

**Growing Strong Families  
Prague, Czech Republic, May 2004  
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**Communication: The Heart of Family Life**

Purpose of session

To make known the truth that communication  
is the key  
to the experience of mature intimacy in families.

The ability to express love is foundational to all other forms of communication.

- Why is it so important to express love to other family members?
  - Physically healthy for the one doing the expressing. It is unhealthy to keep emotions “bottled up”.
  - Physically, repression one’s emotions can lead to ulcers and other ailments.
  - Psychologically, holding in emotions can result in “losing touch with one’s entire being”.
    - Living in two worlds-inner and outer. Coulda’s, shoulda’s, and ought’s control!
  - To affirm the persons we love!
    - We need to HEAR it! “I love You”.
  - Expressing love is important to the development of our relationship. It is through communication that our relationship is maintained and enhanced.
    - Need to be “two way”. No excused allowed!!!

Studies have shown that babies that do not receive expressions of love in infancy will be unable to receive or give expressions of love during their entire lifetime. “*The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*”, Balswick & Balswick, p. 243, Baker, 1999.

There are obstacles to family members expressing love to one another.

- The fear of expressing love can be in part a symptom of low self-esteem.
  - They believe they have little love to give and what they do have is not very valuable.
- Expressing love may have the potential of embarrassing the giver.
  - “We don’t talk about such things. (Intimacy scares me!)
  - We all know we love each other so there is no use stating the obvious! (Emotions are to be controlled not displayed!)
- Developing such intimacy takes time! (and may demand emotional effort that I can’t or don’t want to give!)
- Some people are not in touch enough with their own feelings to express love to others. (Males have a much harder time than females expressing love/emotions/feelings in general)

Children are often socialized into gender specific forms of expression (or non-expression) of love by family modeling and prevailing social norms.

Studies suggest that boys and girls come to have different capacities for expressiveness because of their parents’ role modeling and expectations  
Article: Sex-of-child Differences in Father-child Interaction at One Year of Age. Snow, Jacklin and Maccoby *Child Development* 54: 227-32 1983)

- This perpetuates the problem.

## **Expression of Love between Parent and Child**

The emotional bond between child and parent is the most important factor in the development of a child!

Children who are denied a strong emotional bond with their mother and/or father must go through life compensating for this lack.

## **Expressions of love in Marriage**

Research has shown that the greater the expression of positive feelings between a husband and wife, the better adjusted the marriage.

A marriage in which both partners disclose little is just as well adjusted as a marriage in which both partners disclose much.

The key is similar levels of expressiveness not the amount!