

Feelin' It

As we pursue an enduring love relationship, the baggage we bring into the relationship inescapably influences us. These things will surface as we encounter “bumps” in our marriages.

That’s why it’s so important to “guard our hearts” – to be fully aware of what’s going on inside us. What’s your strategy for guarding your heart?

Illustration: Mr. & Mrs. Mug (Blue & Pink)

Let these urgent words from the Bible be a continuing reminder of how critically important it is to realize what’s going on inside you:

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”
Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

We naturally monitor our spouse’s behavior, but we rarely monitor our own heart. Your ability to feel certain things is connected to the condition of your heart. **Your ability to stay in love has as much to do with the condition of your heart as it does the behavior/actions of your spouse.**

**WHAT’S IN YOU IS GOING TO COME OUT OF YOU
REGARDLESS OF WHO IS WITH YOU.**

Resource: *Enemies of the Heart: Breaking Free from the Four Emotions That Control You*

In every potentially tough situation in our relationships, it’s good to fully identify and name exactly what we’re feeling – then to talk about this with our spouses, if and when appropriate.

These “bump” situations occur regularly in our marriages – sometimes daily. When the next one comes in your marriage, be prepared to follow this exercise ...

1. Identify what you’re feeling.
 - Anger, left out, embarrassed, unappreciated, ugly, unlovable, failure, old, stupid, lonely, abandoned, scared, out of control, betrayed, picked on, jealous, disrespected, insecure, etc.
2. Name it.
3. Say the name aloud. (*The emotions begin to lose their power. We lose our excuse.*)
4. If and when appropriate, talk about it with your spouse.
 - “I’ve discovered that when _____, I feel _____.” *There are no bad feelings. It’s not a criticism. It’s an observation. “I’m so glad you told me.” SILENCE!*

To help prepare for this, visualize in your mind a typical “bump” situation in your marriage, and imagine yourself responding by proceeding through each of these steps. Simply doing this in your mind ahead of time may reveal something about your emotions that you haven’t fully addressed before.

Discussion Questions:

1. In the marriages of people you know, what are the typical kinds of baggage from the past that seem to surface unexpectedly?
2. In a situation where there may be conflict or hurt in a marriage, why is it so important to first understand what's going on in our own hearts?
3. In what ways have you found yourself monitoring your spouse's behavior in regard to situations involving potential conflict or disappointment?
4. What can help us to more clearly understand the baggage from our past as it impacts our marriage today? What can help us to not ignore it or suppress it?
5. What can help us be more accepting of the fact that the "marriage problems" we encounter are very often individual "heart problems" that we need to identify, understand, and face up to?
6. There is a sense of freedom that comes when we finally identify the emotional baggage that we've brought into our relationships. Can you sense how attractive and enjoyable that freedom would be? What do you think it would typically lead to in a marriage relationship?