249317 - She wants to solve the problem of being silent with her husband and not being able to interact with him all the time

the question

My problem is that I do not speak much to people, especially my husband, so our house is usually quiet. My husband holds his mobile phone and I see him laughing loudly. When he sits with me, he asks me to talk to him and discuss issues with him, but at that time I feel that my mind is blank. He loves to joke a great deal, but most of it is lies and I do not like that. Sometimes I say to him: Do not talk about anyone, but he gets upset with me and says: You are too quiet. Even when we travel, we turn on the CD player, and if one of his friends calls him, he may talk to him for three hours or more, laughing and commenting, whilst I am sitting beside him. I want to change my life. Please note that I have a mild phobia. I have been married for three years, and I have a child. My husband’s hobby is reading, and he likes football and poetry.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Let us begin with the last thing which you mentioned, which is your husband’s hobbies: reading, poetry and football.

One of the best ways to overcome silence between the spouses is to talk about anything that has to do with hobbies and interests. Reading and poetry are broad topics, which may open the way to interesting and beneficial discussions, so look at the books and poetry that your husband likes the best, and talk to him about them regularly.

You can ask your husband to suggest a book for you to read, then you can discuss this book together. Or you can ask him about what he read today or yesterday, who the author of the book is, and what topics and ideas he discusses in his book, and so on.

In these discussions, there will inevitably be some jokes or some interesting stories that will energize you and make you more interested in this conversation, and will rid you of apathy and boredom. Thus you will break through the barrier of silence and fulfil your husband's wish, and increase the communication and affection between you.

There is nothing wrong with you reading some books of entertaining stories, such as *al-Bukhala'* by al-Jaahiz, *Akhbaar al-Hamqa*, *at-Tufayliyyeen*, and so on, or some books by modern satirists, and using that to open discussions or chat with your husband.

The correct way to react to his jokes, or to his words in general, is by means of what is known as effective listening, because this type of listening is something positive that encourages further talk and chat. This type of listening is usually done by making positive comments and showing interest when listening, and is also expressed in one's body language (such as looking and gestures) to show that you are interested in what he is saying, even if it is not really interesting to you.

A good thing to do when travelling or when sitting at home is not to give in to the recording that he is listening to or to a friend who is preventing him from talking to. Rather you should use these occasions to break the barrier of silence between you, and make it the topic of your talk, by commenting on what you hear and discussing his views and efforts.

With regard to the phobia you mention, if it takes the form of fear or anxiety when speaking to strangers or doing certain activities in their presence, this is a medical symptom that is known to be a symptom of social phobia or what is called social anxiety disorder. Our advice to you in that case is to visit a doctor or psychologist to treat this phobia in a direct and effective manner through sessions and medications, if necessary.

And Allah knows best.