

Next Time you have a Breakdown in Communication, Consider This

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When a woman falls in love with a man, he makes her feel safe, protected, and cherished. She makes him feel seen and respected. These gifts we give each other satisfy ancient longings housed in our biology. They are why we trust each other so quickly, connect so deeply, and start planning for the future!

At some point, couples move from this position of trust and fulfillment to irritation and frustration. It is as if a pendulum swings them back and forth, sometimes against their will. Maybe it begins with simple things. For instance, one is a slob and the other is a neat freak. These differences started out being cute but aren't anymore! Eventually, she will drive him nuts wanting to talk about the relationship. He will make her worried and insecure withdrawing at every attempt she makes to talk. Before you know it, they feel like enemies to each other either some of the time or all of the time.

The next time your relationship suffers from a breakdown in communication, consider what drew you to each other in the first place. For her, feeling safe, protected and cherished satisfy deep, fundamental needs. For him, feeling seen and respected satisfies deep, fundamental needs. Instead of putting your attention on what you are not getting from your partner, put your attention on what you once gave and try giving it again.

My husband, Joseph, and I have a personality conflict that contributes to breakdowns in communication. It has occurred to me that addressing the personality conflict isn't the way to improve the situation. If we go there, we will wind up monitoring each other and/or ourselves, adding to the frustration and contributing to an even bigger breakdown! Instead, focusing on what we originally gave each other in this situation might just save us a lot of heartache.

The personality conflict looks like this. I have a very active mind. Whenever anyone speaks to me, they are intruding on my thoughts. This means that for the first few seconds of conversation, I am in two places at once in my mind. I'm finishing up my thoughts and beginning to pay attention to the person speaking to me. Things can get lost in translation because of my active mind!

In addition, my sharp mind prefers details. Instead of telling me something like, "That was the best hamburger I've had in a long time," when it's been a couple of days since that hamburger was eaten; I prefer more details such as, "Remember when we ate at the Stony Knob Diner last week and I had a hamburger and fries? That was the best hamburger I've had in months. We need to go back there soon!" I realize people don't talk like that. Folks pick and choose from hundreds of thoughts to share and often begin mid-sentence. I speak like that because details matter to me. See, it's just a personality issue. It isn't personal. What gets personal is how we handle it when I get frustrated because I don't understand something he said.

We have dropped into the habit of Joseph periodically saying something that I don't understand. I don't understand because I don't believe I have enough details to understand. I communicate that I don't know what he is talking about with frustration and impatience in my voice because I very much want to understand. Also, because we have had this breakdown going on for a number of years, the frustration in my voice has grown.

He feels like I am telling him something is wrong with him and so he gets impatient with me and gives me one of these looks that brings out the beast in me! Suddenly, a personality issue has become very personal because of tones of voices, feelings, attitudes, and a breakdown in communication.

Even though a personality conflict isn't a life or death matter, it can make me as a woman feel unprotected, unsafe, and not cherished. Someone who loves and cherishes me wouldn't look at me that way! The same personality conflict makes him feel unseen and disrespected. Suddenly, a truly insignificant-in-the-great-scheme-of-things incident rocks us at the core because these fundamental needs are challenged!

Next time, I am going to respond with a different tone of voice by coming from a different attitude. Instead of reacting from the space of impatience and frustration I have made a habit of, I am going to come from the space of seeing him and respecting him. That would look like telling the truth. Such as, "I was with some thoughts in my head and didn't catch all that, would you mind saying some more?" I bet I will get a different response from him. Taking responsibility for what is going on in my head is far more respectful!

If Joseph were working on this on his own, he might choose to interact with me from a place of cherishing my feelings to see if he could get us to shift gears with this personality conflict. He might say, "Gosh, I know it frustrates you when you don't get enough details and it frustrates me to slow down and provide them! But here goes..." I would find that disarming.

Without either of us manipulating the other to communicate in a certain way and by simply taking responsibility for the truth of where we are at when the communication breaks down, we are able to treat each other in a way that communicates love, respect, and cherishing. That satisfies those fundamental needs that we once easily met and we get to walk out of a personality conflict that causes breakdowns rather than risk walking out of the relationship, causing a break up.

Honesty delivered with care and compassion rocks!

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There is a secret to relationship success that is direct, simple, and effective. We and others have used it to transform marriages that felt burdensome and hurtful into marriages filled with love and satisfaction.

You can discover this secret for yourself in the e-workbook called *Creating the Love You Want: Five Unique Steps to Improve Your Marriage*. Go to <http://www.CreateTheLoveYouWant.com> and order your copy right now. With it, you can begin making a difference for yourself tonight!