

Complaint or Criticism: Do You Know the Difference?

In their book [Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts](#), Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott make a distinction between **complaints** and **criticisms** that all of us would be wise to understand.

A complaint focuses on something you'd like to be different. A criticism focuses on a person's character or personality. Criticism usually involves blaming. A complaint usually starts with "I" and a criticism usually starts with "you". For example, a complaint might be "I wish you'd let me know when you're going to be late getting home from work." A criticism would be, "You never call to tell me when you'll be late."

The simple fact is, all of us will respond better to a complaint than a criticism. If you want your spouse to hear you and respond in a positive way, be sure to use a complaint and not a criticism. A continual use of criticism will hurt your spouse and tear down your relationship.

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott advise couples to use a simple "X, Y, Z" formula to help them state their feelings. You fill in the blanks with your complaint: "In situation X, when you do Y, I feel Z. For example, "Last weekend (X) when you spent over \$200 without consulting me (Y), I felt unimportant and angry (Z). It's a simple guide to help us remember how to state our complaints without criticizing.



About the Author: *Carrie Hoffman is a professionally trained Life Coach, specializing in helping couples build and maintain a strong marriage during their busiest parenting years. She provides coaching for couples and has spoken at numerous moms' groups in the Denver area. If you enjoyed this article, visit www.EmbraceLifeCoach.com to receive a FREE Special Report "How to Speak so Your Spouse Will Listen."*
You can also contact Carrie at Info@EmbraceLifeCoach.com or 303-916-7845 for a complimentary consultation if you are curious about relationship coaching.

