

Editor's Note. The attached is the Powerpoint that Pamela Beck used to support her remarks at the Oct. 9 chapter meeting. The talk was extremely well received. As with any Powerpoint, it is a snapshot of what was presented and given the emotional nature of the subject and Ms. Beck's engaging delivery, interested members may wish to experience the talk as she actually delivered it. You can do so by taking out a DVD copy of the talk from the HLAA-Sarasota Library to view at home in its entirety. This talk is highly recommended as one of the best on the most critical subject of communication strategies for couples. EFO.



It's just not communication,
it's about connection, too!

Pamela Beck

Family Dynamics

It's Not Just About Communication, It's
about Connection, Too!

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Pamela Beck, M.A.

- Most of us already have your own ways to understand and be understood. I'll go over some later, but in the short time we have today, I'd like to suggest some different approaches you might not have considered.
- It's just as, if not more important, to really connect with each other, not just simply communicate.
- **What do I mean by connect?**

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- I'm not talking about the type of connection where you discuss what you're having for dinner. I'm focusing on the **deeper connection that makes you feel loved, understood, respected. The kind that makes you feel closer to your partner and enriches your relationship.**
- Repeating same patterns of behavior over years keeps expectations stagnant. **We get used to expecting and giving the same response without even knowing it.**
- Improved connection can feel difficult, even impossible, to achieve. But I've seen it happen again and again and have experienced it myself. But **how can you start to improve connection with someone you've known for years? It takes awareness: being mindful of what you say and staying aware of your personal communicative exchanges.**

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- **It's not easy.**
- By now, most of you have already established your pattern of communication with your partner.
You probably do/have done the following:
 - **Have visited Dr. to diagnosis hearing loss; selected your hearing assistance approach: aids/implants, if you choose**
 - **Maintain face-to-face contact**
 - **Stand in the best position to hear and be heard**
 - **Stay in the same room when talking**
 - **Told you partner what works best for you to hear/be heard.**
For example, ask partner not to do something else while you're talking, like look at TV.

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- Now let's supplement these with **some new ideas for your toolbox**, to achieve more meaningful connection. Some may seem uncomfortable, but that's the point: they're new and different.
- **Out of the ordinary approaches lead to out of the ordinary responses.**
- Funnily, these new approaches/responses **often resemble those you had in the beginning** of your relationship, but have now forgotten.
- Because this is the HLAS, I'll use this acronym as a reminder of my suggestions:

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HLAS Approach

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- **H is for Humor and Honesty**
- Sometimes a disagreement isn't resolvable. It's the same problem over and over again. Your blood is boiling! What can you do? **Take a breath before immediately snapping.** Turn the situation around for a different result.
- **Humor:**
- One couple I know makes a playful scissor-snipping gesture: A reminder to nip this in the bud. This usually brings a smile and reinforces that they're a **team**; it **rekindles** warmth & connection.
- It's **not about "winning,"** sometimes, it's just **about acceptance of different approaches.**
- **What humorous thing can you do** to stop the escalation into a fight you know will be unwinnable?

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- **H is also for Honesty:**
- - **Use "I" words:** "I feel angry when talk to me from the other room and know I can't hear you. I love you and want us to be closer. I don't want us to keep fighting. Will you work on this with me?"
- **Instead of accusing words:** "You never..." or "You always" or "You're selfish."
- - **Be honest with yourself.** Pay attention to what is & isn't working between you two. **Repeat the behavior for what does work.** Don't repeat the behavior that doesn't work.
- - Have weekly or monthly **short chats** to discuss feelings **away from the actual problem** itself.

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- **L is for Listen**
- Has same letters as SILENT
- Listen without interruption during your chats
- Listen without trying to figure out your answer at the same time
- Listen for what partner is REALLY conveying
- For example, is she, the one with hearing loss, really upset because you talk for her in public? **Or is it perhaps because, she wants you to view her as capable not less able than you?**
- And **Listen to yourself?** How do you communicate?
 - Listen to the tone of your voice. **Are you kind?** Sarcastic? Nasty?
 - Listen to your pattern of communication & recognize it:
- **Maybe things aren't as obvious as they seem:**

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- For example: Does your partner's way of arguing **remind you of the way your parents talked to you, that you hated?**
- Might you be **reacting to that old message rather than** listening and seeing what your partner is saying and doing?
- Perhaps you are **REACTING to a familiar pattern in your** family of origin history, without realizing it and are being unfair to your partner.

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- **A is for Affection**
- When was the last time you held hands? Or touched your partner's head lovingly when walking by? Or given a kiss on the cheek for no reason at all.
- - **One Simple Touch rewires our reactions to our partners.**
- - It makes us **view them differently.**
- - It creates profound connection for giver and receiver.
- - It **can transcend words** and provide meaningful moments without discussion or explanation.
- - It encourages closeness, tenderness and is a reminder you're a special team.
- - **It works to make you closer**, even if your differences can't be resolved.
- Remember to recall **what originally attracted you** to your partner & reminisce with your partner; **recall good times** together

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- **S is for Surprise**
- **When did you last call your partner to just say hello**, not to remind them to go to Home Depot?
- When did you last call to say "I'm thinking about you"?
- When did you last leave a note that wasn't a grocery list but rather said: Have a great day! or "Let's go to the movies tonight."
- Have you considered **starting a new interest together**? It's usually less talking about "issues" and more simply sharing the experience.
- **Surprise breaks patterns of boring or expected or disappointing behavior** for both giver and receiver.
- You see your partners differently, just like what happens with an increase of affection. And you feel different yourself

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- What would happen if you began to view your exchanges with your partner not just as communication to share information, but as **an opportunity to develop a deeper more meaningful connection with each other?**
- Studies support how important to **good health, meaningful connection** with others can be.
- Stick to what you know does work in your relationship and add whatever you're comfortable with from the HLAS approach.
- Communication will never be perfect, but you'll experience less frustration, isolation and anger if you feel more connected.

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- **Being and FEELING more connected is a profound communication in and of itself.** It can:
 - - trump conversation
 - - diffuse tension and disagreements
 - - compensate for what's missing in flawed communication exchanges.

Small changes within each individual **make for huge changes** in the relationship. With Humor, honesty, Listening well, Affection & Surprise you'll communicate better, revive meaningful connection with each other and...it feels great!

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