



Marriage Rules[©]

“CONFLICT IS HEALTHY”

By: Larry B. Gelman, Psy. D.

Growth occurs through the successful resolution of conflict. In the absence of conflict, there is no growth. Healthy conflict evolves and emerges from the friction requisite to spark a vibrant and dynamic relationship.

The “rub” comes from the fact that two people who are each “right” from their subjective frame of reference. Both have needs, wants and requirements which must be met and/or addressed consistently in ways which are meaningful, relevant and useful to each one of them.

No one can make another person happy; however, everyone can satisfy someone, at least some of the time, by fulfilling expectations at the unit of relevance of the other person, again, at least some of the time.

Conflict provides a staging for expectancies to be communicated. Conflict also provides a barometer as to how well, or how poorly, those expectancies are being met and/or addressed.

In unhealthy conflict, someone wins and someone loses. Losers have an historical habit of engaging in revenge and retaliation. Today’s loser is tomorrow’s winner. Today’s winner is tomorrow’s loser. In this system, a cyclic pattern results in people trying, and succeeding in, hurting, if not altogether harming, one another.

In healthy conflict, no one wins because no one loses! Both parties know that if something is not good for one of them, then it is not good for all of them. In this system, a cyclic pattern results in people trying, and succeeding in, respecting one another.

Out of respect, grows trust. And with trust, an important relational building block becomes a marital foundation stone. Without a solid foundation, nothing of enduring substance can be built.

Growth occurs through the successful resolution of conflict,

...but only when “conflict is healthy”.

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