magic In Any Relationship...

Whether it's a relationship between married partners, you and your children, a relationship at work, or any other important relationship--the "Rules" for creating a great relationship and great communication don't change.

In the next section, we've identified 10 major areas that we think will help you improve communication with the people in your life. In each of these areas, we'll give you some practical ideas for dealing with those issues.

## 1. Set conscious intentions and create agreements from the heart

If you want to have a great relationship, set an intention to have a great relationship. If communication is a challenge for you, the first place to start is by setting a conscious intention for how you want your communication to be.

Our conscious intentions for communicating with each other are to share openly and to listen with an open heart to each other. We have it as our intention to support one another in our personal growth journey.

From those conscious intentions, we consciously make our agreements with each other--not just once but consistently.

Since we both were somewhat aware of what we each did to sabotage communication in our previous relationships, we decided to make agreements with each other to change these destructive patterns and to support each other in the process. We also agreed to treat each other like the best friends we said we were.

Those were the first major agreements or commitments we made to each other and we suggest that it's a place to begin if you are with a partner where there are some communication challenges (most relationships have them) and your partner is willing.

Some of our current agreements are:

We agree to not run away, emotionally or physically, when things get tough.

We agree to tackle issues as soon as they come up

To speak our truth as soon as we know it

To listen with an open heart

To take our part of the responsibility for creating the communication challenge



## Make conscious agreements with your co-workers

It is possible to use the same concepts of setting intentions and making agreements with business co-workers.

At one time, Susie was a supervisor of several employees. After working with Otto on agreements, she decided to try it at work with her employees.

She used a participatory style of supervising but had a tendency to jump in and "take over" when she thought an employee was not completing a job at the time it was due to be completed.

This was not only stressful for Susie but demoralizing for her employees.

When she talked about this tendency of hers with one employee, they came to an agreement that Susie would not interfere with the current project and the employee would complete the project in a timely manner.

What happened was a miracle. It resulted in less stress for Susie and happier co-workers.

Many of the points we're bringing up in this special report are our agreements with each other and they are applicable for most relationships.

Keep in mind that agreements can be changed or renegotiated if the agreement is no longer working. If one or both of you has a problem keeping an agreement, you can always recommit. But if there's consistent recommitting, it is time to look at the agreement and tackle whether both of you can honestly agree to it or not.

## 2. Expect differences and embrace them

One of the biggest challenges to great communication, whether it's in your personal life or work experience, is the often unconscious belief that "everyone is just like me."

We often attract people-- co-workers, friends and intimate partners--who have traits and strengths that are opposite and complementary to ours. In the beginning, those qualities may be charming and attractive but they often end up being really irritating to us. Believe it or not, even though we realize that people are different, we still unconsciously believe that others work the way we work, want what we want and think like we think.

The two of us are business partners as well as married, life partners and opposites in many ways. Otto is a divergent, out-of-the-box thinker and Susie has great organizational skills and knows how to focus in on a project and carry it to completion. In the first years of our business, we found ourselves being critical of each other's way of working on projects even though we knew intellectually that we each brought great complementary skills.

Being partners in business was difficult, until we learned to expect differences and embrace them. We've come to recognize and value these differences to be places of growth for each of us. Otto expands Susie's thinking and Susie focuses his.

We found that asking the question "What can I learn from you?" instead of "Why aren't you doing it my way?" enriches our relationship, fosters great communication, and moves our business forward in ways that we previously could never have imagined.

Asking "What can I learn from you?" creates a safe, respectful place

between the two of you, whether it's an intimate relationship or one between co-workers.

### 3. Listen to understand

Have you ever found yourself listening to someone but your mind is somewhere else--either on what you are going to say next or on your "To Do" list for the day? As you well know, when this happens, communication usually doesn't go anywhere. It stops and important information is often missed. More importantly, there's no connection or understanding between you and the other person.

Listening to understand means listening with your full attention without becoming defensive. It means focusing on the other person and not on what you are going to say next. It means opening your heart to understand the other person's experience even if we might not agree with it. We've found that listening to understand and to connect creates safety and trust in any relationship.

It is your responsibility to help people to listen to you and for you to listen to them. If there are distractions that are hindering someone either from listening to you or you listening to them, take the time to say that you'd like to find a quiet spot to talk.

Listening to another person is no time for multi-tasking. Set up the situation so that you both can be successful. Ask for the person's help. You don't have any control over how the other person reacts or listens, but it is your responsibility to help people understand you.

Whether it's listening to a co-worker in a meeting, listening to your partner talk about his/her day, listening to your teenager or 6 year old, the "rules" are the same. If you want to create a connection

between the two of you, learn to listen to understand and with an open heart.

In all of those instances, we've found that minimizing distractions when others are talking and taking the time to listen, without offering negative comments or trying to "fix" it for them, goes a long way to creating the kind of relationships that we all long for.

#### 4. Feel your feelings

How can you hope to communicate clearly and from your heart if you don't know what you are feeling? You can't. If you pay attention, emotions are signposts from your inner wisdom, and they can also be scary and overwhelming.

In our society, both men and women are taught in many ways to not feel our feelings and we do all sorts of things to not feel, to keep everything smooth and on an even keel in our lives. There doesn't seem to be the time or the energy to feel or express our feelings and there certainly hasn't been much room for "feelings" in the business world.

Instead of feeling, we may choose to eat when we're not hungry, work long hours, over-exercise, watch TV, or drink alcohol.

We're not saying that working, eating, exercising, watching TV or having a drink are bad in themselves, but we are saying that when we find ourselves "doing" one of them instead of feeling what's happening inside us, we are missing a great opportunity to connect with ourselves.

What's this got to do with communication? If you aren't paying attention to what you are feeling and letting those around you know, how can you hope to have an honest, authentic exchange between the two of you? When you connect with yourself, you are then able to communicate better with other people in your life.

We believe awareness is the first step--become aware of your actions, especially when you are stressed.

Here's what Susie says about chocolate--"I want chocolate when I feel overwhelmed. I've become aware of that overwhelmed feeling and try to stop myself before I automatically reach for a piece of chocolate. I ask myself "Am I hungry for that piece of chocolate or am I feeling overwhelmed?" If my answer is "overwhelmed," I stop what I'm doing and take a short walk, do some yoga or just sit, quiet myself and allow the feelings to come up. If I need to communicate something to Otto or to someone else, I have to feel it and recognize it first in myself before I can speak it."

Become aware of your feelings and begin to learn how to allow them to flow without causing you so much pain. If you do, you'll find that your relationships and life will get so much better!

## 5. Stay in the present moment

We only have the present moment. Communication gets foggy really quickly if you carry what happened in past relationships or what could happen in the future into a current relationship. Staying in the present moment is possibly one of the hardest skills to learn but it's also one of the most important.

How many times have you reacted to someone in a certain way because he/she reminded you, either consciously or unconsciously, of a past situation with another person? How many times have you made fearful stories up in your head about what might happen in a relationship?

Otto has spent many of his working years as a commissioned sales person. He could tell that he wasn't spending his time in the

present moment when he became fearful about the number of sales he was going to make, or about whether other sales people were making more sales than he was making. He would become concerned that the boss may not want to keep him around if his sales numbers fell.

During the times he truly focused on taking the services he offered and trying to help his clients sell more of their products or services as opposed to simply making the "sale," his sales numbers would go up. He was only able to do this when he could stay in the present moment and not wander into the fear of past unsuccessful sales presentations or his future in that job.

The same thing happens when you are in an intimate relationship or in your relationship with your children. It's very tempting to drift into treating your spouse as you did a previous partner or someone from a previous relationship. It's also very tempting to worry that your current relationship will just end up like all the others you have had.

We've found that bringing ourselves into the present moment as soon as we realize that we have "left," helps us to get in touch with what we are feeling and to also communicate those feelings to the people who need to hear them.

The Buddha wrote the following words about the present moment and we think they are wise words to live by:

Don't chase after the past,  
Don't seek the future.  
The past is gone.  
The future hasn't come yet.  
See clearly on the spot  
That object which is now.

## 6. Speak your truth as soon as you know it

When we were first together, one of the first agreements that we made was to speak our truth as soon as we knew it. We had been in relationships where we didn't speak our truth and the two of us decided that we wanted a different kind of relationship. It's not always easy or painless but we believe that you "kill the monster" while it's little, otherwise it definitely comes back come up and out in uglier ways.

Susie learned this lesson the hard way when she was a supervisor at her work. She allowed a situation to go on for several months, without saying what needed to be said to an employee. She didn't want to hurt the employee and she, like many supervisors, hoped that the situation would just "go away" by itself. As the tension mounted in the office, Susie realized that there wasn't any other way to deal with the situation except to speak the truth as she saw it to the employee. She did and the situation gradually improved, as did office morale.

So what's involved in speaking your truth? First of all, knowing what you are feeling and then having the desire and the courage to tell the person in a way they can hear it. One mother and adult daughter we know are just now beginning to tell one another how it was for each of them as the daughter was growing up. There's the desire on both their parts for honesty. They've been doing this dialogue gradually and they're now opening to one another.

If speaking from your truth is a problem for you, we suggest you start with small things and possibly with people who aren't as important to you. Tell your truth about where you want to go to dinner or what TV show you want to watch or that you need 30 minutes of solitude. Speak it in such a way that the other person can hear it.

## 7. Be clear in your communication

Unclear communication creates assumptions that are relationship killers. Have you ever been misunderstood when you thought you were being clear? It's up to you to say what you need to say in such a way that the person can hear, without being defensive or demeaning.

Part of being clear in your communication is knowing what you want from the other person and having the self-confidence to know that you deserve to ask it of the other person.

If you want someone to do a household chore, like take out the garbage, it's helpful to be very clear about what you'd like to have happen and when. Something like—"Would you be willing to take out the garbage today because it's overflowing in the can?" is pretty straightforward and clear.

Being clear in your communication works both ways. If you find yourself guessing what someone else is saying (or not saying) to you, you need to ask a question instead of assuming to know his or her meaning. Clear up the guessing games. Just ask.

## 8. Take responsibility for your part in the communication dance

Do you know how it feels to look at two people dancing beautifully? Together, their bodies flowing in a mutual dynamic of give and take. This is the way communication is meant to be but often it doesn't work out this way.

One reason for this is that people find themselves in relationships where they either take more than their share of responsibility ("Everything's my fault" "If I just could be more understanding or more patient, then...") or people don't take their share ("It's not my fault" "He's always doing this, this and this".)



You can't possibly communicate with someone on a deep level if one or the other is not taking their share or taking too much responsibility for what's happening in the relationship. When challenges come up for us, it usually is because one or both of us is not taking our share of responsibility for the situation or maybe we're taking more than our share.

When we do finally say to one another, "You know, I really was feeling angry with you (or wanting to fix it for you)," it's like a pressure valve has been released and something eases between us. When we finally realize that we have not admitted how we have contributed to the problem, we are on the way to reconnecting once again.

## 9. Let go of judgments, blame and the need to be right

At the bottom of all of judgments, blame and the need to be right is fear: fear that our needs won't be met; fear that we aren't enough. Judgments, blame, and the need to be right all build walls between you and other people.

One of our Relationship Coaching clients had been separated and divorced from his wife of 20 years for the last 5 years. It was an especially contentious divorce and there were extremely hard feelings between the two of them. During most of the 5 years since his divorce, Tom hung onto the feeling that he was taking all the responsibility for the "failure" of their marriage. He hung on to the idea that his ex-wife should share in the "blame."

His ex-wife never did accept any responsibility and the communication between them surrounding their children deteriorated to the point that they had to have a mediator carry written messages between the two of them. Their relationship did not "soften" until Tom stopped living in past hurts, came into the present moment and gave up his need to be right—his need to hear her take her share of the responsibility for the break-up of their marriage.

In our relationship, getting stuck in judgments, blame or the need to be right and feeling disconnected for days is not what we are willing to do anymore. We made a conscious commitment to stop when we're in these spirals, bring ourselves into remembering our agreements to listen, to be best friends, and to take responsibility for the situation.

## 10. Appreciate with your thoughts and actions

Appreciating the people in your life is one good way we know to keep communication flowing. It may sound strange, but it can even work without a word spoken.

One of Susie's jobs was in a city about one hour from our house so she had a two-hour commute each day. During this time, she played audio-tapes or listened to the radio but inevitably, her thoughts would go to what her employees were doing wrong. She would often arrive at work feeling frustrated even before the day began until she realized that she could change her thoughts about her co-workers and that might change some of the dynamics in the office.

As an experiment, on her way to work, she began thinking only the good points of her co-workers--what they did well and what she could appreciate in them. It didn't take very long until communication and cooperation seemed to improve, especially with one co-worker. Appreciating instead of blaming and judging does work!

We suggest not only sincerely appreciating your loved ones and others in your life with kind words and actions but also with loving, kind thoughts. When you do, you will see how your communication begins to be easier and your relationships become what you've always hoped they would be.

What we've discovered about relationships is that the "rules" for creating great relationships don't change regardless of what type of relationship it is.

Whether you want a better intimate relationship or you want to learn to form better relationships in your work or business, we suggest that these ideas in this special report are a good place to start.

The truth is that everything you want out of life involves creating good relationships--relationships that are built on trust, equality, partnership, truth, caring, respect and love (even in business.)

We hope that you have enjoyed this special report.

It's based on our e-book called "Communication Magic." For more info on this book visit <http://www.communication-magic.com> .

Many Blessings

Susie and Otto Collins

<http://www.collinspartners.com>

## About Susie and Otto Collins

We are Relationship and life success coaches, authors, soulmates, and married life partners, who are committed to helping people like you improve your life and your relationships.

For 30 years, Susie has been a student of relationships, spirituality, energy and the life force. Her search for physical, emotional and spiritual healing has led her to the study of Polarity Therapy, cranio-sacral therapy, reflexology, Hatha Yoga, the Enneagram, and much more. Her formal training includes a Bachelor of Science degree in education, a Masters degree in Library Science, and is a Registered Polarity Practitioner with the American Polarity Therapy Association. Susie is a veteran teacher and university librarian with over 30 years experience teaching in the public schools and university classes.

In addition to our work in the area of relationships, Otto has spent over 20 years as a successful salesperson and marketer of a variety of products and services. He operates the Small Business marketing web site at <http://www.SmallBusinessMarketingCenter.com> and offers a free weekly newsletter with tips, ideas and strategies for growing your small business.

Many years ago, as a result of pondering three of life's greatest questions-- Who am I, Why am I here and What's this all about-- Otto turned his life's focus to bear on the practice and study of spirituality, personal growth and relationships.

We passionately believe that life can be lived in a joyful, conscious, loving way and we are committed to helping others to experience the potential of what is possible in their own lives and relationships.

The desire to be loved the way we wanted to be loved took each of us on a journey of discovery of how to create the relationship of our dreams. We believe Spirit put us together for our own personal growth and to shine the

light of hope for others. Our goal is to help others create outstanding lives and passionate, alive, connected relationships.

Since 1999, we have been writing, speaking and helping others discover the strategies for creating outstanding relationships of all kinds.

Our free online weekly relationship newsletter reaches thousands of people all over the world. To start receiving your free relationship newsletter, <http://www.collinspartners.com>

Along with our books and audio tapes, we offer relationship and life coaching to singles and couples in person and by phone. For more information, <http://www.collinspartners.com/relationships/coaching.htm>

Our formal coaching training has been with Drs. Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks of the Hendricks Institute and authors of "Conscious Loving", "Conscious Living", and "[Attracting Genuine Love](#)".

We are co-authors of several books and courses on relationships including, "Creating Relationship Magic", "Should you stay or should you go?" "No More Jealousy," "Creating Relationship Trust," "Communication Magic," and "Attracting Your Perfect Partner."

Find out about more about how to communicate with the people in your life in "Communication Magic" at <http://www.communication-magic.com>

Read More about Creating Relationship Magic at <http://www.creatingrelationshipmagic.com>

Don't leave any relationship before you read Susie and Otto's Book "Should You Stay or Should You Go?" Read more about this book at <http://www.stayorgo.com>

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<http://www.creatingrelationshipmagic.com>

<http://www.CommunicationMagicBook.com>

Personal Growth web site:

<http://www.personalgrowthplanet.com>

Marketing web sites:

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