

Dysfunctional Communication

Dysfunctional communication describes the communication patterns of unhappy couples. They often do a poor job of saying what they mean, and can kitchen-sink their issues. Topics can wander off-beam and never solve the problem, or a partner can partake in mindreading. Distressed couples can listen poorly, displaying yes-butting, and can engage in cross-complaining.



PLAY PICMONIC

Kitchen-sinking

Kitchen-sink

Kitchen-sinking describes that when someone has a complaint they are rarely precise. Instead, they tend to address several topics at once. Everything but the "kitchen sink" gets dragged into the conversation.

Drifting off-beam

Drifting off-construction-beam

Drifting off-beam describes an aspect of miscommunication where the conversation wanders from topic to topic. The conversation never stays on one problem long enough to resolve it. "You're not doing what I ask right now, you're just like your mother and always take her side."

Mindreading

Mindreader

Mindreading describes what happens when partners do a poor job of hearing each other. They assume that they understand their partners' thoughts, feelings and opinions without asking. "You just said that to make me mad, to get back at me for yesterday."

Yes-butting

Yes-but

Yes-butting describes poor listening by finding something wrong or unworkable with anything their partners say. It communicates constant criticism of another's point of view. "Yes, we can try that solution, but it won't work because..."

Cross-complaining

Cross-complainers

Unhappy partners can cross-complain, meaning that they fail to acknowledge others' concerns. They respond to a complaint with one of their own, rather than express interest in what their partners have to say. "You hate how I never make the bed? Well I hate the way you eat so loudly!"