

Unlocking Your Communication

TEEN - Tool

Developed by Scott Meacham

The TEEN tool was developed by counselor Scott Meacham and made available here for your review and application. It provides a step-by-step process for you to consider using during times of communication problems; when you or your spouse don't feel heard, or when you are wrestling with negative feelings that, when unresolved, keep you stuck in a cycle of dysfunctional responses and unmet needs. In order for it to work, the tool needs to be understood and used precisely as Scott describes. It requires commitment, patience, and understanding from both parties participating in the process, so using it will require sharing the tool with your spouse. When used properly, we trust that your relationships will be blessed by turning negative emotions and painful disharmony into opportunities of growth and an abundance of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

May God bless your effort to use the TEEN tool. Feel free to give us your feedback and let us know how we can help and support you. ([LINKS NEEDED HERE](#)) where they can give you feedback, and if you need some help see (support@menontheedge.org).

A little bit about counselor Scott Meacham, M.A.

Scott Meacham counseled and ministered in his community for over 45 years, while he himself was married and sacrificed thousands of hours helping others in his office and at church.

Before his passing several years ago, Scott Meacham was a godly counselor used by many men participating in Hope for Separated Men's and Men on the Edge Support Groups. Scott was a valued friend, mentor and Christian brother to many. Scott produced many tools to help men and women intentionally develop their communication skills in godly ways that would lead to marriages and relationships that would honor God. Scott felt strongly that the communication of impeccable words in relationships would bring glory to God through the obedience, growth, and healing in the life of those who were committed to use the right tools properly.

Written by Doug McKibbin and the MOTE team

Purpose of the TEEN Tool

Understanding the tool: I am defining the word "tool" as a relational / spiritual / psychological dynamic or principle which has been created in response to an unmet need. Such a "tool" provides a tangible method for applying a Biblical truth in a pragmatic way to a life or relationship. The goal of my "tools" is to effectively live out the promises and principles from God's Word. Visualization and concrete application of an abstract truth becomes very powerful when a Believer wants growth, healing and connectedness in relationships - both with God and with others.

"...I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man" (Acts 24:16 NIV).

Talking Points

The ultimate purpose of these tools, is to bring glory to God through the obedience, growth and healing in the life of the Believer.

Experientially, the Believer becomes more encouraged and hopeful as he sees and feels the supernatural power of applying God's Word in practical ways in his life.

T E E N - Tool Acrostic

The word T E E N is an acrostic for the 4 steps of this tool, to enable the user to more easily remember the 4 steps.

The 4 steps are simply:

- T = Thank you
- E = Emotion
- E = Empathize
- N = Need

Steps in applying the tool:

1. First you must agree to embrace and adhere to the steps, as they are discussed in this tool. These steps are healthy boundaries which achieve the following:
 - a. keep relationships safe as problems are addressed and facilitated
 - b. build trust
 - c. acknowledge God's Person and Power working with you and for you in this process
 - d. ensure mutual respect
2. Always open and close with a prayer that is:
 - a. Brief
 - b. Affirming to the other person
 - c. Specific
 - d. Positive
3. Follow the 4 steps "T E E N" exactly as they are outlined in the tool. Because words are very powerful, you must be careful to posture your words exactly as they are written in this tool.

We often think of adolescence or teen years as a time of vacillating emotions. This relationship tool will help the individual to discover unmet needs in relationships, by putting a word on his / her feelings. Sharing that feeling word with another person helps to flush out negative feelings which would otherwise be emotionally stuffed. After sharing the feeling, the unmet relational need is discovered, communicated, empathized, and a commitment is made to meet the unmet emotional need.

When to use this tool:

1. During times of communication problems.
2. When you do not feel heard.
3. If you are wrestling with negative feelings and choose to begin being emotionally healthy and share them, instead of the old emotionally unhealthy way of stuffing them.
4. To achieve a deeper level of emotional connectedness with another person.

Talking Points

How to use this tool:

Always first make sure the other person is in a “safe” place emotionally to check-in with the Teen Tool, by asking “the two questions”:

1. Ask for the other person if he/she would do a check-in using the Teen Tool with you:

“I would like to do a “check-in using the Teen Tool”:

- a. “Is NOW a good time?”
- b. “Is your adult on board?”

2. If the answer to either question is “no,”:

- a. You always get an appointment as to when would be a good time; or how much time the other person needs to get the “adult on board”.
- b. Try to do it that same day if at all possible.

3. If the answer to both questions is “yes,”:

- a. The other person who initiated the check-in is the one who begins.
- b. Make sure you stop intermittently and allow the other person to echo back what is being heard so you can stay together in this growth process.

4 Steps: (Sender speaks; listener echoes back what is said)

T = “Thank you for . . .”

E = “Emotion I feel is . . .”

E = “Empathize with me, if this makes sense.”

N = “Need from you about this right now is . . .”

Example of using the 4 T E E N TOOL steps:

Sender: “Thank you for taking time to listen to me share with you for a few minutes.”

Listener then to echo back what the mate feels they have heard.

Receiver’s Boundary: You must always draw this mental / emotional boundary before the Sender goes further, and remind yourself, “**This is NEVER about me!**” There is never an exception to this! It is never about the Receiver, it is always about the Sender’s feeling, and the unmet need behind that feeling, and an opportunity to minister to that person!

I tell the Sender, “Please take your hand and draw an invisible boundary between you and the other person right now.” After the Sender does that, I say, “**Now say these words: ‘This is never about me.’**” After the Sender does that, I explain the Biblical principle explained below. This is very important to remember as a life principle in and of itself – whether you are using this tool or just living out your life!

Talking Points

Biblical Principle Note:

There is always only one correct interpretation of Scripture, and potentially many different applications of that same principle.

In this case, Jesus is teaching prophetically about an event in the future. In Mt. 25:40 Jesus Christ says, ***“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”*** The application we are using here is the following: “The way I treat a person who is a **Follower of Jesus Christ** right now during my life on this earth, in eternity future it will be counted as though I treated **Jesus Christ Himself** that way”. Practically speaking, that means if I am abusive to or a blessing to a Follower of Jesus Christ, it will be counted to me in the future, as though I did that to Jesus Christ Himself.

Note: ***“Time Out”*** is used if either Sender or Receiver feel they are ***“losing their adult”***, by **TAKING A TIME OUT**: (see #1,#2 for an example to do the **TIME OUT**)

#1 - make the two-hand “T” gesture so the other person can see it. Hold UP IN FRONT OF YOU while saying THE WORDS OF #2:

#2 - say, “could we please take a 15 minute “Time Out” - that means right now it is.... “ - - O’clock, so in 15 minutes we will resume.”

What you are doing right now when you call a **TIME OUT**, is that you are politely notifying the other person that you are going to take a “break” from this conversation for 15 minutes, and after that period of time is over, you will come back to this same place to meet that person and resume your conversation – as long as it is done with both of your feeling: **(1) safe, (2) respected, (3) loved.** If all three of those dynamics are not present, you do not re-engage, but you call another 15 minute Time Out, and repeat until the Holy Spirit is on the throne of your heart and doing the talking, instead of your “old man” as Paul call it, or your carnal self.

Sender: **“Emotion** I’m feeling right now is (afraid).”

- a. The other person echo back what is being said ...
(must be **a negative feeling word**: “confused, sad, mad, hurt, frustrated” etc.)
- b. Example: **“I want to talk about my feeling afraid.”**

Receiver: The other person echo back, **“You’re saying you want to talk about feeling afraid, is that accurate?”**

- a. When clarification is needed, do so before continuing:
“Would you clarify for me what you meant when you said ...?”
- b. Receiver keeps asking the Sender, **“Is there more?”** until Sender has flushed out all the negative emotional toxicity, and says to the Receiver, **“No more. That’s all.”**

Receiver: **EMPATHIZE:** Receiver gives this gift of empathy only if this is true for you. You

Talking Points

say to the Sender:

“When I put myself in your place, and see that issue through your eyes the way you say you experienced it, that feeling makes sense to me.”

Receiver: **“What do you need from me right now about that feeling?”**

Sender: **Need: “I need to feel safe”.**

- a. The other person echo back what is being said ...
(The need is about the negative feeling word. Remember that **behind every negative feeling word is an unmet need** in this relationship. The unmet need is the opposite of the negative feeling word.)
- b. Example: “I am feeling **afraid**; therefore I need to feel **safe**.”

Receiver: After the listener echoes back, the listener asks the question: **“What would that look like?”**

- Sender:**
- (1) The Sender makes a word picture or states a verbal phrase which enables the Receiver to have a clear grasp of exactly what that looks like in the Sender’s mind.
 - (2) The Receiver echoes back to the Sender exactly what it would look like if the Receiver was meeting the needs of the Sender. **Always clarify if necessary.** Be sure not to assume you know what the Sender means.

Example of **word picture:** “I would feel safe if you would stand here with me, put your arms around me, and hold me tight.

Example of **verbal phrase:** “I would feel safe if you would say something like, “Honey, we can be sure that everything is going to be O.K. because God is still in control.”

Receiver’s Commitment: Receiver makes a commitment to meet the Sender’s need by saying,

- (1) **“I will try to meet your need to feel safe** the way you described it,
- (2) “I **will begin** to do that for you starting . . . (“**right now**”)
- (3) “and I **will continue** to do that for you whenever that need resurfaces and you tell me that you need to feel safe.” (or “for the rest of our lives”)

Important Note: You must always wait minimum of 24 hours before doing another Teen Tool Check In about the same issue, in order for the progress and work you just did to solidify.

May God bless your effort to use Scott Meacham’s TEEN tool. Please give us your feedback and let us know how we can help and support you as, you learn this valuable communication tool.

The MOTE Team