

## ASK ERICA

### “YOU CAN BE RIGHT OR YOU CAN BE MARRIED”

Ever swear that your partner/spouse said something that they say they never said? Or ever fight with your significant other because you disagree with their ideas or thoughts about something? Or ever have an argument with your spouse because you think the kids should be more 'respectful, quiet, athletic' etc.? Then you wind up feeling disconnected, hurt and angry?

These are surefire ways to create discord in your relationship and if we do them long enough these behaviors can lead to separation or even divorce. Thus, Harville Hendrix, author of *Getting The Love You Want* and creator of Imago Relationship Therapy states “You can be right or you can be married”.

Actually, people are not right or wrong, they simply have different perspectives, or we might say different “realities”. Depending on how you were raised, what gender you are, where you have lived, and even what mood you are in, you will interpret events differently. Your perception determines your perspective, your beliefs, your values and thus, your “reality.” So when you find yourself disagreeing and arguing with your mate (or anyone else for that matter), you might take a moment to just consider that you may both be “right”, that each of your realities has validity.

You might then take that a step further and grow curious about your partner's reality. You could then wonder about their perspective, how they see this issue, why they view it so differently, what leads them to their conclusion. And, operating yourself from this place, you then might inquire with curiosity about their thoughts. This leads you to a conscious relationship with your partner.

So, watch for those moments. Use them as opportunities for growth and self development. The next time you find yourself disagreeing with your significant other about who said what, see if you can stop yourself and instead allow that both opinions may be possible. Then look at what you are arguing about from each perspective.

A fun way to explore this is to sit in your partner's usual chair, in the living room, or at the dining table, and have them sit in yours. Take a few deep breaths and really try to feel what it must be like to be them, in THEIR gender, coming from THEIR childhood, living out THEIR roles. Then try to discuss the issue as if you were them with their differing opinion.

The next time you are fighting with your spouse (or even want to fight with them) about a parenting issue, see if you can pause, take a deep breath and then request a conversation with them regarding the issue. Put yourself into that place of true curiosity and ask “so, how was the this behavior that our children are demonstrating now treated in your childhood? Was it tolerated? Was it punished? If so, how? How did you feel as a child when you were punished in that way? As a child, what did you do to avoid those consequences?” Then see if your partner might want to learn about your experience. (You might ask them to read this article first.)

The goal is to bring you closer to understanding your partner's experience. This leads to

empathy and compassion. From this place you can much more easily find consensus, resolve problems, live in harmony and best of all, stay married.

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