

## **Marriage, Fighting, and a Way Out**

"I don't get anything from you," she screamed. "I can't even get how your day was!"

"And all you do is complain!" he yelled back. "It's never good enough for you!"

"The fight" was happening again. It happened often for John and Susan, particularly when things got a bit more stressful around the house. And it's a theme that millions of couples experience in their marriages: She doesn't feel like he's emotionally engaged in the relationship, and he wants her to quit complaining and leave him alone.

Women often voice their concerns to their husbands as a way of "joining them." By expressing what they're feeling, they'd like their husbands to listen and understand their concerns.

On the other side of the room, husbands are listening and only hearing complaints. They feel as though their wives are dissatisfied, and they feel responsible for this dissatisfaction.

Is there an answer to this problem?

What if couples took action to avoid getting "stuck" in the same old argument? What if they learned about their own styles and the styles of their spouse to develop a plan that was more effective than frequent arguing?

Here are four action steps for couples that will go a long way towards avoiding "the fight" in the future.

For her:

1. She can be more familiar with the tendency of her husband to feel responsible when she voices her concerns, and she could make sure that the time was "right" for her to voice her concerns. Avoid bringing up your concerns right as he walks in the door from work.

Talk about them when both of you are comfortable and relaxed. It might also be helpful to occasionally remind your husband that you don't need these things to be "fixed." Just listening will be enough!

2. Realize that the more you try to pry information out of your husband, the more he'll resist! The best way to get more out of your husband is to tell him warmly that you love it when he shares more of his life with you. The next step is to give him the space he needs to do just that.

For him:

1. Take a good look at the difference in how women communicate, and realize that they may not want you to solve problems. Stop looking for the "bottom line" from her and start listening when she speaks to you. And realize that her concerns don't have to be taken personally--they're just concerns, and it doesn't mean that it's your fault!

2. Make a conscious effort to share more of your life with your wife. The hum-drum everyday news about your day may not seem fascinating to you, but it doesn't have to be to be effective. Sharing more will have you feeling more connected to your wife and expanding your ability to connect with your kids, co-workers, etc. Save the "bottom-line" for work!

Married couples can be in choice about what kind of relationship they'd like to have. All they need is a little knowledge and the courage to try on some new behaviors.

With a divorce rate at about 50%, don't you think it's worth a try?

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