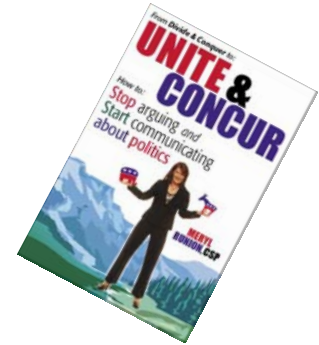


## The things we ~~can't~~ need to talk about Staying silent about eight important issues can leave you powerless

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Please feel free to post this on your blog or email it to  
whomever you believe would benefit from reading it.

### Thank you.



### The things you dare not say

Take a moment to think about the things you want to say but don't. Consider all aspects of your life – work – home – church – everything.

[Unite and Concur](#) helps you master difficult conversations.

Got your list?

Each one of your forbidden topics is like a little piece of kryptonite that weakens you, takes away some of your “super powers” and leaves you vulnerable.

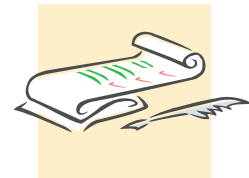


When you don't speak up about important issues, it zaps your strength, diminishes your vitality and even erodes your health. There's a saying – “You're as healthy as the things you can talk about.” This saying does not just refer to psychological health.

Chances are you don't even know how many things you can't talk about (or think you can't talk about.) Chances are, you censor yourself without even considering saying anything.

### The treacherous eight subjects

Most people censor themselves around eight topics. See if this list inspires you to add a few things to your list.



#### 1) Money

More than 50% of couples keep money secrets from each other and difficulty discussing financial matters. One of my friends neglected to tell her fiancé that she was \$50,000 in debt before they married. I think he had a right to know.

The topic of money is shrouded in embarrassment and pretense. People pretend they have more money than they do. People pretend they have less money than they do. Many would work for less than they could command rather than ask for a raise. Most people have someone in their lives that owe them money and are reluctant to ask about it. And people think they're supposed to know how to handle money even if they've never been taught. I know several people who

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made bad investments because they were unwilling to admit how little they knew about investing. (Read [How to ask for a raise.](#))

## 2) Sex

Mention sex in a group of grown adults and you'll hear titters. You can walk around with a smile on your face, but you had better not tell anyone what put it there. Too bad – they might learn something useful. We are remarkably uninformed about a topic that is so intimate to our lives.



Many of us were taught about sex in the back seat of a car and have never learned how to manage these powerful energies in the most positive ways. We read studies to see what's normal, but we could all learn a lot more just by being honest with each other. If you're one of those people who've had a sexual awakening later in life, you might have wondered: "How come no one ever told me about this?"

The topic of sex is shrouded in embarrassment and pretense. People pretend they like sex more than they do or they like sex less than they do. People act like they're more experienced than they are or less experienced than they are. People settle for unsatisfactory sexual relationships rather than ask for what they want.

## 3) Religion

Religion and spirituality are perhaps even more intimate to our existence than sex, which is why it is both important and difficult to be able to talk about them. Good luck if you try with anyone who doesn't think just like you do.

A friend who questioned some of the teachings in a bible class found himself "reassured" by the response, "Don't worry. You'll understand it more over time." My friend never did succeed in initiating an intelligent discussion about his concerns. It wouldn't surprise me if there were others in the group who shared his inquiry.



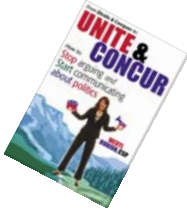
So much of the conversation that does take place about religion and spirituality is dogmatic and proselytizing, which poisons the dialogue for those who seek to relate what they experience or clarify what they question. If more of us felt free to share how spirituality influences us, it would be wonderfully inspiring and informative.

## 4) Politics

The United States is supposed to be a democracy, based upon civilized dialogue and open discussion of issues. Somehow it rarely works that way. Political dialogue is not for the feint of heart these days.

Normally gracious people suddenly decide all bets are off when the topic turns political. Reason and logic give way to tactics, pressure and manipulation. People repeat the talking points of the day with little regard to their validity, and if their arguments are not succeeding, they get louder rather than smarter.

The result is that illogic dominates the political dialogue. (My book [Unite and Concur](#) helps you spot and respond to faulty logic.)



### 5) Incompetence

I get a laugh at my presentations when I ask how many managers have employees with delusions of competence. The point is that many managers don't address employee weaknesses, so the employees don't know that their skills aren't up to par. Then when employee gets a new manager, he or she will resist correction, insisting that the new manager is the problem.

The medical research organization Vital Smarts found that over 50% of medical employees have witnessed incompetence and said nothing. If you don't speak up, you take part in that incompetence and are complicit in harm caused by the incompetence.

### 6) Dishonesty

People like to think of themselves as honest and fair – even when they're not. When you observe dishonesty, the chances are good that the culprit will target you should you attempt to talk about it.



Some types of dishonesty are generally accepted culturally. That doesn't make them honest. Violating copyrights is one widespread example of generally accepted dishonesty.

If you stay silent when faced with dishonesty, you become complicit in rewarding dishonesty. That makes you dishonest yourself.

### 7) Wants and needs

Some people are all too willing to talk about what they want, but a large percentage of the population is reluctant to express their desires. Many of us go around as bundles of unmet needs that we never try to get met – beyond hinting, that it.



It gets worse – often people who never clearly asked for what they wanted feel resentment and punish those who didn't give them what they wanted. Sure, asking for something risks rejection. But not asking ensures it. (Learn how to ask for what you want in the [Say What You Mean](#) eCourse.)

## 8) Joy and pleasure

I once received a comment on an evaluation for a [conflict management seminar](#) that stated that the fact that I used so much humor made it clear that I didn't take the subject seriously. I use humor because I DO take my topics seriously, and humor helps the learning process.

Some people act long-suffering as if it's a claim of nobility. Others are afraid to look like they enjoy their work for fear they aren't earning their pay if they do.

When you let your joy shine, you give others permission to experience joy as well. It's a great message to send.

### **Expand the scope of your conversations**

Your voice is your connection to the world outside you. When you stifle that voice, you stifle that connection.

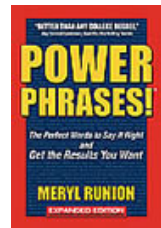
To be sure, speak [strategically](#). Check your timing, pick your battles and speak in a way they are likely to hear.

And sure, there will be times when you will choose to play it safe and stay silent.

Just be sure you know you're staying silent out of choice, and not out of fear or unconsciousness. (My [Risky Conversation Assessment Form](#) will help you do that.)

How's your list of topics you can't discuss freely doing? Has reading this article caused you to add a few topics to your list?

Expand the list of topics you can freely discuss and discover what it's like to go through life without "kryptonite" in your pocket. You'll like it.



**Say what you mean.  
Mean what you say.  
Don't be mean when  
you say it.**