

How CS Lewis' Simple Game Can Save Your Marriage

C.S. Lewis says that we acquire new behaviors by playing the children's game "Let's Pretend." That is, the only way to acquire a habit of good behavior is to pretend that we already have the behavior trait and perform the actions that define it. For example, if we want to be more patient, we must pretend to be patient and do things a patient person does.

I think C.S. Lewis is onto something here. I especially like the idea of thinking of improving your character. A game is something you can take a lot more lightly than "developing your character."

I personally enjoy making games out of tasks. It makes it so much more fun. Also, for me, it brings a little competition into the activity. The game aspect makes me look for an opportunity to practice a particular behavior.

I was a frequent guest on a Christian television talk show, and over time, the host and I became friends. She told me one day about a game she and the crew came up with. The game was simple. The crew would come up with a word, any word, and the host was challenged to place that word somewhere during her hour of interviewing her guests.

So unbeknownst to the other guest, if the host would say this agreed-upon word, the host would win. If she couldn't get the word worked into the interview, the crew would win. I think the prize for winning was bragging rights for the day or an occasional Coca Cola. This little game would go on day after day without anyone in the audience ever knowing what was going on. This talk show's game is a good example of what having a love agreement entails.

You can play the game by yourself, and your spouse will never

know. You can rack up wins or losses, and the audience will never know a game was happening.

I wrote in *Intimacy: A 100 Day Guide to Lasting Relationships* what I called the “holiest of competitions.” It was suggested that a person in the marriage make a game of out-loving their spouse. Those who played the game were winners.

When I play the game, Lisa doesn’t know. I know what I am trying to accomplish. Honestly, just playing the game makes it fun for me throughout the day. I still felt good even if I wasn’t perfect. If I knew there were events in the day where I behaved better, I felt good just by playing the game.

Once you make an agreement you commit to a path of behaving differently. We are going to change the system of marriage by changing one element in the marriage. That element is how you behave in your marriage.

Oh, I can hear the comments now. “You mean I don’t need to get deep therapy and spend thousands of dollars? I don’t have to spend hours reading all about marriage? I don’t have to fast and pray to get all my character defects removed so I can have a better marriage?”

I am an absolute proponent for any of these things that you may need to do to heal and get free from the past to better in the present. The love agreements are just another way to accomplish that. You’ll be able to see the impact of your playing the game of “Let’s Pretend” with the love agreements.
{eoa}

Doug Weiss, Ph.D., is a nationally known author, speaker and licensed psychologist. He is the executive director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the author of several books including, *The 7 Love Agreements*. You may contact Dr. Weiss via his website, or on his Facebook, by phone at 719-278-3708 or through email at heart2heart@.