

Fight Much? Or Don't Talk At All?

If you and your partner never fight, you might think congratulations are in order, but are they? If you're married but never argue or fight, you're either in denial, suppressing issues, or one of you is giving in just to keep the peace. But it's not about arguing and fighting. It's about healthy communication.

What does healthy communication look like?

Focus... Healthy communication stays focused on the issue at hand. When having a disagreement, don't bring stuff up from the past because it clouds the issue and makes it hard to find a solution. If your current disagreement is linked to something in the past, see a therapist, or decide *together* to work through *one* issue at a time.

Understand... One of the quickest ways to shut down a conversation is to invalidate or minimize what your partner is saying. Regardless of what you feel, or if you're convinced they're wrong, hear them out! Do EVERYTHING in your power to understand. Just because you understand where they're coming from doesn't mean you agree with what he or she is saying. Listen without interrupting or becoming defensive, and most importantly, without thinking about your defense or cross-examination.

Hear... You'll continue fighting about the issue UNTIL your spouse feels heard. Hmmm, endless conflict...forever...sounds fun, huh? Strive to see things from your partner's point-of-view. If you're intuitive, this should come easy. If you're a concrete thinker who processes information in facts and figures, you'll need to try harder - but you can do it.

Empathize... Lose the ego, along with judgment & criticism, or self-righteousness; put yourself in their shoes.

Why? It's the right thing to do; and what a loving person does. Empathy breeds empathy.

Take Responsibility Sans Excuses, Justification, Rationalization... Healing happens faster when you take responsibility for your actions. You might feel your actions were justified. You might feel like you had good reasons. You might be convinced a jury of your peers would rule in your favor.

So what? At the end of the day, you made a choice (isn't that what we tell our kids?). Take responsibility for your actions without any veiled undertones of blame. No one is completely blameless. Ever. Taking responsibility calms the situation, settles the dust, and takes the heat out of the moment, paving the way for reconciliation.

Compromise... Compromise is healthy and productive. How many marriages are like our political leaders? Fight. Fight. Fight. Stubborn. No compromise. Bossy. Endless stalemates. Look, when you have a conversation with your spouse, both of you should win; it doesn't mean you get 100% of everything you wanted. It means you make progress. It means your relationship is better now than it was yesterday.

Arguing until you get everything you want is unhealthy. In fact, it's dysfunctional. Since when has satisfying an irrational need for control and certainty ever been healthy?

Your goal is to find solutions that support each other and move your relationship forward.

Healthy communication includes these six things. Quickly look at the above list of six things to see which one(s) if any have been missing from your conversations.

Until next time, this is Mike Tucker and I want YOU to be mad about marriage!