



Communication is a Lifelong Journey

My wife and I have been working our way through the book and accompanying workbook, *Getting the Love You Want*, by Harville Hendrix and his wife, Helen LaKelly Hunt. It isn't happening at lightning speed. Not much does when it comes to getting better at communication. The longer we've been together (now 34-plus years) the more patterns ("ruts") run deep. But, there's hope! And we are seeing a bit of the fruit of our labors.

Hendrix and Hunt share a tool they call Couple's Dialogue. As Lyn and I tackled how to use this tool, I realized that this tool isn't limited to use by couples. So, I'm beginning to use it with clients, and I'm choosing to simply call it Effective Dialogue. And, honestly, who of us could use tools aimed at more effective dialogue? Probably all of us...

Here goes. Effective Dialogue has three parts: Mirroring, Validation and Empathy. Two people are involved. One is the Sender. The other is the Receiver.

The Sender shares a basic thought or feeling. For example, *I worry about what will happen to the company when I'm no longer around.*

The Receiver mirrors that statement. Sometimes the Receiver will re-state what the Sender shared, word-for-word and then ask, *Did I get that right?* Sometimes, the Receiver asks the Sender to simplify their thought/feeling. Sometimes the Receiver paraphrases what they heard. The idea in mirroring is for the Receiver to hear clearly what the Sender stated. Once the Sender feels that the Receiver "got it," they move on to Step Two.

Validation: The Receiver makes a statement like, *That makes sense to me, or I get that.* The Receiver doesn't have to agree with the Sender's statement, he or she simply VALIDATES the statement. The Sender, in steps one and two, needs to be heard and his/her statement valued as a statement. The Sender has made a VALID statement.

Moving on to the third step of empathy, the Receiver "imagines" what it's like to be the Sender, saying something like, *I can only imagine what it must feel like to let go of this business that you "birthed." That must be hard to even consider. I can understand that you would worry about the future of YOUR business.*

NOW, reverse roles.

When Lyn and I have practiced this, it's been amazing to see how we are drawn together rather than being pushed apart.

What might this practice, this tool, mean for your business and for your family?

Give it a try! You'll be glad you did!