

## **What Stories are You Telling yourself About your Partner?**

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A habit anyone can fall into that causes relationship stress is believing the stories we make up about our romantic partners. People can get tied up in knots inside because they believe the person they love the most is untrustworthy, controlling, dismissive, bossy, or any number of other things that have less to do with their partner's reality than with their perception of the partner. If we share those made up stories with our friends, we can get some serious confirmation that the relationship is about to fail! However, that confirmation is based on fantasy, not reality!

The stories we make up about our romantic partners may begin with a modicum of truth. However, as give meaning to the stories, we hurt the relationship and ourselves unnecessarily. Here are some examples of stories turned into fantasies.

“He still cares for his ex. They have children together. I can never compete with her.” With this story, every time he feels he has to make a choice between you and the children, you can interpret this normal circumstance that shows up in blended families to mean he still loves his ex and would rather be with her so why doesn't he just go do it! Next thing you know, your blood pressure rises and you are feeling anger and jealousy that are more than the situation calls for!

“She flirts with my friends. I wonder if she will cheat on me. Maybe she is cheating on me. I don't like the way she looks at Tim or the way he looks at her. She wouldn't cheat on me, would she? But, damn, she's a flirt!” Here, you tune your antennae to every move she makes, waiting for her to break your heart. The distrust that builds up is a sabotaging energy that is more likely to make it happen than her flirtatious personality.

“He/she hates it when I ...fill in the blank.” Does she really hate it? Does he? It is easy to project onto other people either the things we do not like about ourselves or the things that we have been told are our defects. Maybe the noise you make when you chew your food doesn't bother her. However, if you shrink up and apologize every time you become self-conscious about it because your last girl friend hated it, you have repeated moments of you appearing insecure to the woman you want to impress the most.

“He fantasizes about other women when he's making love to me.” This one is a relationship killer! Unless he has been rude and actually told you he fantasizes about somebody else, let this one go. This is something insecure or inexperienced lovers latch onto in order to stroke their insecurity. That kind of insecurity will look for ways and means to sabotage the relationship. Why? Perhaps so they can feel as though they are at least in control of how the relationship ends. Maybe their self-esteem is so low that they cannot help but create challenges to their self-esteem rather than learn to grow healthier self-esteem.

All of these stories are opportunities to practice the discipline of choosing a better interpretation of your spouse or romantic partner! You can make the choice to interpret

his or her behavior and words a different way. The first time you try it you might feel naïve. However, if choosing a better interpretation turns out to be the wrong thing to have done, then you have tested the relationship and gathered important information. If choosing a better interpretation turns out to be the right thing to have done, your relationship just improved with the simplicity of a thought.

The stories we create about our romantic partners come from past relationships. They come from the most recent romance you had as well as the first one you had when you were a kid! They come from how Aunt Betty made fun of you or how Uncle John was inappropriate. They come from how you interpreted your parents' messages throughout your childhood. They come from how your siblings and schoolmates treated you. They come from every person who had an effect on your self-esteem.

The person you share your bed with, your life with, deserves better than to be interpreted through that many people – especially the ones who did not have your best interest in mind when they teased or disrespected you. You deserve to grow your self-esteem to such a healthy level that you no longer sabotage your relationship with made up stories.

Try it! Take the stories you make up about your lover and shush them. Then replace them with something positive. For instance:

“He loves his children. That’s why he sometimes feels torn between us. He loves me. That’s why he sometimes feels torn between us. How can I help him not feel torn so we can get back to that loving feeling?”

“She is such a flirt. That’s why I fell in love with her in the first place. But look at how she looks at me. No matter how anyone else flatters her, she only looks at me that way.”

“I think she hates it when I do that. But she hasn’t said anything about it. I’ll just wait and see. Maybe she loves me so much she thinks it’s cute!”

“He closes his eyes when we make love. Next time, I’m going to be on top. I’m going to take it slow and try gently blowing air across his eyelids. Maybe he’ll open them and I’ll smile at him and show him how turned on he makes me. That might encourage him. I may need to talk to him about how his not looking at me makes me feel insecure someday. In the meantime, how can I be creative and playful about this?”

If a positive interpretation tests the relationship, then that is information you need anyway. If it improves your relationship, what else is there to say?

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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!