

The Dance of Relationships

We all have basic emotional needs that require nurturing. When these emotional needs lack the nurturing they require, we begin to feel uncomfortable and tend to react in negative ways. This negative reaction is generally directed towards the person or event we feel triggered the uncomfortable feeling.

This reaction is similar to when the air we breathe is cut off. We react negatively towards the one blocking the air we need. The book, 'Love & Respect', by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, illustrates that we –male and female- have different emotional needs than the opposing sex. In general, males have an emotional need to be respected, and females have an emotional need to be loved. Sometimes the roles are reversed but let's use this generality as our example.

Respect for a man is the emotional air he breaths. Love for a woman is the emotional air she breaths. When we do not get the emotional air we need, we tend to react negatively towards the other by cutting off the emotional air they need.

When a man is not feeling respected, he negatively reacts by not loving her. When she is not feeling loved, she negatively reacts by not respecting him. Then the crazy cycle starts. Repeatedly this happens, and before you know it, you are paying for couple's counseling thinking your partner should listen to the therapist because there's nothing wrong with you.

The stronger, more mature one recognizes this and decides the relationship is more important than being right or vengeful for not being emotionally validated. If this is uncomfortable for you, welcome to the club. We're not in the relationship to be right all the time. We're in the relationship because we care for our partner and value them. Likewise, we want our partner to care for and value us as well. When one of the partners decides to address the area needed in order to prosper the relationship, both can come out ahead.

Take our example couple above. If the man forgives his wife for not respecting him and loves her anyway, she may be more willing to respect him since she now has the emotional air she needs. If the woman forgives her husband for not loving her and respects him anyway, he may be more willing to love her since he now has the emotional air he needs.

What if I am willing and they're not budging or want a divorce? That is a tough question. I cannot answer for every situation under the sun. I do realize that sometimes, one side of the party may not want to work things out. For whatever reason, their emotional bank account has been overdrawn to the point where reconciliation is not possible. It is in this case, I highly recommend some form of couple's counseling. If this is the route it takes, be open minded and not so closed off as to think your partner should listen to the therapist because there's nothing wrong with you. I don't know if there is or not. Be open minded through it all. You're both in this together. If you leave your partner alone through any therapy process, how can you expect them to not leave you in it? Be open-minded and look at it as it's about helping, not being right.