

Misunderstanding Misunderstanding

My dear Jill,

I'm not sure you got what he's trying to say. I think both of you are lost in translation. And things get further lost in translation as we try to narrate marital problems to third parties. The reason is simple. Every time we try to relate issues in a marriage to a third party we do so with an objective. We relay problems in marriage to third parties with a view to achieving vindication. And that objective colours the truth. Our objective makes us unobjective however we try. Why Solomon said every story sounds true until you hear the other side. It means we downplay some things and omit salient facts.

And we can't represent the views of the other party anyway. Men and women process facts uniquely. For this alone there's bound to be disagreement even about the disagreement. I could try and explain his position to you, but you're not a man. So you won't and can't get it, unless you open yourself up. Let me try anyway. Things are way deeper than you imagine.

You see, men separate cause from reason. The cause of a fight is never the reason for his reaction. Women on the other hand don't separate cause from reason. They do linear processing when it comes to fights. A woman's two-stage logic is: She took my husband. Therefore I'm going to fight her. Premise,





conclusion. But a man's three-stage logic is: He took my wife. He's trying to prove to me he has money. I'll show him. You can see the man has an extra premise inserted. That extra premise is what informs his action. You will notice that during a quarrel your husband may refuse to eat the dinner you served. It's a three-stage logic thing. The whole idea is to get to you, making his point by a means that will certainly affect you. He's angry. The escalation of that anger is what's driving his actions. He's acting not reacting.

And like many women you hate being ignored, and you hate your food being ignored. If you assuage that anger you solve the quarrel. The real issue itself can then be talked over. That's why it seems to you that he can't be assuaged despite all the begging. It's because you're not addressing the anger. And the more you try to prove you're right the angrier he becomes. You're not getting his point. But once the anger is calmed, or he calms down by effluxion of time he'll come around, sometimes by himself. You can thus see that the cause of why men do what they do is different from the reason they do it.

In a counseling situation the man may look stupid. His actions were fueled by anger not really the issues. An inexperienced female counselor will not see his point. He can't justify his actions based on the simple facts. Men often do stupid things when they're angry. He may even have an affair in anger. When men do stupid things in righteous indignation they feel illogically justified. A man is very vulnerable when he's angry. An angry man, or a man without self-control is



like a city without a wall, Solomon said.

Men anger and hunger. When a man is angry, even though he's hungry he'll refuse to eat at home. He's reinforcing his point. He'll rather make the point on a rumbling and very empty stomach. That in itself is a point. He'll rather pop a bottle of Coke, or take garri (granulated African cassava staple) than touch your food. Men can be stubborn that way. And he can refuse to eat your cooking for days. He'll eat alternatively. If not arrested by God, circumstances, your humility or his humility, the problem can go on for months. At that stage of course you have a major problem in that marriage. Communication is reduced to the most essential elements, food as we've seen is gone, and sex is gone too. It's at this point that the marriage needs special intervention. Without intervention the end of that marriage beckons. By the time an authority figure intervenes the gulf is now so huge even Julius Berger will struggle to bridge it. The internal regulatory mechanism has totally broken down due to pride on both sides. Pride destroys more marriages than any other factor. Humility is essential in marriage.

When there's an impasse in a marriage someone has to swallow his or her pride. Love does not insist on having its own way. Love is humble.

Now, this is my reading of your situation. I think he's saying you're not paying attention to his intimacy needs. Now, that won't make sense to you because



you're a dutiful wife. And that's exactly the point. Sometimes, we're so devoted to marriage we ignore our partner. The house runs like clockwork: the children take their bath in regulation period, food is always ready, house is clean... Everything is going smooth except what's going on between you and your spouse.

You've got to watch it, a man has needs. Emotional and physical needs. Just as a woman has needs. For you for example, you like to regurgitate the events of the day at the office. You want him to listen. Unbeknownst to you you're piling extra pressure. Men often lack the emotional capacity to take that all in. But love accommodates such extraordinary emotional demands. It's why it's called love.

And you like to cuddle. Some men can't handle cuddling. It stimulates desire for sex instead, but that's not what you want. Just as you like to offload your worries and cuddle, he has his own needs too. He wants you to pay attention to him. Him! He needs sex, he needs friendship, he needs affection... To go out with you... For drinks, to the cinema... If you don't go out with him he'll either suffer in silence, or rent someone. Pray he rents someone benign. That you don't fulfill those needs won't make them go away. And for men, your willingness and eagerness to go out with him, or to have sex with him matters. If it has to take a process to get you to go out or to have sex with him, it'll be too much of an emotional demand. Making him beg for his rights in marriage, or making him wary about "disturbing" you is neither right nor wise. It's the same way a woman



feels if she literary has to beg her husband to meet basic financial obligations in marriage. Willingness and eagerness to please... These are two very important things in marriage. I hope you understand better, and you'll make urgent amends.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lena Alder'.

Your mentor

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