

### 3.3 Conversation

Unlike the need for sex, conversation is not an emotional need that can or should be met exclusively in marriage. Our need for conversation can ethically be met by almost anyone. But if it is one of your most important emotional needs, whoever meets it best will deposit so many love units, you may fall in love with that person. So if it's your need, it's crucial to your marital happiness that your spouse is the one who meets it the best and most often.

The need for conversation is not met by simply talking to someone. It is met when the conversation is enjoyable for both persons involved. Good conversation is characterized by the following: (1) using it to inform and investigate each other, (2) focusing attention on topics of mutual interest, (3) balancing the conversation so both have an equal opportunity to talk, and (4) giving each other undivided attention while talking to each other.

Conversation fails to meet this need when (1) demands are made, (2) disrespect is shown, (3) one or both become angry, or (4) when it is used to dwell on mistakes of the past or present. Unless conversation is mutually enjoyable, a couple is better off not talking to each other at all. An unpleasant conversation not only fails to meet the emotional need, but it also makes it less likely that there will be an opportunity to meet the need in the future. That's because we tend to prevent our spouse from meeting our needs if earlier attempts were painful to us.

Men and women don't have too much difficulty talking to each other during courtship. That's a time of information-gathering for both partners. Both are highly motivated to discover each other's likes and dislikes, personal background, current interests and plans for the future. But after marriage, many women find that the man who would spend hours talking to her on the telephone, now seems to have lost all interest in talking to her, and spends his spare time watching television or reading.

If your need for conversation was fulfilled during courtship, you also expect it to be met after marriage. And if you fell in love because your need for conversation was met by your spouse during courtship, you risk falling out of love if that need is not met during marriage.

Do you have a craving just to talk to someone? Do you pick up the telephone just because you feel like talking? If you see conversation as a practical necessity, primarily as a means to an end, you probably don't have much of a need for it. But if you use conversation "just to talk," and enjoy conversation in its own right, and are frustrated when you haven't been able to talk to someone for a while, consider it to be one of your most important emotional needs.