

# Dating and CHD

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- We Hope for. . .



- We're afraid that. . .



**OUCH!**



How do we, as people living with CHD, make sure that our relationships aren't defined by our conditions, but aren't in denial of them, either?



# A Patient's Perspective

## The Shirt Stays On

### [Modern Love](#)

By JAMESON RICH

AUG. 5, 2016

New York Times



# A Patient's Perspective

- It has taken time, nearly all of my 23 years, for me to learn how much to say, whom to tell, what to show of myself. I have learned exactly how much people care to know and what they care to know and how much it matters to them.



# A Patient's Perspective

- But something about my scars feels more precious.
- I've earned them. So maybe a part of me believes that seeing them is something you need to earn. I'll show you when I know they'll matter to you. I'll show you when I want you to see all my scars, both above and below the surface.



# A Patient's Perspective

- ... someone who cares enough to hold my hand in waiting rooms or to hear about the worst parts of everything, about all the firsts I never got to experience, or what I remembered of flatlining.



# Foundation of Relationships: Communication

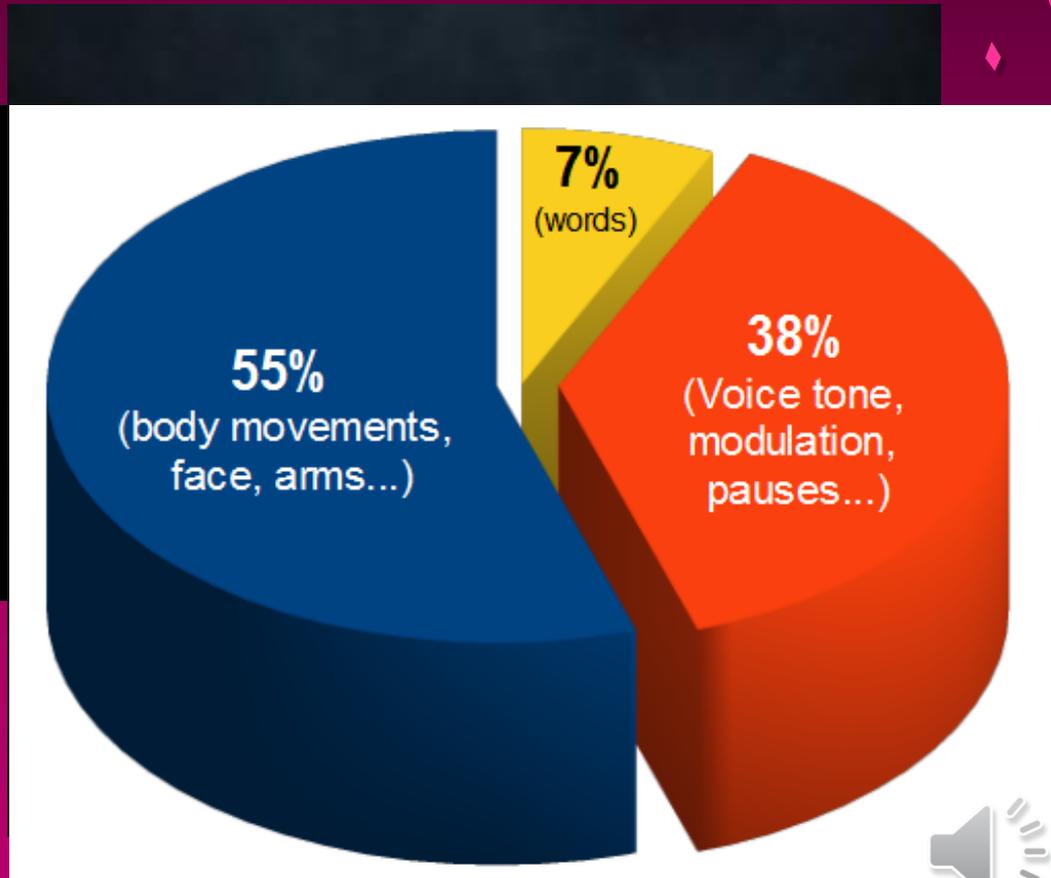
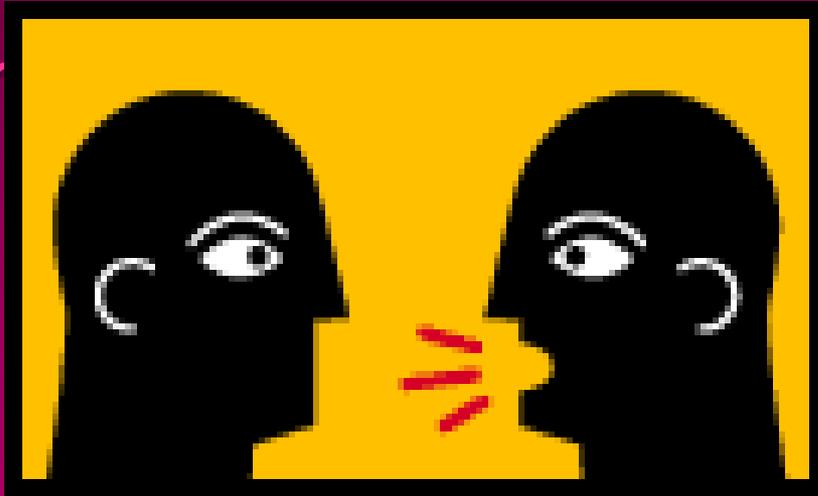
**Ultimate**



**Reality**



# Communication is multidimensional



# Barriers to Communication

- **Physical Barriers**
- **Mental and Emotional Barriers**
- **Cultural Differences**
- **Language Barriers**
- **Contextual Barrier**
- **Experiential Barrier**
- **Situational Barrier**



# Another Patient's Perspective

## Top 10 Reasons to Date a Congenital Heart Defect Survivor

Stephanie Romer

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

<https://www.achaheart.org/blog/2011/top-10-reasons-to-date-a-congenital-heart-defect-survivor/>



# Another Patient's Perspective

“Love is a battlefield.” Having CHD sometimes feel like a war. Combine the two and things can get ugly.

I've spoken to many CHDers about one of my most studied subjects—love. One CHDer in particular I became close to and exchanged many conversations about love with was our dear friend, [Steve Catoe](#), who is deeply missed. The general consensus in our community is that we've all often felt hopeless in love.

However, with our bright and relentless spirits, we keep fighting, smiling, living, and searching for what's next. After talking with many CHDers about love, I decided we need a list of positive reasons of why we are so incredibly awesome.



#10 – Admit it... scars are hot!

#9 – Our childhood wasn't "normal" – so it's alright if yours wasn't either.

#8 – Listening to a CHDer's funky heart beat and us listening to your strangely normal one encourages cuddling.

#7 – You have a built-in excuse to check out our smokin' hot torsos.

#6 – We know from experience that vulnerability is nothing to be ashamed of and can even be a strength.

#5 – Accompanying us to our cardiology appointments can offer fabulous opportunities for travel and sightseeing!



#4 – CHDers need to trust you enough to know that you won't let them down. If you're dating a CHDer, you've been judged and found worthy.

#3 – Sternotomy scars accentuate cleavage.

#2 – We understand how precious life is and we're not going to waste it.

#1 – CHDers know **EXACTLY** how to make your heart race!



# Lessons learned

- Be true to yourself
- Accept others for who they are
- Successful relationships are shared 100% each
- The Joy is in the Journey
- Seek friends and role models



# The REAL Experts



Kim and Tom Russell



Nick and Jeni Busta



