

A Quick Tip to Help You Through Conflict in Your Marriage

Though marriage can be wonderful, it can also have inevitable conflict. Conflict is a precursor to change and growth toward becoming one flesh. Conflict is a part of your marriage progressing toward becoming a fully functioning trinity.

When you have two universes of ideas, experiences, agendas and genders, you will have conflict. Conflict must occur to expose what's in your heart or mind. Exposing flesh with truth or opposing ideas can bring a wobbling two-headed creature into agreement. Conflict is healthy for your marriage so that it can grow stronger.

Conflict is not always huge and about money or sex. Conflict can also be the small things in a marriage like how you fold socks and other insignificant things that move you into full engagement.

I want to share with you a brilliant principle God gave to Lisa and me very early in our marriage, which reduced a significant amount of potential conflicts over the 25 years we've been married. Here's the principle, "If I am doing it, I am doing it right. If you criticize me, you get to do it."

So here is how this principle works practically. For example, we had a disagreement about folding socks. Lisa likes to ball up the socks when she folds laundry. I like my socks just folded, not balled up like a dog toy. So, if Lisa is folding laundry and I complain, she can ask me (politely of course) if I would like to fold all the laundry. If I continue to complain even one word after that, I get to fold the laundry. Likewise, if I am folding the socks (not balling them up like a dog toy) and she complains, after me asking her if she wants

to fold all the laundry, she would get to complete the folding task.

This works great for Lisa and me. We are both competent adults. We are both really good problem solvers, so we respect each other. There's usually three ways to do something. If I prefer to have something done different than her way, I need to put my life energy into doing it, not ask her to conform to my way of doing things.

Conflict will be a part of becoming one flesh. When you have conflict, I would encourage you to follow a few principles to make it as smooth as possible.

Stay focused on one problem at a time. A spouse that brings up several problems to confuse their opponent rarely effectively solves problems. If you're arguing about socks, stay on the topic of socks, don't bring dishes, their childhood, interest rates or something that happened three years ago into it. Couples who fight like that get angrier, use blame and take longer to reconnect. Honestly, when a couple does this in my office, it feels like a war zone.

Conflict will always be with you; however, if the goal is to become one flesh, you will want to capitalize on conflict to move you toward agreement and resolution so you both now think as one about the issue.

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