

How Can 2 People Have 3 Opinions?

How can 2 people have 3 opinions? Communication, specifically communication failures, is another factor in marriage failures.

Unrealistic expectations that we place on our partner, conditions, different values and immaturity add to the strain we find on our communication with our spouse.

So how do we wade through these murky waters? Let's start with this story:

A husband and wife had been married for 60 years and had no secrets except for one: The woman kept in her closet a shoe box that she forbade her husband from ever opening. But when she was on her deathbed—and with her blessing—he opened the box and found a crocheted doll and \$95,000 in cash.

“My mother told me that the secret to a happy marriage was to never argue,” she explained. “Instead, I should keep quiet and crochet a doll.”

Her husband was touched. Only one doll was in the box—that meant she'd been angry with him only once in 60 years. “But what about all this money?” he asked.

“Oh,” she said, “that's the money I made from selling the dolls.”

Today we will look at 5 elements of marital conflict and communication.

1. Review: Love & Respect!

Men, what is your one word?

Ladies, what is your one word?

Love and respect must be given UNCONDITIONALLY. How are you doing with that? Honestly rate yourself, how are you doing? If you think you are doing great the results should be seen in your spouse.

If we think we are doing great, does your spouse think you are? That is who it matters most too.

Again, we are not perfect. Everyday is another opportunity to demonstrate love and respect.

This leads to our second point:

2. Are your expectations for the relationship realistic?

If you enter the relationship with unrealistic expectations, you are setting your partner and your relationship up for failure.

Men, you can love her like a princess, but don't expect her to act like a princess.

Ladies, this may come as a shock, but you didn't marry Prince Charming. He isn't a knight riding in on a white stallion to rescue you from the disappointments you've experienced in life.

When we have those lofty expectations and wake up to, well, a real person, we come crashing down to earth in a painful way.

Those expectations can set us up for disappointment, frustration, anger and disillusionment. Some people come into the relationship with unrealistic expectations because they hold themselves to unrealistic expectations.

Having expectations for ourselves that are near impossible to fulfill sabotages our own happiness. Then, when we place those expectations onto others

we set them up to disappoint us in spite of how great they may be as people.

Holding onto these expectations will simply lead us down the path of destruction.

Don't get me wrong, expectations are normal, even healthy, but they must also be realistic.

How often do you and your spouse discuss your expectations? Can you tell me your spouses' expectations for you in the relationship? If you don't know what those expectations are, you need to find out.

Knowing your spouse's expectations for you in the relationship is a great first step toward better understanding and unity in the relationship.

Again, you can't be the judge of what should be expectations alone. You must work those out together as a couple.

Now, one thing to consider before marriage is what are your unnegotiable expectations? For example, for the Christian one of those unnegotiable expectations should be that their potential mate is also a believer. Dating is a great way to discover what you can accept

and what needs to be on your unnegotiable list. Just keep it realistic.

3. Set rules on how you will resolve conflict.

Young people, early in your relationship or marriage, set up your fair fight rules. For us older people, before our next fight, set up your fair fight rules. Here are a few to consider:

A. Be willing to share when you are hurt.

Matthew 18:15, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."

If someone, including your spouse, sins against you or hurts your feelings, you are to go to them, not your buddy or your sister and especially not your mom. You go to them and calmly tell them what they did that hurt you.

Do not leave it unresolved. Unresolved conflict will begin building the wall between the two of you. This applies to every relationship.

B. The goal isn't to get even.

1 Peter 3:8-9, "Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

You know what this is like. He or she said this or did that, so you need to make your point or take that action to even the score. At that point you have both just lost. It's not about getting even, it's about getting right.

You married a human, who may sometimes act like an alien, but after centuries of testing it has been confirmed, you have married a human. And humans fail and sin and insult sometimes knowingly and other times unknowingly.

How often does a comment get blown up into world war 3? You assume worst intent when we should assume best intent.

Be the calm one, seek peace and understanding. If you are angry calm down first, then discuss. If your discussion returns to anger you may need to learn how to manage your anger to become efficient at

discussion. If it is really hard to have a civil conversation invite a 3rd person into the conversation to be a mediator. A mediator can be a good coach for both of you.

C. Don't let the anger or issue go unresolved.

Ephesians 4:26-27, "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold."

What this verse means is that you need to resolve the issue quickly. It doesn't mean you can't sleep until it is resolved. If you have a late-night argument, it doesn't mean staying up until you fix it. We all know that doesn't work. Sometimes you need to walk away, calm down and then work on the matter.

The principle here is that you don't leave it unresolved. Unresolved conflicts add to the wall between the two of you. Tear that wall down! Commit to doing the work of resolving any conflict that arises between the two of you.

The other person isn't a beast; it's the person you married. They only become a beast when the wall has grown so tall that the sounds you hear coming from them sound like a monster. Tear down the wall.

D. Learn to say, "I'm sorry, will you forgive me."

Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."

Not only are you to go to someone who has offended you, but you are to go to the person that you offended. Do we understand this? If you are the offended or the offender, you are to go to resolve the matter.

We are called to live in peace with one another and that means we resolve the conflicts we have with people. And how do we resolve conflict we started? We say the words, "I'm sorry, will you forgive me?"

If you never say I'm sorry you need to learn how to do this and you need to start taking responsibility for your stuff, because you have your stuff if you are in a relationship with anyone! Period!

4. Forgiveness

How many times do you think we are to forgive our spouse?

Matthew 18:21-22, "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven."

This doesn't mean that the 491st time you stop forgiving.

To understand this, we need to understand the nature of forgiveness. For example, what does the Lord's Prayer say about forgiveness?

Matthew 6:12, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Keep reading:

Matthew 6:14-15, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

And if we bounced back to where Jesus told Peter to forgive 70 X 7 times and kept reading in Mt. 18 what parable do we read? The parable of the unmerciful

servant who when he was forgiven much refused to forgive a small debt against him.

What happened to that unmerciful servant? He was then required to repay his debt and when he couldn't he was thrown into prison.

We are not only told to forgive, but we are also told to forget in spite of the old saying "I can forgive but I will never forget." What does Scripture say?

1 Corinthians 13:4-5, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

It keeps no record of wrongs! How often do we get into an argument with our spouse and that laundry list of every past wrong, every mistake, every sin gets pulled out and recited like a judge reading a felon's rap sheet? Is this what God does to us?

When this happens, it shows us that there is no forgiveness, there is no reconciliation, the relationship stands in damage. How many times will you forgive your spouse? How many times?

To receive forgiveness also means that we confess what we have done wrong. If we don't confess, how can we expect forgiveness. Is there something you need to confess?

5. Reconciliation

Reconciliation defined means "the restoration of friendly relations." This isn't the 'agree to disagree attitude.' This isn't the 'I'll put up with-it attitude.'

Reconciliation is the process of 2 people in conflict agreeing to make amends, come to a truce.

To understand what reconciliation between 2 people looks like we can simply look at how we have been reconciled to God.

Joel 2:12-13, "Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." 13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity."

Reconciliation comes from the heart. I love that line, "Rend your heart and not your garments." In middle

eastern culture you hear about the emotional response resulting in people tearing their clothing. God says he wants the heart response, not the outer response.

Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

How can we, two sinners, expect to bypass reconciliation with each other when it is so clear that every one of us must seek reconciliation with God?

Isaiah records that even the wicked, when they turn to God are freely pardoned. How can we do less than this with our spouse?