

Roadblocks to Effective Communication (WHAT NOT TO DO)

The following roadblocks block effective communication. Indicate how frequently you use each of the following roadblocks during conflicts with your spouse or significant other:

- 0 = never
- 1 = rarely
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = often

- 1. **Timing** - Picking the wrong time to begin an argument. Late at night, during a favorite TV show, after several drinks, or just before your spouse has to leave for work are options. As a general rule, looking for the time your spouse least expects it, or is least able to respond.
- 2. **Escalating** - Moving quickly from the issue, to the questioning of personality, to wondering whether it is worth the effort to stay together (issue to personality to relationship). Interpreting your spouse's shortcomings as evidence of bad faith, and the impossibility of a happy relationship.
- 3. **Brown Bagging** - Trying to list as many problems in as much detail as possible. Not sticking to the original issue, but rather throwing in all the problems you can think of. Not limiting yourself to the present. If your partner can't remember the offense, bringing it up will just confuse the issue.
- 4. **Overgeneralizing** - Using words like "always" and "never" as in "you are always late." This is likely to distract your partner into discussing the overgeneralization rather than the issue and to insure further misunderstandings.
- 5. **Cross-complaining** - Responding to any complaint your spouse may raise with one of your own. For example, "Me late? Why, if it weren't for the fact that you never have any clean clothes for me...." If done, you will balance complaint against complaint forever and solve nothing.
- 6. **Crucializing** - Exaggerating the importance of the issue with statements such as "If you really loved us, you would have never done it in the first place" or "This proves that you don't care."
- 7. **Asking Why** - "Why didn't you clean up?" or "Why were you late?" will imply that there must be something terribly wrong with your spouse and that the issue is something more than a simple problem that might easily be resolved.
- 8. **Blaming** - Thinking or stating that fault lies entirely with your spouse and that once again, you are simply the innocent victim. Not admitting that your behavior plays any part in the difficulty.

- 6.
- _____ 21. **Using Money** - "If you made as much money as..." or "When you make as much as I do, then you can have an opinion," are similar to "pulling rank."
 - _____ 22. **Using Children** - "If you spent more time with them, they wouldn't be failing" or "Do you want them to grow up like you?"
 - _____ 23. **Using Relatives** - "When you do that, you are just like your mother" or "Your father agrees with me." Avoids your taking responsibility for your own feelings.
 - _____ 24. **Giving Advice** - By telling people how to act, think, and feel, you maintain an attitude of superiority while insisting that you are only trying to be helpful.
 - _____ 25. **Getting Even** - By holding grudges for as long as possible, you end up blowing up or striking back in future arguments.
 - _____ 26. **Using Terminal Language** - For example, if you happen to be upset by the fact that the room wasn't straightened, starting with "You slob..." suggests that it is your spouse's existence and not behavior that is at question. This will result in an argument that will solve nothing.
 - _____ 27. **Being Inconsistent** - Changing your position. Complaining that your spouse never talks to you and then ignoring whatever your spouse may have to say.
 - _____ 28. **Others** - This list should only be considered suggestive of the range of roadblocks that we fall into using. With practice and creativity, you should be able to identify and recognize when you are allowing roadblocks to stop you and your partner from effective communication.

TOTAL SCORE

1. List at least two roadblocks which you engage in which result in misunderstandings and conflict escalation.
2. Indicate at least two roadblocks that you will actively work on eliminating from conflicts this week.