

The Communication Map



A One Page
Communication and Conflict Resolution System
for Couples and Families

David Steele

The Communication Map

A One Page
Communication and Conflict Resolution System
for Couples and Families

David Steele

RCN
press

RCN Press

a division of Relationship Coaching Institute

P.O. box 111783, Campbell, CA 95011

www.RelationshipCoachingInstitute.com

All Right Reserved

This book is intended for personal use of the purchaser. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form whatsoever, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any informational storage or retrieval system without express written, dated, and signed permission from the author, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles and reviews.

Disclaimer and/or Legal Notices

Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause. Any error that may have occurred are inadvertent and will be corrected in subsequent editions, provided notification is sent to the publisher.

The Communication Map:

*A One-Page Communication and Conflict Resolution System for Couples, Parents,
and Families*

Copyright © 2014 by David Steele

First Edition

Printed in the United States of America

Published by RCN Press

a division of

Relationship Coaching Institute

P.O. Box 111783,

Campbell, CA 95011

www.RelationshipCoachingInstitute.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data: Steele, David, The
Communication Map: A One Page Communication and Conflict Resolution
System for Couples and Families

ISBN-10: 0-9755005-8-9

ISBN-13: 9780975500583

**Attention universities, colleges, churches, professionals associations,
couples groups, and other organizations:** Quantity discounts are available on
bulk purchase of this book. Customized special editions can also be created for
specific needs. For more information, please contact:

orders@relationshipcoachinginstitute.com.

About the Author

Relationship Coaching Institute Founder, Author, Relationship Coaching Pioneer, and Global Authority on Growing a Profitable Private Practice, David Steele is making a profound impact for coaches, therapists, the media, clients and those seeking to make conscious life partner choices around the world. As a subject matter expert and author, the cornerstones that are the foundation David's worldwide contributions include:



- Serving as chief ambassador and member support officer for the members and clients of the Relationship Coaching Institute;
- Guiding coaches, therapists, and those aspiring to careers in either arena as a sought-after speaker, trainer, and workshop leader on practice building, honoring three decades of thought leadership in the field and his recent book [From Therapist to Coach: Leveraging Your Clinical Expertise to Build a Thriving Coaching Practice](#)
- Unabashed advocate of helping professionals earning six and seven figures while making a significant difference in the world as a popular speaker, coach and consultant on innovative marketing and practice building, and with his latest book [The Million Dollar Private Practice: How to Build a Highly Successful Business That Makes a Difference](#)
- Offering relationship expertise and perspectives to the media, based on lessons shared in his book and related programs [Conscious Dating: Finding the Love of Your Life in Today's World](#)

David welcomes speaking invitations, media interviews, quantity book purchases, and other opportunities that allow him to fulfill his life mission to vastly improve the success rate of committed relationships worldwide.

Contact David [here](#)

Read this great interview with David Steele in Published! magazine [here](#)

Table of Contents

[Foreword](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Getting Started](#)

[Nine Rules of the Road](#)

[The Sender and the Receiver](#)

[Step One: Experience the Issue](#)

[Step Two: Hit Road Block \(or not!\)](#)

[Step Three: Identify the Issue](#)

[Step Four: Communicate the Issue](#)

[Step Five: Make a Request](#)

[Step Six: Negotiate](#)

[Step Seven and Eight: Agree and Follow Through](#)

[Final Thoughts about The Communication Map](#)

[Top Five Communication Tips](#)

["Is there more?"](#)

[It's Not About You](#)

[It's All About You](#)

[Turn Complaints in to Requests](#)

[Telling Your Truth](#)

[Closing Notes](#)

[What's Next?](#)

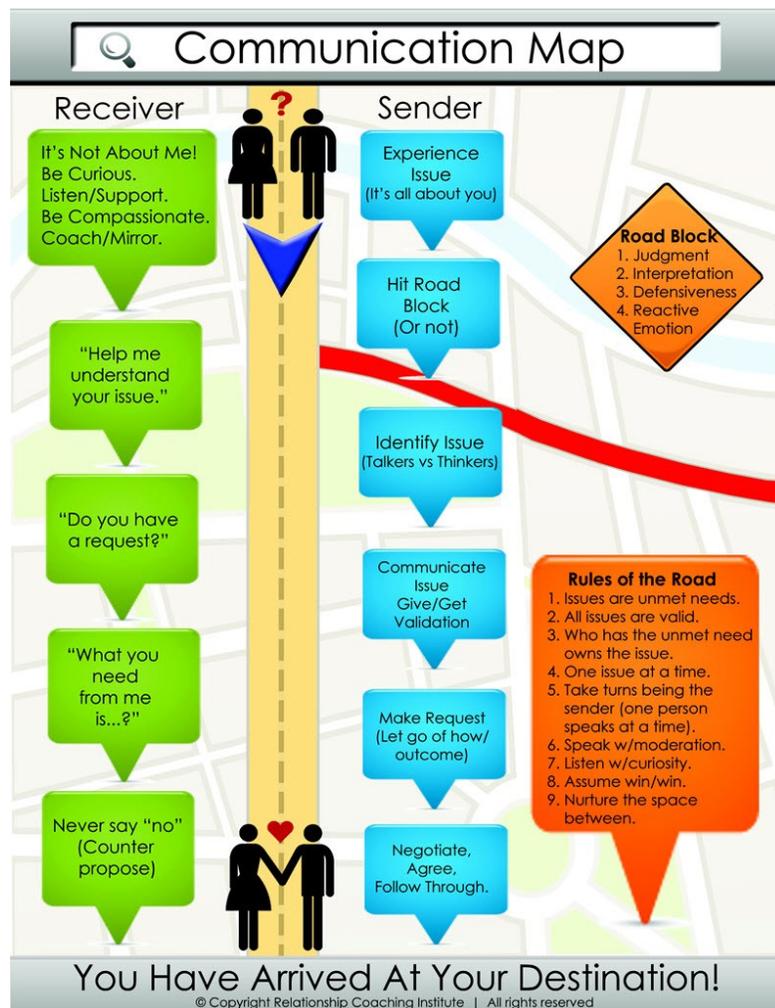
Foreword

This ebook explains the steps and strategies of The Communication Map, and The Communication Map itself is available in digital and print formats for easy use and reference at:

www.TheCommunicationMap.com

The content of this ebook has been taken directly from The Communication Map Audio Tutorial with David Steele. The transcript was edited to give you a more readable and easy-to-digest version of this training. However, if you prefer to listen to David Steele teach about The Communication Map, you can listen to the audio tutorial for free right here:

www.relationshipcoachinginstitute.com/communicationmapaudio



Introduction

Welcome to 'The Communication Map', a one-page communication system for all relationships. I'm David Steele, founder of Relationship Coaching Institute.

The Communication Map is a tool that I developed in my practice with couples. I was searching for a strategy of how to help them with their communication in a way they could relate to, without jargon, that would help their functioning immediately, that they could learn in one session or less and then go home and actually use effectively and independently without my help. This was my criteria that no other communication model could meet, so I experimented and tested until The Communication Map came together as you see it today.

My priority with couples is "functioning first." The Communication Map doesn't address feelings or the past. In my way of thinking, you must survive before you can thrive. Many couples get stuck in conflict around the big and little issues in their life together. Nobody likes arguing, which causes bad feelings, and many cope with conflict by avoiding it, which causes resentment and doesn't help the relationship either. The Communication Map is a foundational system that provides you a structure for effectively addressing issues and problems in any relationship. You can then use other skills to address feelings, reasons and motivations, the past, and other aspects that might enhance the relationship beyond solving the immediate problem.

Since developing The Communication Map some years ago I've heard from many, many people that they like it, it's easy to learn and use, and is universal enough to use in any relationship, including parent/child, manager/employee, friends, neighbors, and so on. People are amazed that they can go home and actually use it effectively right away, making their life together more functional and harmonious immediately. I hope this will be true for you as well.

Getting Started



When you look at The Communication Map, the front side is the actual map. It's the graphic of what happens in communication and what to do about it when there is an issue. On the back of The Communication Map are my [Top Five Communication Tips for Couples](#). The Communication Map can be used in all settings. I call it a One-Page Communication System for All Relationships. Even though these strategies are designed for couples I'm sure you can apply them to other relationships as well.

The Communication Map comes into play when one person in a relationship experiences an issue or problem and needs to talk to the other person about it. Before you start communicating about an issue it's very helpful to let your partner know what's going on and ask if it's a good time for them or make an appointment. For example "I have something important to discuss, is now a good time for you?" This gives the partner the time and opportunity to prepare themselves and clear their head to listen and be receptive. In addition to making sure it's a good time to talk, it helps to go to a private space free from distractions. You must make sure the time and place is conducive to good communication, otherwise it won't work from the start.

So let's get started. In any communication there is a sender and a receiver. The Communication Map comes into play when the sender is experiencing an issue of some kind and needs to communicate about it.

Nine Rules of the Road

Rule #1: Issues are unmet needs.

In my thinking, a problem or an issue in a relationship is about an unmet need. If it weren't a need, it wouldn't be an issue. Take a look at the Rules of the Road on the lower right side and you'll notice that this is number one, defining issues as unmet needs.

Rules of the Road

1. Issues are unmet needs.
2. All issues are valid.
3. Who has the unmet need owns the issue.
4. One issue at a time.
5. Take turns being the sender (one person speaks at a time).
6. Speak w/moderation.
7. Listen w/curiosity.
8. Assume win/win.
9. Nurture the space between.

Rule #2: All issues are valid.

If we assume this then we won't argue with each other about the validity of the issue. It is not very nice to discount somebody's issue and say, "Oh, come on now that's no big deal. What's your problem? Don't be ridiculous." Don't allow someone to discount your issue. And don't discount their issue either, because all issues are valid, big and small. Just the fact that you experience an issue makes it valid, you don't need to justify it or get agreement about whether it's an issue or not.

Rule #3: Who has the unmet need, owns the issue.

This is what I call David Steele's Law of Relationship, and it goes two ways. For the sender it means that if you have an issue, it's about you, you own it. It's yours. It belongs to you. There is no universal issue out there that if everybody experiences this one thing, everybody will have an issue with it. Some people will. Some people won't. Needs and issues are subjective, not facts. They are your truth and not necessarily a truth that others share.

So if it's an issue for you, it's because you have the need and the need is unmet. It's not automatically an indictment that your partner is in the wrong. For example, if your partner comes home late and doesn't call, in some relationships that might be a problem, in others it wouldn't be a big deal. If you have a need to know what to expect it will be an issue for you if that need is unmet when your partner is late and didn't call. The need is yours and the issue is yours. Your partner being late is simply a fact, it doesn't make them right or wrong. It doesn't make your issue less valid, it simply means you need to take an attitude of ownership. Taking ownership of your needs and issues in a relationship is incredibly important because it empowers you to be responsible for your needs and is much less likely to put your partner on the defensive because you're not making them wrong or blaming them for your unmet need.

What this means for the receiver is that it's not about you. It's not your issue and your job is to let the sender have the issue and don't try to take it away from them by having an issue with their issue. If you take their issue personally and make it about you then you'll hit a [Road Block](#). If you let them have their issue and support them to get their unmet need met you will be helping yourself as well because you want a happy relationship and happy partner.

Rule #4: One issue at a time.

This is very important because when people communicate about issues and they talk about more than one at a time it often goes all over the place. They bring out everything and the kitchen sink; every resentment they've saved up, every little grievance. If you want to have productive communication, if you want to resolve something between you two, you pretty much have to focus on one thing at a time.

Rule #5: Take turns being the sender.

One person speaks at the time. This is basic playground behavior. Share and take turns. However, you notice that arguments often happen because one

person is not letting the other person speak so they feel like they have to talk louder to be heard. And then it goes back and forth. So take turns being the sender. I want to acknowledge that this is simple, but it's not necessarily easy. When you're hitting a [Road Block](#) it feels so urgent to have your partner listen to you that you have a hard time being present and listening to them. This takes a heroically conscious effort, but it can be done.

Rule #6: Speak with moderation.

If you're taking turns then you don't need to yell to be heard. You can speak with moderation. Productive communication is about being calm, respectful and choosing your words carefully.

Rule #7: Listen with curiosity.

This is an important attitude, to be curious about where your partner is coming from and not to pre-judge them as wrong, or speculate that, "They really mean this." Or "they're just saying that because of that." Look at them through new eyes. Listen to them as if you're listening to them for the first time. Listen with curiosity. When you do I guarantee you'll learn something new about your partner and your relationship will not only work better, it'll be more passionate and fulfilling.

Think back on your patterns of listening to your partner. How often are you formulating in your mind what you're going to say back to them while they're talking? Sometimes we don't even give the other guy a chance to finish before we insert our opinions. This is human nature, it's a bad habit, we all have this tendency and it takes a little effort to adopt an attitude of curiosity, but it'll help you really be able to hear and listen effectively.

This is also part of taking turns. If your partner is the sender, then you need to be the receiver. You need to listen. We'll cover later what being a receiver looks like in detail. If it's your turn to be the sender then you have a

right to expect that your partner listen and receive you, and if they are not playing that role you can request them to do so.

Rule #8: Assume the win-win.

Most of us understand intellectually that we can negotiate and find a way that works for both of us. But what often happens unconsciously is that there is an assumption that if you get your way then I'm going to lose and I'm not going to get my needs met.

This is a scarcity mentality that drives people into conflict. They really don't trust that their needs will be met if their partner's needs are met at the same time. It's either-or. I like to believe that it is both-and. So assume the win-win. If you follow the structure of The Communication Map, this won't be a problem.

Working with couples I've found that structure is everything. When you have a structure to follow and you know what to do and what not to do then your communication and your relationship is far more productive. The Communication Map probably follows the 80/20 rule. About 80% of it is simply consciousness and understanding about what's going on, and about 20% of it is actually what to do and what to say. It's actually fairly simple. The more complicated thing is being clear about how this works and what not to do.

Rule #9: Nurture the space between.

Here's a concept that we often forget about, and many couples don't even know about, which is that a relationship is more than just two people. There is a space between you where this relationship lives. This is where your children live, and everyone else that comes into contact with the two of you. There's an emotional atmosphere between you two and it needs to be clean to be fulfilled and happy. If you have unresolved conflict, if your communication is not clean and effective, if there are resentments and disappointments and

unresolved issues between you two, that is going to pollute the space between you two and everyone, including you, will feel it. So the space between is the relationship.. We want to nurture that space; we want to treat it as sacred. It's not just about your partner and it's not just about you. It's the combination that you are both 100% responsible for. Not 50/50, each partner is 100% responsible for what happens in the space between.

So those are the Nine Rules of the Road.

The Sender and the Receiver



It's Not About Me!
Be Curious.
Listen/Support.
Be Compassionate.
Coach/Mirror.

Let's go back to the sender and the receiver. The sender is the one with the issue and has a certain process they need to follow, and we're going to cover what that is in a moment. But first, let's talk about the role of the receiver.

Look on the upper left side of The Communication Map. Eighty percent of being a good receiver is the attitude. It's being curious about what's going on for your partner. It's realizing that, hey, it's not about me! My partner who I love or who I care about has an issue, they have an unmet need. It's not necessarily my fault although I might have contributed to it, but their unmet need, their issue is not really about me. It lives inside them, its origin is with them, so I need to be compassionate, support them and listen to what's going on for them. The best role for the receiver is to be a coach, to ask questions about what's going on for the sender and to mirror back what you're hearing.

Step One: Experience the Issue

Let's take the example where one partner comes home from work, they're late and they didn't call. They usually come home at 5:00 and this evening they're home at 7:00. No call, dinner is cold and the partner that has been waiting is upset and they've been worried. What typically might happen in this situation is the sender, when the receiver finally gets home, might say, "Where have you been? I've been so worried. You are late and you didn't call and I'm really upset, and you know what? You are just a jerk and you're inconsiderate and I can't believe you didn't call me. You always call, why didn't you call this time? Dinner's cold and it's all your fault." That might be a little exaggerated, but in a lot of relationships that I've seen, that's not so far off the mark.



In this situation what choice does the receiver have? They've got to defend themselves because they're feeling attacked. What really happened here is that the sender experienced an issue because their partner was late and they hit a Road Block.

Step Two: Hit Road Blocks (or not!)



Road Blocks, as you can see on the right hand side of The Communication Map, are one of four things: Judgment, Interpretation, Defensiveness or Reactive Emotion.

Judgment means right or wrong, good or bad. You are wrong and bad for being late.

Interpretation is speculation or making meaning, creating stories around you being late or why you're late. That you are inconsiderate for being late and you must have something to hide otherwise you would have called to let me know that you were going to be late but you're feeling guilty about something so that's why you didn't call. Interpretation is about stories and making meanings.

Defensiveness is the other side of judgment and it's what happens when you're feeling attacked. It's a self-protective knee jerk. It would be understandable and common for the receiver in this situation to hit the wall by being defensive and say, "What do you mean? It's only two hours. Dinner's not cold yet. OK, this was just one time but my cell phone died. Give me a break."

Reactive Emotion is when you feel an emotion like anger or fear or anxiety or shame. I like to characterize the primary emotions as mad, sad, glad, fear, shame. All other emotions tend to be variations of those five primary emotions. When you're experiencing an emotion your nervous system is stimulated into fight or flight mode, it's much harder to communicate productively, and it becomes about how you feel. Then you've hit a Road Block, which is solid, and you're not going anywhere. It's a dead end. Hitting a Road Block disrupts the connection between the two of you and the issue and unmet need cannot be addressed until you back up and start over.

Hopefully the concept of Road Blocks will help you understand what's going on, like, "Oh, OK. I'm in judgment right now," or "I'm wrapped up in my interpretation of why you're doing this," or "I'm feeling defensive right now," or "I'm in a reactive emotion right now." Once you're aware enough to realize that you're up against a Road Block you can give yourself a moment to back up and get back on track.

Step Three: Identify Issue

Talkers and Thinkers

When upset or in conflict I find that there are two kinds of people. There are the talkers and the thinkers. The talkers need to talk about it. They pretty much think out loud. They need to talk it out with their partner to get clear about what's going on for them. They express what's going on for them so that they can clearly formulate their issue.



Identify Issue
(Talkers vs Thinkers)

The thinkers need to think about it first. They need to internally process it so they can form the words and meanings and communicate that to their partner.

With the thinkers if you try to get them to talk too soon and they're not ready it's not going to come out very pretty, so don't push them. With the talkers if you don't let them talk it out first, if you expect that what they say is going to be clear at the very outset, then you're in trouble. So you pretty much need to understand whether you're a talker or a thinker and whether your partner is a talker or a thinker so you know what their needs are.

It's funny how most couples will have one talker and one thinker. It's like we seek each other out for a complementary relationship, but processing things differently can be challenging in a relationship. Talkers tend to judge the thinkers as too aloof and withdrawn, and thinkers tend to judge the talkers as too chatty and indirect: they just want the bottom line. If you're the talker and your partner has an issue, it's going to be hard for you to just let the thinker think, because you need to talk about it. If you're the thinker it's going to be hard for you to let your partner just talk about it because you need to process things internally and you automatically project that that's what they should do. And you wish that they would just be quiet and think about it first and then come to you when they have it all thought out and reasonable, but that's not

the way it happens.

In working with couples I've found that typically they almost always know what they are. If you ask somebody, "Are you a talker or a thinker?" they'll almost always be able to say what they are. If they don't it's very easy, just ask their partner. Your partner almost always knows which one you are. It's amazing to me how often the thinkers are the men and the talkers are the women. Pretty stereotypical, but true in my experience.

Step Four: Communicate the Issue



"Help me understand your issue."

So in identifying the issue and being able to communicate it clearly the talkers need to talk about it and the receiver just needs to listen, let them talk, let them get it out and you see that the attitude under the Receiver on The Communication Map is, "Help me to understand your issue." You might have a prejudged idea of what the issue might be.

In this instance the example is clear. "I was late and I didn't call." That's pretty clear.

But is it clear? Is it really about that? When you prejudge and you assume where your partner is coming from you don't give them the room to be where they're really coming from and express what they're really thinking and feeling. We have to hold off our tendency to prejudge and presume and have an open mind, listen and support compassionately, ask some questions and mirror back what we're getting. The attitude is, "Help me to understand your issue."



Communicate Issue
Give/Get Validation

We need to support our partner in identifying and communicating the issue clearly and specifically, even if we think we know what it is. The solution becomes clear when the issue is clear. If you try to solve something when you're not crystal clear about the problem, the solution won't work. This is especially hard for men. When you're a guy, you feel bad if your partner is unhappy and want to fix it. We want to be the hero and jump in and save the day. We need to work really hard to be patient, not take it personally, let our partner own the issue, support them in communicating it to us, and offer ideas and solutions only if requested.

So let's say you're trying to support your partner in this situation. You could say "I'm sorry I'm late and didn't call, dear, but help me understand, what specifically is your issue with that?" You don't assume, unless your partner clearly says so, that being late and not calling is precisely the issue.

So let's say the sender's response is, "You're late. It's 7:00. You usually come home at 5:00, and usually call if you're late, and you didn't call this time."

Notice those are facts. Facts are typically inarguable measurable events, but in themselves they don't identify an issue. As we mentioned before, what might be an issue for one person would be no problem at all for another. It's an excellent communication strategy to start with the facts, so you can mirror that and say- "Yes, it's 7:00, I usually come home at 5:00 and I didn't call." And then follow up with an attitude of curiosity by asking "What about my being late is a problem for you?"

In this situation the sender might elaborate by saying, "I was worried and I was anxious and I didn't know why you didn't call." The receiver might be listening to that and mirror, "OK, so it's 7:00 and I'm late and I didn't call and you were worried. Is that what your issue is?" It's easy to assume, but at this point maybe it is and maybe it isn't what you think it is. You're at Step Three in The Communication Map and working on Step Four, seeking confirmation from the sender, that nod of the head and positive, "Yes! That's my issue!" so that you can reflect it back and validate their issue.

In this case the sender might say, "Well you know what? It's not so much about you being late. It's just that I cooked this wonderful dinner and it cost a lot of money and now it's cold and I think that's what I'm most upset about." So the receiver might be surprised that what they thought was the issue is not really the issue. It's up to the sender to communicate the issue. It's up to the receiver to help the sender communicate what it's really about. So the receiver might mirror that back. "Oh, OK. You're saying what you're really upset about is you spent all this money on this great meal and now it's cold and you're disappointed and you're upset about that." And the sender might respond, "Yes." Then you know you have agreement, you have confirmation, and you have validation of what the issue is. It started off being, "You're late you jerk,

you're so inconsiderate, " and now it's, "Well I'm just really upset because I made this special meal and now it's cold and I'm hungry and I wish you would have called so I could have held it off for us to enjoy together"

Being clear about the issue for yourself is the first hurdle, then you need to make sure your partner understands, you need to get and give validation about what exactly is the issue, then you can focus on how to meet the unmet need. This might sound obvious, but many couples skip this step and don't mirror or reflect their understanding at all, they just assume each knows what the other means. So getting and giving confirmation means that the receiver reflects back their understanding of the issue to the satisfaction of the sender- "Yes, you've got it." And, if the receiver isn't mirroring, the sender can ask "Now what's your understanding of my issue here?"

Step Five: Make a Request



“Do you have a request?”

Once the issue is clear to both partners, the next step is for the sender to make a request. As tempting as it might be for the receiver to fix it or offer solutions, only the sender really knows what would meet their unmet need and they must ask for what they want, so the receiver's role is to support the sender to make a request. If you're too quick to give advice you don't give the sender the opportunity to take responsibility and make a request.

In my mind, requesting is the most important communication skill there is. We all have issues, we all have unmet needs, we all have things we want in a relationship for it to work for us and if we don't make a request what are we going to do? The alternatives to requesting are not very pretty, like complaining, demanding, threatening, coercion, criticizing, entitlement or mind reading.

Complaining: "You're late and now the expensive dinner that I spent hours preparing is ruined."

Demanding: "You need to call if you're going to be late!"

Threatening: "If you're late next time and you don't call I'm going to..."

Criticizing: "What's the matter with you that you don't call if you're late? You're so inconsiderate!"

Coercing: "You better call next time or else you're going to sleep on the couch!"

Entitlement: "I'm your wife and I worked hard to cook for you and I deserve a call if you're going to be late!"

Mind Reading: "You should know that I need you to call if you're going to be late!"

All of these strategies focus on the negative don't work very well. Requesting is the only productive option that focuses on the positive of what you need to make things work.

So after the issue and unmet need is identified in Step Four of The Communication Map, Step Five is for the sender to make a request that will meet their unmet need, and for the receiver to support them to do so.



Sometimes the sender gets so absorbed in getting the issue off their chest, they feel so good talking about it that they have a hard time moving forward. While a good receiver will let the sender fully express themselves, if it goes on too long or becomes repetitive the receiver can support the sender to make a request by asking "Do you have a request about that? How can I support you to get your need met in this situation?"

Let Go of How/Outcome

The interesting thing about a need is that there are many, many ways to meet it. You can make a request, but it's a good idea to let go of the outcome and let go of the "how." Since there's many ways to meet a need, all that matters is that the need is met, not how it's met. So you can come up with a way to meet your need that works for both of you.

Couples often get stuck here because they get attached to a particular outcome, a particular way of getting their needs met. "I want you to call me by 4:50 if you're going to be late." Well that might not always be possible. What matters is that you get your need met, not exactly how it's met.

It's also possible that after becoming clear about their issue the sender decides they don't need anything different from the receiver. In this situation, for example, the sender might say "You know honey, I just realized that I did this to myself. I know you often have late meetings in the middle of the week and I probably shouldn't have gone all out like that tonight. I was in such a good

mood today and looking forward to seeing you tonight, and I got all excited to see your favorite dinner entree on sale today and wanted to cook you a special meal. I should have put it in the freezer until the weekend."

There are two possible responses to a request. One is "Yep, no problem, I can do that." The other is "Well, I'd like to, but that won't work for me because of this, so how about this?" Either an unqualified "yes" or to propose something that might work better for the receiver that would meet the need of the sender, which is negotiation.

When making a request, in my experience, and I've done this hundreds of times with couples now, I'd estimate about 75% of the time the thing that you first ask for, your first request, won't work. About 75% of the time! The odds are that the first thing you ask for is not going to be the win/win, is not going to be what works best and most effectively for both of you. So you'll need to go to the next step, Step Six in The Communication Map which is negotiating.

Step Six: Negotiate

I make a distinction between negotiation and compromise. Compromise is when two people give up part of what works for them or what they need to meet somewhere in the middle.

Negotiation is a win/win. Negotiation is when both people are 100% happy; they don't feel like they're giving up anything. It's worth the time and

effort to negotiate and brainstorm and come up with an option that truly works for both parties. Often, that option won't be apparent to you right away. Too often, couples will focus on either/or. "We're either going to solve it my way or your way." And they get dug in.



Negotiate,
Agree,
Follow Through.

What I'd like to suggest is that there is a third option out there somewhere. Something that is going to be a unique reflection of both of you, and it doesn't always appear right away. It's worth brainstorming and being creative. Ask friends and family for ideas. Do some research on the Internet. Let it sit for a while. If you have an unsolvable problem, or something that seems unsolvable, just know that there's probably a creative solution out there someplace, you just have to find it. It's worth it because if you come up with an agreement that doesn't really work for one of the parties, it's not going to stick.

You want to come up with something that really truly does work for both parties so it does stick, and if you don't know what it is right away don't worry about it. There's a saying I like- "You don't know what you don't know." Be patient with yourself, be patient with the process. This is not an emergency. In fact, in all my years of working with couples I have yet to see a relationship emergency where 911 should be called. But it feels urgent. We want to solve it right now, we are feeling bad right now, and we are attached to an idea right now.

But if in this process, the answer doesn't readily appear to you, then be

patient and agree on a plan for how you're going to find the solution together. You don't know what you don't know. Talk about it. Think about it. Get some ideas from family and friends about it. Brainstorm and be patient with the process. Hopefully you're not going anywhere. Hopefully you'll find a way to solve this eventually. "Well, you see the reason I'm late is because I was in a meeting and I couldn't call you because I was in a meeting. When I got out of the meeting, you know, we only live five minutes away so it was going to take as much time to call you as it would just to drive home. So, I don't know what to do!"

Okay, well, if you don't know what to do, talk about it, brainstorm some options and between the two of you a third option will eventually appear if you're open-minded and looking for it. In this example it wasn't really about being late. It was about needing some advance warning to hold off an expensive, wonderful dinner that the sender was preparing. So then you could brainstorm that. In this situation, you could come up with the idea of text messaging, which wouldn't interfere with the meeting. Most cell phones even have pre-saved messages that say "running late" or "in a meeting," which can be sent quickly, easily, and unobtrusively in a few seconds.

The receiver's role in negotiating is to help the sender identify a solution that meets their need that the receiver is able to do. Realize that it's not about you. Be curious, listening and supporting compassionately by mirroring back and really wanting to understand what the sender's issue is, and maybe coaching by asking, "Do you have a request? What is it that you need from me?" Help the sender identify and communicate what they need that would resolve the issue for them.

Never Say No

One last thing for the receiver about requesting and negotiation: if your partner makes a request of you, my suggestion is never say no. I like to think of this as being positive. Instead of shooting down what doesn't work for you, counter-propose something that would work for you. It doesn't feel good to



Never say "no"
(Counter propose)

hear the word No- "Nope, sorry, can't do that ". It is much more productive and loving to say, "Well honey, you know I'd really like to do that, I'm not sure I can do it that way, how about this?"

So counter-propose something that you can do that would meet their needs. When I talk to couples about this I suggest that they do this in all areas of their lives, and that they even make a pact with each other. I've had couples when I suggest this, look at each other, shake hands and say "Yes! We agree! Never say no!"

For example, if someone is in the mood for sex and the other one is not, instead of saying no and rejecting, then that partner can counter-propose. "Well, how about in the morning?" So it's a very positive way of being in a relationship, being safe and trusting that your partner will receive you, and listen to you, and be positively responsive to you when you have a request or a need or an issue and that they won't say "No" to you. So I highly recommend making this pact and having that attitude with everyone, especially your kids. If your 5 year old sees a television commercial and then says, "Mommy, mommy, can we go to Disneyland tomorrow?" You could say "No, you have school tomorrow." Or, you can say, "Disneyland would be a lot of fun. You know what? We're going to Disneyland this summer!" Instead of saying "No" and what you can't do and why you can't do it, I suggest to respond with what you can do, when, where and how

Steps Seven and Eight: Agree and Follow Through

And so in step 6 you negotiate, then in Step 7 you agree on a solution that works, truly works for both of you that meets the need of the sender that the receiver gladly is able to do. Then the final step, Step 8 in The Communication Map is to follow through. And that's how you know it's a plan that works. That's how you know it's a commitment that will stick. I make a distinction between a commitment and a promise. A promise is when you make an agreement that you intend to keep, and a commitment is where you actually show up and do it. A promise is a verbal statement of intent, a kind of internal commitment that you fully intend to keep, and a commitment involves action. You might with all good intentions make a promise, and yet not keep it for a variety of reasons. Assuming sincere positive intent of both parties, I propose that if you weren't able to keep the agreement, it's probably not your fault: it's because it was not a good agreement. The definition of a good agreement in Step 7 is one that you can keep that works for both of you, which you sometimes won't know until you give it a try in Step 8.

A good agreement is one that you can keep, that you want to keep, because it's doable for you, and you care about your partner, and you want them to be happy. If the follow through doesn't happen the issue will repeat itself, and you go back to the drawing board and come up with a plan that works for both of you that you can do.

Final Thoughts About The Communication Map



It's important in this process to forgive each other for being human, to be patient with each other and the process, for the receiver to learn how to listen and learn how to not take it personally. For the sender to learn how to be clear about what's going on for them, and to recognize when they're hitting a Road Block and to bounce back from that and get back on track. There is no such thing as perfection, so don't be hard on yourself or your partner. What matters is your positive intent and applying The Communication Map as best you can. Just by understanding this process and practicing these steps over time you'll find yourself bouncing back from Road Blocks sooner and sooner, until the day comes that you rarely, if ever, hit a Road Block any more.

However, some couples have hard-to-solve or unsolvable problems that require professional intervention, so if The Communication Map isn't working for you with your best effort, it may be time to get some help.

As you can see, The Communication Map is pretty simple. It provides structure and makes something very intangible, words and hot air going back and forth, and makes it tangible and clear. If you're the one with the issue or problem, you're the sender, and your goal is to identify and communicate your issue clearly and make a request about it. Issue/request, issue/request, issue/request. If you're the receiver your job is to not take the sender's issue personally and support them to identify what it is and make a request about it.

For most functional couples with basic communication skills, enough emotional maturity to manage their emotional reactivity and bounce back from hitting a Road Block, this is all that's needed to effectively address issues big and small and prevent unproductive conflict so you can enjoy your life together

and grow your love, trust, connection and intimacy.

I suggest putting The Communication Map in a visible spot in your home or office so that you can refer to it on the spur of the moment and remind yourself how to respond to a potentially conflictual situation. Keep it handy and when you or your partner is experiencing an issue, just grab it and put it in front of you, follow the structure and within a few short minutes you'll be back in connection. You have a choice in how to handle an issue, and as long as you have a choice you might as well choose what works and not repeat the unproductive pattern over and over again because behavior does follow patterns. Nothing ever happens just once. So, once you make this choice, and you do that over and over again, you'll develop the skill of being able to restore connection anytime you need to, and that is how to have a successful relationship.

Top Five Communication Tips for Couples

Tip #1: Use the Three Magic Words of Listening: "Is there more?"

First, there are three magic words when you're listening to somebody. Usually we want to insert what we think, but if you're listening with curiosity you'll ask, "Is there more?" And what is so surprising when somebody says that to you is, you usually say, "Well, yeah there is!" It's so contrary to what we usually do, as our partner will say something, and then you want to say back what's on our mind about that. And it is far more effective just to listen, take it in, and help your partner say even more about what's going on for them until it's all out, kind of like peeling away the layers of the onion, and then respond to it. If you care about your partner and want a great relationship with them, you'll be a good listener and invite them to share all they need to with you by asking them "Is there more?"

And if you're wondering what the Three Magic Words of Speaking might be, I suggest "I care about you" or "I love you." Because when you're upset at your partner and you have some feelings and some thoughts that are challenging, it's always helpful to be in touch with and communicate, "Yeah, you know you're my partner and I love you, but I'm really pissed at you right now."

Tip #2: It's Not About You!

This strategy is to realize, "It's not about you." And we covered this earlier in talking about The Communication Map. If your partner is experiencing an issue, it's their issue, they own it. It's not about you, don't take it personally. And that actually makes it easier to be the receiver, if you're not taking it personally. It's like, "OK, I love you, I want you to be happy. So, tell me what's on your mind and we'll see how we can resolve this." And when we take it

personally, get defensive and make it about us, we're not able to do that.

Tip #3: It's All About You!

When we're upset about something it's human nature to direct our attention to the person who stimulated it for us as if it's their fault that we're upset. But, the truth is in the same situation there are some people who would be upset about that, and others who wouldn't." So, the reason we're upset is about us, not really the situation or behavior. I like the idea of the 90/10 formula... if you're upset about something, 90 percent of the emotional energy is related to the past, and only 10 percent is in the present.

Another paradigm that I like is, Facts, Judgments, and Feelings, and to be able to be clear and separate them out. In our example, the facts are that you're late, you usually come home at 5:00 and now it's 7:00 and you didn't call. And then the judgments are opinions and interpretations like you're wrong, and you're bad, and you're inconsiderate, and you're a jerk, and you shouldn't do that. The feelings are anger, anxiety, fear, abandonment. When we confuse them and when we bundle them all up, and we just communicate them in a diatribe, "You're late, it's 7:00 and you didn't call, dinner is ruined and that's the most inconsiderate thing that I've ever experienced in my life," and on and on. Our communication doesn't work very well when we simply react.

Being conscious and separating the facts from the judgments and the feelings allows us to have more choice in how we respond to the situation and avoid hitting the wall.

Tip #4: Turn Complaints into Requests

Number four of my Top five Communication Tips for Couples is to, "Turn complaints into requests." And we talked about requesting being the most important communication skill there is. We have many, many, many needs. It is impossible that they're all going to be met all the time. So, when you have an unmet need and you experience an issue, we need to be able to make a request about that, respectfully, in connection with our partner that will create a

win-win that does not make our partner wrong and bad. And it's important that we approach this in a positive and productive manner, by requesting instead of complaining, or expecting mind-reading, or coercing, or criticizing, or threatening, entitlement or demanding.

Tip #5: Tell Your Truth

Communication tip number five is "Tell your truth." The Nine Rules of the Road of The Communication Map are so important that it creates the kind of safety that you need to be able to tell your truth, which is really being authentic with your partner about your thoughts, your feelings, your needs, your wants, all of that. And my experience in working with couples is that it's often scary for them: it's a big risk to say what you're really thinking, feeling, wanting and needing. However, intimacy requires telling your truth. Intimacy means, "into me I see." So, when we're inviting someone to be intimate with us, we're inviting them to see inside us, what our world is like, and we want to be respected and loved for who we really are.

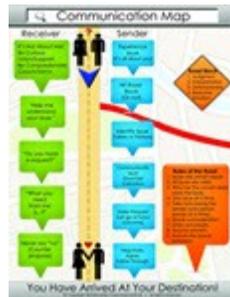
Intimacy is what real connection and love is all about. And we can't do that if we're not telling each other the truth. And the main reasons why people don't tell the truth to each other are that they fear conflict, that they don't want to hurt their partner, or that they don't want to have an argument with their partner. They want everything to be OK, and they fear that if they tell the truth, that it's not going to be OK. If you use The Communication Map you will have a structure that allows you to express any issue and get your need met; it doesn't have to be an argument, it doesn't have to be a conflict, and it doesn't have to feel bad. So, go ahead and practice telling your truth, even if it's scary. Because that's where true connection and intimacy comes from.

Closing Notes

I hope you will take The Communication Map, and use it in all your relationships, especially your intimate relationships, so that from now on you'll always have a way to reconnect with your partner when there is an unmet need and an issue; simple, effective, and practical.

But please remember that I started this ebook saying that The Communication Map is foundational, it's about functioning first and that we need to survive before we can thrive. I hope this is the beginning, not the end, of enhancing your ability to have successful relationships and that you will build on this with more advanced communication and relationship skills (see next page for some great, free resources). I sincerely hope The Communication Map will help you experience happy, loving, and fulfilling relationships.

What's Next?



ORDER your copy of The Communication Map today!
\$12.95 for two copies of the laminated version

Buy Now



Or order [here](#)



DOWNLOAD this free program for couples:

Beyond Happily Ever After:

5 Strategies for a Radical Relationship

www.relationshipcoachinginstitute.com/beyond-happily-ever-after-download



JOIN the Together Forever Club!

www.togetherforeverclub.com



LEARN My All-Time Favorite

Relationship Tool for Couples

(other than The Communication Map!)

www.relationshipcoachinginstitute.com/my-all-time-favorite-tool-for-couples



DISCOVER how to have a Radical Marriage

www.radicalmarriage.com



EXPLORE these great FREE resources for couples:

www.coupleforlife.com/free-stuff



VISIT our blog for the latest news!

www.relationshipcoachinginstitute.com/topics/blog



FIND a relationship coach!

relationshipcoachfinder.com



Interested in becoming a Relationship Coach?

GET your FREE Relationship Coach Starter Kit!

www.relationshipcoachinginstitute.com