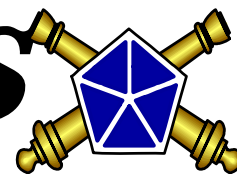




# PREP TIMES

USAREUR  
FREEDOM'S  
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
AN ARMY FORWARD  
ANY MISSION, ANYWHERE!



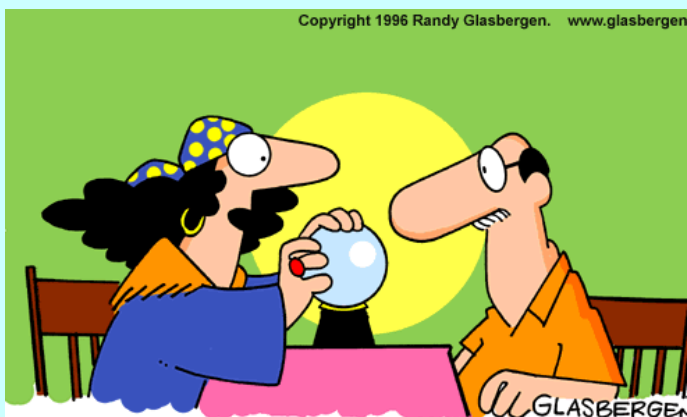
ISSUE SEVEN

V CORPS ARTILLERY MINISTRY TEAM

OEF/OIF

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS

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**"I'm getting a message from your dear, departed wife. She says it's okay if you leave the seat up now."**

### MESSAGE RECEIVED!

Our first apartment in Springfield, Illinois was a tiny, one bedroom, one bath, one kitchen, one living room place on North 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Married just two weeks, we moved in and set up our first home as husband and wife. After an exhausting day, we finally crashed about midnight. A few hours later, the stillness of the night was shattered by a loud scream. The bedroom light snapped on and I jumped up in panic. There stood my wife, the back of her nightgown dripping wet. With a firm and somewhat angry tone she uttered the words that I shall forever remember... "YOU DIDN'T PUT THE TOILET SEAT DOWN!" Needless to say, the memory of that moment has stuck with me all these many years. The only reason I was not hospitalized that night was that I was able to control the urge to burst into laughter. The message was clear. The intent was clear. And it was, as we say in the military, lima/charlie short for "LOUD and CLEAR".

Communication is a two-way process. Not only do the words need to be transmitted accurately, but they must also be received accurately. This issue addresses the critical value of effective communication and provides some ways to improve your skills.

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FINAL ISSUE: **PRIORITIZING**

### IMAGINE...NO RULES!

If you watch sports, you will notice that in nearly every athletic event, there are referees, judges, umpires, or officials. The reason is that every competition has its own rules that must be followed for fairness and safety. Imagine a football or hockey game with no officials. What would happen in a boxing or wrestling match without a referee? Chaos would erupt and player injuries would increase.

Equally important are rules for good communications. Below are some that I found on a California State University website that may be useful.

1. Let the other person know that he/she is important. Their feelings are important.
2. Avoid name calling and demeaning the other person, which will only make the other person defensive. Don't criticize a person; discuss specific aspects of his/her behavior rather than criticizing.
3. Talk in a manner that is clear and specific. Ask for clarification and feedback. Avoid saying, "You always.....," or "You never.....". Be direct and honest. Say what you mean, mean what you say.
4. Don't tell the other person what he/she is thinking or feeling. The only way to know is to ask.
5. Stay focused on one issue at time, and work through to resolution. Don't "pile on" one issue on top of another.
6. Don't bring up past issues. Try to let go of past issues. Work towards understanding how your partner feels, share your honest feelings, and work toward compromise and building future trust.
7. When differences arise, look for compromises rather than right-wrong, good-bad categories. Work towards solutions. Present ideas on how to improve the situation or how to make things better.
8. Use "I feel" messages instead of "You are" messages. For example, say, "I feel hurt when you ignore me!" but do not say, "You are selfish and inconsiderate for ignoring me."
9. Understand that we have different perceptions of the same event or experience. Therefore, don't waste time arguing over who is right or wrong. The task is to understand the other person's perception and to work towards solutions.

(CONTINUED ON page 2)

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## IMAGINE...NO RULES (continued from page 1)

- Should the discussion escalate and become destructive, either person may suggest that the discussion be stopped and resumed at a later date and time. Then set that time and stick to it.
- Deal with problems as they arise, or set a time to deal with the problem. Don't allow the problems to build until there is a major blowup.

Rules are essential in sports, business, society, and in the family. Often couples resort to unfair fighting by attacking their spouse's self-esteem or by bringing up the past, or by "piling on". If you need help, contact a counselor or your unit chaplain.

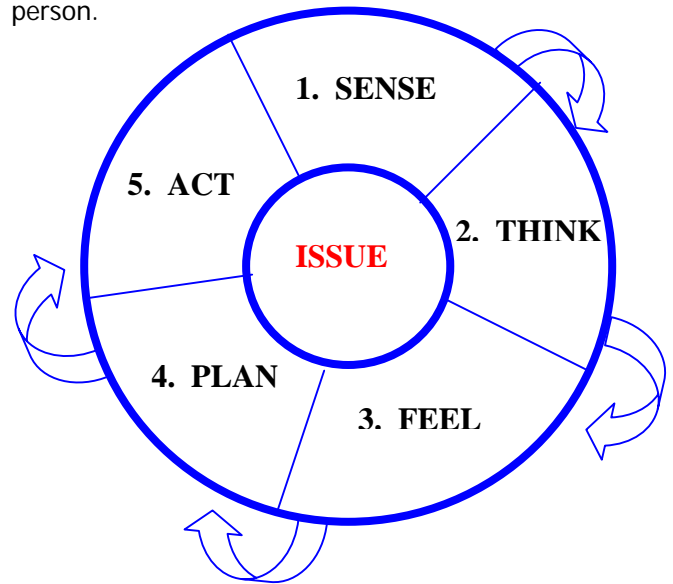


## JUST SPINNING OUR WHEELS

Do you occasionally feel like conversations are repetitious and mechanical? Are your attempts at effective communications becoming an exercise in "spinning wheels"? There can be some structure to your communication that may help. If you use a technique developed by *Couples Communication* at the University of Minnesota Study Center.



The structure is simple. Couples can improve their communication when discussing an issue by following a five step approach using the awareness wheel below. The first rule is to always speak with "I" messages. Always speak for yourself, not the other person.



**STEP 1** is to communicate what you sense, namely what you see and hear concerning the issue. This is raw data. "I see" or "I hear". Then you check out what the other person sees or hears on the issue.

**STEP 2** is what "I think" about it. This is the interpretation of the raw data. Remember, your partner may think differently.

**STEP 3** communicates how "I feel". Most people can list 4 or 5 emotions off the top of their heads. However, there are over a hundred different human emotions. Problems occur when we inaccurately describe how we genuinely feel. We may be anxious and we call it angry. This leads to defensiveness and tension.

**STEP 4** is what "I plan" to do regarding the issue. How do I plan to resolve it? Finally...

**STEP 5** is my action.

As we communicate using the awareness wheel we recognize that the other significant person will have their own sensing, thinking, feeling, plan, and actions. Effective communication means checking out the other's awareness and discussing it.

Using this technique is awkward and clumsy at first because we all too often assume that the other person senses, thinks, and feels as we do. There are some great websites that can assist in this process.