



## Listening? They won't if you don't...

Maintaining a sustainable relationship comes down to a simple mathematical formula. According to Dr. John Gottman\* stable relationships enjoy a 5:1 ration of positive to negative moments. The balance is disrupted when quarrelling and criticism take the place of listening and respect. When relationships are challenging there's no need to despair, but you do need to take action. Listening first and expressing gratitude will help restore balance, even in difficult circumstances.

### No one likes to be criticised

Complaints are unavoidable and handled well, they develop negotiation skills and strengthen relationships. **Complaints refer to a specific behaviour** or incident and effective complaining requires sticking to the facts and seeks to find a solution. Criticism on the other hand, is a sign that change is needed. **Criticism attacks the person or their character** and leads to a defensive reaction, which doesn't yield solutions.

Imagine this: Annie is speaking to Isabel who forgot to take out the bin. *"You didn't take out the bin. You're hopeless! You never take notice of what I ask."*

At this point Isabel is feeling like she can't do anything right and there's no point trying since she 'never' takes notice. If Annie said, *"I notice the bin wasn't taken out. What happened?"* and listened for Isabel's response before saying, *"I rely on you doing this job and I value your help. If the bin doesn't go out, we end up with maggots in the house and that's yucky to clean up. How can you remind yourself in the future?"*

Now Isabel has been treated with respect and given the opportunity to explain. As a result, she is much more likely to feel like a valued part of the team and take responsibility next time.

### Everyone likes to be heard

Listening is one of the quickest ways to create positive moments. When you combine it with expressing appreciation, you'll show interest and respect, which will encourage others to do the same. It's not always easy, but it does pay off.

\*Gottman, J, 2007, *"Why marriages succeed or fail and how to make yours last"*.

Bare Hands is run by allied health professionals committed to helping women embrace positive change by providing access to practical education. To find out more give us a call, email us or visit [www.barehands.com.au](http://www.barehands.com.au).

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- ✓ It takes 5 positive moments for every negative moment, to keep a relationship stable.
- ✓ LOVE and RESPECT is what everyone wants
- ✓ LISTEN

**"Appreciation is a wonderful thing: it makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well."**

Voltaire (1694-1778)

Encouraging women to develop and enjoy dynamic family relationships is Laurie's special focus. With four children, a clinical practice and as the co-founder of Bare Hands, she understands many of the challenges of modern day families and has spent the last 30 years studying and practising strategies and skills that really make a difference.



Laurie Morrison Co-founder Bare Hands, Mother, B.HSc, Strategic Psychotherapist.

**Bare Hands**  
Practical life strategies for women