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life advice

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Understanding Your Spouse's Point of View

Understanding your spouse comes by understanding their point of view.

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As close as you and your spouse are, you both see the world from your own points of view.

You finally saved enough for a new washer-dryer, and boy do you need it. With the new baby, and a husband in construction, not to mention your own work clothes, laundry, sheets, towels and the lot, your hand-me-down appliances were past limping-along and close to dead. Today's the big day the two of you planned to spend checking out appliances at the stores that you carefully researched ahead of time and earmarked as "best washer-dryer for affordable prices" places.

Your husband was well aware of, "The Plan." He'd agreed, no problem yet here you are, almost noon, well past your let's-go time, and no husband. No call either.

Nothing since he bolted out the door this morning: "I'm just gonna get in a quick hour on the putting green," he said. That was at 7:00 a.m. Your patience is wearing thin.

You call your husband's cell—again. No answer. You tweet and text him. Nada. At this rate, you won't have enough time to check out all the appliance stores, which either means you'll have to do this another day, grr, or take the first half-way reasonable deal that comes along.

It's 1:00 p.m. and your patience are gone, you're fuming. You take your increasing irritability and frustration out on an innocent cuticle, then another. Ouch. Ah! There he is!

"Sorry hon," says the former-light-of-your-life, "I got into a conversation with Lou, he wanted to have breakfast, play a few holes—you know how it is."

"Lou!" you exclaim, "What about me? What about our plan?"

"It's business, honey—he's bidding on a big job and he might take me on."

"I don't care!" you yell, marching out the door.

Of course it's not fair, but life isn't about fair, life is about how we cope with the events and situations that cross our path. As understandable as your frustration and irritability are, they don't help you cope effectively. You'll only succeed in damaging another cuticle (or two or three) and raising your stress level to where you're unlikely to function at your best. Or even at your so-so-OK best. So take a deep breath and let's rewind.

We are, each and every one of us, the center of our own particular universe. No matter how altruistic and unselfish you are, no matter how much of your life you devote to others, you do so from your own perspective, your own point of view. Even if, Mother Theresa-like, your life is entirely dedicated to helping others, you do so from your point of

view, it is the right thing to do, the necessary thing to do, the thing you feel you must do. You are always operating from your point of view.

So is your spouse. From his point of view, he's doing the best he can for you and the family. Washer-dryer takes a distinct second place when he's faced with an opportunity to schmooze that potential lead to more work and money. Your husband was operating, as we all do, from his point of view.

How does this matter to you? It helps you cope more effectively. When you remember that people operate from their own point of view, you realize that 99 percent of your beloved's actions are not in order to bug you, inconvenience you, insult you or otherwise interfere with the smooth running of your life. He's doing whatever he's doing for the smooth running of his life, and how he perceives the best way to insure the smooth running of the family's life. Recognize that your spouse has demands placed on him (by himself, life or others), and that in all likelihood, his responses and actions toward you are largely determined by how he's coping with those demands. That recognition alone can lift a large percent of stress off you.

Beyond that, try a big dose of understanding. Do your darndest to step into your spouses' shoes and see life—his responsibilities, his reality, as he sees it. Ask questions designed not to blame him for behaving the way he does, but to understand what he does. Be willing to consider that his point of view is at least as valid as yours.

When you appreciate that others are coming from a point of view that is different from yours, answering concerns of their own—just like you have concerns of your own—it's a lot easier to drop your resentment and cooperate so that the day-to-day living of your marriage becomes easier and a lot more fun.

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