

**Part 1**  
Cracking the Code  
to a **Deeper Connection**



**coupletalk**<sup>®</sup>

cracking the code  
to an amazing relationship

Don and Alex Flecky

Universal Version  
for All Couples

A Video Version of Dr. Bernard Guerney's  
Relationship Enhancement<sup>®</sup> Program



CoupleTalk - Cracking the Code to an Amazing Relationship  
Part 1: Cracking the Code to a Deeper Connection  
Universal Version for All Couples

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Find us on the web at [CoupleTalk.com](http://CoupleTalk.com)



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# Personal Welcome



Making a connection with someone is a great feeling. You and your partner probably experienced this when you first got to know each other. We did too! When we first met over 35 years ago, we talked about everything. Back then, our communication was *all about connection!*

Fast forward to a few years after we married: the kids had come along, work was stressful, and the house was in disrepair. Communication between us wasn't so much about "connection" as "function":

*"Did you feed the dog?"*

*"I'm out of clean underwear. When's the laundry going to be done?"*

*"Hey, we forgot that today's our turn to do the kids' carpool!"*

Feeding animals, having clean laundry and carpool duty may all be necessary, but "functional" communication is not enough to make a satisfying relationship. We've been there ourselves, stuck in that routine. But we didn't stay there, and you don't have to either. We learned how to communicate differently, and as a result we rediscovered each other in a deeper, more intimate way. And that is our goal for you.

In ***Part 1: Cracking the Code to a Deeper Connection***, you'll get beyond the dog-feeding, dirty underwear, carpool-duty kind of talk. You'll find new ways to listen and express yourself. You'll rediscover each other at a more meaningful level and learn ways to keep your relationship growing for the long haul - and have some fun along the way!

We are grateful that we've learned these skills, and it's our hope that as a result of CoupleTalk, you'll be drawn closer to each other. We look forward to sharing this time with you!

*Don + Alex*





**Session 1**  
Trading Places

**Part 1**  
Cracking the Code  
to a **Deeper Connection**



Notes to Self

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# Session 1

## Trading Places

It's a wonderful feeling to be understood by another person. They get you. They accept you. They appreciate you at the deepest level.

Have you ever really felt completely understood by someone? What was that like? How did that affect your relationship with them?

Being fully understood by someone and then showing understanding to them doesn't just happen. It takes time, energy, a little skill, and a willingness to trade places.



## Video Notes

### Intro to Session 1

#### CoupleTalk...

1. ...teaches practical communication \_\_\_\_\_,  
(*Two video illustrations: "Without Skills" and "With Skills"*)  
and requires \_\_\_\_\_.
2. ...is backed by \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ...is based on Core Values:



What I want and what my partner wants is not as important as what our marriage needs.

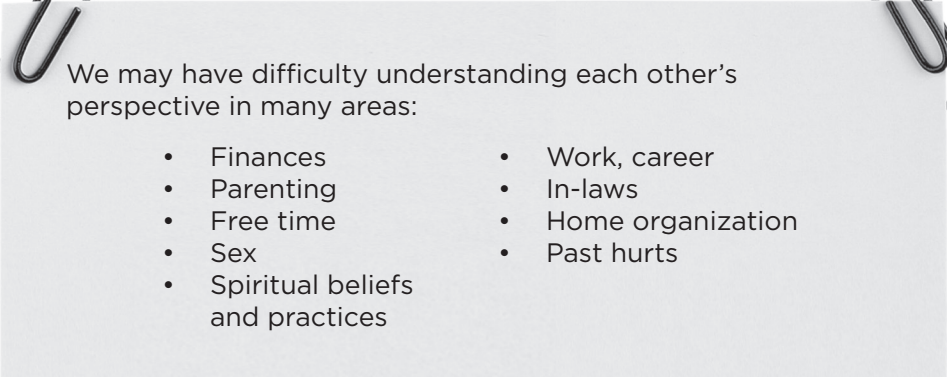
## Perspectives

Have you ever wished your partner could “look over your shoulder” to see your “world” the way you do?

## Empathy

### Definition

Putting yourself in another person’s shoes—or heart—and \_\_\_\_\_ with the other person so much that you momentarily take on his or her T\_\_\_\_\_, F\_\_\_\_\_, C\_\_\_\_\_, and D\_\_\_\_\_.



We may have difficulty understanding each other’s perspective in many areas:

- Finances
- Parenting
- Free time
- Sex
- Spiritual beliefs and practices
- Work, career
- In-laws
- Home organization
- Past hurts





## Exercise

### Childhood Memory

**Purpose:** To experience empathy by “trading places” with your partner.

**Directions:** Think of a specific event that happened in your childhood. It can be pleasant or unpleasant, but it should be an event that has **emotion** and **meaning** for you.

#### Childhood Events

- Loss of a pet
- A move
- A new school
- A holiday experience
- Rejection by the opposite sex
- Death of a loved one
- A special gift or award
- Parents divorce
- A sports experience
- Rejection by friends
- A church or club experience
- Getting lost
- Losing something

**Choose** which partner will begin telling their story first.


**Partner 1:** Tell your story of this childhood event to your partner.

- Briefly describe what happened (the event).
- Then focus on telling about the feelings you experienced.
- It may be helpful to use the prompt: “When that happened, I felt...”



### Common Feeling Words

Happy (overjoyed, glad)  
 Sad (disappointed, upset)  
 Angry (frustrated, furious)  
 Afraid (scared, concerned)



- After your partner retells your story, gently give your partner any corrections or additions, letting your partner retell the new part.

**Partner 2:** Listen, then trade places (switch chairs) and retell your partner's story.

- Begin: "As (partner's name) when I was (age) I remember..." and then retell the story, **as if you were your partner.**
- If your partner corrects you, changes or adds to his/her story, retell that part again in the new way.
- Be open to corrections. Your partner is helping you know them better!

**When finished,** repeat the entire exercise with the other partner's Childhood Memory.



### Finished early? Didn't finish?

**If you both finish before time is up,** tell another Childhood Memory.

**If you don't finish before time is up,** plan to finish later.

- We need to finish **my** "Childhood Memory."
- We need to finish **my partner's** "Childhood Memory."



## Quick Debrief

### Childhood Memory: *How was that for you?*

What was your experience with the Childhood Memory exercise? Below are common responses we've heard over the years from participants. Remember, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers!

Check all that are true for you:

When I listened and retold *my partner's* story...

- it was hard work.
- I wished I could ask questions or comment.
- I felt closer to my partner.
- it felt awkward and silly.
- my mind wandered.
- it felt like I was having the experience.
- I wanted to hear more stories!
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

When I told *my* story...

- it felt awkward.
- I was frustrated my partner didn't quite get it "right."
- I loved telling my story!
- I felt the pain again.
- saying my feelings was hard.
- I saw a connection to my adult life.
- I didn't like revisiting that painful time.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: A "Quick Debrief" follows most CoupleTalk exercises.

First, **individually** reflect and respond in your workbook. Then, as a **group**, watch couples' responses on the video. Finally, as a **couple**, privately discuss your responses.





## Video Notes

### Cracking the Code to a Deeper Connection

#### Summary: Trading Places...

1. ...means “becoming” your partner, and understanding them from the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. ...helps you set yourself aside momentarily so you can \_\_\_\_\_ your spouse.

#### Cracking the Code in Everyday Life

Respond with Empathy in Everyday Life

Take time to notice what your partner is feeling. How would they like you to respond? Here are some ideas:

**When you notice that your partner is feeling...**

**...you can \_\_\_\_\_ them!**

happy or loving

Stop what you planned to do and spend time together.

overwhelmed

Ask what you can do to help.

worried or sad

Stay close by. Sometimes just being near is all they need.

a need for some space

Back off a little. Be patient.



## Exercise

### Partner Appreciations

**Purpose:** To express positives to your partner. To listen to — and internalize — the positives you hear from your partner.

#### Directions:

**Partner 1:** Express an appreciation to your partner.

- It doesn't matter if it's for something small, as long as it matters to you.
- Begin: "I appreciate that you..."

**I appreciate that you...**

#### Topics

- A quality you admire
- Helped you out in some way
- Something they do for you or others
- Made extra effort for you
- Something from the past that you remember with appreciation

**Partner 2:** Summarize back what you heard.

- Begin: "You appreciate that I..."

**When finished,** switch roles and repeat.

**You appreciate that I...**



**Finished early? Didn't finish?**

If you both finish before time is up, tell each other another appreciation!

If you don't finish before time is up, plan to finish this as soon as possible. You both need to say — and hear — appreciations as much as possible!

- We didn't finish but will finish soon!



**Quick Debrief**

**Partner Appreciations: *How was that for you?***

One-word answers are okay, but a sentence or two might be more helpful to understand each of your experiences with this exercise.

Answer the following:

1. What was it like to hear that positive thing said about you?

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2. How did it feel to summarize your partner's compliment - out loud?

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3. How was it for you to tell your partner an appreciation?

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**Making It Real**

Invest 5 to 15 minutes daily to build healthy habits and grow your relationship!

*Making It Real - After Session 1, on pages 85 - 90, can be done on your own, with your partner, or in a group.*

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

*Encouragement requires empathy and seeing the world from your spouse's perspective. We must first learn what is important to our spouse. Only then can we give encouragement. With verbal encouragement, we are trying to communicate, "I know. I care. I am with you. How can I help?"*

— Dr. Gary Chapman  
The Five Love Languages