

## When Communication Leads to: We Need to Talk

### **Presenters**

Malaika Graves, M.D. and Wilfred Graves Jr., Ph.D.

Please visit our website: <https://wilfredgraves.org>.

Additional copies of this handout may be downloaded from <https://wilfredgraves.org/notes>.

### **TOPIC 1 – Pre-Communication Issues**

Marriage refines us. God uses marriage to bring us to a place of maturity. Healthy communication in marriage requires self-reflection. It also requires prayer, humility, surrender, etc. Be conscious of your communication style and that of your partner and remain positive.

### **TOPIC 2 – Choosing the Appropriate Time to Talk and Starting the Conversation**

Choose a time when the two of you are relaxed and ready to talk. Set up a definite time for your discussions, but even then, be flexible and considerate of your spouse. Make sure to deal with tough topics as soon as you can to foster a healthy and harmonious relationship. Two potential conversation starters are i.) Can we set aside some time to talk about something that's been on my mind? Or ii.) I think it's important that we work on this issue together.

### **TOPIC 3 – Being Positive and Finding Common Ground**

Frame the issue as something you can work on together. Building consensus helps both parties feel like they are contributing positively to a solution.

### **TOPIC 4 – Pre-planning and Staying Focused**

Don't try to discuss every problem you have ever had in the relationship. Also, think about the deeper issue(s) behind the conflict. What are some realistic outcomes of your conversation?

### **TOPIC 5 – Listening**

Stay present and really listen to your partner, Practice reflective listening (repeating what your partner is saying). Watch your body language and body posture.

### **TOPIC 6 – Taking Responsibility for Your Part in the Conflict**

Apologize when you have brought up issues to your partner in hurtful ways. Take ownership of your actions and responses.

### **TOPIC 7 – Fighting Fair and Keeping Calm**

Don't accuse your partner: "You always..." or belittle your partner. You must learn to communicate in a mature, kind, and loving way. Take a break from the discussion if necessary.

### **TOPIC 8 – Getting Help from Others**

Help is available through counseling and various professional resources.

### **TOPIC 9 – Lessons Learned from Difficult Conversations**

Difficult conversations enable couples to work toward a common goal.

### **Q & A**