

# Restoration Attempts In Marriage

Healthy communication patterns within a marriage relationship are vital. Despite learning effective communication skills and strategies, we all miscommunicate at times. Instances occur where we misspeak, come on too strong, or do not communicate a clear message. At other times, we do not listen well or are not emotionally attune to our spouse. How we handle these communication missteps is very important. Healthy and satisfying relationships are not made up of “perfect” people, but rather healthy marriages are comprised of individuals who know what to do when mistakes are made. Managing this reality is key in a marriage relationship.

## Restoration Attempts

Restoration attempts can come in the form of particular behaviors or comments with the intentional purpose of keeping negativity from escalating out of control. All couples unfortunately say mean things at times, are too critical, get defensive, withdraw from each other, raise their voice tone, or use blaming statements. These communication missteps, if not addressed, can lead to marital connection rupturing and additional relational damage. Furthermore, negative emotions are stirred up which can lead to additional negativity. Consider *Proverbs 15:18* “*A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*”

A restoration attempt is not necessarily about fixing something that is broken. Relationally it is more about getting back on track. It is exiting the conversation before it escalates out of hand or language or behaviors become detrimental to the relationship. It is “putting on the brakes.” Consider an example: If you were interested in learning how to snow ski, one of the first and most critical skills you would need to learn is the “snow plow”. This skill involves forming a “V” with your skis in front of you. It allows you the ability to slow down when going down the mountain side or you could easily slide out of control. The snow plow skill seeks to prevent disaster, injury and give an individual a sense of control. Restoration attempts in communication are like a relational snow plow.

Restoration attempts are not just about exiting the conversation, but can also be about turning emotionally toward your spouse. This may consist of sharing affection, humor, validation, or taking responsibility. The essential message of communication through these types of restoration attempts is “you are important to me” or “we will get through this.” Such vital messages lead to a decrease in defensiveness, escalation, and an increase in emotional connection. Whether the restoration attempt is about slowing down, stopping the conversation, or building emotional closeness, it is beneficial to understand what went wrong. How did we get off track? It moves a couple out of the details and into how each communicates with the other.

## Using Restoration Attempts in my Relationship

All of us have been in conversations that veered off the track. The key to restoration attempts is recognizing early when escalations can occur and making attempts often. *Proverbs 17:14* reminds us “*The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.*” It seems the longer we stay in unhealthy communication the more likely a cascade of escalating emotions will occur. Consider also this passage - *James 3:5-6* “*Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.*” When the tongue gains momentum in an unhealthy direction, we do well to heed the early warning signs as it is difficult to turn around before there is damage. Restoration attempts will likely be ineffective when the conversation has already escalated out of control.

# Restoration Attempts In Marriage

## Specific Examples

We will consider a myriad of specific restoration attempt examples. The language for these examples could be split into four different categories as shown below:

### Calm Down / Braking

- Just try to listen to me right now.
- I need our communication to be calmer right now.
- Can we switch topics for a while?
- Can we take a short break?
- I am starting to feel overwhelmed.
- Please be gentler with me.
- Let's start all over again.
- We are veering off track.

### Disclose Emotion

- I feel blamed. Would you rephrase that?
- I feel defensive. Would you rephrase that?
- I don't feel understood right now.
- That felt like an offensive remark.

### Share Affection

- This is OUR problem, not your problem.
- One thing I appreciate about you is...
- I understand.
- I see your perspective.
- Thank you for...
- I realize this isn't your fault.
- That's a great point.
- I love you.

### Offer Remorse

- Let me start over in a softer manner.
- Could I have a do over?
- I want to be gentler to you right now and I don't know how.
- I really blew that one, sorry.

Reviewing these lists and becoming familiar with a few examples or phrases is ideal for the next communication misstep. Begin a restoration attempt by incorporating this new language after poor communication with your spouse. This process may feel phony or artificial at first. With time, you will not need to formalize the process as your spouse will understand what you are trying to do. The receiver of the restoration attempt needs to accept the attempt. Start by focusing on hearing each other's restoration attempts. Learn to recognize such attempts and find out what works well for you as an individual couple.

# Restoration Attempts In Marriage

## Factors that Influence Restoration Attempts

Making and receiving repair attempts is essential to the health of your marriage connection. Engaging this process does require a level of self-control. Consider *Proverbs 25:28* “*He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*” Lack of self-control leads to us being vulnerable and with no protection against Satan’s attacks. Lack of self-control could lead us to seek a “restoration attempt” with a wrong motive or lead to the inability to accept our spouse’s attempt at restoring healthy communication.

Secondly, friendship is vital for good restoration attempts to work well. You cannot disconnect the emotional climate in a relationship from the ability to accept and see restoration attempts. A couple that has a high level of friendship tends not to be clouded by negativity or negative thoughts towards their spouse and their ability to manage conflict. Conversely, where there are low levels of friendship in marriage negative stories about the spouse or relationship can damage and destroy.

## Conclusion

As with any new skill, begin using restoration attempts in simple and small ways. Brainstorm a few ways to integrate this practical but challenging concept into your relationship. Analyze where your marital relationship is currently at...are you ready to try a restoration attempt today? Do you need to focus on building friendship and a positive environment in your marriage first before restoration attempts have a chance of succeeding? One thing is for sure, as you find small ways to incorporate this concept into your relationship, you will reap the benefit of increased trust and intimacy and live out *Ephesians 4:31-32* “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*”

Some material adapted from Repair Attempts, John Gottman. Published in the Silver Lining 4-2019 by Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services ([www.accounseling.org](http://www.accounseling.org)). Can be freely copied and redistributed. Not to be sold.