

Scott Blair: Having trouble understanding your partner? This is Stay Happily Married, Episode 308.

Recording: Welcome to Stay Happily Married. Your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Scott Blair: I'm Scott Blair and I'm your host today, welcome to the show. Having trouble understanding your partner? We all go through life trying to understand who we are and what we're meant to do. We have to learn how to differentiate our needs from our wants and truly discover who we are. It is difficult to do this for ourselves and even more challenging to understand someone else's needs and wants. When we come into a relationship we have to learn to acknowledge and share our own needs and wants as well as discover our partner's needs and wants. We do this so we can understand each other and our motives in life so that we can better communicate and coexist but how do we know exactly what motivates us in life? How would knowing what motivates our lives benefit our relationships?

Earning her master's degree in social work from Fordham University in New York City, Mrs. Patricia Pirone is the senior vice president of Pratt Assessments. While attending graduate school Patricia worked extensively with children in foster care. After earning her master's in social work she began working in an outpatient mental health clinic with children, adolescents and families. In 2010 Patricia started her private practice where she returned to clinical work with children, adolescents and adults. Over the next several years Patricia grew the practice and in 2014 decided to create Pratt Assessments and began selling a tool that revolutionized her practice. Pratt Assessments is the parent company to Touchstone Assessments, Elevate Assessments and Assessment Athletics. Welcome to the show Patricia, I'm so glad that you could join us today.

Patricia Pirone: Thank you for having me.

Scott Blair: Patricia, you are here today to talk to us about an assessment tool that has helped revolutionize your practice and would you mind taking a few moments and kind of briefly explaining to us what this tool is?

Patricia Pirone: Well, I own a company called Elevate Assessments and prior to launching that company I was a clinician in private practice and when I incorporated this tool into my business I really found that it made a significant difference in the lives of my clients so what this tool is all about is giving couples knowledge beyond the daily conversations that they're having so we're able to look at an individual's behaviors, motivators and values. So of course while people are getting to know each other in the course of being in a relationship and dating and even, you know, married there's many things that come up and there are many things that you talk about. But every married

couple knows that there's situations and challenges that arise that you certainly didn't anticipate and under stress that's really when you get to know your partner.

And how many people have the insight and the tools to positively address and work through those challenges? And so our assessment is an unbiased discovery tool that provides valuable insights and can be used as a road map towards positive change in a counseling or coaching relationship with a professional. When you think about it, many people will start a new job and take some type of personality assessment so companies understand that in order to reduce turnover and to increase productivity among their employees they need to find those employees that not only embrace the corporate culture but also mesh with their managers. And their coworkers and assessments can provide this type of insight at the beginning of a relationship or can be used to create understanding within an existing team.

When we look at employees they're not expected to stay with a company until retirement and yet companies pump a tremendous amount of their resources into their hiring practices and their team building and marriages on the other hand, when you look at them, you know you enter into a vow of till death do us part but so few resources are put into making that right match and trying to find that right fit because really, in a relationship, a business relationship we're trying to reduce turnover. So marriages are entered into with a vow of till death do us part and very few resources and tools are put into place that can reduce turnover or divorce and to increase productivity or I will call quality.

Scott Blair: Yeah, I have taken some of those personality assessments at places I've worked and it's really helped management understand the employees. It's helped the employees understand how to relate to one another. Even recently, I think a year or two ago, we took one at my church and it was helping everybody kind of discover their gifts so they can kind of know where they would volunteer and fit in best but I've never thought about it for relationships. That's very interesting.

Patricia Pirone: Absolutely, I mean you could really apply this to so many different aspects of your life and your work and your sport or your parenting and your children, to understand how their motivated. So many different ways we can apply these tools so we're just talking about one aspect but really we've got tools that can kind of address any number of areas where you're looking to improve a relationship.

Scott Blair: Well, what problems do you see couples experiencing in the relationship that could benefit by taking one of these assessments?

Patricia Pirone:

Well, I would look at lack of understanding as a crack in the foundation of marriage. Foundation of any relationship really is appreciation and respect so we're assuming that exists and then lack of communication starts to kind of undermine that foundation so any homeowner would know that a crack in a foundation is never good and is often kind of costly to repair. So, using my own marriage for an example, I learned that I'm most motivated by peace and harmony which makes perfect sense to me because I'm a working mom, I've got three preschoolers and so we're got to keep a certain amount of, you know, order in order to have harmony. So I like some degree of routine and structure and I like check lists and the feeling of getting things done but really one of my biggest challenges to sustaining my peace and harmony is my husband. He's a big personality; he can easily do something that shifts my mood.

Well, how many times have I asked him to cover the grill after he's done using it or pick up his clothes or you know, pay attention to the gas light on my dashboard when he's been the one driving the car around for the weekend. So for me, peace and harmony comes in the form of the little things and it's not my husband's ambition and mission to upset me but peace and harmony is the lowest of his motivators, meaning he doesn't naturally notice what I notice.

So I could really let that get to me or I could look at the flip side of that and use it as a strength in our relationship and say, you know what, when I'm overwhelmed, when I've kind of had enough of wrangling children he can easily step in and take over because it's those little things that get me that don't get him so he then becomes a perfect supporter and putting peace and harmony back in my life because he can take over when I'm frustrated. And it's because of this assessment that we really know that about each other. Before, I looked at that as a trigger and now I look at that as a strength in our relationship.

Scott Blair:

Okay, and what are some of the short and long term negative effects that not having an understanding and being able to utilize this tool can actually have on the relationship?

Patricia Pirone:

Well, like I said before, you know, we're looking at lack of communication and understanding as a crack in that foundation and because I think, you know, we're kind of told don't sweat the small stuff but it really is, it's a lot of small stuff that builds up to possibly, you know, feeling unloved, not respected, undermined and so that then starts to create a negative dynamic in a relationship.

Scott Blair:

Well, at what point do you think people are becoming aware of this negative dynamic that this not understanding each other is hurting the relationship?

Patricia Pirone: Well, I think people probably entered into marriage with some sense that there were some differences between them and I think, you know, what happened was they said, well when we, you know, when we have our own home then it will get better. When we have the right job, then it will get better. When, you know, everything will get better some point in the future and so what then happens is, you know, marriage doesn't make problems go away. I think it tends to magnify some problems and there's always going to be some stress so once one stress passes and you think it will be better there's another stress coming up right behind it that's going to take its place. And it's not the stressor necessarily, it's how the stress is managed that really starts to negatively impact relationships.

Scott Blair: Are you noticing any trends? I mean, is there a certain type of couple that really need to utilize a tool like this or you think it's pretty much broad in everybody?

Patricia Pirone: I think anybody can benefit from a tool like this. You know, we are not looking to say, you know, a person who, you know, tends towards these traits should never marry or be with a person who tends towards these traits. It's not about that. It's looking at things, you know, we are who we are, we all have some strengths and some weaknesses. We can look at where are our weaknesses so we can try to improve upon them and make those growth opportunities and we can look at our strengths and we can really play up to those strengths. Very similar to the example that I gave about my own husband not being motivated by peace and harmony so that could be a weakness in my eyes because it has been disruptive or I can look at it like a strength because it means he can step in when I am overwhelmed. And so I find that, you know, peace and harmony seems to be a trend among women and what I find is that it's so difficult to sustain because there's always a challenge to peace and harmony.

When you're driven by maybe some of the other motivators and, for instance, one of them in our assessment is return on investment, you have so much more control over that. So if you go to work and you know that you are expected to work, you know, 40 hours a week and you make X amount of money you can kind of determine whether or not you feel like you're getting a good return on your investment, are you getting paid what you're worth, are you valued on your job and if the answer is no to any of those questions you have some options. You can choose to, you know, transfer from your position, you can choose to look for a new company altogether. If at any point you feel like you're not getting a good return on investment, you know, when you're literally investing your money you may decide to move it. If you feel like you're not getting something out of a volunteer opportunity that you had wanted to get then make a choice that you don't volunteer there or maybe you go and you do something else with your time.

That's very much under your control but yet peace and harmony is kind of this very elusive motivator and so I feel like that's a huge challenge that we see amongst couples.

Scott Blair: So, what do you suggest to couples when they come in and they tell you that, you know, they just, he doesn't get me or she doesn't understand me, we're not getting along, we're not communicating well and they don't have that communication, where do you start with them, what are the suggestions?

Patricia Pirone: Well, I would say take an assessment because that is a very easy way to start to understand where are you coming from and then you can use that as a framework to work with, you know, one of our coaches or any other professional. You think about how many times have women read an article that has some tips and it's not always very easy to get some buy in or how many times have you said, you know, "Honey, I think this would be a very great book for us to read together," and reading a book is kind of a commitment, you know, it's going to take a bit of time to get through it and I've experienced women are getting a little frustrated and I can go the other way too of course. But I've just noticed in my practice some women have gotten frustrated, "Well, I wanted him to read it and he didn't read it." Taking an assessment that's maybe 45 minutes of your time is a jumpstart to moving forward so you still have to be committed to the process but we really move it forward quickly.

Our assessments are designed and tested by psychologists and subject matter experts and they're valid and they're reliable and every assessment comes with a phone debrief. And then we offer coaching to continue that conversation beyond the debrief so that you can really get to put that information into action.

Scott Blair: Okay, so when you have a couple that takes the assessment, they get a, you know, a bit of a deeper understanding of each other and they do a phone debrief and they get some coaching from you guys, what are some of the changes that you're seeing in the quality in the interactions of their relationship?

Patricia Pirone: Well, I think you hit on it earlier when you said you had taken an assessment like this and you noticed that it made differences in your work life and then you saw some people in your church had taken it so that's what we're seeing. We're seeing that people are benefiting from these assessments not just in their relationship, not just the couple but that they're making improvements in all aspects of their life, that they're becoming better parents, better managers, better employees, better coaches, you know, better whatever because they're becoming better people. They're having a deeper understanding of themselves and they're having a better understanding of how other people are seeing them and how they're showing up for other

people so if there is something there that they don't like and they've got some really great information about that and how to change it comes then from the coaching relationship. But it brings it to light, some of the issues.

Scott Blair: Well, Patricia this is a brilliant idea. I really find it interesting, never thought about using it in relationships or even you mentioned parenting and other things, really look forward to learning more about it. Thank you so much for talking with us today and being on the show.

Patricia Pirone: Thank you so much for having me.

Scott Blair: To find out more about Mrs. Patricia Pirone and her practice Elevate Assessments you can visit their website at [www.elevateassessments.com](http://www.elevateassessments.com). Or call 704-350-2380 for an appointment. Thank you so much for joining us today and I hope you'll join us again next week. For more information about this show and previous episodes visit us at [stayhappilymarried.com](http://stayhappilymarried.com). I'm Scott Blair, until next time, stay happily married.

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