

Celebrate Differences

“Differences: Pushing You Apart Or Drawing You Together?”

Fusion – the process in which light atoms such as those of hydrogen and deuterium combine and form heavier atoms, releasing a great amount of energy, that primarily manifests itself in the form of heat.

Intuition – the state of being aware of or knowing something without having to discover or perceive it.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV)

*Give your spouse the most generous explanation for their **behavior** and believe it.*

Give your spouse the most generous explanation for their difference and believe it.



Find the most generous explanation for your spouse’s differences and believe it.

1. What differences in your spouse attracted you when you were dating?
2. At this point in your marriage, what differences remain? Or have new ones emerged?
3. How do you deal with your differences?
4. Do you tend to think generously about your spouse’s behavior?
5. What does our culture say about the differences between men and women?
6. Paul writes in Philippians 4:8 that we are to think on what is good and pure, essentially reflecting a habit of thought that is generous. What do your current habits of thought reflect?
7. What action steps can you take to either change or improve your current habits of thought?

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Activity: Personality Inventory (6 copies – home, work, spouse, kids)

Circle your responses based on how you relation to your family – the most important people in your life. Be sure to circle responses based on who you actually are and how you act toward others right now – not on how you wish you were or always wanted to be.

Divide Up The Room – Lions/Otters/Beavers/Golden Retrievers (OPPOSITES ATTRACT)

DISC profile is a simple test that will yield tremendous insight into how you process decisions and what your natural tendencies may be. (Note Fast/Slow & People/Task)

- The **D** (Dominant; Lion; Choleric; Powerful; Extrovert; Doer; Optimist) person is a hard-charging driver that is task-oriented and first looks to problems.

“Without wise leadership, a nation is in trouble; but with good counselors there is safety.”

Proverbs 11:14 (TLB)

- The **I** (Influencing; Otter; Sanguine; Popular; Extrovert; Talker; Optimist) person is people-oriented, fun, outgoing, and generally concerned about people-pleasing, so they first look to people.

“A cheerful heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit makes one sick.”

Proverbs 17:22 (TLB)

- The **S** (Stable; Golden Retriever; Phlegmatic; Peaceful; Introvert; Watcher; Pessimist) person is amiable, loyal, does not like conflict, and is concerned about pace.

“Gentle words cause life and health; griping brings discouragement.”

Proverbs 15:4 (TLB)

- The **C** (Compliant; Beaver; Melancholy; Perfectionist; Introvert; Thinker; Pessimist) person is analytical, loves detail, factual, can seem rigid, and loves procedures.

“A sensible man watches for problems ahead and prepares to meet them.
The simpleton never looks and suffers the consequences.”

Proverbs 27:12 (TLB)

Personality Inventory Evaluations ...

“If you refuse criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace;
if you accept criticism, you are on the road to fame.”

Proverbs 13:18 (TLB)

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1. With your personality type, what *strengths* do you see in yourself?

2. With your personality type, what *weaknesses* do you see in yourself?

3. Which of the personality traits do you like *best* in your spouse? Why?

4. Which of the personality traits do you like *least* in your spouse? Why?

5. What *qualities* of the other personality types would you like to develop?

6. What can you do to *affirm* and take advantage of your spouse's unique personality? How can you *blend* your strengths with his or hers?

7. List three recurring *struggles* you face as a couple that are results of your personality differences ...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

8. What are some specific ways in which you can be more *understanding* and *tolerant* of your spouse's personality when working through one of the struggles you named?

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Four Kinds of People ...

<u>Pay</u> Now	<u>Pay</u> Later	(Beavers gone bad; learn to have fun; chill out)
<u>Pay</u> Now	<u>Play</u> Later	(Me, Lions, Amie had to teach me to play)
<u>Play</u> Now	<u>Play</u> Later	(Otters gone bad; grow up; take responsibility)
<u>Play</u> Now	<u>Pay</u> Later	(Golden Retrievers; can be viewed as lazy)

Stages In Our Differences (Ray Linder, “What Will I Do With My Money?”)

1. Fascination
2. Irritation
3. Toleration
4. Appreciation
5. Celebration – receiving vs. resisting each other’s gifts

Your temperament mixes with your God-given spiritual gifts.

“We have different **gifts**, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is **prophesying**, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is **servng**, let him serve; if it is **teaching**, let him teach; ⁸ if it is **encouraging**, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him **give** generously; if it is **leadership**, let him govern diligently; if it is showing **mercy**, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:3-8 (NIV)

Discussion: What is your spiritual gift? What gift do you see in your spouse? What influence do these gifts have in your relationship?

Your temperament affects your wants, needs, and money decisions.

Discussion: Based on your personality inventories, what changes do you need to make with regard to how you handle the *stuff* God has given you?

Your temperament impacts career path and job satisfaction.

Discussion: Based on your personality inventory, are you *working* in your strengths zone?

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Your temperament influences how you raise your children/grandchildren.

Discussion: How is your personality expressed in the way you raised your children or are raising your children/grandchildren? What temperament are your kids?

Many times one is the **dreamer** (rarely will it be the beavers). If you're married to someone who loves to dream and has grand visions of what can be, how do you respond?
(Wow vs. How)

If you don't listen to the dreams of your spouse, someone else will. They want the luxury of dreaming. Not that all of their dreams will even come to fruition. If the dream moves into desire then you'd better pay special attention to it.

Your temperament is reflected in how you perceive life ... Cup 1/2 Full vs. Cup 1/2 Empty

Exercise: Toast Your Spouse

"Here's to Amie, my Gold Retriever. I thank God for giving me this stable, caring woman as my wife. I am grateful that she helps me to relax and have fun."

Let's pray!

Otters ... curb their tongues, control their egos, cultivate their memories, concern themselves with others and count the cost.

Beavers ... fill them with hope, make them happy, help them to look for the positives, grant them a tough outer skin, expose their insecurities, help them to relax their standards

Golden Retrievers ... be enthusiastic, try something new, accept responsibility, communicate feelings, make decisions, learn to say no

Lions ... open their minds and help them examine their weaknesses, admit faults, learn to apologize, seek forgiveness, learn to relax, take pressure off of others, respond to other leadership, develop patience, stop manipulating, don't argue & tone things down.

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“Increasing The Softside & Hardside of Love”
Gary Smalley & John Trent

Now that we’ve seen how God has created us with regard to temperament and spiritual gifts, let’s spend this session working through how we can begin to find a balance in the way we love one another. Depending on how God has made you, you will find it easier to relate to the hardside (Lion & Beaver) or the softside (Retriever & Otter) of love.

The intensity and drive that most lions show, and the emotional reserve and desire to do things by the book that most beavers share, are indeed strengths. To the other animals in the family zoo, however, they can often project a hardside distance.

And it’s our otters and golden retrievers who tend to camp out on the soft side of love. Being naturally soft on people, they’re often too soft on problems as well. They need a healthy hardness to balance their love not just in a crisis, but every day.

How can work toward a balance between the two?

Let’s start with trying to add healthy **softness** to our lives ...

1. Deal with the emotional “freeze points” in the past.

Emotional freeze points reflect either a single event or a season of events that lock a person into giving only one side of love.

Discussion: Did you see a balance of softside and hardside love in your home? If not, toward what extreme was it shifted?

Discussion: Can you think of a specific time when you made an inner decision that you were not going to be soft or hard with others? What prompted the decision?

Discussion: How was God pictured in your childhood home? Did you receive a balanced view of Him, or was He only a softside God of mercy or a hardside God of judgment? How has this past view of God affected your view of Him today?

2. Recognize that certain personality bents can set up barriers to softside love.

Otters and golden retrievers have as strong a natural desire to move closer to others as lions and beavers do to move away.

Beavers ... your ability to think critically can be interpreted as an aloofness, a lack of need for others and a rigidity that nonverbally pushes people away.

Lions ... your desire for control and power will frustrate those wanting to get close to you.

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3. Learn to give others a “softness sandwich.”

Encouraging words ... direct words ... leave with softness.

4. Understand what softness means to the other person.

The less we appreciate a person’s natural strengths, the hard we’ll tend to act toward that individual. We need to ASK what softness means to them and then LISTEN to what they have to say. It will give you a ton of insight into large and small ways to touch their hearts and soften yours.

5. Learn the secret of making hard decisions in a soft way.

We need to place a high value on one another and then honor one another accordingly. Avoid exploding and running over everyone else or using harsh, biting words that cut deeply.

6. Recognize the destructive power of nonverbal hardness.

We’ll never be truly effective at communicating the soft side of love if we don’t take a hard look at what we’re saying nonverbally. Gestures, long stares, and icy looks will damage just as much as cruel words.

Learning to be softer with others begins with our eyes and mouths. In a mixed message of soft words and hard nonverbal signals, all ties go to the hard side. (Body positioning, tone of voice, volume, crossed arms, eye contact, hugs, etc.)

7. Become personally involved in helping others.

When we begin intentionally sacrificing for others it will sensitize our hearts! Are you involved in a situation where you are serving others?

8. Allow tough times to mold us into soft people.

Many people go through trials, but not all are trained by them. Physical pain or other problems can make us harder in our personal lives. Yet for others who have gone through a season of difficulty, hard times can make soft people. Going through pain will make us either bitter or better. Are trials making you harder or softer?

9. Keep our hearts spiritually soft.

Without question, the greatest single way to soften our love for others is to increase our love for Christ. We need to remain open to correction from others. And we must avoid those things that bring darkness to our hearts (greed, evil, strife, anger, deceit, slander, hatred and especially sexual sin). We need to embrace the conviction of the Holy Spirit or our hearts will become hardened.

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10. Make it your goal to be soft with those you love.

If you're a lion or a beaver, goals feel as good as a hot towel right out of the dryer. When someone gives you a goal, the challenge fuels your fire. So my challenge to you is to make it a goal to add softness to your love for others. Ask God to help you every day! Look for tangible ways to express your softside love and celebrate the win in your marriage!

Let's turn our attention to adding **hardside** love in a healthy way ...

1. Recognize the effect of emotional freeze points.

Emotional freeze points reflect either a single event or a season of events that lock a person into giving only one side of love.

2. Allow a short time of distance to build a season of closeness.

By nature, otters and golden retrievers tend to be very strong at building relationships. But if those close relationships develop problems, they're apt to explain them away. They want to give them more time to work out or try to ignore what's wrong altogether. Why? It's a classic case of people's strengths being pushed to an extreme and become their greatest weaknesses.

Otters and golden retrievers get so close to people that they can't separate the person from the problem. So they begin to equate legitimate correction with personal rejection. The most insecure people are those who can't distance themselves from their loved ones far enough to discipline them.

3. Learn to use a word that can save your relationships.

NO ... you can take or lose control of your life simply by saying or failing to say this one hardside word! Golden retrievers and otters have particular difficulty saying no.

Even Jesus said no (margins, parameters)! Failing to say no can allow unwanted attitudes to take root in our homes (watch out for the reaction of the lions). Failing to say no can keep us from doing what's really important. Failing to say no can allow tension and resentment to build up. Failing to say no can cut meaningful communication in half. Failing to say no can keep others and ourselves from the truth (codependency).

One of the biggest hurdles a softside person faces is being willing to confront others and say no. Many counselors will tell you that it's much easier to get a hardside person to become softer than it is to get a softside person to become harder.

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4. Face the heart of procrastination.

While we can all put things off, otters and golden retrievers are masters at procrastination. Procrastination has the power to put people out of work, freeze them in sin, and confine them to frustration and hopelessness.

The four-letter word that lies at the heart of procrastination is fear. And whenever we put off needed inner changes, several types of fear emerge ... fear of discipline, failure, success, finding out our limitations, commitment and being controlled.

What do we do when we realize we're putting off becoming more tough or tender? We need to face our fear! What's holding you back from making necessary changes?

5. Avoid the trap of relying on instant change.

We wish there were an easy way to change, but any hardside or softside trait we need to add will only make its way into our lives by earning it in daily persistence (habits form – 21 days).

6. Allow yourself to become accountable to others.

Loving accountability is God's primary tool to stop a person from procrastinating and start making needed changes. (Glass House Living)

7. Build relational bridges to carry hardside words.

Golden retrievers and otters are great at building intimate relationships. Once those bridges are built though, we need to cross them when it's called for. Speak the truth in love!

8. Break hardside changes down into bite-size steps.

Pick an area that you feel you need to be more hardside with your spouse, child, coworker, etc. Then begin writing a step-by-step process of how you can get to that point in your relationship. (Seek wise counsel)

9. Strengthen your spiritual confidence.

The more clearly we understand our God and His purpose for our lives, the easier it will be to provide whichever side of love our families need. The more secure and satisfied we are with Christ as our provider and source of life, the stronger we can be in helping others be all God wants for them.

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10. Set a lifetime goal of giving **hardside** love when it's needed.

It starts today ... and will continue until the day you die. Don't put it off any longer. Begin working on it now. You owe it to those you love as well as to yourself.

Self-help approaches will only get you so far. Best intentions will fizzle out. Resolutions will wane. Only the power of God will bring this process to completion.

Christ's death on the cross was both the hardest and softest event in all of history. Where does the power come from? From God's Spirit as He takes up residence in our lives when we come to know Christ as Savior ...

“For God so loved the world (*softside*) that he gave his one and only Son (*hardside*), that whoever believes in him shall not perish (*hardside*) but have eternal life (*softside*).”
John 3:16 (NIV)

When we begin to understand the differences in our basic temperaments, it takes the pressure off our human relationships. We can look at each other's differences in a positive way and not try to make everyone be like us.

Here are some practical suggestions (Personality Plus) ...

Otters ... appreciate their sense of fun.

- Recognize their difficulty in accomplishing tasks.
- Realize they talk without thinking first.
- Realize they like variety and flexibility.
- Help them to keep from accepting more than they can do.
- Don't expect them to remember appointments or be on time.
- Praise them for everything they accomplish.
- Remember they are circumstantial people.
- Bring them presents; they like new toys.
- Accept that they make fun out of what would be embarrassing to others.
- Realize they mean well.

Beavers ... be grateful that you have a deeply sensitive and emotional partner.

- Know that they are very sensitive and get hurt easily.
- Realize they are programmed with a pessimistic attitude.
- Learn to deal with depression.
- Compliment them sincerely and lovingly.
- Accept that they like it quiet sometimes.
- Try to keep a reasonable schedule.
- Realize that neatness is a necessity.
- Help them not to become slaves to the family.

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Lions ... be grateful that you have a leader who is “always right”.

- Recognize they are born leaders.
- Insist on two-way communication.
- Know they don't mean to hurt.
- Don't push your luck.
- Try to divide areas of responsibility.
- Realize they are not compassionate.
- Know they are always right.

Golden Retrievers ... appreciate their even dispositions.

- Realize they need direct motivation.
- Help them set goals and make rewards.
- Don't expect enthusiasm.
- Realize that putting things off is their form of quiet control.
- Force them to make decisions.
- Don't heap all the blame on them.
- Encourage them to accept responsibilities.

Let's Pray!

Admit you need help, confess your inability to love adequately without His help, take a step of faith and trust God for the power to change, act and wait for your feelings to follow, start making the right changes and trust God to supply the power as you need it.