

SURVIVING POWER STRUGGLES

Power struggles with your partner. *Boy, those are fun aren't they.* A power struggle is when a spouse battles the other for control demanding to run the show. Sometimes a power struggle takes the form of one spouse shutting the other out completely.

Here are three common reasons for power struggles:

1. A spouse feels insignificant and is trying to feel important.
2. A spouse is striving for a sense of safety or comfort, which they believe can be achieved by controlling the people or situations around them.
3. Protection. They've tried to connect and have gotten hurt. So by closing you out they're certain they won't get hurt again.

So what should you do when faced with a power struggle? Give-in and get swallowed up? Give-up and call it quits?

RESOLVING THE POWER STRUGGLE

Please understand that it's impossible to solve this issue in a single email. But here are two things that might help:

1) Affirm.

Affirm your spouse often so they know and *feel* how important and significant they are to you.

2) Play Safe.

Make a rule that you and your spouse will never do anything intentionally to hurt the other or make them feel stupid. If your partner feels safe with you they'll trust you with their thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears and dreams. If they don't, they won't. It's that simple. It's your job to make your spouse feel safe, significant, valued, special, cared for, and loved at the deepest and highest levels.

THE DEEP DARK SIDE OF POWER STRUGGLES

Sometimes power struggles deteriorate into abuse, which can be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual. (Verbal, emotional, mental and spiritual forms of violence can be as abusive as physical or sexual abuse.) And remember, domestic violence isn't gender-specific, especially when you include verbal and emotional abusiveness.

ARE YOU BEING ABUSED?

If your spouse is constantly exerting control over you, controlling your life, behavior, choices and actions, which range from telling you what you can or cannot wear to the friends you may or may not have, to where you're allowed or not allowed to go, or insists on controlling the

finances denying you access to the checkbook or credit cards (unless you're recovering from a spending addiction), then it's abuse.

Does your spouse monitor your every action or invade your privacy? Are your thoughts and feelings always dismissed or diminished? Does your spouse make fun of you, are you mocked, ridiculed, put down or threatened? Do they intentionally make you feel insignificant, helpless, ugly, unworthy, stupid, unlovable or weak? These are examples of abuse, the dark side of power struggles.

NEVER tolerate that kind of treatment from anyone, especially your spouse. If you're in that situation, find professional help immediately to free yourself from your life-diminishing, and possibly life-threatening, marital environment. Whatever you do, don't make the mistake of thinking that this situation will take care of itself or that your spouse will magically change into the prince or princess you've been hoping for.

If you are in an abusive marital situation, get help today.

Until next time this is Mike & the Crew and we want you to be *mad about marriage!*