

DOES YOUR SPOUSE FEEL RESPECTED?

by Mike Danchak

Mutual respect in a marriage is a key to lasting intimacy. However, often in marriage coaching, I find that one or both partners believe themselves to be truly better than (maybe even superior to) their partner. Not just better at certain tasks or skills...but better as a whole person. This is what leads to the idea that if only one's partner could be "fixed" then the partnership would be happy and successful. The nonverbal messages comes across to your mate, "Your broke. You are fortunate to have me as a mate...I can fix you!" This message undermines intimacy. It's impossible to have a mutually intimate relationship with someone who does not respect you or if you do not respect your spouse.

Most people aren't broken and if they are it isn't the role of the spouse to point it out and make them a project. Most of us are fully functional as human beings and we know it. Life was working before we married our spouse and will continue to work even if they are gone.

Respecting your spouse has to be built on the recognition that he/she is a fully functional and remarkably capable person. You spouse may not be as good as you are at organization, or baseball, or cooking, or gardening or whatever. But, guess what? You aren't as good as they are at many things. Which of you is better?

Respect means being truly interested in how your spouse feels and thinks about a topic, and allowing them to have their own set of values, beliefs, likes and dislikes. Respect means that your spouse's opinion matters, even if you disagree with it. Respect means allowing your spouse to live with out being made to feel "less than" for their choices.

Here are some coaching tips to communicate respect to your spouse and build intimacy in your marriage:

- When meet your spouse for lunch, you are on time.
- You publically complement your spouse's on his/her opinions
- You consult with your spouse when making decisions that will impact them
- You go out of your way to please your spouse and do things that make them feel good
- You remember your spouse's birthday, anniversary, and other special occasions that are important to him/her.
- Your spouse encourages you when you face difficult situations and struggle with your limitations

1. Do you feel respected by your spouse?

2. If the answer is "yes" share with your spouse things they do to make you feel respected?

3. If the answer is "no," talk with your spouse about the behaviors that cause you to feel disrespected.

4. Talk about things you both can do to make the other spouse feel respected.