



SEPARATION

What can you do about this epidemic?

An Aptitude Survey

written by Rob Koch for D.I.D.S.S.



Family Breakdown can be one of the most devastating and paralyzing experiences known to man. It can also be overwhelming and damaging to those who want to be part of the solution to this complex epidemic. How can you help someone get through it? How can we correct the systems that may have hindered, rather than helped, the thousands of families per year who break up? This huge social problem facing our nation requires a whole range of professions, personalities, passions and people, some who may have experienced separation themselves. YOU have valuable skills and experience to contribute!

**No one person alone can cure the epidemic.
No one person alone can solve a separation, nor prevent it from happening again.
But we CAN do our part and work together as a team.**

This simple diagnostic tool will help you discern the ideal role/s for you.

1. Respond to each statement below according to the following scale.
2. Put the number in the blank before each statement.
3. Go with your initial response, relating it to your life experience in general.
4. Transfer the numbers you gave for each assessment statement to the grid on the final page.
5. Total each row then rank the three highest in the final column.
6. Read the Overview of Roles and answer the questions below the score sheet.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1		In most group settings I seem to take charge.
2		I often find myself mediating between people in conflict.
3		I am keen to see people go home from a group having learned something.
4		Statistics seem to fascinate me.
5		I love getting alongside someone who needs practical help.
6		I would jump at the chance at meeting with politicians or media to inform them of issues.
7		My concern is that 'hurt people hurt people' and I want to help them deal with their pain.
8		When someone is sharing at a group I like to look at them and let them know I hear them.
9		My ear is usually tuned to the news for the latest developments in family law and child support.
10		I'm no leader or speaker but I can certainly make their job easier by doing simple tasks.
11		My primary concern is the well-being of the children in any family breakdown or conflict.
12		Getting our organization or group well-resourced, connected and funded is one of my top priorities.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

13		In groups I am keen to draw people out rather than let one person dominate.
14		I would love more opportunities to help separating couples avoid the legal system.
15		I love to read books and pass onto others helpful principles and strategies.
16		To work alone compiling reports and analyzing trends is something I really enjoy.
17		I make myself available to individuals so they can benefit from my experience.
18		I have been known to rattle some cages and make a noise when I see injustice.
19		Reading self-help books and even psychological theories fascinates me.
20		I love connecting with people and want to get them together to socialize and have some fun.
21		I am on the mailing list of a whole range of newsletters and briefings about fathers and families.
22		Seeing an office, room or desk in chaos makes me wonder if anything really gets done.
23		I usually perform well in a crisis.
24		I don't have the level of expertise that some have but I'm happy to support the team where I can.
25		What really lights me up is seeing men getting real in a group meeting.
26		I can usually see both sides of a story when two people are in conflict.
27		I get annoyed when people make the same mistakes over and over - never learning.
28		Getting accurate data and from impartial research is so essential in issues like family violence.
29		I actually enjoy going to court with a man who needs support.
30		While I care about individuals, I prefer to spend my energy on challenging the system.
31		Groups are okay but I prefer working one-on-one with a person.
32		It really annoys me when others interrupt someone who is trying to speak from the heart.
33		It is really important that people, and those who help them, are accurately informed.
34		Taking accurate notes, gathering good data and getting reports sent off on time should be a priority.
35		I seem to intuitively know if someone is suicidal or at high risk of harming themselves or others.
36		So we need money for advertising - I'll raise the funds and get the best deal possible.
37		I am stickler for maintaining order for the greater good of the group.
38		I would consider a career in mediation to help couples to stay together, or part on better terms.
39		I have a systematic mind and love to make the complex simple for others.
40		My eyes are often fixated on studying people and wondering what makes them tick.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

41		I don't see much use in a bunch of men just spilling their guts. They need to see their kids!
42		It would thrill me to hear the news that the government has done what we campaigned for.
43		It troubles me to hear of someone's bad experiences with a counsellor – they can be so helpful!
44		When a man is obviously struggling or in pain my natural tendency is to touch and console him.
45		I seem to scour the internet and read heaps of emails then disseminate the information to others.
46		I know that the whole organization and its objectives could crash if we aren't organized.
47		Like a good triage nurse I can quickly assess where a person is at and direct them accordingly.
48		I can easily see what frontline workers need to enable them to get their job done.
49		I get frustrated when I see a group meeting floundering or badly run.
50		I get a little stressed when people are disagreeing and I often try to restore harmony.
51		Nothing thrills me more than to get feedback that a strategy I taught actually worked!
52		I like to know why people relate the way they do.
53		There aren't many services I don't know about and can help a man navigate his way through.
54		I would consider a career in politics or law just to see men get a fairer deal.
55		You can confront the system all you like but meanwhile some poor casualty needs my help.
56		I am convinced that listening, really listening, is one of the most vital ways you can help a man.
57		I tend to jump in to correct half truths or total ignorance that are shared in a group or class.
58		I like to take care of the logistics that way I know its done, and done properly!
59		Sure I could be 'at the top of the cliff building fences' but who'll be at the bottom to stop the bleeding?
60		While others say it can't be done, I can usually see a way it can, and make it happen.



Twelve Roles that Make a Team Work

RANK

1	13	25	37	49	TOTAL	A) Facilitator	
2	14	26	38	50	TOTAL	B) Mediator	
3	15	27	39	51	TOTAL	C) Educator	
4	16	28	40	52	TOTAL	D) Researcher	
5	17	29	41	53	TOTAL	E) Advocate	
6	18	30	42	54	TOTAL	F) Lobbyist	
7	19	31	43	55	TOTAL	G) Therapist	
8	20	32	44	56	TOTAL	H) Empathizer	
9	21	33	45	57	TOTAL	I) Disseminator	
10	22	34	46	58	TOTAL	J) Administrator	
11	23	35	47	59	TOTAL	K) First Aider	
12	24	36	48	60	TOTAL	L) Resourcer	

FOR EXISTING VOLUNTEERS WITH *DADS IN DISTRESS SUPPORT SERVICES*:

1. What DIDSSS role/s have you been operating in until now?
2. Has that been a comfortable fit for you? Has it sustained you or drained you?
3. How, when (and where!) can you move more into the role/s more suited to you?
4. Can you see others stepping up more if you began to value their role more?
5. In your region/group, what other roles need to be filled to be more fully functioning as an effective team, rather than as a one or two man show?

FOR THOSE CONSIDERING VOLUNTEERING WITH DIDSSS:

1. Of the three highest scoring roles which appeals to you most? Why?
2. Is this confirmed by significant others in your life?

An Overview of Roles

ROLE	FOCUS	FUNCTIONS	CONTRIBUTION	CAUTIONS
A) Facilitator	The Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May lead a DIDSS Peer Support Group • and builds a team that utilizes the contributions of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Facilitator is a leader of men and the meeting. You're it! • You don't always have the answers but you provide the opportunities and forum for men to share and learn and contribute. • Your presence there most meetings provides continuity and direction, even if you have delegated leadership to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beware of dominating. Your goal is to get others talking and listening. • You may get distracted by the process and not hear what a man is saying. • You could feel threatened by the strengths of others, or the opposite extreme, ignore their contribution. • Having regular debriefs with management or a professional counsellor will help you identify and overcome unhealthy responses, triggers and deal with stress and difficult people.
B) Mediator	Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolves conflicts within a DIDSS Group • Mediates between couples and families, or works with the dad alone to achieve a resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mediator is a valuable team member who could bring a DIDSS meeting back on track, especially if the conflict involves the Facilitator. • Your ability to help a Dad see another point of view could reduce the amount of conflict he has with his former spouse and enable him to see his children sooner for longer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could feel a failure if you cannot diffuse a conflict or prevent it from escalating. Accept the fact that some people will not budge. • While you hold fast to the DIDSS motto of there being three sides to every story, you may lose impartiality and side with the man. Be aware of the power plays and hidden agendas. • Working informally with couples can be a potential legal minefield. Consider doing a mediation course and set clear boundaries.
C) Educator	Change	<p>Teaches principles and strategies...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a DIDSS group teaching segment • or one-on-one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Educator could also be the Facilitator, but other regulars may be more experienced or knowledgeable and have wisdom to share. • A teaching segment prevents degenerating, and can constructively help others' navigate the future and understand the past'. • Your role will help build better men, better dads and better partners for their future relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beware of undermining the role of the facilitator by chiming in uninvited. • Don't promise more than you can deliver: Start small with a short 15min presentation on an agreed topic that you have a reasonable grasp of, then evaluate. • You could easily fall into the trap of giving advice and prescriptions instead of guidance and principles. Let men decide what to take on board. • It is easy to allow your own experiences to create an unbalanced and negative view point. Accept the fact that maybe you need more time (and counselling) to heal before you are ready to teach and lead others.
D) Researcher	Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examines research and media reports and presents an accurate summary. • May conduct research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Researcher operates mostly behind the scenes of the DIDSS group or organization and may only connect through cyberspace. • As one who takes a step back to examine the macro view of society, relationships and separation, your volunteer hours are invaluable spent determining the truth and what works. Without you we flounder. • DIDSS may call upon you to conduct our own research in order to be more effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By removing yourself from the coalface you may lose touch with real people and the realities they face. Compliment your macro view with more exposure to the micro view of the epidemic. Get along to a DIDSS group – not always the same one. • You could also develop a skewed view of reality by continual focus on the problem. Let's remember that around 57% of marriages <i>don't</i> fail, and of those that do around 86% can separate amicably without involving the legal system. • If this is your passion you may get frustrated that you can't explore more. Consider getting tertiary qualifications and become a professional in this field.
E) Advocate	Justice, Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists, empowers and maybe accompanies a Dad to access services and be heard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Advocate can be of enormous value to the dad in distress, and a great asset to the overworked Facilitator. • You spend one-on-one time with a Dad to provide info on accessing a service like CSA, Family Court or Mediation. • You skill him up on how to more likely get a fair hearing. • Through experience the good advocate has developed objectivity and the firmness needed to keep the Dad on task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your superior knowledge of the system & services could be a threat to the Facilitator. Be careful how you 'correct' misinformation. • Beware of conveying an 'us v's them' mentality. While weaknesses exist in the system there <i>are</i> genuine people there who do care. • Do not take over a case, but rather empower a Dad with the confidence that comes from good preparation ahead of time. • Desperate men will latch on and drain you – set clear boundaries and realistic expectations. • Your growing body of knowledge and personal contacts needs to be mapped somewhere for others to easily access if you move on.
F) Lobbyist	The System	<p>Represents the views of dads to policy makers, the public and the media.</p> <p>May even have an official role representing DIDSS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lobbyist stands at the top the cliff building fences to prevent more families becoming casualties of the System. • You are among the first to write a letter to your local politician, or put forward the plight of separated dads and kids to those who will hear. • Your sharp mind, superior verbal skills and above all, your passion tempered with patience will eventually make a difference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can be a pain in the neck at a DIDSS meeting. It is not the forum to stand on your soapbox. Be there to listen and to reassure men that these issues are being addressed at the macro level. • Collect stories but before sending them up the line, check the facts. • Be careful how you represent the cause – avoid a victim mentality. Be balanced and respectful. • Avoid wasting time and energy -Choose your 'podium' carefully; look for strategic and creative opportunities. Some men have been involved in films, docs and promos. Others have shown the films or distributed them.

An Overview of Roles (continued)

ROLE	FOCUS	FUNCTIONS	CONTRIBUTION	CAUTIONS
G) Therapist	Healing	Helps a Dad examine the past, learn from it and move on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Therapist may be a counsellor or just someone with a good heart, perceptive insight and superior interpersonal skills. • You know that time alone does not heal the broken-hearted, the guilt-ridden, the wounded or wounding man. • Men, their families (current and future) benefit immensely from your committed, caring and confronting intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a wounded-healer yourself, you may find it painful when similar memories are triggered. Be aware of how your own story is affecting the counselling process, or being affected. Have regular debriefs with a professional counsellor. • It is common to ignore your own advice; apply the principle or strategy to yourself first where applicable. If <i>you</i> can't live up to it, how can you expect others to? • You may get consumed with people's problems and take responsibility for them. There are so many traps to avoid and these are best addressed by proper training and supervision.
H) Empathizer	The individual	<p>Provides a compassionate response to a Dad in the group or one-on-one.</p> <p>Essential aptitude for the position of Field Volunteer (or 'Buddy')</p> <p>May help to get dads socializing together, with or without the kids.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Empathizer provides a good balance to some of the more task-oriented team members. • People really appreciate your superior listening skills, gentleness and compassion. • You love connecting and getting people connected. • You think beyond the DIDSS meeting to create social opportunities for men to unwind and support each other through friendship and fun. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening so intently can be very draining. Allow time after the engagement to relax, and make sure that you get your own 'love tank' filled somehow: spend time with people who give rather than take – friend, family, minister, other volunteers or your co-ordinator. • You may feel pressure to solve a situation or you may feel out of your depth, not knowing what to say. Remember your main role is console. If something more is needed connect him to someone else, and follow him up later. Make sure you are not too intense. Give space. • Many men don't want a hug. Respect that. • If you find your patience is wearing thin, or your capacity to care is waning fast - talk about it. Maybe its time for someone else to do the listening. Seek out professional help if you feel depressed or traumatized. It can happen to anyone.
I) Disseminator	Information	Informs other DIDSS and management of relevant facts, stories and opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Disseminator is the essential link that connects the macro view to the micro; you spread what is happening in society to the individuals that may be impacted. • Like the Researcher your contribution is made mostly behind the scenes of the DIDSS group or organization and you mainly connect through cyberspace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may appear to be unsocial and clinical - to put paper before people. It feels safer and easier to manage facts and figures but unless you relate to people and win their trust they are less likely to value and embrace the information you provide. If that is you, break out of your comfort zone and make the effort. Yes, you may have been hurt before but it is time to forgive and try again. • There is a danger of selective filtering of facts to fit your bias. If you are truly concerned about the truth, present all sides of the arguments without editorializing.
J) Administrator	Efficiency, Organisation	<p>Takes care of the practical issues involved in running a DIDSS group.</p> <p>May have an administrative role in Head Office or assisting Regional Co-ordinators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Administrator keeps things organized by either formally or informally fulfilling the role of Secretary of the DIDSS group, or PA to the DIDSS Team Leader or Facilitator. • Things would fall apart if you weren't in charge of venue security and bookings, taking accurate notes, collecting data, getting reports sent off, distributing mail & resources etc . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As this role has generally been undertaken by the group facilitator (to varying degrees of success) you may find it challenging to retrieve these tasks from him. He may be reluctant to let you take responsibility because he has been let down before. You will have to prove yourself trustworthy and reliable. Don't let him down. • Communication breakdown is always a possibility in any team. Best not to rely on Email alone – get on the phone or see people face to face. If you get frustrated easily with people's lack of responsiveness find another role.
K) First Aider	Health & wellbeing	<p>Helps a new Dad choose a healthy response and prioritize the way forward.</p> <p>Preferable aptitude for the position of Field Volunteer (or 'Buddy')</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The First-Aider does more than provide empathy. You get alongside a new dad in distress who may be very vulnerable, and even suicidal. • Wherever possible, you will go to great lengths to get the dad or his children to a safe place mentally and physically. • While not every man can be saved your work at the bottom of the cliff will help many get up again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will need to remind yourself and those you are helping that you are a crisis worker, not a counsellor or housing worker. Retrieval, not therapy is your role. Know what resources are out there and get him linked in asap. • You may feel personally responsible to fix each man's problem and in doing so, create a whole lot more for yourself and significant others. Get regular debriefing. • Despite your regular training in suicide prevention and intervention you could feel overwhelmed in the midst of a crisis. Don't act alone. Get in touch with your co-ordinator asap and work together with various professionals.
L) Resourcer	The Tools	<p>Identifies and secures what is needed for the success and survival of the DIDSS service now and in the future.</p> <p>May have a role in Head Office or function as a Regional Co-ordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Resourcer enables and empowers the frontline workers by opening up a supply chain of support and practical resources. • You may be focused locally or nationally, usually working behind the scenes. • Without your fundraising efforts, funding submissions, strategic contacts and powers of persuasion we would literally grind to a halt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one is more resourceful than the Resourcer. If you are doing it all what happens if you drop off the planet? Spread the load by including others wherever you can. Make it your aim to develop resourcefulness in others. • Before you develop a new resource or tool, take a good look around rather than reinventing the wheel. Chances are that chart, spreadsheet, tip sheet, booklet, brochure, manual, module or map already exists. It may need modifying first, but think of the time you will save. • Acknowledge your sources wherever you can – give credit where it is due. Never take others for granted.