



## KEEP UP THE PROBLEM-SOLVING: CHOOSE A POSITIVE PING PONG EFFECT.

Some people call it communication. For a few moments, call it the "ping pong ball" effect.

One person starts the conversation, "Why are you late? You are always late. You are just trying to control me through the kids." PING. ●

The other person responds, "You jerk. The next time you want to take them to the ball game, forget it." PONG. ●

And back to the first person, "Sure - you had no idea the roads were slippery. It's only been snowing for two hours." PING. ●

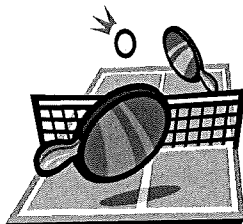
Then to the second person, "You are so unreasonable - you are the most unreasonable person I know." PONG. ●

Back to the first person, "It's your fault for not leaving earlier." PING. ●

These two people illustrate the negative ping pong ball effect, where the communication goes from bad to worse and then worst. Finally, someone explodes in anger, the car door is slammed shut, and there is a total break down of communication.

Go back to the illustration and see if you can identify the following negative pings and pongs:

- insulting
- blaming
- name calling
- accusing
- sarcasm
- threatening
- globalizing (hint: look for "always" or "never")



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### Checklist For The Upcoming Two Months

Confirm winter break and winter holiday parenting time schedules.

Check when semester report cards come out. Contact the teacher or school to arrange for your own copy.

Plan your (new) holiday traditions. Think simple, low-cost and personal connections.

Consider giving a holiday gift for your child's future—savings bonds, money for savings, plus something to build your child's own holiday celebrations such as one holiday ornament each year.

Use the holidays to teach your children kindness, generosity and compassion—give extra money at church, help wrap gifts for the needy, sponsor a holiday meal or donate holiday items to a food shelf.

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The problem with negative ping pong effect is that it diverts the communicator's attention from the problem. Can you tell from the above conversation what the problem was with being late? Pick from the following:

- a. The second speaker was an hour late bringing the flower girl to the wedding of the first speaker.
- b. Can't tell.
- c. No problem; these people just like to fight.
- d. The second speaker was 5 minutes late bringing the kids for a routine visitation.

Any conversation can be re-scripted. Imagine the positive ping pong effect if the above conversation had started with "I'm so glad you are here - the roads must be terrible. When did you start out?"

Most conversations can also be re-directed even if they start out with a negative ping. Let's say the first speaker persisted in starting the conversation with "Why are you late? You're always late. You're just trying to control me through the kids." PING. ●

"I am so sorry. The roads are terrible. The trip took twice as long as I thought it would." PONG. ●

Now the first speaker has a choice; the response could be either a negative ping or a positive one. Let's choose the more challenging and have the first speaker say, "Sure - you had no idea the roads were slippery. It's only been snowing for two hours." PING. ●

The second speaker however is dedicated to being positive and now responds, "I guess next time I'll leave earlier when it's snowing. I know it's important to you for the kids to be on time so you can get them to their swimming lesson." PONG. ●

With only one of the speakers keeping his/her responses to positive ones, now can you tell what the problem was with being late?

If you keep communicating positively, you can identify a problem. When you can identify a problem you can find a solution.

Will the communicators in the first illustration ever find a solution to their dilemma? Hard to say, isn't it?

ANSWERS TO PAGE 1 QUESTION:

Globalizing	"You're always late."
Accusing	"You're just trying to control me through the kids."
Name-calling	"You jerk."
Threatening	"The next time you want to take them to the ball game, forget it."
Insulting	"You are the most unreasonable person I know".
Sarcasm	"Sure -- you had <u>no</u> idea the roads were slippery - it's <u>only</u> been snowing for 2 hours."
Blaming	"It's your fault for not leaving earlier."

# HOW LONG SHOULD YOU KEEP IMPORTANT PAPERS?

In divorces, one side often wishes he/she had kept every single financial statement from the past 25 years of the marriage.

The ability to document a long history of financial transactions may be helpful to establishing a claim, for example, that your savings account really was the inheritance from your grandmother.

For most people for ordinary purposes, such voluminous paperwork is not necessary. Money magazine (October 2004) recommends the following criteria for keeping records:

**ONE MONTH:** Credit-card and ATM receipts (or until you get your monthly

statement); receipts for small ticket items

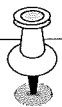
as long as they can be returned (likely 30 days).



**ONE YEAR:** Paid utility bills, monthly and quarterly bank, brokerage and credit-card statements (or until you get the year-end one); and paycheck stubs until you get your W-2.

**SEVEN YEARS:** Tax returns, receipts for major purchases and year-end credit card, bank and brokerage statements.

**INDEFINITELY:** Medical records, receipts for home improvements, mortgage documents, current insurance policies and warranties until they expire.



*Children seldom misquote you. In fact, they usually repeat word for word what you shouldn't have said.*

*Rose Abshire*



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