



HOW TO LIVE (AND LOVE) WITH YOUR DIFFERENCES

JOT Plus is a curated collection of Adai Ad's Just One Things (JOTs) posts. Each edition shines a light on a specific theme related to building a successful marriage. It's not meant to be a complete guide, but rather a handy, focused gathering of insights from the JOTs shared up to the time of production. *Since this is a collection—not a guide—you'll notice some ideas come up again, in different ways. That's totally on purpose, because real growth often happens when we see the same truths from a few different angles.*

THERE WILL BE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPOUSES. IN EVERY MARRIAGE.

In every couple, there are two unique people, so there will inevitably be differences in perspectives, opinions, dreams, and desires. There really isn't one right way to experience the world.

Things that irritate us about our spouse are things where we have differences. Explore deeper to understand what difference(s) that irritation reveals. It might be: spontaneous vs planner, different levels of orderliness, different spending habits, different ideas for parenting....

When we respect the other, we give them the freedom to be who they are. Even when we see things differently. Even if we would do things differently. And even when it impacts us, we still allow them to have their own perspectives. And we go along with each other's way sometimes.

View differences as complementary – not to divide, but unite and expand. Maximize from the differences. Think: What can be good in the difference? How can the differences enrich or enhance our lives? What can we learn from each other? How can we each stretch and grow and experience the world differently?



The tips in this JOT PLUS edition offer insight into how to navigate the inevitable differences that come up in relationships – how you think, how you move through the world, what matters most to you. The goal isn't to erase those differences, but to learn how to live with them respectfully—and sometimes even benefit from them.

Whether it's about shifting your mindset, softening your reactions, or simply choosing better words in the moment, these JOTs are meant to spark small shifts that add up over time. You might not always agree, but you can still stay connected.

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LOVE EASES DIFFERENCES.

When you genuinely love and enjoy your partner's company, differences may matter less.

You'll find comfort in letting them be themselves, knowing that your connection is built on love and respect. While some differences may be significant and require discussion, many disagreements may not be as crucial as they seem.

To strengthen your bond, engage in activities that deepen your connection with your spouse. Quality time together, meaningful conversations, and shared experiences can nurture your relationship.

Additionally, practicing empathy and actively listening to each other's perspectives can help bridge any gaps caused by differences. Taking the time to understand where your partner is coming from fosters mutual respect and strengthens your connection.

Remember, investing in your relationship is ongoing. By prioritizing your connection and nurturing your bond, you can navigate differences with ease, fostering a relationship grounded in mutual respect and understanding.

RESPECT AND LAUGH EVEN WHEN YOU DISAGREE.

You care about each other. A lot. And at the same time, there are one or two or three areas in which you see things differently.

Just because you have a disagreement or a difference of perspective doesn't mean that you can't respect each other.

There are ways to have respectful discourse about the topic of conflict. It doesn't have to be a fight.

Even more so, in between those conversations as you work to a resolution, you ought to be that same loving couple – respectful, loving, cordial, warm, friendly. It may not seem easy, but it is possible.

It's about the mindset: “We care about each other AND we see things differently on this issue.” Don't let the conflict spill over into other aspects of your relationship.

NOT 'THINK ALIKE' RATHER 'THINK TOGETHER'.

For a relationship to be happy and healthy, you don't always have to think alike. Each of you has your own perspectives and ideas based on your unique personalities and backgrounds. It is not possible that you will always think alike.

It may be simpler if you did think alike, but then you'd be missing out on so much. **Your differences expand your worlds; you get to see other ways of looking at things. You come to bigger and better ways.**

When you encounter a difference of perspective, it is important to think together. Each of you put your ideas down, maybe gather some other perspectives, and then think together to come up with a resolution that works well for the situation.

When you value the thoughts and ideas of others, you can accomplish more and bigger than you ever could on your own.

IT'S REALLY POSSIBLE THAT BOTH OF YOU ARE CORRECT.

Life is complex. Relationships are complex. Both of you can be right – from each of your perspectives.

We don't have to diminish the other person's views and feelings to be right. We don't have to give up anything to hear the other person's point of view. We each have different information or different interpretations, and so both versions of the situation can make sense at the same time.

The aim is to move from "Who is right here?" or "How can they think that?" to curiosity:

💬 "I wonder what information they have that I don't." "How might they be seeing the world such that their view makes sense?"

Both people's stories matter. Understanding someone else's story doesn't mean that we have to give up our own. **This is an 'AND' situation – My Story and Your Story.**

Share your story and ask about theirs. Once you both have a better understanding of what is going on for the other, you can have a better conversation to move forward with more empathy and understanding.



How have your differences shaped the rhythm of your home?

UNDERSTANDING DOESN'T MEAN AGREEING. IT MEANS SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH THEIR EYES FOR A MOMENT—AND THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING.

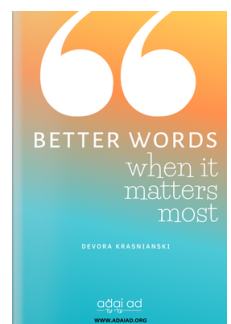
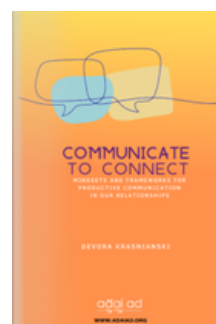
SIT IN YOUR SPOUSE'S CHAIR TO UNDERSTAND THEIR PERSPECTIVE.

Sit in your spouse's chair (metaphorically). Try to understand why they did whatever it is that they did that is triggering a negative reaction in you.

Try to look at the situation, problem or argument from their point of view. Try to see what might have been going on for them right before the incident, what might they have been thinking or experiencing, what might that have triggered for them. How is it inline with their personality or style? Was their intent malicious or was it more neutral and you took it differently than was intended?

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RESPECT YOUR DIFFERENCES.

We are all individual people with our own perspectives and views of our world. There will be differences. It is important to understand your spouse's viewpoint. Be respectful of their opinion, even if it differs from your own.

Try to put yourself in their shoes, and recognize that everyone has different experiences and beliefs that shape their perspective.

Be open to changing your perspective. Come into the conversation open to learning, not to prove your perspective is the best one.

- **Listen carefully to their perspective.** Give them time to finish their thoughts without interruption.
- **Ask open-ended questions that invite** the other person to explain their viewpoint so you can get a better understanding. 💬 “I am really interested to hear your perspective on this.” 💬 “What do you think about this?” or 💬 “What’s your opinion on this?”
- **Consider their perspective objectively.** Try to understand their point of view without judging or dismissing it.
- **Show them that you are trying to understand their perspective.** Show compassion for their experiences and feelings. 💬 “That’s interesting. I never thought of it that way.” 💬 “It makes sense that you would see it that way.”
- **After you’ve listened to the other person, take some time to reflect on what they have said.** Think about how their experiences and feelings might be different from your own.
- **Respectfully discuss your differences.** Once you have a better understanding of their perspective, you can discuss your differences in a respectful manner.

Throughout the whole conversation, be mindful of your body language and tone.

“DIFFERENCES WERE
MEANT NOT TO DIVIDE
BUT TO ENRICH.”
– J.H. OLDHAM

WORDS TO USE:

"I THINK THIS IS WHERE WE DIFFER..."

The phrase "I think this is where we differ..." is a great way to acknowledge a disagreement without escalating conflict.

It keeps the conversation respectful, showing that you recognize and respect the other person's perspective while expressing your own.

It's a softer, more thoughtful approach to differences, opening the door for dialogue rather than argument.

Plus, it emphasizes that the difference is in thinking, not personal value, which can help keep discussions productive and focused on ideas rather than getting personal.

WORDS TO AVOID:

"JUST BE RATIONAL HERE"

Too often, we use the words "Just be rational here" to mean "Agree with me". You don't have to always be in 100% agreement about everything. Your spouse doesn't have to have the same thoughts and ideas as you. You don't have to have the same thoughts and ideas as your spouse.

When your spouse has an idea that is different from yours, just listen. When you listen carefully to your partner, the situation automatically calms down, and they often become more open to your viewpoint.

'Just listening' allows for more facts and clarification to emerge, which can clear up misunderstandings. You might just learn something new when you listen to your spouse's perspectives and ideas.

- "... "Help me understand this from your point of view."
- "... "Maybe I'm missing something here. Can you say it again in different words?"

QUARRELING? HOW TO GET BACK ON TRACK.

You have differences of perspectives. Of course, you want your position to be heard and respected. So does your spouse. It ought to be shared in a congenial and respectful discussion.

But too often, such discussions wind up becoming quarrels or arguments.

You know you're quarreling when you find yourself getting irritated and wanting to prove your point and you are not going to back down until you've won. Pay attention to your emotions, thoughts and even body sensations; you'll know if you are quarreling.

If you feel that you're headed that way, ask for a timeout so you can redirect your energies to a more productive conversation. "... "This is not how I wanted this conversation to go, I need to collect myself. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Think about the long-term relationship, not only about this particular issue.

Plan what and how you will share. What is your goal – to persuade or win? to share and come to a workable resolution? to get some particular information? Stay focused on that goal, and don't get sidetracked.

If your spouse is moving toward an argument, contain yourself, don't take the bait – as hard as it is. It takes two to quarrel, and only one to preempt it.

DON'T COMPARE YOUR SPOUSE TO YOURSELF.

You are each unique and wonderful in your own ways. Don't make it into a competition.

You may prioritize being healthy, and your spouse doesn't care as much. You may want to be involved in community work and your spouse would rather spend more time with the family. You may have certain ways of doing things and they may do it differently.

You can be proud of all the wonderful things you do. But don't start noticing when your spouse doesn't do all the wonderful things you do. And definitely don't nag about them. Accept your differences.

ALLOW YOUR SPOUSE TO HAVE THEIR OWN TASTE.

If your spouse is into something you don't 'get' or understand, don't jump to making fun or questioning it. If they think something is 'cool' or 'cute', you can simply let it be.

Firstly, understand that it may just be a gender thing; men and women often appreciate things differently. Beyond that, people just have varying tastes.

Let them enjoy their thing without making it a big deal. You don't need to comment on everything they say or like. Choose your moments for disagreement or playful teasing wisely.

If you're genuinely curious about it, later on, you can ask them about it – with respect and curiosity.

LET YOUR SPOUSE DO WHAT MATTERS TO THEM.

Too often, we want our priorities to be our spouse's priorities. We might make some comments on our spouse's desires or priorities.

Yet, it is important that each of the couple has the space and time to do the things that are important to them. Our desires don't always outweigh their desires. And note, they may just want or need time for a hobby or some downtime.

How to give them space:

- Keep quiet about your opinions about how they should use their time. Doing what they think is important might be part of their self-care, even if you wouldn't think it is.
- Ask: 🗣️ “How would you like to spend the evening?” or 🗣️ “How would you like to spend tomorrow?” This is a great way to give your spouse the space to share how they'd like to spend their time. It's also a great way to start the conversation, so you can meet in the middle.

ALLOW YOUR SPOUSE TO PURSUE THEIR INTERESTS.

You are a team of two individuals. Each with their own interests, talents and strengths.

Allow, better yet, ENCOURAGE your spouse to pursue their own interests, to be their own person.

Figure out how to budget for time and money for each of your interests (within reason, of course).

As applicable, obtain related resources or supplies. Share articles or books.

Listen and ask questions when they share about this interest.

LET YOUR HUSBAND BE A MAN. LET YOUR WIFE BE A WOMAN.

Men and women are mostly the same. Both want to be happy and have a strong need to love and be loved.

There are also differences between men and women.

Differences such as what makes them happy in a relationship and family.
Differences in how they address problems.
Differences in what they like to do.
Differences in how they de-stress.
Lots of differences.

Yes, a woman can do what most men can do. But she isn't necessarily at her happiest when she has to do it. And similarly with men.

Let a man be a man. Let a woman be a woman. Don't expect your husband to be like your girl friends. Don't expect your wife to be like one of the guys.

Your marriage needs what a man and a woman bring to a relationship and shared responsibilities.



Name one way you and your spouse are different.

Now name one way that difference has helped you grow.

LET GO OF BEING RIGHT AND ACCEPT YOUR SPOUSE.

When you accept reality, your life will be much less stressful.

He always runs late. Instead of yelling at him each and every time, accept that he'll (almost) always be late and add a time buffer to any plans with him.

She hates attending couple's events. Instead of coercing, pleading, and manipulating her into attending, take a friend instead or go alone.

HIGHLIGHT THE PLACES WHERE YOUR INTERESTS OVERLAP WITH YOUR SPOUSE.

When people see areas where their lives intersect with someone else, they feel more connected. This is like saying "I'm like you." It makes people feel understood and gives them a sense of belonging.

In marriage, we tend to bring up and focus on areas where we have differences more often rather than our similarities. So **it is important to make a point to intentionally do or speak about something that highlights your similarities.**

- Go to a restaurant that you both love.
- Focus on a shared hobby.
- Read up on a topic that you both enjoy and have a good convo around that.
- Dream together about an upcoming vacation. Even if it is just a dream.

HONORING EACH OTHER'S VALUES.

In any relationship, differences of perspectives are inevitable due to each person's unique set of values that they hold dear. For instance, one spouse may prioritize feeding the family only healthy foods for their well-being, while the other cherishes the freedom to explore diverse cuisines and savor life's pleasures. Both values are valid and deserve acknowledgment. Neither is 'right' or 'wrong'.

When navigating these differences, the primary goal is to find common ground and seek a compromise that respects and honors both partners' values. Honest communication, speaking from a position of values, and explaining why certain things are important are crucial during these discussions. And listening to each other with curiosity and empathy – and no judgment. This approach allows each partner to gain a deeper understanding of the other's core convictions, beliefs, desires, and priorities.

Through open and respectful dialogue, a balance can be achieved that satisfies both desires for health and enjoyment, fostering a relationship that celebrates each partner's unique perspectives while cherishing shared values. Recognizing and understanding these differences is vital for nurturing a harmonious and thriving partnership.



What is something your spouse does that feels unfamiliar or even frustrating?

What might that reveal about what matters to them?



DO YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME ON THE FEW AREAS YOU DISAGREE ON?

Hmm. Is it possible that you are focusing more time on the areas that you disagree with than living the life that you do see eye to eye on?

Some studies say we spend 90% of our time on the 10% that we disagree on. That's grossly misusing our energy and time on the wrong things.

There are probably many more areas of similarity than we generally think. **When we start down a path of focusing on the differences, we generally are forgetting about all the similarities that we do have.**

You don't have to agree on everything. Actually, it is impossible that you will. Allow your marriage to have the space to have those differences, and of course, the similarities.

Look for the areas of agreement and allow the differences to just be.

Proactively ask questions along the lines of:

- ... "Where are we aligned?"
- ... "What points of view do we share?"
- ... "Which areas do we agree on?"

Don't aim for exact alignment. Respect the inevitable differences. Go with the flow.

UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT YOUR DIFFERENCES.

Your spouse IS different from you.

It might be easier if your spouse felt like you, thought like you, had the same needs and personality. But they never will.

And that's a good thing. You complement each other's strengths and limitations. You are exposed to different perspectives and styles. You are introduced to new interests and people.

At the same time, your attitude about those differences is so important. The differences are unchangeable. And when you accept that, you can really thrive. **It starts with understanding and respecting the differences – without any negative attitude about those differences.**

Take the time to learn each other's strengths and styles. You'll better understand the intentions and hows and whys of how each of you think and act. You will then have a healthier perspective about how to work together.

DISAGREEMENT? USE IT TO GET TO KNOW THE OTHER PERSON BETTER.

1.

Bumping into differences of perspectives in your marriage? You might be making mental judgments and jumping to inaccurate assumptions. Rather than seeing your spouse's differing views as potential for conflict, consider it an opportunity to learn more about them. Ask yourself:

… “Do I really understand what they mean?”

… “What are they seeing that I am not?”

… “What have they experienced in their past that has led them to this belief?”

… “How can I use this as an opportunity to know them better?”

And have a heart-to-heart conversation about it. With genuine curiosity and respect. Be willing to be influenced by their way.

In this way, your spouse will feel more understood and therefore feel safer and more secure since you are not challenging their beliefs or thoughts. And you may expand your way of seeing the issue.

2.

Our views are based on our values, standards, ethics, commitments, dreams, passions, etc. When someone shares their perspectives or opinions, they are showing something about themselves – what is important to them, what they value.

When someone is expressing their opinion, instead of asking yourself the question, “Do I agree or disagree?” ask yourself, … “What are they revealing about themselves right now?” or “What can I get to know about what is important to them?”

And in a respectful conversation, ask:

… “Help me understand your perspective.”

… “Please help me understand how you came to this thought/idea.”

… “Can you walk me through how you're seeing this?”

… “I don't fully get it yet, but I want to.”

… “This is different for me—can you help me understand where you're coming from?”

… “We see it differently, but I care about your view.”

I FEEL. YOU FEEL. WE DON'T FEEL THE SAME.

People can have two very different experiences of the same event.

We are in the same room, and one is cold and one is hot. Two experiences in the same room.

We are at the same party, and one is tired and one wants to party on.

We are at the same lecture, and one is bored and the other is inspired.

One feels excited and the other is anxious.

We are separate people and experience the world differently. It doesn't make sense to expect or hope or demand that the other person experience the situation in the same way we do.

Yes, it might be simpler if we both felt the same way, but that isn't the reality. Instead of dismissing the other person's experiences and trying to bring them to our side, we'd be better off being accommodating, compromising, or collaborating.



Which difference between you used to feel big—but now feels smaller, easier, or even funny?

LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

Having a partner who has different interests means that both of you get the chance to introduce each other to new things. This is also a way of sharing a part of yourselves with each other.

Be curious about what interests your spouse. This is what makes your life richer and more beautiful.

You may find that you actually do like trying exotic foods or hiking or watching sunsets. At the very least, you may understand more about your spouse's interests and what about them is so compelling to your spouse. And you'll get to see things from a different perspective.

Whatever it is, big or small, your genuine curiosity can bring the two of you closer.

SAME TEAM, DIFFERENT STYLES.

If you find yourself thinking, "We just aren't well-matched," it's easy to start seeing every difference as proof. Suddenly, everything becomes evidence: how they load the dishwasher, how they handle stress, how they spend money or time. **The problem isn't the differences—it's the story we tell about them.**

When we frame those quirks or gaps as signs of incompatibility, we stop being curious. We stop being generous. And we stop working together.

But here's the shift: **instead of seeing differences as problems, try seeing them as part of the team dynamic.** What does this person bring that I don't? What might I bring that balances them? That small mental turn—from "we clash" to "we complement"—opens space for appreciation, flexibility, and even growth. Differences don't mean you're not well-matched. They mean you're two real people, building something real.

IT'S OK TO HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO TOUGH SITUATIONS.

In challenging times, people react based on their unique blend of fears, interests, responsibilities, and experiences (FIRE).

Recognize that everyone copes differently, and that's perfectly fine. The key is to validate and empathize with their perspective rather than judging or belittling them. Let them have their own reactions.

Have conversations – without judgment but with curiosity. You might uncover new aspects of your spouse's coping mechanisms and how they handle adversity or fear.

If their choices or decisions significantly affect you, engage in a respectful dialogue to understand their point of view. Use phrases like:

- 💬 “It would help me if you shared your perspective.”
- 💬 “Help me understand how you are experiencing this.”
- 💬 “What's truly going on for you?”
- 💬 “What fears or experiences might be influencing your thoughts, emotions, or response?”
- 💬 “I don't fully get it yet, but I want to.”

Your marriage takes precedence over imposing your viewpoint. If you feel your spouse is exaggerating or catastrophizing, avoid trying to talk them out of it.

Show compassion for their anxiety and respect each other's concerns. Listen to each other so you can come up with a plan that feels reasonable (enough) for both of you. For the sake of your relationship, be willing to compromise, even if you think their reaction is exaggerated.

Likewise, share your own fears and experiences so that your spouse gains a deeper understanding of your response and perspective. Say things like:

- 💬 “I see things this way based on my experiences...”
- 💬 “I'm reacting like this because of my concerns about...”

In these hard times, the aim should be to reduce stress – and definitely not add to it.



Is there a way your differences reflect what each of you needed growing up?

What happens when you view it through that lens?