



Six Landmines for Couples

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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My friend, Richard, has been a marriage counsellor for years and is kind enough to share his ideas with me. He has narrowed relationship problems into six specific categories and claims that if you can identify the areas of concern you will have a framework into which you can develop strategies for change.

Richard's template includes problems with:

Communications - On almost a daily basis I hear my clients complain that s/he didn't listen, talk, understand or follow through. Communicating with others takes effort. It involves words, tone and body language - each of which relays messages to the other person. Even silence is a form of communication.

Money - Some people like to save, and others like to spend! It sounds simple unless you're married to your opposite in this area. I have noticed that people tend to act out their values with money. For example, someone who enjoys time at a resort with family might purchase a boat while his/her partner who places more value on the future may choose to buy RESPs.

Sex - Too much, too little, with the wrong person, at the wrong time, in the wrong place or can't? Frequently, clients will tell me that sex is the problem and I reply by stating that it is the result or consequence of problems in the relationship.

Children - Each of us brings our history with us when we enter into a relationship and often base our parenting on what we know from our childhood. Two parents - two different experiences. This can cause a number of problems not to mention the fact that children are extremely good at figuring out parenting weaknesses and capitalize on them.

Boundaries - Imagine what your life would be like if you were a football field. No fences or physical barriers to stop adults, children or animals from racing across. Sometimes people have problems establishing physical or emotional boundaries which will protect them or their family members.

Division of Labour - Who cleans your toilet? Who cooks the meals and does the driving, laundry or yard work? We live in a world where everyone seems to be "too busy". This requires cooperation and planning to prevent burnout and resentment.

Psychologists help individuals, couples, groups and organizations to problem-solve. Most of the problems that any of the referrals focus on would fall into one of these six categories. Richard's pretty smart, isn't he?

If you are struggling in any of these categories help is only a telephone call away. See if there is a Richard in your community who can help you to develop strategies for change.