

Positive Speaking Skills that Erase Negative Habits

1. I will clearly communicate that I like to talk with my partner.
 - **DISCUSSION HINT:** Mastering this skill isn't about words or telepathy; it's about tangible signals and intentional space... that flash of genuine delight when your eyes meet... your warm radiant smile during shared moments... conscious efforts to spend time together. These are all potent non-verbal declarations of your heart.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" (Maya Angelou). "When your kid [/spouse] walks in the room, does your face light up? That's what they're looking for" (Maya Angelou).
2. I will compliment my partner often.
 - **DISCUSSION HINT:** The more specific a compliment, the more sincere it will appear. While general praise is kind, focusing on particular qualities, actions, or details demonstrates genuine observation and appreciation. Sincerity is key; make sure your compliments reflect your true feelings.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** "I can live for two months on a good compliment" (Mark Twain).
3. I will express disagreement without turning my partner off.
 - **DISCUSSION HINT:** To express disagreement without pressing your partner's buttons, it is often helpful to first discover what you agree on. Then use "I" statements to frame your concerns as your own feelings without placing blame, truly listen to their perspective, and maintain a calm, respectful voice.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** "The secret of negotiation is to harmonize the real interests of the parties concerned" (Francois de Callieres).

4. If I criticize my partner, I will focus on the issue and avoid any sense of superiority.
 - **DISCUSSION HINT:** Remember, the goal is to resolve the problem, not to establish dominance. Address specific behaviors, not character. Frame critiques as preferences or requests, not absolute truths. Maintain a respectful tone that invites collaboration, not defensiveness.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).
5. I will be direct and honest instead of dancing around an issue.
 - **DISCUSSION HINT:** While the desire to avoid conflict is natural, directness solves more problems. Identify your core message. Then, practice stating it clearly and concisely, using “I” statements to express your feelings and needs. Remember, being direct doesn't mean being harsh; it's about being clear and respectful.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** “Love should always make us tell the truth” (Ephesians 4:15 CEV). “Speak the truth, even if your voice shakes” (Unknown).
6. I will not bring up the past when dealing with a present situation.
 - **DISCUSSION HINT:** The present demands your full attention. Any detour into old grievances shifts the focus from problem-solving to blame and retaliation. Ask yourself, “What can I do NOW to resolve this situation?” If past issues need to be dealt with, consider setting aside dedicated time to address them separately.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** “Love does not keep a record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5 CSB).
7. I will ask my partner for feedback to ensure that the message I sent was accurately understood.
 - **DISCUSSION HINT:** When requesting feedback, communicate receptivity with your tone of voice, facial expression and posture.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** “We all need people who will give us feedback. That’s how we improve” (Bill Gates).

8. When negotiating, I will speak in a manner that encourages cooperation.
- **DISCUSSION HINT:** Negotiation is about finding mutually acceptable solutions, not winning at all costs. Instead of “I need” or “you should,” try “we could” or “let's explore.” Ask clarifying questions. Find common ground. Avoid accusatory language. Maintain a calm and respectful tone. Be open to compromise.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** “Your speech should always be gracious and sprinkled with insight so that you may know how to respond to every person” (Colossians 4:6 CEB).
9. I will avoid trigger words and nonverbal cues that will unnecessarily evoke a negative response.
- **DISCUSSION HINT:** Work together to create a discreet “safe word” or signal that can be used (especially for public settings) to indicate when you feel triggered, offended, disrespected, or overwhelmed, before the conversation escalates. When the safe word/signal is used, allow for a pause or change in approach.
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** “The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives” (Tony Robbins). “Let no harmful word come out of your mouth, but only what is beneficial for building others up according to the need, so that it gives grace to those who hear it” (Ephesians 4:29 TLV).
10. I will think about what I am going to say before I speak.
- **DISCUSSION HINT:** Ask yourself these questions: What is the goal of my communication? How might my words affect my partner? Are my intended words clear, respectful, and constructive? Do I fully understand my partner's perspective? Is this the right moment to have this conversation?
 - **MOTIVATION TIP:** “The heart of the righteous considers how to answer” (Proverbs 15:28 NET). “Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another” (Napoleon Hill).

11. I will remain cordial and respectful of my partner even if we disagree over what was said.

- **DISCUSSION HINT:** Pay attention to your tone of voice, words, and body language. Instead of focusing on who is “right” or “wrong,” prioritize finding common ground and expressing your differing views with empathy and understanding. Suggest a break if needed.
- **MOTIVATION TIP:** “A gentle answer turns away wrath. But a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs. 15:1 NASB). “Respect is a two-way street. If you want to get it, you've got to give it” (R.G. Risch). “The art of disagreeing without being disagreeable” (Mahatma Gandhi).

12. I will share freely with my partner, trusting that what I share will be kept confidential.

- **DISCUSSION HINT:** Opening up isn’t always easy, especially with past trust concerns. Start small, observe their reactions, and address any trust breaches calmly. Building trust takes time. Communicate your fears, and work together to create a safe space for vulnerability. True connection requires mutual trust.
- **MOTIVATION TIP:** “Vulnerability is not weakness. It's our most accurate measure of courage” (Brené Brown). “Trust is the fruit of a relationship in which you know you are loved” (William P. Young). “To share your weakness is to make yourself vulnerable; to make yourself vulnerable is to show your strength” (Criss Jami).