

Do You Unwittingly Disrespect Your Marriage?

There are several types of games that disrespect plays in a marriage. The first game I notice in couples that disrespect one another is what has become known as the “one up” game. It’s a game couples play where someone has to be the winner or on top. Either spouse can initiate the game, but once the game starts, it’s off to the races.

There are no rules to the “one up” game, just a winner and a loser. Once you start, you can bring up negative history about the spouse, attack their character, their gender, their family of origin or anything else that can prove why you are one up on your spouse. A second game couples play with each other is “Mr.” or “Mrs. Superior.” In this game one person assumes an emotionally based position of superiority. They might back it up by their age, education and life experiences, but somehow they are superior to their spouse. They don’t even have to argue much; they are just right because they are who they are. This smug game is even more difficult to explain and harder to work with in counseling because the one-up spouse usually doesn’t believe in counseling either because somehow he or she is also smarter than the counselor.

Usually in all of these games, the spouse projects a false self-image, an image that is not human, not flawed, not a sinner, but simply wonderful all the time. These false self-types usually disrespect their less-than-wonderful spouse. It always amazes me how these perfect people can pick such terrible sinners for spouses. When someone is being disrespectful to his or her spouse due to a false self-image, it’s difficult to get very far with him or her in counseling because they are not honest about themselves.

Let’s cover some core beliefs of a disrespectful spouse. The

following are some core beliefs for you to read and apply to yourself. I know you'll be tempted to look at your spouse, but please don't do this. Knowing their defects doesn't help you to change personally. Remember that when you change, this change also influences your marriage.

Core Beliefs

I have a right to criticize. A disrespector believes that just because they can see a weakness, deficiency, or a less than wonderful quality about their spouse, they have the right to highlight this to him or her. They almost feel like it's their duty to share the faults with their spouse regularly as if sharing the criticism with their partner will greatly benefit their spouse and help them to grow.

In my professional experience, a disrespector in general is not a great prayer warrior. Seeing a weakness in someone else is to be covered in prayer before being brought to the person—if it is even ever brought to him or her at all.

My perceptions are truth. A disrespector has unquestionable authority. Their perceptions are absolute. They have innate powers to interpret your thoughts, motives and beliefs at all times. What you were truly thinking or feeling is not real, only what they think you were thinking and motivated by is the real truth.

This disrespector will spend countless hours convincing you of “what you really meant” or “why you really did such and such”; if you are in a marriage with a disrespector, there have been many long nights in discussion.

It's always your fault. This core belief is just flat in denial. Anyone who can't see that at some time they will have something to do with the issues and less than positive interactions in a marriage are just in denial. This disrespector lives in an object relationship with self. They are always the good object. If there is any bad, it has to be

someone else because they are wonderful. My experience is that this disrespector usually has secrets that they feel very bad about and for them to make any further mistakes makes them feel more bad and hopeless.

I'm just having fun. This disrespector couches their disrespect and superiority in humor: "You know I don't really mean it." But it is said often enough that you wonder what they were really thinking. If they put you down in front of others and can get other disrespecters to laugh as well, then "it's just having fun."

Usually these disrespecters are thin-skinned. If you really turn the tables and move others to laugh at them, they usually get mad. Then this disrespect isn't fun anymore; you're just being mean.

I'm angry, too bad. This disrespector's core belief is that if they are mad, there are no rules. To shred you or demean you is just okay. If they push you to fight back or cry, it's just too bad for you. You just deserve it because "I'm mad, and I needed someone else to pass my pain onto."

Your heart has no value. This core belief is hard to understand for anyone who values other hearts because the disrespector truly doesn't care about what you feel or think. To them it's much more important that you capitulate or comply with their agenda or belief. It's more important that you obey what they say than who you are. Being heard is irrelevant. This ship is going in their direction; "get on or get out of the way" is this disrespector's bullish perspective.

Clearly, being a disrespector is so contrary to the heart and nature of Christ. Now take a minute and think through this issue of love and respect for a moment.

God is all knowing. He is all-powerful, and He really is God of heaven and earth. He not only came to earth, but came to earth as one of His creations, a man, and tried to teach us.

He died, rose again and is coming back for us.

He not only loves us, He respects the value He has given us. Now God didn't only do all this just for you, He did it for your spouse too.

Your spouse is beloved by God. Christ died for your spouse and respects him or her. He listens to their heart, their less-than-logical discussions, and does it respectfully.

You see, a respecifier comes more from a life and relationship perspective, which is a totally different angle than that of the disrespecifier. A respecifier first understands the very definition of respect. To respect is to give honor or preference toward another person.

Most of us have people we give honor or preference to. They might be the pastor, someone much older or more successful than us. It's truly interesting whom we give honor and respect to.

Most of us would honor the president of the United States, a famous actor or celebrity, or even our own children. If you knew the son or daughter of someone you think is famous, you might give honor to him or her because of his or her father.

I think you know where I am going. If God who is king of all kings of all time had a child, you would honor that child, wouldn't you? That child through Christ Jesus is your spouse. Respecting them is the beginning of this love agreement.

Respecters also have a set of core beliefs. These beliefs are quite different from those of the disrespecifier check back on Friday to hear more. {eo}

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