



THE ONE WHO LOVES THE MOST – WINS!

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Who wouldn't want to know how to make their relationship better? Forty-nine years ago, when I was beginning my relationship with my husband, I would have given my prized rock'n roll collection for someone to teach me what I know today. I'm enormously grateful to have learned what I did eventually – and thrilled that my husband did too!

Through teaching courses about relationships for thirty years, I've selected some principles that can be implemented immediately:

An unflappable, loving vision: You are *both* wanting the same things... to feel love more and to be loved more. When we acknowledge that, then we don't perceive our partner as the enemy, but just someone trying their best to get what they want. Even when our partners don't act in a loving or clear way, we can know they are *doing the best they know how* based on their current beliefs. If they knew better, they'd be doing it better. Think about them this way the next time you're not getting what you want.

Responsibility Heaven: As shocking as it can be for us, if we took full responsibility for our own happiness and unhappiness – and didn't blame our partner for “causing” our unhappiness – we would actually feel like we had won the lottery. Why? Because then, instead of relying on your partner to “make” you happy or change behaviors that “make” you unhappy, you place the decision-making power in your own hands, deciding to make yourself happy now. (This is the biggie! Get this and you're set for life!) How can we do this? By first accepting that we always have a choice of how we're viewing any behavior or situation. The choice is to either be happy or unhappy about it. Take a close look at a particular time you got unhappy (hurt, angry, uncomfortable, irritated, etc.) with your partner. What did you hope would happen when you got unhappy? (We tend to get unhappy to either motivate another person or ourselves.) Did it work? My guess is “no”. Help! We need another way to go for what we want. When our partner is unloving, accusatory, angry, or in any way challenging, we could decide it's an *opportunity* for us to learn or get better at something (e.g. loving, letting go of judgments, not controlling, etc.) Once we perceive the situation as an opportunity, it's easy to choose to be happy about it, right? After all, we then believe what is happening is good for us. Then, no matter what your partner does, you get to be happy. No more need to blame the other for *making* you unhappy. (Your partner doesn't have that power. Only you do.) No more need to make him/her wrong or bad because you didn't get what you wanted. You're no longer at the mercy of your partner's

actions. Now that's relationship heaven! Additionally, it means we are not responsible for our partners' unhappiness or happiness either. Great news!

Assumption alternative: Ask! We often make assumptions about what our partner thinks or feels without checking it out first. We believe our partner thinks the way we would under those circumstances... no way! Your partner will most likely put information together and form conclusions differently than you. Try asking your partner questions *nicely* like "What did you mean when you said that? Why did you just say that? What do you think about that? How did you feel when I said that? It's important to believe your partner's answer versus thinking it's a lie. So many people feel unheard or misunderstood in relationships, often because of assumptions. All you can do is *not* fill in the blanks with what you *think* is going on for the other person, keep *asking* questions, *believe* what your partner says, and *stay open* to what they say. Everything that your partner does will simply tell you about *his/her* beliefs (not about you).

Ownership Power: We are always doing what we want, even when we think we're doing something *for our partner*. If we decide to do something, we are making the choice for our own reasons. (If you're doing something that fits into that category, ask yourself, "what is the underlying reason I'm choosing to do this?" or "what do I hope to get out of doing this?" You'll discover that, in the end, it's *for you*, not your partner.) If we believe we *have to* or *should*, then we are not taking ownership of our choices and decisions, and blaming our partner. Get yourself out of the victim position by whispering in your own ear, "If I do this, it is my own decision. I'm doing it for me."

Self-studentship: Begin to study yourself. *Notice* when you get uncomfortable, unhappy, or reactive (without judging yourself!) You will then become aware of the ways you've learned to take care of yourself and ways you've learned to try to motivate others. Read "**Happiness Is A Choice**" by Barry Neil Kaufman (yes, my husband wrote it – and the learning of these ideas, which we teach to others at The Option Institute, saved our marriage, our parenting and our lives!) There is nothing that feels better, serves us and supports our lives more than knowing how to generate love from within ourselves, without needing our partners to change or be what we want *first*. Sure, we believe the things we're wanting in our relationship are important. Go for them. But do we want to make them more important than our happiness and our feeling loving? Every time we get unhappy, we are actually saying, "I am willing to give up my happiness to get myself or my partner to do this or stop that." Nothing is worth the giving up of our happiness.

Make your happiness and being loving your highest priority, and you'll never regret it. I have a motto that has worked amazingly for me in my relationship: **THE ONE WHO LOVES THE MOST – WINS!!!**

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