Loving Your Spouse The Way You Are Or The Way She Needs?

TO LOVE OR TO FALL IN LOVE?

Love is not infatuation. Love should not be seen as a spontaneous feeling that happens or does not happen to you. Loving is a voluntary act. And it is extremely important to know, especially in marriage, that “love”, the noun, is the result of our willingness “to love”, the verb. Learning to love, by trying to know better the way my spouse needs me to love her, does not take away the sincerity of the act of loving. It is for this reason that our Tora presents love as an “obligation”, it tells us to love our neighbor, the stranger, ourselves and God. And it also teaches us how to do it.

FROM DIFFERENT PLANETS

Modern society has made a tremendous effort during the last 50-60 years so that men and women enjoy the same rights in society, have the same opportunities in the job market, etc. But you must understand that emotionally we are, and will continue to be, very different (in the vast majority of cases). The way a man expresses love or perceives love – or the absence of it – is very different from the way a woman expresses and perceives love. Being unaware of these psychological and emotional differences can be very damaging to a marriage.

Let’s now see one simple example

HOW TO LOVE YOUR WIFE ?

Very often a wife might feel the need to chat with her husband, expecting that both of them would open up emotionally and share their feelings. In these types of emotional conversations, one expresses what bothers or hurts him or her as a way to unwind and release tensions, and when articulating

conflicts in these conversations, no solution is sought, just relief and support. When a wife opens up emotionally, what she needs from her husband is attentive and empathetic listening, and the effort to understand her. This type of therapeutic conversation helps a woman to feel understood, that is, supported and validated in her feelings. And then she feels loved.

HOW TO LOVE A MAN?

For most men, the goal of a conversation where a problem or a conflict is discussed is not about sharing emotions or relax, but to find a solution to those problems. In the world of men, you don't share your emotions when you want to vent. On the contrary! For a man, "opening up and articulating his problems" might be like psychological torture. Why? Because when a man talks about his problems he "lives" them again. When a man is tense he would rather unwind privately and quietly in one of "his caves", as John Gray describes it. How? Doing something that turns his mind into automatic pilot and distracts him from the problem, like listening to the news, watching a sports event, etc. This private space helps him to stop thinking about his problem and in this way he would eventually feel more relieved. Thus, when his wife generously provides him with this private space, and helps him relax in his way, the husband feels grateful and loved.

MEN ARE NOT FROM VENUS

Most of us, men and women, are not very knowledgeable or aware about these differences. On the contrary: we live in a society where political correctness pushes us to ignore the innate differences between the genders. Therefore, we do not get many opportunities to learn and recognize that wives and husbands show love and want to be loved in different ways. Now, f no one teaches a wife that a man's way of unwinding is completely opposite to a woman's, she will naturally try to "help" her husband in the only way she knows, and "out of her sincere love for him" will try to push him to tell her all about his

problem. The wife offers her ear and her time, with the best of intentions. Just as she would like her husband to act in that situation. When this happens, and her husband refuses to talk and vent out his problems with her, she would probably feel that he is rejecting “her”. And she would probably believe that he does not accept her emotional support because he does not love her enough…. From the other side, it is quite possible that the husband would interpret her behavior not as an act of love but as an attempt from her side to deprive him of his own space.

LOWER YOUR EXPECTATIONS

This is just one example of how things can go wrong despite our good intentions and in spite of love for each other, simply because “we don’t know how to love our spouse”.
Learning to love your spouse means in the first place that a husband or a wife must do whatever they can “to educate himself” and learn how each one expresses his or her love and needs to be loved differently.
Finally, it is also critical to understand that “knowing” is the first step, but it is not enough. Just because we learn something new, we cannot transform ourselves immediately and automatically. Acting upon new knowledge, particularly in the area of emotions, might take a long time to happen. To make it part of you, you have to keep trying until you find the delicate balance between what you are and what you know that you should do.

To be continued