

COMMUNICATION. Proper communication is a requisite for a functioning society; without it we can't run our economic, cultural and judicial systems, or - for that matter - our relationships. But surprisingly we're ill-equipped for adequate communication. **A**s we listen to others, we often only hear what we want to hear. We do not ensure that what we may think to be the core of an issue is indeed what the other party intended to communicate. **D**uring my divorce our counsellor taught me a valuable lesson: My wife and I had to put in simple terms what we thought about our marriage; but once she had made her point I was not to reply - instead I was to repeat what I thought she had just said. **I**t was extraordinary to realise how badly we communicated; it took a half a dozen repeats - a whole counselling session - for both of us to work out what the other wanted to communicate.

An important concern with successful communication is to not mix issues.

If your partner says "you never do any housework," it could be tempting to reply, "and you spend hours on the phone."

This is not helpful - it is crucial to deal with just one issue at any one time.