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**Couples - How Do We Get Along Better?**

This article is about a subject that is always relevant and maybe more so in these stressful times. How do I get along better with my “significant other”? Believe it or not, it’s not that complicated but it is very difficult to do.

Here are some fundamental building blocks of a successful partnership:

**Devotion**

Devotion to one’s partner sounds so “over the top”. It’s not when we actually see what it looks like in a relationship. Each person in the partnership may sacrifice his/her own self-interests for the other. We consider each other as a capable and worthwhile person. We are one another’s “biggest fan.” The word “love” is so overused in our society. It is for this reason that I am not using it.

**Respect**

There are so many aspects of respect and factors than encompass respect. This is just a partial discussion here. We accept vulnerability and do not use these weaknesses to gain power in the partnership. There is no physical violence tolerated. We do not physically harm our partner. We do not emotionally abuse our partner. Emotional abuse is a subjective issue for some. For others it is clear. Here is a partial list that explains what emotional abuse may look like:

* humiliation-public and/or private
* pitting children against partner
* isolating person from family and/or social support group
* is critical most of the time
* blames other for problems and conflict
* systematic erosion of partner’s confidence over time

**Compromise**

Always needing to get one’s way is a relationship killer. Ask yourself “what is more important, the relationship or being right”? If being right is your answer, you may have great difficulty compromising. Considering the other’s point of view and sometimes acquiescing is a part of compromise. Another characteristic of compromise is both parties giving in a little, partially conceding. You don’t need to keep track. When couples compromise, they figure out a system that works for them. It’s about fairness. It’s fair to share in getting one’s way. This use of fairness prevents a build-up of resentment in either or both parties. Resentment is another relationship killer.

**Patience**

You notice when someone is impatient. It is overt. You do not feel heard or listened to. You feel rushed and it’s difficult to explain yourself when rushed. Impatience has an angry, irritable tone to it. Patience is the polar opposite of all that. In a healthy relationship, there is no room for impatience. We give our partner more attention than others, we demonstrate empathy and kindness and genuine concern. We give our partner the “benefit of the doubt”.

Please understand that what I have described here is what an ideal partnership looks like and doesn’t look like. Like many struggles in life, this can be a work in progress. These building blocks can be used as a guide and an ideal to aspire to. Some of us need to work harder than others to get along better with their partners. A couple that is committed to success will be willing to do the work to build on and repair their relationship.

**Relationship Building Skills**

being a good listener being accountable

knowing when to stop talking admitting you are wrong

sharing responsibilities having realistic expectations

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