

## THE HARSH STARTUP QUESTIONNAIRE

To get a sense of whether harsh startup is a problem in your marriage, answer the following questions.

Read each statement and circle T for "true" or F for "false."

When we begin to discuss our marital issues:

1. My partner is often very critical of me. T F
2. I hate the way my partner raises an issue. T F
3. Arguments often seem to come out of nowhere. T F
4. Before I know it, we are in a fight. T F
5. When my partner complains, I feel picked on. T F
6. I seem to always get blamed for issues. T F
7. My partner is negative all out of proportion. T F
8. I feel I have to ward off personal attacks. T F
9. I often have to deny charges leveled against me. T F
10. My partner's feelings are too easily hurt. T F
11. What goes wrong is often not my responsibility. T F
12. My spouse criticizes my personality. T F
13. Issues get raised in an insulting manner. T F
14. My partner will at times complain in a smug or superior way. T F
15. I have just about had it with all this negativity between us. T F
16. I feel basically disrespected when my partner complains. T F
17. I just want to leave the scene when complaints arise. T F
18. Our calm is suddenly shattered. T F
19. I find my partner's negativity unnerving and unsettling. T F
20. I think my partner can be totally irrational. T F

Scoring: Give yourself one point for each "true" answer.

Under 5: This is an area of strength in your marriage. Your chances of resolving your conflict or learning to manage it successfully together are dramatically increased.

5 or above: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Your score suggests that when you address areas of disagreement with your spouse, one of you tends to be harsh. Here are some suggestions on softening the startup.

- Complain but don't blame.
- Make statements that start with "I" instead of "You."
- Describe what is happening, don't evaluate or judge.
- Be clear.
- Be polite.
- Be appreciative.
- Don't store things up.