

Use Cues to Improve Relationships

Borrowing an idea from a stage or television crew may help improve relationships. Listening for cues and picking up on the clues they offer can help couples—or anyone else, for that matter—nurture their relationships. Missing such cues can result in missed opportunities that can distance spouses, friends or co-workers. Here's an example:

Cue: A spouse casually mentions that he or she looks forward to attending a home show to look for ideas about remodeling the kitchen. The remark is a surprise to his or her spouse, who hadn't thought of the remodeling project.

Picking up on the cue, the spouse calmly responds: "Oh, really, I hadn't realized that you were thinking about remodeling the kitchen. What would you like to do?"

Such a cue, part of a natural day-to-day dialog about weekend plans, offers an opportunity to discuss what is on the spouse's mind, even if the other does not totally agree. Taking a cue can be pleasing to a spouse and also helps establish priorities in a relationship. Here's another example:

Cue: A spouse mentions a news story about a celebrity and new movie. Picking up on the

cue, his or her spouse suggests checking movie schedules and arranging childcare so the couple can attend. The thoughtful gesture will likely get the couple's date off to a pleasant start.

Using cues to enhance your relationships is a learned skill. Here's some how-to's:

- Be attentive.
- Take time to listen.
- Watch for facial expressions and body language—they can be clues, too.
- Speak calmly—don't raise your voice or yell. Either can damage communication.
- Be respectful to your spouse, family and others.
- Make thoughtful gestures, such as "please," and "thank-you," an everyday habit.
- Can't remain calm after a cue that you don't like? Step back and ask for time to think about what you are hearing. Do set a time to talk about the topic, though, rather than letting it simmer to the boiling point.

Nancy B. Peterson
K-State Research & Extension
Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS
nancyp@ksu.edu website: <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu>

Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Ph.D., CFLE
School of Family Studies and Human Services
K-State Research & Extension
Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS
colsen@ksu.edu or 785-532-5773

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Gary Pierzynski, Interim Director.