

## Marriage

### Ah, Newlyweds... then reality sets in.

The wedding day is met with much anticipation. Bright eyed, eager, some butterflies, plans in place. So much thought and preparation for a single event, then, after the marriage ceremony, the honeymoon and then back to real life.

There is often magical thinking that goes into a wedding. Apart from the fairy book ceremony, some couples consider the event to vanquish any and all issues between themselves; the home will magically clean itself, finances will sort themselves out and spouses will get along with in-laws.

Some four to eight months down the road the shine wears off the romance and the married couple starts to view each other in more realistic terms. For some, *buyer's remorse* sets in. At issue is accommodating to a new shared world, defining mutual expectations and setting boundaries.

Regardless if the domicile was one or other partner's or a new setting, it now is the shared space of both persons. Unlike college roomies, married persons will share their space forevermore. Hence determining mutual rules for care, cleaning, maintenance and the like are essential to lifelong cohabitation. Learning to negotiate to joint agreement is the goal.

It may be that either or both had entered the marriage assuming the other would meet unspecified expectations. Hopefully, now several months down the road, it is clear that neither can read the other's mind. And further, hopefully, they realize that dialogue will be necessary to clear up misconceptions and set new ground rules. Determining who cleans the toilet and whether the seat is up or down are real life issues. Learning how to negotiate in a manner that they will arrive a joint decision, which both are enthusiastic about it the goal.

As for finances, it is often the case that new spouses have different priorities for expenditures. They understand the use of money in different manners. Again, one or other may assume their thinking is aligned with what is reasonable and may go about spending on the basis of a wrong assumption.

Bringing the new purchase home is just the right catalyst to ignite a conflict and set off a flurry of bad feelings. It is important for new spouses to realize that such purchases are not likely entered into lightly, just misguidedly. It is vital for new spouses to discuss spending priorities to minimize the probability of either assuming the other will naturally be thrilled with a surprise purchase. It is not a matter of doing purchases in only one manner. It may be more realistic and workable to learn to ask how certain use of money affects the partner before you making the decision. You are not asking for permission but rather asking for the input from your partner before you make your choice.

All homes have an entrance with a door and lock. The purpose of having a door and lock is to provide a boundary between the spouses and the rest of the world. The issue for new spouses is determining whom they let in and when. This extends to family and friends. New spouses must come to realize that the boundary provides for one's own privacy, that of the other spouse and that of the couple. The boundary also helps spouses be viewed as an independent couple, rather than just an extension of one or the other's extended family. Whatever the rules were for letting in family and friends prior to marriage, once married the rules do change by learning to negotiate and come to a joint agreement that works for both. Thus boundary formation means defining a circle around the spouses with the couple as the priority. Permitting others into the circle is a matter of discussion and negotiation to a joint agreement that works for both.

Boundary formation also extends to determining how couples will spend traditional holidays, whether they visit parents, in-laws, or in what order. Often setting boundaries can bring conflict with extended family and even friends as they vie for the couple's time and attention. Better the terms of these relationships be set according to the couple's wishes than the wishes of others. In the end, spouses live with each other so their relationship must be secure and clear.

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