SHALOM BAYIT: Complain more. Criticize less.

Conflicts and disagreement are inevitable in any healthy long term relationship. Marriage is no exception. Each of us has his or her own personality, character and point of view. Each one of us was raised and educated by different parents. And on top of all that, one of us is male and the other female, which as the Tora hints, were created "opposite" (*kenegdo*) to each other.

The key for achieving domestic harmony in this area consists in regaining control at *how* we argue. Are we disagreeing in a way that tensions would probably escalate, or in a way that words would eventually lead to a conflict-resolution?

To succeed, we must become aware of the difference between complaint and criticism. While complaint is natural and sometimes necessary, criticism is always destructive.
1. Complaint is about specific issues, criticism is an attack on your spouse. When you complain, you express your frustration with an unsolved problem or uncomfortable situation. When you criticize, you aim, intentionally or unintentionally, at hurting your spouse's feelings.

COMPLAINT: *We don't go out as much as I 'd like to, we need to go out more often….*
CRITICISM: *You are so insensitive, all you want is to go out with your friends…*
COMPLAINT: *"I have a problem with you not calling*

when you're going to be late. I get worried. "
CRITICISM: *"Why don't you call when you're going to be late? You just don't care about the rest of us."*

2. When I complain I talk mainly about my feelings. When I criticize, is always about your flaws.
COMPLAINT: *"It upsets me when I see the dirty dishes in the kitchen"*
CRITICISM: *You left dirty dishes all over the kitchen again….*

3. The ideal complaint should have 3 components. 1. A description of my feelings. 2. A description of the actions or things that upsets me. 3. A suggestion of what to do, say, or change.
COMPLAINT: *(1) It upsets me when (2) I see your clothing out of their place (3) let me show you how to hang those pants.* CRITICISM*: You are just incapable of keeping your bedroom clean, are you? I hate to see the type of lazy person you have become.*

Unlike complaints, criticism will trigger a defense or a counterattack from your spouse. Which will probably lead to more *ad hominem* verbal conflicts, quarrels, etc. It is a loss / loss situation for both, and when pervasive, a self destructive cycle for your marriage.

Identify when you practice criticism, and if you cannot avoid it, turn criticism into complaints.