

From *The Verbally Abusive Relationship* by Patricia Evans

The appropriate way to use the following is to heighten awareness of your partner's communication and to examine your own communication for evidence of any of the 15 categories below. But it won't improve communication if you point out your partner's failings. Instead, you need to do something to break the cycle that keeps these patterns of communication alive:

1. **Withholding** – Not listening, not sharing, vs. listening to your partner, acknowledging his/her experience, sharing yourself and encouraging each other to share.
2. **Countering** – Stating a different opinion (e.g., "That's not what happened" or "I didn't mean it that way") instead of trying to understand your partner's thoughts and feelings.
3. **Discounting** – Saying things such as "You're too negative" or "You're overreacting" instead of acknowledging your partner's reality.
4. **Verbal abuse disguised as jokes** – i.e., disparaging the partner, even if done with wit and style.
5. **Blocking and diverting** – Refusing to communicate, establishing what can be discussed, switching the topic instead of staying with what your partner is trying to say.
6. **Accusing and blaming** – Focusing on your partner's wrongdoing, breach of agreement or feelings and needs that you think are inappropriate.
7. **Judging and criticizing** – Even if you're trying to be "helpful," this shows a lack of acceptance of your partner as a human being.
8. **Trivializing** – This expresses your opinion that what your partner has done or said or feels is insignificant.
9. **Undermining** – This not only withholds emotional support but erodes confidence and determination.
10. **Threatening** – This manipulates your partner by bringing up his/her fears, thus guaranteeing a defensive reaction.
11. **Name calling** – Even forms of endearment such as "Sweetheart!" can be felt as sarcasm.
12. **Forgetting** – This involves both denial and covert manipulation. Everyone forgets now and then, but the partner who consistently says, "That didn't happen" is being abusive.
13. **Ordering** – This denies the autonomy and authority of your partner, including statements such as "Get rid of this" or "We're doing this now."
14. **Denial** – This is one of the most insidious categories and comes from a self-image (e.g., "I would never willingly hurt you" or "I can't imagine why you would react that way").
15. **Abusive anger** – This includes yelling, snapping at, raging, even glaring at your partner.