

Speaking My Mind

By: Dr. Bob Huizenga

Stating Powerfully What's on your Mind

Take a couple minutes to reflect on or write out your responses to these questions. To what degree do you believe your words hold "power" and are heard by your spouse?

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| Very Much So | | | | | Very Little |
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What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of letting your spouse or partner know what's on your mind?

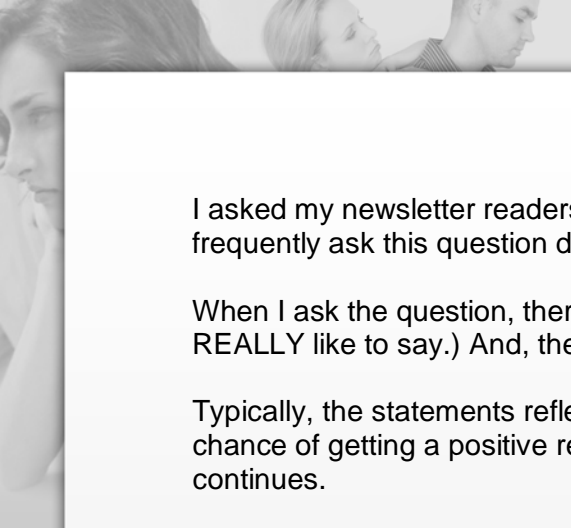
What type of feeling do you get when you think of letting your spouse or partner know what's on your mind?

What does it mean to let your spouse or partner know what's on your mind?

What is your level of comfort when you think of letting your partner or spouse known what's on your mind?

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|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Comfortable | | | | | Uncomfortable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Let Your Spouse/Partner Know what's on Your Mind



I asked my newsletter readers what they would really like to say to their spouse/partner. I also frequently ask this question during coaching sessions.

When I ask the question, there is usually a long pause (most never think about what they would REALLY like to say.) And, then the statements usually come forth.

Typically, the statements reflect ways of thinking and approaching the other that stand little chance of getting a positive response. The cycle of negativity and reactivity predictably continues.

(Sidebar: Please know I'm not being critical or harsh in judgment of such statements. The reality is none of us have been taught effective ways to communicate or interact in ways that are productive and life-giving. It is incredible that we spend tens of thousands of dollars on educating ourselves and our children in arenas OTHER than learning how to communicate and get along with others. Doesn't it stand to reason that learning how to get along with others is CRITICAL in any endeavor in which we try to succeed, marriage and intimacy being one?)

Below are the statements that I culled from a survey when I asked, "What do you REALLY want to say to your spouse/partner?"

The bold is my reframing of the first statement in ways that stand a better chance of succeeding. Please know my reframe is a guess, albeit an educated and experienced guess, considering I know very little of the situations, other than the statements.

Read over the statements and my response.

Notice the changes I make in the statements. I attempt to "get at" the underlying or core dynamics and state those in way that expresses one's personal power, yet refrains from inciting negativity or reactivity.

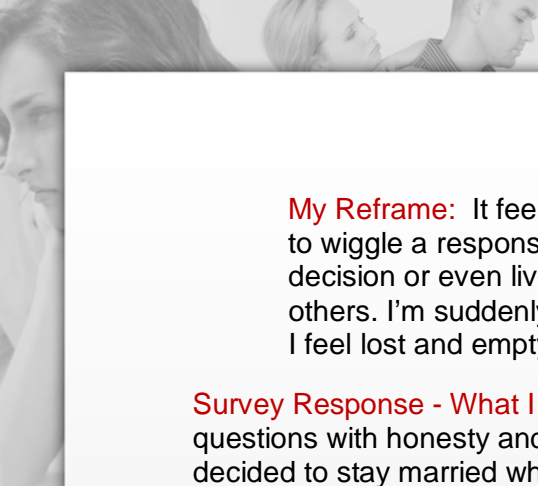
These concepts will be clearer as we move along with new exercises and practice.

Readiness to Engage Your Spouse or Partner

Survey Response – What I REALLY want to say: I would really like to say: Why didn't you respect me enough to be completely honest about yourself and your situation? Why is it so hard for you to go beyond admitting you did something wrong to the point where we figure out why you did those things? Why is it so hard for you to completely cut off other women? What is really going on with you?

My Reframe: I am so angry right now. I feel foolish. I feel like my world has been turned upside down, without warning. I need my pain and hurt to be acknowledged and affirmed, because I'm having a difficult time with that. It's also slowly dawning on me that this is not my problem. I thought I knew you, but I obviously was wrong. I'm not sure what I'm going to do with this. I would like to know you – I think – but am not sure that's possible. I long to be heard and healed, but I'm not sure that can happen with you

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: I have been "saying" through written word most everything I want to, I would like to receive feedback from her and engagement.



My Reframe: It feels like I've said everything. I've used all my ideas, words and phrases to wiggle a response out of you. I'm afraid I have a terribly difficult time making a decision or even living life without basing what I do or how I respond on input from others. I'm suddenly becoming aware that I'm so terribly needy at this point. On my own I feel lost and empty. I don't like that about me.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: I love you but I need you to answer my questions with honesty and help me to better move past the hurt of being lied. Why did you decided to stay married when you were so gun ho about a divorce, this is more confusing than anything. Sometimes I really hate you for doing this.

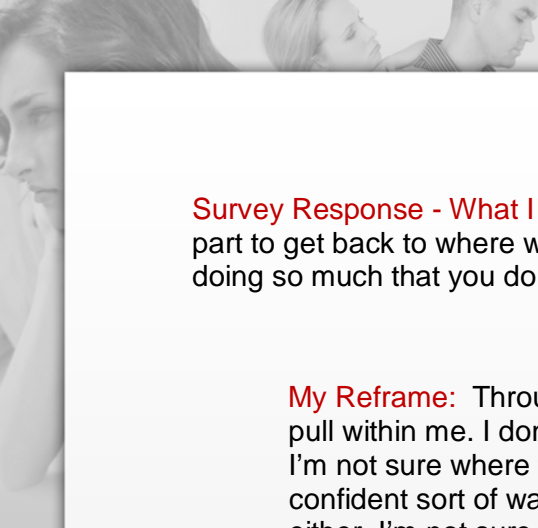
My Reframe: I hate being in this feeling of limbo. I find myself waiting and waiting for you to declare yourself, and it doesn't happen. Perhaps it never will. I want to be with a person who is decisive and has integrity. A part of me wishes that were you, but that doesn't seem likely. I remember with fondness our friendship which felt very natural. I miss that.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: I am sorry that my passiveness hurt you, that you suffered more than I could realize; I will not be able to change from one day to the next, but knowing of the affair was a brutal wake-up call, and I am learning, not knowing whether I will ever "graduate". I cannot control whether you continue the affair or not, that is your decision, but I too felt very hurt when I heard of the affair. I do not wish to leave you but I am aware that a real separation is a possibility. You hope that we can continue a friendly and respectful relationship (be friends), but I can now not know whether I will be able to do that if we do go our own ways. I am afraid that if we do move more apart, to gain distance and breathing space, it will be impossible to grow as a couple and as individuals in our couple, and that will be a missed opportunity for life. You say I had my opportunities and missed them, I say: correct, but this crisis is another opportunity and I do not wish to miss or blow this one.

My Reframe: I have not always been aware of the signals you were giving off regarding your needs. I feel badly about that now, but am going about the process of learning to be more aware of others around me. It appears that our married relationship is coming to an end. If we do divorce, I would like resolution for sake of the children. I fear for your future. It seems to me you are continuing with the other person what you did with me, namely giving men all the power to make you feel good. I wish you well with that. I hope your hurt in the future is not too great. I would think, with your counseling, that you would recognize your pattern of deferring to men. Perhaps not.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: Knock off all the bull shit. Quit attacking my mom and blaming me for that fact that my mother doesn't like you. Quit making out that you're right all the time. You are selfish and when I bring that up, you get angry with me and won't talk about it. Stop spending money on Disneyland when we are broke, stop it! I got pissed off for you giving the boat to your brother when we could have sold it. You keep doing crazy things, please stop it.

My Reframe: I feel terribly helpless with you. You got me! I have no clue how to get my point across in a way that you will hear. I would like us to make decisions together, but that doesn't happen. I wonder what it is about me that puts me in these helpless situations. I would love to find a way to live peacefully yet be able to negotiate.



Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: We created this mess and I'm trying to do my part to get back to where we need to be. I don't see you doing that and it's probably because I'm doing so much that you don't have room to breathe much less think about life without me.

My Reframe: Through all this I'm more and more aware of powerful needs that tug and pull within me. I don't like that about me and intend to make changes. It IS difficult. And, I'm not sure where that will take me. I want to be far more assertive and aggressive in a confident sort of way. I don't want to push others away, but I don't want to be a doormat either. I'm not sure where you fit with this and I don't really want to care.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: I want us to understand how we got here and change how we communicate with each other so that we are never tested like this again. I want to fix us. I don't want to give up on us. I still believe in you. I want to trust you like I did before.

My Reframe: I'm trying to understand what there is about me that puts myself in this situation. I would hope I can find new and fresh ways of relating to those around me, especially you. I do NOT want to go through this again. I value my relationship with you. I can see us growing old together and enjoying each others' company.

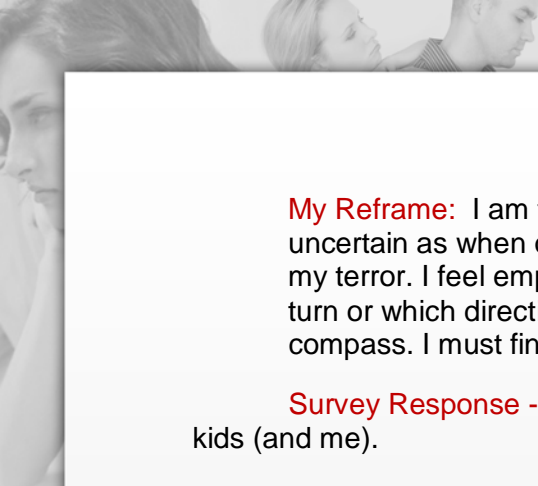
Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: I know what you did over the past 6 months. I know about Hawaii, I know you were planning a future with her and that you told her you love her and want to marry her. I think you are scared not to have me in your life because you fear you will fall apart, that I am the glue that holds you together. I am done with you manipulating me. You want me back, why? Because you love me or you're tired of the double life and you're afraid to be alone?

My Reframe: I know about your relationship with the other person. I don't want any more secrets. I feel drained by the secrets. I hate guessing and wondering. I feel like I've tried too hard to hold everything together. I'm tired. I'm tired of that role I play. I'm not sure where this will take me, but I must do something differently. I want certainty and somehow I'm working toward it.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: I would like to tell him that he needs to take 6 months or so to really invest in intense counseling - insist he deal with his issues or face a divorce.

My Reframe: I am using the next 6 months to evaluate my life; what's important for me, how I want to spend the rest of my years and how I can create a life that I enjoy. Perhaps it will involve you. I'm not sure at this point. And, I guess, at this point, it doesn't matter a great deal to me whether you are there or not. I need to move on...with or without you.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: I am terrified that I don't even know the whole truth about your involvements with other women; I am terrified to let this go. I am afraid you are addicted to cheating and are only "fixing me up" so that you can abuse my trust again. After all, I took you back before and the only thing that showed you was that you could treat me however you wanted and I would accept it and allow you to treat me badly all over again. I am afraid I will continue to hold on to this hurt, anger, and pain, until I drive you away from me with my need to be heard and soothed by you. The way I act sometimes towards you by pursuing you makes me sick. I must find a way to let go of this pain and let go of the need to control the outcome before it eats me alive.



My Reframe: I am terrified and I'm trying to find a way to cope with my terror. I'm uncertain as when or how to trust. Actually trust for me no longer exists. That's part of my terror. I feel empty. I feel like I've lost my inner compass. I'm no longer sure where to turn or which direction to follow. I no longer can afford to allow another person to be my compass. I must find that for myself.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: Get better or get out - stop hurting the kids (and me).

My Reframe: I'm leaving,

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: Let's reestablish our commitment. Let's look at how to make our marriage work for both of us. We need to look at the past only to come to an agreement as to what it was and where it went wrong, why it went wrong and what we need to do to make it better and strengthen it. I need you to understand I want to work with you in creating a strong marriage - but in order to do that you need to join in on that commitment - I need to have self respect and that means that you have to make promises you can keep - you need to clearly make a commitment to me which I can verifiably see and feel confident is really happening. I know this is difficult from your perspective because you want to think I am trying to 'control or manage' you - I understand that is what it feels like - but I can't immediately trust you to do as you say given the promises that have been so clearly broken in the last 2 years. If this isn't appealing to you - or it isn't something you can actually do - you need to (courageously) tell me so I can walk away.

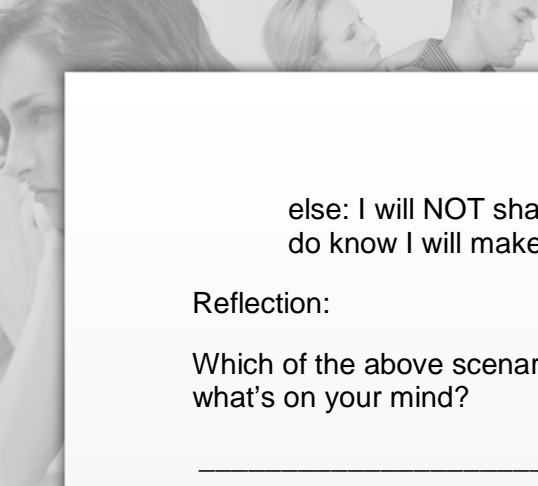
My Reframe: I'm discovering that stability is vitally important for me. I want a stable life. I don't like surprises. I want to be able to count on my world, to know there is structure that will provide order in my life. I need strength. I need to feel strong. And, I hope that my needs here do not become an obstacle to intimacy. I'm not sure when to "let go" and enjoy. There is a tension for me. I feel it now.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: "I love you very much, I know I have made mistakes as well - we always had been best friends and I am sure that we can work through this together"

My Reframe: I feel so naïve. I feel like I've been slammed in the face and I had no idea it was coming or what it was. My world, as I wanted to see it, is collapsing. I'm scared. I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. I just want to hang onto something, maybe the past, and I know I can't do that. Nor, really, am I sure I want to.

Survey Response - What I REALLY want to say: That I'd like to give our marriage and family a genuine chance to succeed or not before throwing in the towel, because I sincerely don't believe we have. I want the affair to end to give us this chance. I feel like I've been reactive to each MLC-fueled, affair crisis but not privy to how we got here. I feel like it's been easier for you to seek out a new partner/distraction than actually risk a disagreement or a fight with me. I don't mind the disagreement. Better to negotiate our grievances than both of us lose the whole war and have our kids hurt as collateral damage.

My Reframe: I haven't realized that I'm such a powerful person. I suppose I come across that way sometimes. My intent, however, is not to push away or intimidate. I need to understand things. I need closure and resolution on loose ends. So, I hope you can find the strength and courage (said with smile) at some point to be an equal with me. I won't hurt you. (smile) But, please know one thing and I mean this more than anything



else: I will NOT share you with another person. I don't know where this will take us, but I do know I will make it – hopefully with you – but I WILL make it.

Reflection:

Which of the above scenarios speaks most powerfully about letting your spouse or partner know what's on your mind?

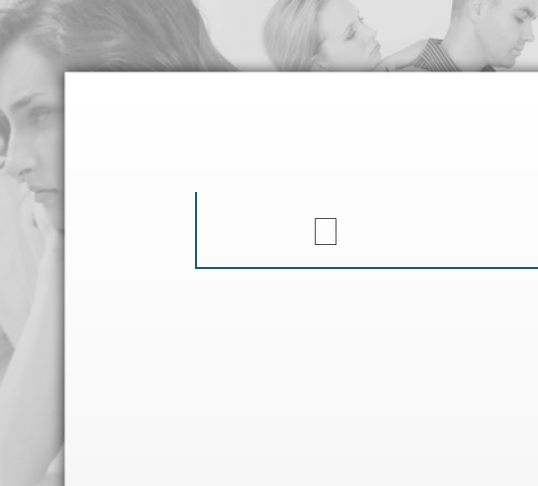
What has this been like for you to read the reframes and think about what you really want to say to your spouse?

In the next step begin to make the mental and behavioral shifts that will place you on a more productive and effective path to marriage and love construction or reconstruction.

The constructive belief may not make full sense to you at this point. However as you proceed through the rebuilding steps you will see and experience the validity and power of each constructive belief.

Take a couple moments to check where you fit presently on these shifts that are important to your success in speaking your voice.

| Destructive Belief | Check what you believe now | Constructive Belief |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| I've said it all and nothing happens. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | | I'm only beginning to explore all that I can say to my spouse. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My spouse won't listen to me. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | | I haven't discovered an effective way to get my spouse to hear and understand me. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I'm afraid s/he will bolt if I say what I really want to say <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | | S/he will respect me if I say accurately what I truly want to say <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I get tongue-tied when I try to say what I truly want to say. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | | I can learn to state powerfully and slowly what I truly want to say. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I get angry and frustrated when I start talking about important issues. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | | I can charge neutral. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I'm afraid we will start arguing if I let him/her know what's on my mind. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | | I can state what's on my mind without attaching or inviting an argument. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |



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| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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If you want to take this a little further:

List other shifts you would like to make:

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Engage yourself means spending some time in the next day or two consciously and intentionally thinking about the above exercise; specifically the distinctions and shifts you desire.

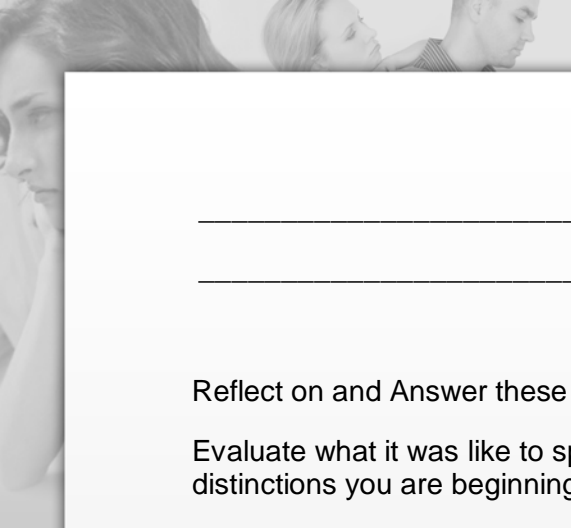
Engaging your spouse means sharing the above exercise in constructive ways.

Choose one shift and give that shift your full attention. What would that shift feel like? What would you be doing as you make that shift? What would that shift bring to you?

Reflect on and Answer these questions:

I/we will be most aware of these new distinctions and/or shifts at this time and place during the next day.

I will use this trigger (mantra: I will do this, word: power, feel good, etc., rubber band around wrist, etc.) to keep me on track.



Reflect on and Answer these Questions:

Evaluate what it was like to spend a day or two focusing on your desired shift and the distinctions you are beginning to make.

Notice any changes you experience in terms of your personal power, feelings and thoughts about yourself.

Remember, you are just beginning. Don't be upset or alarmed if you find it difficult to pinpoint change and shifts.

These questions will help you evaluate your experience:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being as bad as it can get) I now rate my bad feelings as _____.

I notice this new thought coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this new image coming to mind after the engagement.

I notice this feeling _____ located in this part of my body
_____ emerging after the engagement.

I now think this of myself after the engagement.

Review checklist:

| Review | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I was able to identify one or more scenarios that helped me frame what I would truly like to say to my spouse. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I've identified the top 2 constructive beliefs that I want to propel my life and interaction with my spouse. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I can imagine myself making a powerfully constructive statement to my spouse. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I feel empowered when rehearsing what I truly want to say. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I'm beginning to understand the concept of "charging neutral." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It's liberating to know that the more powerfully constructively I take a stand, the greater the chance for lasting intimacy in my marriage. |