



TYPES OF CONFLICTS THAT MIGHT BE GETTING IN YOUR WAY: ATTEMPTING TO CLARIFY JUST WHAT YOU ARE FIGHTING ABOUT

COMMON PROJECTS AND HOW TO DO THEM (e.g., children, pets, how to spend leisure time together, house decorating/remodeling, etc.)

It is natural for partners to have different priorities and preferences about how to pursue common projects: partners were raised in different families, usually with different socioeconomic levels, and with different expectations. Fights in this arena usually are about negotiating whose priorities and preferences will be followed in what spheres, and what compromises can be made, although it may look to partners as if the fight is about basic character traits or basic values.

- What is partner A's way of doing things, and what does he/she think of partner B's preferences?
- What is partner B's way of doing things and what does he/she think of partner A's preferences?
- How have you successfully negotiated such differences of opinion before?

WORK THAT BOTH PARTNERS AGREE HAS TO BE DONE (house work, bills and finances, driving kids here and yonder, walking the dog, yard work, house maintenance...)

It is natural for each partner to prefer to do less of what is unpleasant, and more of what is pleasant, and to do more where they feel more competent, and less where they feel less so. Typically, fights in this arena are about negotiating acceptable loads, and negotiating what feels to bother partners to be a fair and ideal distribution of tasks, although the fight may seem to partners to be about exploitation, gender expectations, appreciation, being taken for granted, laziness, or selfishness.

- What does partner A think about the present distribution of tasks
 - Amount of work allotted to him/her, is it manageable?
 - Amount of work allotted to partner B, is it manageable?
 - Degree of fit of the tasks allotted to each: might some trades make sense?
- What does partner B think about the present distribution of tasks
 - Amount of work allotted to him/her
 - Amount of work allotted to partner A
 - Degree of fit of the tasks allotted to each: might some trades make sense?

INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS THAT DON'T INVOLVE THE OTHER PARTNER (leisure activities that only one partner spends a significant amount of time on, one's career, education, friends, parents)

It's natural for partners to have some individual projects that don't essentially involve their partner, whether this is their career, leisure activities or friends. Typically, fights in this arena are about one partner feeling that their partner is spending too much time, energy, or money on their own projects, and not enough on their partner. What tends to happen is that one partner who has, e.g., a passion for ice skating, feels criticized for something that feels essential to them, when their partner is really expressing a desire to have more of them and a kind of jealousy for the time spent on the passion.

- What is partner A losing when partner B pursues his/her individual project?
- What is partner B's view of that same good? of partner A's feelings about it?

PROJECTS THAT ARE INDIVIDUAL BUT WHERE ONE WANTS THE PARTICIPATION OF THE OTHER PARTNER (time and behavior with in laws, leisure activities that one partner loves and the other tolerates (e.g., hiking, sailing, going out dancing), level of cleanliness in the house, eating healthfully, etc.)

Some individual projects are such that although they really are one partner's project, that partner would like their partner to participate in it in some way. These types of projects are often seen by one partner as common projects and by the other as individual projects, which leads to some confusion and a lot of painful fighting. It can help to be clear that this is partner A's project, but that partner A would like the participation/collaboration of partner B, not because partner B is committed to the project, but because partner B is committed to helping partner A achieve his/her project.

- One partner feels that they have to do what their partner wants too much of the time, or one partner feels their partner doesn't do what they want enough of the time.
- Partner A's fear about what will happen if he/she doesn't do what partner B wants
- Partner A's objections to doing what partner B wants
- Partner B's fears about what will happen if partner A doesn't do what he/she wants
- Partner B's stake in having partner A participate in this project with him/her