

A Big Mistake Newlyweds Make

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“Most power conflicts in intimate relationships occur when one partner tries to treat the other as a child, mother, or father.” - Bert Hellinger

Over the weekend, I watched as newlyweds innocently tore at their love for one another when he treated her like she was his mom and she treated him like he was her little boy.

At one point, someone needed him for something and as he was finished with his coffee, he handed his empty cup to his wife and said, “Here, honey.” As he left to go where he was needed she said derisively, “Thanks, for giving me your trash, honey!” It caught him off guard as he did a double take. But he didn’t try to remedy the situation.

Later, as they were seated and talking to someone nearby, she reached up and scrubbed his head the way you’d treat a little boy. I mean a little guy – someone at least younger than nine years old if not at least younger than five, actually! He shrunk from her touch, ducking and scowling while gently growling, “Don’t do that!” His dignity was compromised but he attempted to protect hers even as he told her to stop.

When he handed his wife his empty cup, he may as well have said, “Here, mom!” It’s what kids do with their mothers. She didn’t like being treated like a mother by her man; but then later, she treated him like a youngster.

There are a number of dynamics occurring here. This relationship is several years old and included the two of them living together, but the marriage isn’t yet six months old. Something changes in a relationship when the marital knot is tied. It doesn’t matter how enlightened you may be nor does it matter how committed you were to each other before you got married, something concrete shifts in your relationship dynamics when you wed.

One reason this shift happens is because once you are married; you become family to one another. That legal bond is deeply affecting. When you become family, the relationship is at a new stage where natural and understandable mistakes happen. One of these is dropping into a pattern of demonstrating love the way you were loved by your parents.

It’s the darndest thing and completely annoying; because when you show each other love the way your parents loved you, it pours cold water on your desire for each other. No healthy man wants to make love to his mother or daughter and no healthy woman wants to make love to her father or son. So, when you try to fill those roles with each other, it dampens your sex drive.

When you treat each other like children or parents in public places, you humiliate yourselves, creating resentment. This also does nothing for your sex drive towards each other!

Another way getting married affects a relationship is that in a marriage, life just works easiest when there is a leader and a follower. I think we instinctively know this and so when we wed, we create power struggles to determine who will lead and who will follow. Treating each other like a child or parent is one of the fastest ways to engage in a power struggle to determine who will come out on top.

As a leading expert on the romantic challenges facing mama's boys and daddy's girls, I can assure you that the newlywed game of treating each other like children (or parents) is chronic. It takes vigilance to bring it to a halt. The only way to do it is to treat it like a bad habit. Even if it is a brand new habit born of the newness of the relationship, treat it like an old habit because it's something that has a hold of you in a deep place inside. It will not give up the fight easily!

You will begin by catching yourself after the offensive act or remark. It may be days and days of catching yourself after the fact before you can catch yourself in the middle of it. Once you are catching yourself in the middle of treating him or her like a child or parent, just stop right there. You can tell each other what you hope to accomplish. I promise, your effort will be appreciated!

One fine day, you will find that you catch yourself before you belittle your man or confuse your woman with your mother. That will be a fine day indeed! Keep up the good work and a time will arrive when it just doesn't happen anymore. By then your respect and cherishing of one another will have grown with multiple benefits besides!

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