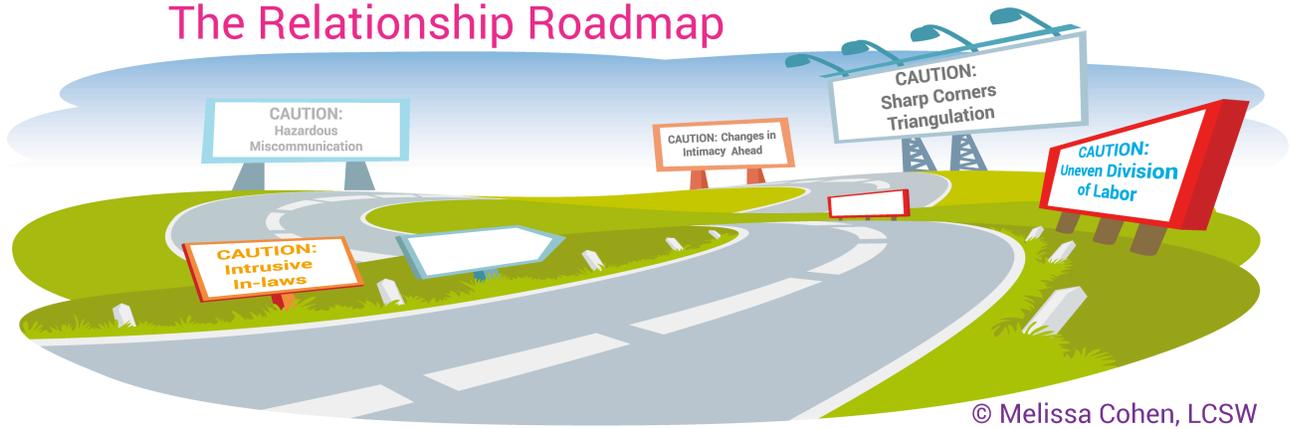


The Relationship Roadmap



Drivers Ed: Learning to communicate.

Lack of communication is like leaving your engine running with your car in park.

1. You are stuck and you've stopped trying to move forward.
2. It is bad for the environment
3. You can't think clearly
4. If you breathe it long enough, it will kill your relationship.

Communication is like learning to drive. It is a skill that requires practice to achieve mastery, especially if you were not taught the skills as a child.

Rules of the road:

1. It's not the what it's the how.
2. Nobody likes a Know It All.
3. Most of us actually can't read minds.
4. Everyone gets a do-over

Conflict is normal in all relationships, even your relationship with yourself.

How to move from conflict to compromise.

Rules:

NO SKIPPING STEPS! Understanding must precede problem-solving.

The Relationship Roadmap



When you are the speaker:

1. Describe the situation without criticism or blame.
However justified you feel in blaming your partner, this approach is not effective because it builds resentment and defensiveness
2. Make statements that start with I instead of you. I statements are less likely to be critical. Of course you can come up with I statements that thwart this general rule, like "I think you are a jerk" but we both know that is not going to lead to a productive conversation.
3. Be clear. Asking for "support," will not produce a desired effect because it doesn't tell the listener what actions to take to improve the situation.
4. Don't let problems build-up. When we store problems, they escalate in our minds. Often, we avoid conflict only to burst later, which causes emotional flooding for both parties. At that point, no productive conversation can take place.

The Relationship Roadmap



When you are the listener:

1. Focus on understanding your partner's perspective.
2. Postpone persuasion or defending yourself.
3. Ask questions but maintain the focus on your partner's experience.
4. Validate that your partner has a right to his/her point of view.

Compromise: Identify your core needs that must be honored and your areas of flexibility.

Problem-Solving: Make an agreement or plan of action that honors both partners' needs.

All skills require practice to achieve mastery. You must practice these skills, even if it is hard or awkward. The more you practice, the easier it becomes.