

Golden Nuggets

Yom Tov is joyous ... and stressful. Respect and accept all aspects of Yom Tov.

Prepare and plan for all aspects of Yom Tov so things run smoothly. Yom Tov is not one of those things that you can 'just play it by ear'.

Marriage is a negotiation of needs. Each of the couple has their own needs, expectation, likes, dislikes. None are more right than the other's. Talk it through. It isn't her way or his way, there's usually a third alternative - our way.

A marriage is compromised of 3 elements and all need to be fed – consistently. Husband, wife and the couplehood. All three have needs. Intentionally, set time and energy to feed the couplehood.

You are both on the same team against the problem or issue. The enemy is the issue, not the spouse. It is not that your spouse is giving you a hard time about [the issue]. It is the issue itself that is the enemy. Check in with each other, "Who is the enemy here?" and identify the issue. Apologize if you treated your spouse as the enemy.

Check in with each other. Often. You can follow a script if needed. For each of these, the first one shares and then the next before going to the next part.

1. An appreciation: Something you noticed and appreciate about your spouse. Something they did for you or for someone else or how they responded to a situation. Something positive that you appreciate about them.
 2. News. New information that the other should know about. This can be something practical – schedules, updates. It can be feelings.
 3. Problem and a proposed solution. A possible solution to an issue that presenter may be having. For example: "I am feeling tired these days. I will try to go to sleep earlier."
 4. A wondering. "I wonder if I will enjoy that..." "I wonder what might happen ...". This can be short term or long term.
 5. Hopes and dreams. "I hope all goes smooth this week." "I dream about living in a large house with a backyard."
- Either can start the checkin. Either can ask for a checkin. "I'm feeling overwhelmed, I want to check in, can you please start?"

Keep it simple, and then one notch simpler. Prevent issues from coming up. (ex: have one less guest, one less fancy dish)

Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die. Resentments don't go away on their own. Talk about the issue so it doesn't turn into a resentment. If you have resentments, work through them.

Take an issue all the way to its end; don't just drop the topic because it is too hard to talk about it. Bring in an objective third party to help you talk through the issue. They can help you see other perspectives or better ways to communicate.

Sometimes, in heated issues, it is worthwhile to allow each other to talk uninterrupted to a prescribed amount of time (ex: 3 minutes); you may think of it as 'having the mic for 3 minutes and then passing the mic'. Then the other will get the same amount of time to talk.

Before the next one gets the mic, they summarize what they just heard. "So what I heard is ... did I get that right?" If they did, they get the opportunity to share. If they did not fully get it, the first speaker clarifies or adds.

Sometimes, through the talking you come to better understand your own needs and wants and why you want or don't want to do something. Go deep.

When you share your underlying feelings and reasons behind your wants and needs, your spouse gets to know you better. You can then come up with more creative solutions. Or, you may realize how important it is to your spouse and you will try to accommodate them.

Many times, we turn issues into right and wrong, as in 'my way is right and what you are saying is wrong.' Some people also do this in areas of halacha and minhagim. Many times, it isn't so black and white. If it is a true halacha question, get a psak from a Rav.

You may want to do certain things because you want to carry on a tradition, or brings you happy memories of time gone by. But that doesn't make your way 'right' or 'better'. Talk it out. In most cases, it is the emotions that are the real crux.

Once the emotions are addressed (shared and validated), it is much easier to come up with a practical solution of compromise.

Bring your marriage to its full potential. "If good is good, is better not better?"