

SURVIVING LIFE DRAMAS

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Transcript

Part 8 of 12

Surviving Miscommunication



changing minds, changing lives

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Surviving Life Dramas: Surviving Miscommunication
Part 8 of 12

Dr. Mike Gosling:

Hello, I'm Doctor Mike Gosling and on behalf of the entire team at Gosling International and the Emotional Wealth Academy, I'd like to welcome you to today's seminar. How many of you have come here today to learn about surviving miscommunication? Great, because that's what today's topic is all about – how to communicate well with your partners and your family and how to manage your needs for love. How to give and receive love.

Our speaker today is uniquely qualified to speak on the topic, having counselled thousands of people for more than thirty years on how to manage miscommunication. Expert counsellor and Gosling Counselling Director, Mrs Karen Gosling.

Karen Gosling:

Welcome to today's seminar on surviving miscommunication. In our last seminar, we spoke about perhaps the most common form of relationship problem, which is the communication differences and the communication difficulties that exist between men and women. The second most common cause of relationship difficulties is to do with unmet expectations.

But first of all, we have to think about what an expectation is. An expectation isn't something that you necessarily think about. It can be. It can be that you expect something to happen and you're conscious of it, but very often, an expectation in a relationship sense is something that

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you think is just normal. Or something that you think "this is the way it should be", or "this is of course what is going to happen because it's been like this all of my life." That's actually what an expectation is.

And so, when you have an expectation, or the way you think something is going to be and it doesn't happen like that, it actually is the same thing as an unmet expectation. We humans, when we have an unmet expectation, we end up having a negative emotion. In the previous seminars, you will know that a negative emotion is a stress response. The brain somehow is interpreting that something is wrong. Something is threatening. A Stress response.

And so, if my expectation is not met and I then have a negative emotion, I would actually attribute that bad feeling to the person that I think has not met my expectation. So, how it works is, you don't meet my expectation, I have a bad feeling, I perceive that you have caused me to have this bad feeling, I don't like this feeling and because you've caused it, I get mad at you and I feel justified in getting mad at you because you've not looked after my feelings.

So, fast forward all of that, speed that up and it sounds something like this. Husband is punctual, wife isn't punctual. When wife is running late, husband goes, "Why are you always late?" Wife feels attacked. And wife says, "I'm not always late. And anyway, the traffic was really heavy." You've always got a reason and suddenly, you've escalated into an argument. And the argument is actually about unmet expectations and about one blaming the other one for them having a bad feeling.

If you think of a situation where wife blames husband – for all you men out there, let's think about that. How often do you get blamed? Wife blames husband for all her bad feelings. She might be feeling lonely, she might be feeling neglected, she might be feeling unsupported. These are all her feelings. You don't even necessarily know about it because you're thinking about other things. But the wife, being the one who is the more verbal – the one who will communicate her feelings – will want to tell you about her feelings.

Because, in the context of a loving relationship, she will then presume that once you know about her bad feelings, you will probably try and do something about it and you'll try and help her to feel better. But, she will tell you that she is not happy about something – maybe it's about your punctuality, maybe it's about not coming home in time to be with the children, maybe it's about leaving your socks on the floor, whatever it is – she will tell you in the hope that you will change.

However, what happens is that the moment she tells you, she will change her expectation and she believes that you will do something different. And if you don't, she will get mad again. Now, the human reaction – the emotion that we experience for unmet expectation – if it's what I call low-intensity – not particularly important in your life - we will feel disappointed.

For example, you might expect to get a birthday card from your mother on your birthday and you don't. You might be disappointed. But on another level of intensity, the next level, you'll be more than disappointed. At the next level you will be irritated. Think of the feeling when you book a taxi for seven o'clock and the taxi doesn't arrive on time. You're not disappointed,

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you're irritated. And in a third, more intense level, you become resentful. So if you have an expectation that isn't met, you will become resentful.

So, the way that it cycles is that you start off feeling disappointed, then you tell your partner, you think it's going to get better, if it doesn't get better you end up being irritated. So if I'm irritated with you, with husband, I will speak to you in a snippy voice or I'll make sarcastic comments or I'll show my irritation to you, and you're meant to be able to read that to change your behaviour accordingly. But unfortunately, what happens is you don't like me being irritated and cross at you and you may not change your behaviour and then I become resentful and so this cycle goes on.

So, couples before they realise it, are having resentments between one another because of unmet expectations. They start to distance because they are each blaming the other one for the bad feeling. They don't actually know why they're feeling so distant. Remember I said in one other seminar about a woman who talks about her feelings, it will often be interpreted as a complaint? Well this is particularly so when wife is telling husband about her expectations. He will not just hear it as a complaint, he will hear it as attack. He'll hear it as an attack on him and he will see it a nagging.

And of course this means that his expectation is also not being met, because a husband will expect that a wife will be forever adoring and grateful and sweet and tender like when he first met her. And so when she becomes this person that criticises and nags and says, "You should be doing that and you're not doing that," his expectation isn't met and he also starts to get resentful and distant. And each one in the relationship can become confused by this.

It may also be that the husband gets defiant because if his wife is nagging all the time, or criticising, or blaming, she will still be talking about her feelings, but he takes it as blame, attack. It is very easy for him to go, "You can't tell me what to do. Stop trying to control me." He may just say that in his head – if he's learned to keep quiet. And then he will back off and shut down. And then the wife will come and talk and nag even more because he's being unresponsive and a nag will always go after an unresponsive face or an unresponsive person to try and get a reaction from him. She won't let it lie.

So, he will become defiant or rebellious and absolutely refuse to do it and that really doesn't meet her expectation. Even about the little things around home. So for example, if the wife says, "I think you should spend a bit more time with the children." That's actually a suggestion. He hears it as a complaint, he gets defiant, she gets upset and the relationship starts to become more difficult.

So, again in a counselling situation, husband and wife come on a series of sessions. The wife was much more verbal in the counselling session, as so often they are. Husband feels attacked and blamed and sits quietly in the chair. But, it was very good in the third session where the husband said he would say some of his resentments. And one thing that came up was that he said he felt his wife was very rude. She was a bit taken aback and said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Well, you are rude. You never say please and you never teach our children to say please. You're always ordering them around."

Now, what's significant to mention here is that this was across a cultural relationship. The husband was English speaking and the woman was from Europe and spoke English extremely

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well even though it was her second language. So, her husband was talking about her being rude, and she was asking for some examples. He said to her, "For example, when we're at the table with the kids, you always say, 'Pass the salt,' or, 'Give me the butter,' or, 'Get me a drink.'" I believe that we should be saying, "Please can you get me that," and teaching our children some manners. That's one of the reasons why I don't agree with your parenting."

Wife was really confused as to what he was talking about and she protested and she said, "I do teach our children manners and I do say please and thank you."

So he talked about some of the times they had been at the table and she heard him describe what she said. And she said, "Do you know what? You're right. I do say that. Get me the salt. Get me the drink. Why is that, because in my head I'm saying, "Please". And what she realised was that in her language, the word 'please' wasn't actually verbalised. It was a tone, it was an intonation that changed in the way the sentence was said which inferred "please". When she translated that to English, this was omitted because the tone wasn't there.

So for her, it was a realisation that it was not coming across as please, and that in fact the children weren't hearing manners and for the husband, it was a complete eye-opener that what he had been assuming was her rudeness and lack of manners was just his expectation not being met and he had been very resentful about that and very unhappy about that, and never explained to her what his expectation was. That particular problem got ironed out very quickly.

A wife is usually the one who is very aware of the family dynamics because of her female brain and because of her hormonal – the hormones being affected on the brain, because of her nurturing ability, she will be constantly keeping track of how the relationships are in the family. Not just hers and her husband's, but between the children, between the children and the dad, and she will calculate whether or not the children have had enough time with dad. So, if dad is absent at work, or perhaps he's away travelling, she will perceive that the children are missing out on dad time and she will then try and structure time between him and the children when he gets home.

So, it's quite common for a wife, the moment the dad gets home – because there's only a few hours, very little time in which this relationship can develop – that she will ask the father to take over. And many men have said to me that they resent that. They say they're away working, they work hard, they come home and they're expected to do child care. And if he protests and says, "No, I'm not going to because I'm too tired." Then she gets upset by that because for her, it's not about him doing the task. For her, it's about him bonding with the children and enhancing their relationship.

Now, in an environment where there are family situations with paid help at home – perhaps a nanny – and the husband is paying for that, he believes he is now exempt from needing to help with child care because he's paying for that extra pair of hands to help with the evening routine, for example, The bathing, dressing. And so he again becomes resentful when the wife expects him to be involved none-the-less. Again, it's because husband may have an expectation that it's to do with just the practical task of, and the wife thinks that him being

involved in the tasks is to do with relationship enhancement and spending dad time and with the children feeling nurtured by that interaction.

This is a pretty good example of where expectations are not being met, because expectations are not even talked about. Everybody just assumes that the other one is on the same wavelength. So, it's important to talk about expectations and it is important to discuss the other one's expectations.

Socialising is another area of relationship problem, where one wants to socialise a different amount than the other one. Now, this could be because of, just simply personality differences. For example, somebody who is an extrovert likes socialising, so they want to go out with friends often, or have friends over, or go and visit the family – the mum, cousin, sister – frequently. But the other partner may just need time to calm down at home alone. Because the person who is more introvert can socialise well, but it drains them. They might even enjoy socialising, but they actually need to recharge at home alone.

And so if you've got one of each, there will be expectations that are not met. If a wife is a full-time mum for example, she may well look forward all week to having the opportunity to socialise on a Friday night or a Saturday night with her husband and with friends. You may in fact be the social calendar and organise the activities. Husband on that Friday night may well say, "I don't want to come."

And it's not so much that she has to go alone, because she might be perfectly capable of going alone to visit her mum or going out with friends, but that wasn't her expectation. She had an

expectation that husband would spend time with her and would want to spend time with her. And if that expectation is not spelled out and there isn't some compromise, then it's easy for both the husband and the wife to think, "This isn't the person that I married." That starts to alter your impression or your perspective of this partner that you've got.

There was a time when a husband and a wife came to sort some problems about him coming home for a meal. So, again a counselling situation – it was only ever one visit. This husband and wife came, they were expatriates, living here in Singapore, and they had one child who was eighteen months.

Their ongoing argument was the father coming home in time to have an evening meal with this little family, with wife and child, and his difficulty at getting home in time. Time and time again, he would attempt to get home to try and keep his wife happy because she always spoke about the importance of this. And he couldn't ever get out of the office on time. So, by the time he got home, often the child had been fed and was put to bed.

So, this ongoing problem. They came for this counselling session about it and I spoke to them both about expectations. That's really how we opened up the whole topic of meal-times. Now, these two were both English speaking, but had grown up in different countries. One had grown up in Australia, one had grown up in Canada. Their two life-styles were very different.

What the wife remembered was this. Wife had grown up in a family where there were four children, her dad was always home for an evening meal. He would come home and have a lovely family time together. Mum would always be the one to get up and clear the table and

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wash the dishes, while dad stayed at the table and helped all the children different ages, with homework. And she had a memory of wonderful family time. Of dad being there helping with homework, talking, discussing, she had a very strong memory of the importance of the dad in her growing up years. And she just thought that when she had a family of her own, the same thing would happen.

Now, when the husband spoke about his growing up years, he also spoke about a very warm and loving family. He was one of seven children in a very cold climate. Dad would be working two jobs to maintain this family with seven children, the children ranged in ages from eighteen down to about three. And he said the kids were coming and going with all these different activities and he had memory of coming in from the outside and cold and shaking off the coat and the snow. And there was always a huge pot of warm food on the stove that mum would have going. And as the kids came in from all these different areas, different times, she would serve them a big plate of stew, or a big casserole. And they would take this warm food and go and sit with whoever was around at the time and watch TV by the fire while they ate their meal. He also had memories of a loving, warm family. But their meal times were very different. Dad was never present in his home because dad was out earning money, working two jobs to keep his family going.

So in this session, the couple spoke about what they believed was normal and how they thought things should be. It started to become very obvious to all of us that they had different experiences growing up and therefore, each had gathered a different expectation about how things were going to be when they had their own family. So, I asked, "How was it before you had a child?"

"No problem." They would often go out to eat, or they would cook together, or they would bring something in and they would eat together by the television. No problem. Spending time together.

Then when the child was born and the child was just tiny, again no problem. They often had TV teas and sitting and chatting together while they ate their meal. But, all of a sudden, the child was old enough to sit in a high chair and that was the turning point. The wife realised that the moment this child could sit in a high chair and could sit at a table, her expectation changed. Now what came in was her belief that the dad should be present and the dad should have an input for this child's development. And she realised of course, as she was talking, that this was not necessary for an eighteen month old child, and that she was placing far too many demands on her husband to be home when it was not even dark yet – living in this different country.

So she said to him, "Of course, I can see now why I want you to be home. But this is unrealistic and your work is busy. But I would really appreciate if you could try and be home for a meal just one night a week." And he gave her a hug and he said, "How about I try two?"

That leads me to the next session of this seminar, which is about the different ways in which people feel loved. That wife that I just described, was obviously feeling a little bit neglected and feeling as though her husband wasn't involved with the child care. And when he made an effort to come home for a meal, she felt loved and she felt looked after. And so it is in our relationships that we don't often feel loved and we don't often feel cared about, which means

our expectations aren't being met. But we also have to realise how we feel loved. We actually all feel loved in different ways.

There are five or six different ways, all different, in which a person feels loved and I describe it as having an emotional fuel tank. If inside of us we have an emotional fuel tank and it runs dry, we don't necessarily all go to the same service station, the same gas station to fill up with gas. We might have a preference. So the way we feel loved, we have a preference as well. And so, what I'm going to describe to you are the five most common ways in which a person feels loved and see if you can work out what ways you like. And then I'm going to tell you the importance of understanding these different ways. We call these 'Love Languages'. And the expression comes from a wonderful book called, *The Five Love Languages*, by Dr. Gary Chapman.

The first love language is gifts – there's no particular order. I just call it the first. And there are some people who feel the most loved when they receive a gift from their partner. It's the reason why Tiffany's exists. There are some partners who feel very loved and very cherished when they receive an expensive gift. It might be a solitaire diamond or beautiful perfume or the set of golf clubs – this isn't gender specific. And some will say the gift doesn't even have to be expensive – it's the thought that counts.

Then there are a group of people who need words of affirmation. If you are a words person, your ears play a particularly important part in how you receive love. If you are a 'words of affirmation' person, you like to be affirmed verbally by your partner. You like to be told, "Hey,

that's a nice top," or, "You're looking nice tonight." "Who's my handsome boy now?" It's a comment about appearance.

Or it might be that you like to receive comments about your skills. I know that my husband Mike always feels a bit chuffed when people comment on his fantastic cooking. He is a good cook. He's writing a cookery book and he's got recipes on the web site. So, if somebody says, "Hey Mike, just love that chilli crab. Who needs to go to a restaurant when we can eat at Mike's Asia Pacific kitchen?" Then he feels really terrific.

Or it could be about your abilities. If you're a words husband, you might feel really boosted when your wife says, "Thank you for taking care of us," or, "You're an amazing provider." Or, if you're a words wife, you might like, "Hey, you're a terrific mum, thanks for what you're doing with the kids."

Now, words people, because the ears play such an important part, are particularly sensitive to tone and to criticism. If words of affirmation sounds like love, feels like love, then words of criticism feels like rejection. And so these people are particularly wounded when there is criticism.

There's another group of people that we call 'acts people.' Acts of service. Now, if you're an acts person, the way you feel the most loved is if your partner does something for you. It's an act of consideration. It might be something really small like feeling loved and looked after if you are a husband and your wife uses the car and she brings it back topped up with gas. Or if you are an acts wife, you may feel loved if your husband gets up to the child who is crying

during the night, or you may feel loved if he says, "How about I take the kids out in the morning and you can have a sleep in and just spend some time by yourself."

It's not just your partner doing something for you without being asked. Perhaps you can ask for something to be done. And if it's done happily, if it's done cheerily, if it's done and you only ask once, then you will still feel loved. If the acts husband says, "Can you drive me to work this morning so I don't have to catch the bus?"

She says, "Yeah, no problem." Then that's terrific. Or if the husband says, "Can you pick up those pictures from the picture framers because I want to get them on the wall before our friends come on the weekend?" And she happily does that. No problem.

But the husband who asks for something to be done and doesn't do it and doesn't do it and doesn't do it, builds up a resentment because he actually is feeling not loved.

Then there's another group of people who need physical touch. This is to do with the frequency of skin contact. These are the people who like to hold hands, or to receive a back massage, or to give you a hug. Physical people like to be cuddled when they're falling off to sleep or when they're watching a movie, or they link legs in bed. But if you're not a physical person, you don't necessarily feel unloved if those things are missing. If you're a physical person and those touches are missing, you start to feel insecure. It doesn't necessarily mean sex, because this doesn't necessarily involve husbands and wives. This can also be related to parents and children – but it's the physical contact.

I have a son. Even now at the age of eighteen, loves the physical contact. He'll come and lean his elbow on my shoulder, or he'll come and punch his brother on the arm, he just loves that physical contact as a way of feeling connected. And when he's away from home, as he is sometimes, working, he misses that and greets us all with a big hug when he gets off the plane.

And then there is time. The fifth love language is time and there are two different types of time. Some people need to spend time together in communication – talking. Particularly women. And it doesn't have to be a lot of time. It might be those ten minutes that you talk after you turn off the television at night, or it might be the fifteen minutes that you talk on a Saturday morning over breakfast, where you catch up, you know what's going on in each other's lives. You feel connected, there's a reconnect. You feel at one with the other person because you know what's going on in their life, you know what they think, you know what they feel, you know their mood. That's the communication.

Then there's another group of people who don't necessarily have to do a lot of talking. They simply like time together. And these are the people who enjoy just being in each other's company. They may do gardening together or they like to go to look at furniture together, or they may like to go to the museum together, or even go to the movies together. Not necessarily have a lot of discussion, but just spending time. These are the people who often have their computers or their work spaces at home in the same office – because they just like being together in the same space.

Now, as you're listening to this, it might well be that you have worked out what is the most important to you. We all like a bit of everything, we all appreciate a bit of everything, but

most of us find that one or two of these things jump out as the things that we need the most. And what we need the most is generally the way we show love.

So, for example, if I was a gifts person and indeed felt loved by receiving a gift, I would show my love to you by giving you a gift. That would be the natural way that I would express my love to you. But, if you're not a gifts person, then my expression of love falls on deaf ears.

And so, typically what happens in a relationship is that we express our love to our partner in the way that we like to receive it. But, if it's not the way that your partner likes to receive it, then your expression of love is falling on deaf ears. And this is the reason why, many times I hear one partner say, "But I really love her." And she says, "Well, I don't feel very loved." It's like they've got it wrong. And husbands and wives and parents and kids need to actually know what each other's love language is. And it makes life a whole lot easier because it means that you can actually not spend a whole lot of time doing everything else.

For example, I am a person who likes to communicate and I'm a words person. This is me, the X. So, if you know that, you really don't need to buy me gifts. All you really have to do is speak to me and tell me some things that you're happy about, or things that you appreciate about our relationship or about our friendship. I had a girlfriend in the early years of my marriage who would frequently send me 'thank you' notes after we had invited her to our place for a meal, or if I went to her place and took a gift, I would get a thank you note. That comes in the context of gifts. I don't need thank you notes. And yet, that's the way some people are brought up. But I don't need them because I don't know what to do with them. I would rather

she ring me and say, "That was a great night we had last night at your place. Thanks for a good evening." And that's really all I would need.

So, when we recognise how our partner needs to be loved and needs to be valued, we can bypass, short-circuit all the things that aren't important and go straight in. What is interesting also with love languages is that if we have, let's say wife who needs words and gifts and a husband who needs acts and physical, this does not mean that the relationship is incompatible – because this isn't about compatibility. This is about simply knowing.

So wife, by doing acts and giving her husband lots of hugs, he would then feel loved and would automatically respond to her in the way that she likes to feel loved. If we serve our partner first, if we give to our partner what they want, then we get back in abundance because they feel loved and fulfilled and want to, in the context of a loving relationship, give back to us.

What I have found is when I have husbands and wives who like the same thing – and recently this became very evident where both husband and wife liked words and husband and wife liked physical contact. When things were good, they were very, very good because what each of them needed, they very readily gave to one another when they were connected. And they felt very connected because it wasn't hard, they didn't have to step out of their comfort zone and do anything particularly different. It was very natural for them to give what the other wanted. And they felt like they had a very soul-mate type relationship.

But my goodness, when things went bad, they were very, very bad because when you are at odds with your partner, when you feel disconnected, when you feel cross, when you feel blame, when you feel resentful, the thing you are not likely to do is to show love in the way that you would normally show it. So, you withhold. And if you are each withholding exactly what your partner wants, it gets bad very quickly. And so couples who feel very disconnected are very often experiencing a great deal of hostility from their partner, simply because of the fact that their partner is not expressing love in the way that they need.

So, by knowing about love languages, by knowing about how to give and receive love, we can very rapidly turn a relationship around. Somebody has to do it, has to do something different first. Because if one says, I will love you in the way you want to be loved, what you get back is relationship. What is so commonly the case is that because women communicate more, because women are more articulate, they are more verbal, it is frequent that the woman will say, "I want you to do this and this. I'm not happy with this and this. Please can you do this and this." And the husband feels that he's the one who is wrong and he's the one who has to respond to her.

But, if the husband was more articulate, if males could speak about their needs, they would also be saying the same thing. Husbands would also be saying, "Can you please hug me some more so that I feel loved. Can you stop nagging me and criticising me so that I feel more loved? Can you do things when I ask and make me feel like a priority?"

I spoke before of picture frames because it reminded me of a time when a husband was so frustrated because his wife wouldn't pick up the picture frames from the framers. He had

wanted these pictures to go up on the wall when his parents came to visit. His parents had come, they'd had their holiday, they'd gone again and the pictures were still at the framers. And so on this occasion at the counselling session, the husband said, "I asked you and I asked you."

And she said, "Well you could have picked them up yourself."

He was an 'acts of service' man and he said, "I know I could have picked them up myself, but really I was testing you. I just wanted to see how long it would take you to do this one small thing that I asked."

And she said, "Well, I thought about it often enough."

He said, "Thinking about it doesn't do it."

She said, "Well I tried on a few occasions. On one occasion, I couldn't park the car close to the framers and I knew they were too heavy to carry back to the car. And on another occasion, it was raining and I didn't want to carry the pictures in the rain back to the car. Then there was another occasion when I actually parked quite close and I could have got them but the kids were in the back seat and they were screaming and they were hungry and they were tired, and I actually had to decide what my priority was – picking up your pictures or looking after the kids – and I chose the kids."

And he said, "Precisely my point. It's always something else or somebody else that's got priority. It's never me."

And that was the first time that the wife actually took on board that he was an acts husband and that he felt not loved because she hadn't picked up the pictures from the framers. And if she had known that, how easy it would have been to resolve that particular resentment.

When I talk to people about this, sometimes it's at a social setting. This is quite non-threatening to talk about it at a dinner-party for example, and to have a chat about it. Because sometimes, people don't even know what they themselves need. And so it could be that you have not even thought for yourself, "What do I need the most to feel loved?" And if you don't know what you need to feel loved and to feel secure, then how on earth could your partner know? So, it's something that all of us have to consider. "What do I need?" – and then actually let your partner know about that and let your kids know about that, so that so that people who love you can express their love to you in a way that is meaningful to you.

I have a mother-in-law who is very much a gifts person, but it took me more than twenty years to work that out. She's a wonderful lady – has always lived apart from where my family is. And she has frequently sent cards and photographs and money and little inspirational sayings and letters – she's done that to me and to my children and to my husband for all the years I've been married. And you know what I would do? I would ring her up and I'd say, "Thank you." Because I'm a words person.

And it took me years to discover that that didn't leave her feeling loved because she was a gifts person and I was saying, "Thank you," to her for her gift - which I appreciated, but it didn't necessarily make me feel loved. Often her words and her letters did and her inspirational sayings did, but I would pick up the phone and I would say, "Thank you for sending me the photographs." But what made her feel more loved was when I finally realised this and I started taking a bit of effort to send her photographs and letters. Because she's an older lady and she doesn't have e-mail and she wasn't feeling very loved by me just picking up the phone. There was no point in me sending her money, because she sent me money. And so, she felt the most

loved, as a woman in her eighties, when I sent gifts to her. And once I realised that, I didn't have to do all the other things.

I have a son who likes Time together. He's only in his teens. He certainly doesn't like the communication, but he'll often say, "Will you come and watch a movie in my room?" – just because he likes the company of someone in his room. Or if I'm doing a crossword, "Why don't you come and do your crossword here? Why don't you come and do your sewing in my room?"

And sometimes it seems daft for me to be going doing my sewing jobs, sitting in my teenage son's bedroom. We're not even talking. But he just loves the time together. So, we're loved in different ways.

Questioner:

It would appear to me that the most difficult one is the act of service.

Karen Gosling:

Tell me some more. Why are you thinking that's a difficult one?

Questioner:

Because I think for men, I think it's easy to buy gifts, but the act of service, we can have a lot of difficulties because of time constraint or we might get it wrong, so we're afraid of doing the act of service.

Karen Gosling:

It's actually quite okay to have this sort of discussion with your partner, because if she's not an 'acts of service' person, you don't necessarily have to spend much time doing acts of service. If she doesn't need you to cook a meal or make the breakfast for her, then you don't need to bother. That's a relief.

But, if she is an 'acts of service' wife, you might like to take it in turns to get up on a Sunday morning to look after the children, so that she can have a chance to have a lie-in. Or you might say, once a month, "I'll take the kids for the afternoon while you go and pamper yourself or go and spend the afternoon with your girlfriends or go and have a manicure done." You taking the children for some hours is actually an act of service.

You might say to her, "Would you like me to do the cooking at the weekend? Shall I cook the dinner-party this time? Do you want me to drive you to work?" It only needs to be little, little things and if she's an 'acts of service' person, the tiniest thing can actually make her feel very loved because it seems like you have considered her. It's about feeling considered.

Questioner:

Actually, I have it much easier – my wife is British and making a cup of tea and bringing it up to her is always good enough!.

Karen Gosling:

It is an act of service. Making a cup of tea. As long as you find out how she likes to have her toast. There was the time that finally the husband and wife were divorced and they were in the court room. And the judge was saying to the wife, "So, why did you file for divorce? Your husband tells me that he has always looked after you and always done things for you and always brought you breakfast in bed. Every morning for forty years."

And she said, "Yes, he has. And every morning he'd bring me toast and jam. But, he never asked me how I liked my toast. And every morning it was burnt."

So, if we put together the information that we know about love languages and establishing what is it that your partner needs to feel the most loved, so that you can actually – even if it's move out of comfort zone. And what I mean by that is, maybe you're not a person who will very easily say things. You may not be a person who is very verbal. You may not be a person who finds it very easy to say, "Hey, you look nice." Or, "Thank you for doing that." But if that is what your partner wants, you have to move out of your comfort zone to do that. You have to be mindful. It's thinking about – mindful of what your partner wants.

So, if you do that and know that women as a general rule, like to communicate and like to talk about their feelings, one of the greatest gifts that a man can give to his wife is to say, "Would you like to talk? Is there any thing you're troubled about? Is there anything that annoys you?" And then give them the gift of time to actually let them off-load. That is free – it's just a bit of time.

And I can give to you just a couple more examples of how expectations and wrong communication can cause so much resentment. I think about a time when I knew a wife who was in hospital having just given birth to second child. She had made it very clear to husband that she wanted husband to be there and to stay with her during the delivery and for the twenty four hours afterwards. Because when the first baby was born, that had not happened and she had felt very disappointed. And there had been a little bit of miscommunication that she rectified now during the second pregnancy. And he was very clear and he did a wonderful job at being present during the birth – that was a gift of time and it wasn't something that he was necessarily keen on doing but it meant a lot to her. And according to her request, he stayed at the hospital over night and spent the whole of the next day with her. So, she was feeling very loved and very fulfilled and was very pleased with herself that she had communicated her needs to him and that he had fulfilled them.

On the second day after the birth, the guys from his work, as a celebratory time, had organised a golf game and said to him, "Come on. Let's go and play golf and have a few drinks afterwards to celebrate the birth." And he hesitated and he was trying to think whether his wife would agree to that or not. But he told me, "I thought to myself, I've done what she asked me but I think I'd better go and ask."

So he went to her in the hospital and said, "The guys are organising a golf game and they've said that I should go and have a few beers afterwards. What do you think?" I'll leave you to imagine what she thought. But she said, "You decide." So he did, he decided. He went and played golf for the day and had a few beers afterwards. And when she later on explained that

she was so resentful, he said, "I don't understand. I came to you and I asked you and you didn't say no. And so I thought it was okay."

And she said, "No, no, no. It wasn't okay. I don't expect to have to tell you what to do. I thought that after everything we went through and all the things I've been saying to you about the importance of you being here at this particular time, that you would forgo your golf game. I didn't want to have to nag and tell you what to do."

But, he got it wrong and that was a resentment that she hung onto for a while. But he also was resentful because, as he said to her, "I asked you. If you didn't want me to go, please can you be clear and say, "No I really don't want you to go, would you please stay here with me at the hospital." And I would have been very happy to do that. Please don't be so indirect. I need you to tell me facts and not expect me to understand feelings."

Questioner:

Just going back to that. Exactly, men really need clear directions. I've had that problem many times.

Karen Gosling:

Yes, and women can be very indirect. Sometimes, indirect speech of women just drives men crazy. How many ways can a woman say, "Fine." Because a husband will say, "Are you okay with that?"

And she'll go, "Yeah, that's fine." And it's not fine at all. But because men don't pick up the nuances of tone as readily as women do, they don't get it. And that's not a put down to men. It's to try to get women to try to understand that men actually do need some clear instruction. Because women expect you, or think that you will pick up those nuances. Those emotional tones – and you don't necessarily.

It can also be that while a woman is talking to you, that she, because of her verbal agility and her ability to think and talk at the same time and to listen and talk at the same time, it's very common that she will talk about another topic and that you have absolutely no idea what's going on. And I can read from this book. Alan and Barbara Pease are a married couple who actually write a lot of books about the differences between men and women. Their first book was about why men don't listen and women can't read maps. And their second book is about why men lie and women cry. There's a lot of hilarious differences but I'll just read this one story here about indirect speech.

This gentleman writes, "My wife has elevated indirect speech to an art form. Yesterday for example, she was pottering around in the kitchen and she said, "At the staff meeting today, my supervisor said, 'Don't eat the salami.'"

"What!" I exclaimed. "What did she say about salami?"

"No, not her. You," she replied in an exasperated tone. "I don't want you to eat the salami. I'm saving it."

I stood there with that dumb look on my face, trying to locate the transcript of our conversation in that dusty filing cabinet in my head, while she casually picked up where she had left off, telling me what her supervisor had actually said.

She does this constantly. I have to insert bookmarks into the stream of words so that I can identify which thread of the conversation she's currently severing. She can keep four or five different thought lines going simultaneously with casual ease, while I struggle to keep up. Her girlfriends all seem to follow it, but it gives my two sons and me brain damage. How can such an intelligent woman be so scatterbrained when she talks?"

And that about sums it up. Women and their ability to communicate and men just shake their heads and say, "I don't understand women."

Questioner:

My own experience was that I will go to the kitchen and make a cup of tea for myself, and then I go to the computer and switch it on and start work. She comes back and says, "Why didn't you make a cup of tea for me too?"

And I said, "Well, you didn't tell me."

Karen Gosling:

And how does that leave you feeling when she says, "Why didn't you make one for me?" You feel, "Oh of course."

Questioner:

How should I know that she wanted a drink?

Karen Gosling:

And a wife would say, "But you should know. You should just automatically know..."

Questioner:

That's exactly the response which comes back.

Karen Gosling:

You should know. That's right. And of course, why? Because a wife in the same situation, if she makes herself a cup of tea, because of this different brain that will empathise, will also think, "Oh, I wonder if he would like a cup of tea." And it's either, "Let me go and ask him," or, "I'll make him one anyway and then I'll be doing an act of service."

Questioner:

Yeah, but it still kind of leads to the experience that even if she makes a cup of tea, she comes over and gives me a cup of tea."

Karen Gosling:

Whether you want it or not.

Questioner:

But I want a beer. So of course, when I'm having a beer, I don't want a cup of tea.

Karen Gosling:

Right. And because a woman is tuned in to relational things, she would feel, from her own perspective, that if she made a cup of tea for herself, that you would think that that was selfish. And she doesn't want you to think that that is selfish, so she would rather make you a cup of tea even if you don't want it so that you would think well of her. Because it may well be that in her upbringing, the expectation always was that you consider the other person and you make them a cup of tea. So, she brings that expectation into the relationship.

Or she may have come from a family where her mother or her father got cross with her if she didn't make them a cup of tea. Or maybe she was the oldest child in the family that always had to look after the younger brothers and sisters and she had to make them a cup of tea. And this is where expectations and your previous life experience actually gets brought into your marriage and you just do what you think is normal.

Questioner:

I mean my way of doing that is also from my personal experiences that once I grew up, I told my mother, "Don't do these things for me. I'm grown up now. I want to do things for myself." Because I got irritated when she always would do something for me.

Questioner:

Can I add this? Some of the women may be also thinking of the husband as a child. It's domineering. As parents, they do extra for the children and they think the husbands should also follow suit. To me, the act of service is love, to me it is the other way. It's like domineering, it's showing control. She is telling the husband, "I give you the food and you want to drink when I tell you to drink."

Karen Gosling:

That is also a very interesting perspective because if you have a wife that is doing those things and you don't need her to do it or you don't want her to do it. The chances are, you are not an 'acts of service' person and you don't in any way feel loved when she does things for you. On the contrary, you actually feel smothered.

But, she may be an 'acts of service' person. First of all, she's female and has the tendency to nurture. So, she nurtures the children and of course she nurtures also husband because that is her way of showing love. But, it may well be that she is an 'acts of service' wife, so she shows

love to you by doing something for you. You are not an 'acts of service' man. You absolutely don't need that. But if you've never clarified that expectation...

Questioner:

I do and she still does it. That's why I'm thinking that it is done on purpose and that it is more a command and control.

Karen Gosling:

So, then you feel irritated about it?

Questioner:

I will accept it, but I don't appreciate it.

Karen Gosling:

You don't appreciate it because if you have already told her about it, then you have changed your expectation and now you would expect her to respect your wish and not to do it. So now, again you have an unmet expectation and now you feel irritated by it. Absolutely right. So, how to move forward? Maybe you need to say, "Darling I don't want to criticise you and I know you're trying to help me and I know you're trying to show your love to me by doing this, but I really don't need it. I really would prefer you not to do it."

And she will possibly be even offended. But then somehow you can try to explain to her that she is filling her own need. She's not filling yours.

Questioner:

The women are not stupid. They are very intelligent. But if they feel they are in the power, but occasionally the man will allow that but not all the time.

Karen Gosling:

My suggestion is that it's actually not a woman trying to show power, it's a woman trying to be in relationship with you and she's probably doing it in the wrong way.

Questioner:

You might have a cultural factor there, at face value, which is much more prevalent in Asian society than Western society. Whatever she learned from her parents, she possibly copies.

Karen Gosling:

She copies because that has become her norm, that has become her expectation. Thank you.

Dr. Mike Gosling:

Thank you Karen for an excellent explanation on surviving miscommunication and teaching us how to meet our needs for love. The next topic in the *Surviving Life Dramas* series is *Surviving Your Depression*. In this seminar, Karen will help you understand depression and talk about the myths of medication.

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I'm Doctor Mike Gosling for the Emotional Wealth Academy.