

# Relationship Rehab Show

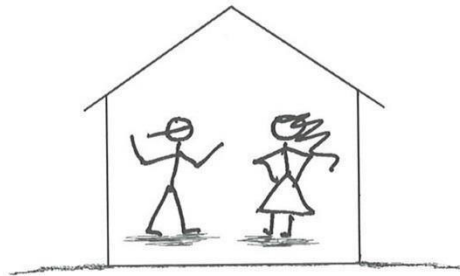
FREE DOWNLOAD #9

Communication That Doesn't Work

Taught in [How to Stay Married & Love It!](#) and the [Millionaire Marriage Club](#).

**WE JUST CAN'T COMMUNICATE!**

Chapter One from [Communication Elixirs](#) by Nancy Landrum



I've heard hundreds of couples say to me, "We just can't communicate!" I've heard parents say about their child, "He won't listen to me!" I've heard adult children say about his or her parent, "She just doesn't understand!" or, "He's so unreasonable!" Employees complain, "My boss doesn't listen to me!" A customer rants, "You don't understand!" I've sometimes said those things myself!

Each of the relationships described above is built around a core of love and/or a need for some level of connection, either the need for emotional connection or the successful conduction of business. Yet the experience is sometimes one of pain and frustration. Poor communication is cited as one of the most common causes of divorce. Even when other reasons are given, the inability to communicate effectively often exacerbates the issues rather than helping to resolve them. Lack of effective communication creates a sense of isolation, frustration, and disconnection in the most mundane daily interactions, whether between loved ones or in communications between co-workers or with a boss and employee.

Each of us carries around in us a tool box filled with communication tools that we collected as they were modeled for us as children. Some additional tools have, no doubt, been added as we watched TV or heard others on the playground or on the job. Some of you may have even taken communication classes in school or read books about salesmanship.

The questions that need to be asked are "Do these tools create the interpersonal relationships that I want? Is how I speak or listen or negotiate differences helping to build a successful relationship or are my methods contributing to a communication breakdown?"

## A METAPHOR

I own a few rental properties. I recently went to a vacated house to do some painting for the new tenant.

I tried opening the door with one of the keys on my key ring that didn't have a label to identify it. Although I had another key that had the correct address label on it, I wanted to see if this unmarked key also, fit this house. When it wouldn't unlock the front door, I knew I had the wrong key. So, I used the correctly labeled key that successfully opened the door.

All of us have had some version of this “key” experience where we make course corrections based on new information. For instance, when the item we want isn’t available in one store, we go to another store. When we don’t like the look of one outfit, we choose another. If we try a new dish and find it not to our taste, in the future we eat something else.

Yet we may not be applying this course-correcting principle to our communication skills. I recall when, out of frustration, I yelled at my late husband Jim and the situation got worse, not better, I blamed Jim, not my communication method. When I sent a sarcastic put-down his way because he didn’t agree with me, and he left the house in a huff, I blamed *him*, not my sarcasm. When our arguments escalated into shouting matches, Jim and I blamed each other. We were not even aware of how poorly we listened to each other. We each only felt the frustration and hopelessness of *not* being heard, let alone understood.

We neglected to realize that, like the key that didn’t fit the lock, the communication methods we were using were not capable of opening the door to the loving connection we craved.

Does this mean that my poor communication methods are always to blame if a discussion doesn’t go well? No. I can only be responsible for respectfully using skills that manage my half of the exchange.

But since I learned and began consistently using better speaking, listening and negotiating tools, it’s amazing how my relationships have significantly improved!

### **STIR THE POT: Increase Awareness**

This book will challenge you to look at the communication tools you habitually use. You’ll examine your listening skills, your speaking skills, and how you converse with another. Starting now, I want you to notice—without self-judgment, just awareness—what happens when your communication with someone doesn’t go well. What was your tone of voice? Your facial expression? What words did you use? What was your underlying attitude toward the other person? Imagine how *you* would feel if that combination of words, body language and tone was delivered to *you*. How would you respond? What was the goal of that interaction? Was the goal achieved?

Before learning how to speak well, let’s take a look at some common communication methods that abort a healthy dialogue before it even gets started...

### **Instructions for filling out the Communication Inventory:**

- If you have a partner or spouse, print out two so each of you fills out one, scoring both of you.
- If you are single, but want to evaluate your communication methods, fill it out just for yourself.
- If you want to work on your relationship with a family member, or friend, and that person is willing to participate in learning new skills, then each of you fill out one inventory using the “partner” column for the other.

This exercise is just the beginning of learning how to communicate more effectively. More powerful skills are coming!

*Nancy Landrum*

# Communication Inventory

Taken from the book, "How to Stay Married & Love It!" by Nancy Landrum

0=Never 1=Rarely 2=Sometimes 3=Frequently

Assign the most accurate number for your exchanges in the past 14 days.

Add up your score, your spouse's score and then a total combined score.

I do:	Partner does:	I do:	Partner does:
___	___ Use "always" and "never"	___	___ Use accusatory "you"
___	___ Give unwanted advice	___	___ The silent treatment
___	___ Withdraw with hurt feelings	___	___ Use sarcasm
___	___ Blame	___	___ Make excuses
___	___ Heap on shame/guilt	___	___ Talk hopeless talk
___	___ Condemn in vague generalizations	___	___ Act like "poor me"
___	___ Slam doors/throw things	___	___ Run from conflict
___	___ Sidestep issue (i.e., change subject)	___	___ Be subservient/ passive
___	___ Insist on being in control	___	___ Call derogatory names
___	___ Refuse to assume responsibility	___	___ Bring up old business
___	___ Emotionally disconnect	___	___ Defensiveness
___	___ Compare spouse to another	___	___ Use hurtful humor
___	___ Jump from issue to issue	___	___ Embarrass in public
___	___ Use disrespectful tone of voice	___	___ Yell, scream, rage
___	___ Use threats in an attempt control	___	___ Lie
___	___ Punish by withholding affection	___	___ Intimidation/Violence
___	___ Use disparaging physical gestures	___	___ Hurtful targeted insults
___	___ Act condescending/ self-righteous	___	___ Get others to take sides
___	___ Threaten or flirt with infidelity	___	___ Force sex
___	___ Be unfaithful	___	___ Practice an addiction
___	___ = Totals	___	___ =Totals

Total of my two columns \_\_\_ + Total for partner's columns \_\_\_ = \_\_\_ Grand Total

(Possible total of 240. Higher the total=higher the conflict, lower the satisfaction.)

In day-to-day life, we make constant course-corrections based on feedback—one key doesn't work so it must be the other one—but we seldom look at the feedback from (the results produced by) our communication methods. *Every* communication is an attempt to convey thoughts, feelings or needs and can be evaluated by this standard: Does it result in more or less loving, a better or worse relationship? Will I assume full responsibility for my communication methods and change the ones that are disrespectful?

Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting a different result!  
 "Learning to communicate well requires practice, persistence, and patience, but the pay-off of a great marriage (relationship) is worth the effort." Jim Landrum