**Murder Mystery – 5.4(b) Negative Communication**

**Purpose**:

* This activity gets students collaborating and sharing information to try to solve a puzzle: how negative communication patterns can affect a marriage.
* It is beneficial for quiet students who often don’t contribute to discussions.

**Details**

* Key information is put on individual cards (see next page)
* These are given to small groups (of about 3 students).
* All members of the group have the same amount of cards (18 cards in total, so 6 each if working in groups of three).
* They’re not allowed to read from others’ cards, only their own – they have to listen to everyone’s contributions to solve the puzzle.
* It can be competitive if you want – just tell them the first team who finishes wins a prize.

**Possible Answer/s**:

*Stonewalling/withdrawing from an argument means that the issue is never resolved. The demander (usually the wife) still feels unsatisfied that the issue hasn’t been dealt with. This could lead to even more “demanding” which will result in more stonewalling from the other partner, so the situation gets worse and not better. If this pattern continues over a long period of time, it’s likely that marital satisfaction will decrease.*

*It can also increase the negative: positive communication ratio, which will increase the likelihood of the couple divorcing.*

More info on this blog post

<https://ibpsych.themantic-education.com/2017/08/28/lesson-idea-murder-mystery-who-killed-the-marriage/>

*One group gets one set of cards (you’ll need to cut these out).*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The term “marriage dissolution” refers to separation or divorce. | Gottman claims he can predict divorce with over 90% accuracy. | Stonewalling means an issue is never resolved, so the “demanding” partner is unsatisfied and may continue to want to address the issue. |
| Gottman claims he can predict divorce within five minutes of an observation of a couple by observing their communication patterns. | The demand/withdraw communication pattern is also called the “wife demand/husband withdraw.” | Gottman and Krokoff (1989) found a negative correlation between husband withdrawal and marital satisfaction. |
| The “demand” is when one partner wants to deal with an issue. | The “withdraw” is when one partner removes themselves from discussing an issue. | The demand/withdraw pattern could increase negative to positive ratios of communication. |
| “Stonewalling” is what Gottman calls removing oneself from discussing an issue. | Research shows that the withdraw/demand leads to marital dissatisfaction. | 80% of stonewallers are males (according to Gottman’s research). |
| 7% of regulated couples in Gottman’s research divorced during the four year period of the study. | 19% of non-regulated couples in Gottman’s study divorced during the four year period of the study. | Stonewalling is a defence pattern that people (mostly males) use to reduce their physiological arousal and stress during emotional discussions. |
| Non-regulated couples might be showing the demand/withdraw pattern. | Stonewalling (or withdrawing) might increase the “demand” made by one partner (usually the wife). | Being open to discuss an issue could bring couples closer and result in a higher ratio of positive to negative pieces of communication. |