

WHY DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

Do I Have to Explain Everything?

FACTS AND FALLACIES OF INTIMACY: PART 4

By Dr. Kevin Downing

FALLACY

My mate should understand and empathize with most everything that is important to me. If they really love me this shouldn't be a problem. The longer we are married the less we will have to explain things to each other.

FACT

As terribly inconvenient as it is, the fact of the matter is that your mate cannot read your mind. What is obvious to you is not always obvious to them – even if you have been married a long time.

KIM AND KENNY

Kim had brought her husband Kenny to marriage counseling. They had years of misunderstanding and conflict. She launched into him in sheer frustration that he was not getting it. As she spoke to him she looked over at me with those eyes that said – “Isn't this unbelievable that he doesn't understand me?” As much as I wanted to support her, I had to tell her she was missing the mark. She was just too vague in her demands with Kenny.

She wanted him to make her and the kids a greater priority in his life. The concept was great. Kenny just didn't know exactly what to do with her criticism. He wasn't sure what making her a greater priority looked like in her mind. (It reminds me of the wife who asked her husband to be more thoughtful so he got her a subscription to the hunting magazine - Field and Stream!)

THE LACK-OF-LOVE ASSUMPTION

It's easy to declare that our partner “doesn't love us” when they don't do what is so obvious to us. But, as we have talked about in past articles, this is what we call – mind reading. This mind reading is one of what we call – the four pipelines of poison in marriage. In healthy relationships we may doubt our mate's motives but not dictate their motives. It would be better for Kim to say to Kenny – “It's difficult for me to believe that the kids and I are the first priority in your life when I have to explain to you how to put us first.” Kenny can then say – “I'm so sorry. I have an idea or two but beyond that I need to hear what you want, if I'm going to deliver.”

When Kim says... “You don't really love us” she puts Kenny in a no win situation. It's hard, if not impossible to prove your motive in the spur of the moment. Frustration and hopelessness usually follows. This is not what Kim is after.

ONLY YOU KNOW WHAT YOU FEEL

I came across the most amazing Proverb the other day. I have never heard a sermon on it. It spells so clearly that only we know what we feel. It says...

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy. Proverbs 14:10

If only you know your own pain and joy – then it is up to you to share it!

THE SMALL THINGS THAT SPEAK BIG THINGS

What will help your pain and what will help to fulfill your desire? What has helped in the past? I recently had a couple similar to Kenny and Kim that just had the hardest time getting things going in their marriage. They went through weeks of frustration. Finally they had a great week. I was delighted for them and curious. What happened that their week was so wonderful?

The wife said about her husband, "He wrote me the nicest emails when I was at work – he never does that." I said, "OK, what else?" She said, "He walked the dog with me." And I said, "What else?" She responded with, "That's it!" I said, "Really – that's it? That's all he did?" She said, "That's right." Wow, I was surprised and so was her husband. Then I asked her husband, "How long did all of this take?" It was only about 20-30 minutes!

These little gestures of love spoke volumes to his wife. It was just the little things that spoke to her and said, "You are important, valued and loved by me." Much to his surprise, they took little time and no money. And to think that he used to see her as a bottomless pit that he could never make happy.

WHERE DO I START?

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5: 6-7

If you start with God then humility is the beginning point. It's hard to get angry and point the finger of blame at your mate when you haven't humbled yourself. Humility gives you the bigger picture on your marriage and place in life. It also helps you identify your feelings and balance negative emotions with a by-product of humility which is - gratitude. Next, you are directed to put your feelings and concerns for the future on God to carry. After that settles in awhile... you'll be at a much better place to talk to your mate!

Dr. Downing is available to see clients at the Fullerton office. Call 1-800-998-6329 today to schedule an appointment! We have over 40 locations in southern California.

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