

Shalom Bayis: Gottman Method Part III



Rabbi Efrem Goldberg
Nov. 2015

Disclaimer!

- ◆ I am not an expert
- ◆ I am not a trained therapist
- ◆ I have counseled dozens of couples in a supplemental role always referring to a trained therapist.
- ◆ This presentation represents insights from a two day training I attended with Drs. John and Julie Gottman combined with my informal, but somewhat extensive experience.

Stop the Four Horsemen with their Antidotes

~~CRITICISM~~



Complain
without Blame

~~DEFENSIVENESS~~



Take
Responsibility

~~CONTEMPT~~

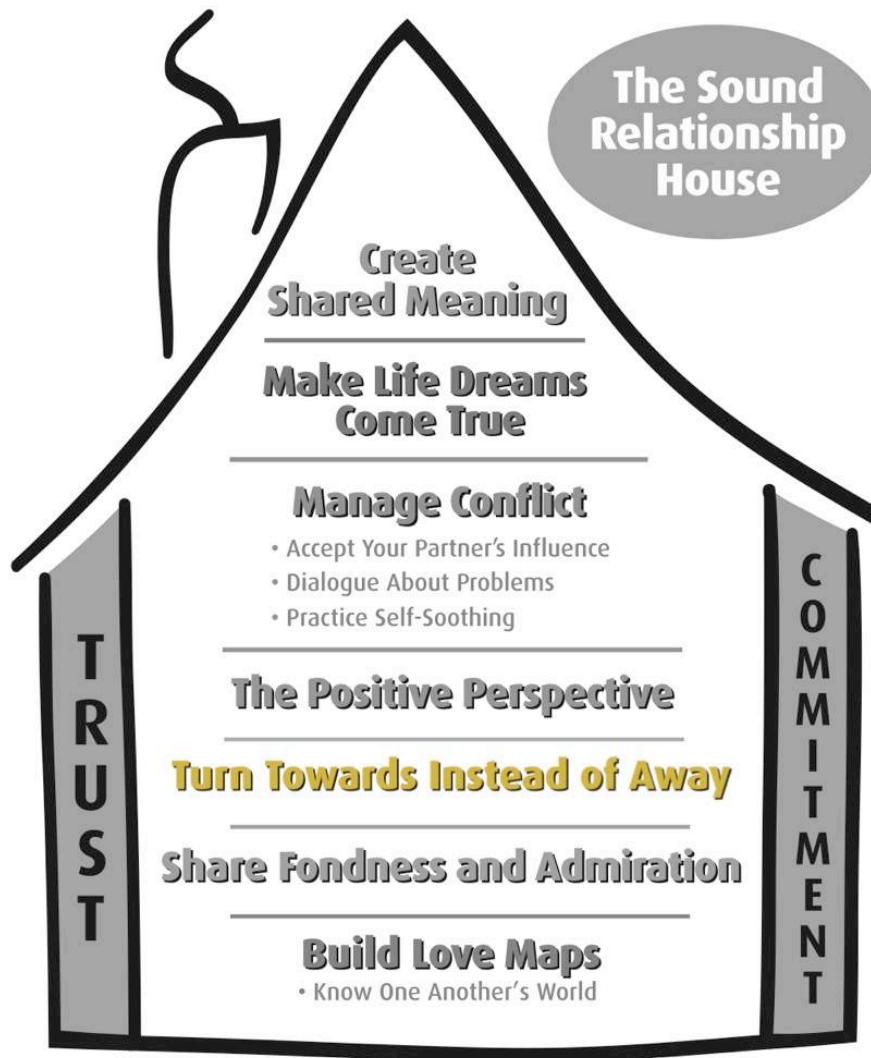


Build Culture
of Appreciation

~~STONEWALLING~~



Do Physiological
Self-Soothing



Rabbi Efreim Goldberg
Boca Raton Synagogue 5776/2015

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Friendship

- ◆ The first three levels of the house describe essential components of the couple's friendship

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר ברא ששון ושמחה, חתן וכלה, גילה רינה, דיצה וחדווה, אהבה ואחוה, ושלום **ורעות**, מהרה ה' אלקינו ישמע בערי יהודה ובחוצות ירושלים, קול ששון וקול שמחה, קול חתן וקול כלה, קול מצהלות חתנים מחופתם, ונערים ממשתה נגינתם. ברוך אתה ה', משמח חתן עם הכלה.

"Blessed are You, LORD, our God, sovereign of the universe, who created joy and gladness, groom and bride, mirth, song, delight and rejoicing, love and harmony and peace and **friendship**. Soon, LORD our God, may there ever be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem voices of joy and gladness, voices of groom and bride, the jubilant voices of those joined in marriage under the bridal canopy, the voices of young people feasting and singing. Blessed are You, LORD, who causes the groom to rejoice with his bride."

- Why is friendship the culmination of the beracha?
- Our hope is that the couple not only love one another, but that they continue to like one another.

LOVE MAP

“Emotionally intelligent couples are intimately familiar with each other’s world. I call this having a richly detailed **love map**.”

John Gottman, PhD



The Gottman Institute



- ♦ **Turn Against** – Respond to a bid for connection in a crabby, irritable or critical way. “Why do you waste your time with that activity, or why do you keep spending money!”



- ♦ **Turn Away** – Ignore a bid for connection and fail to connect. This is usually non-hostile, but is a way to lose points from the *Emotional Bank Account* – pretend you don’t hear the request.



- ♦ **Turn Towards** – Respond to a bid for connection in a responsive, interested and loving way. This adds points to the *Emotional Bank Account* – “Oh that sounds so interesting, tell me more about it. Or, what happened in your day?”



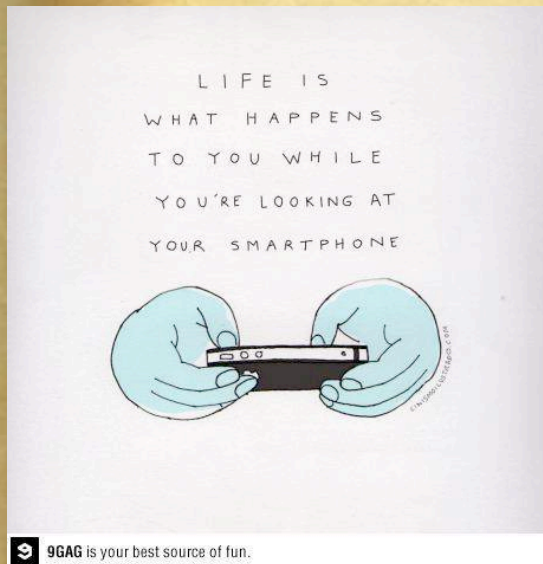
- ◆ Successful relationships are characterized by a 20:1 ratio of positive bids and turning toward their partner for every one negative bid or turning against or away from their partner.
- ◆ Many marriages that dissolve and fall apart, not because of fighting, bickering and differences.
- ◆ Many marriages fall apart because of indifference, apathy and growing apart. These couples are living lives parallel to one another but not intersecting in a meaningful way. There is no emotional connection, no humor, affection or even active interest.

Be There!

- ◆ “*Va’yomer Hashem el Moshe alei eili ha’harah ve’heyey sham, v’etna lecha es luchos ha’even v’haTorha v’hamitzvah asher kasavti l’horosam.* Hashem said to Moshe, Ascend to Me to the mountain and remain there, and I shall give you the stone tablets and the teaching and the commandment that I have written, to teach them.”



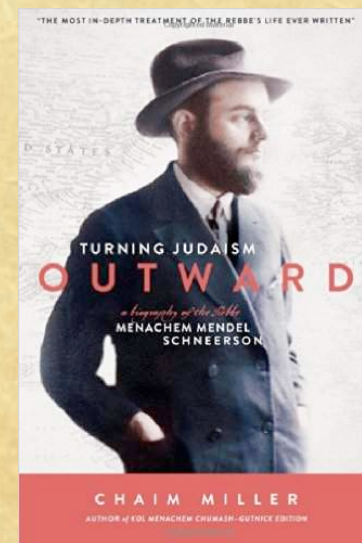
Be There, Not Absent Present



- ♦ *V'yehei sham*, and be there, means be present, don't be distracted, interrupted, or unfocused. Hashem tells Moshe, I don't want to compete for your attention even if you have the noblest distractions such as caring for your people. Put them aside when you are with me, and be with me.
- ♦ Kenneth J. Gergen, a psychologist and professor at Swarthmore College, has coined the phrase “absent presence,” a phenomenon of being totally absent in spirit, even when we are physically present in body.

Lubavitcher Rebbe & Rebbetzin

He visited his mother every day, in her apartment on President Street, and always took a tea break with Rebbetzin Moussia, a time which he said was as precious to him as putting on *tefilin*.⁴ During the



Positive Perspective

- ◆ PSO – Positive Sentiment Override
- ◆ NSO – Negative Sentiment Override
- ◆ Are neutral messages perceived as negative or positive? Does your partner even have a fighting chance? Are they wrong even before they open their mouth?
- ◆ Is your partner your adversary or your friend or both?

מֹות תָּמוּת: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב הֵיטָה הָאָדָם
לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה-לוֹ עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: וַיִּצַּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן-

the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.

¹⁸ HASHEM God said, "It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him." ¹⁹ Now, HASHEM God had formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every

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Reinforce Seeing the Good

After the angels finished their meal, they asked Avraham where Sarah was, and he responded that she can be found inside the tent. Rashi explains that the angels certainly knew where Sarah was. The intent of their query was merely to endear Sarah to Avraham. Their question would prompt his answer, "She is in the tent," thus highlighting her *middah* of modesty. Avraham's articulation of Sarah's qualities would bring him an added level of appreciation for his wife.



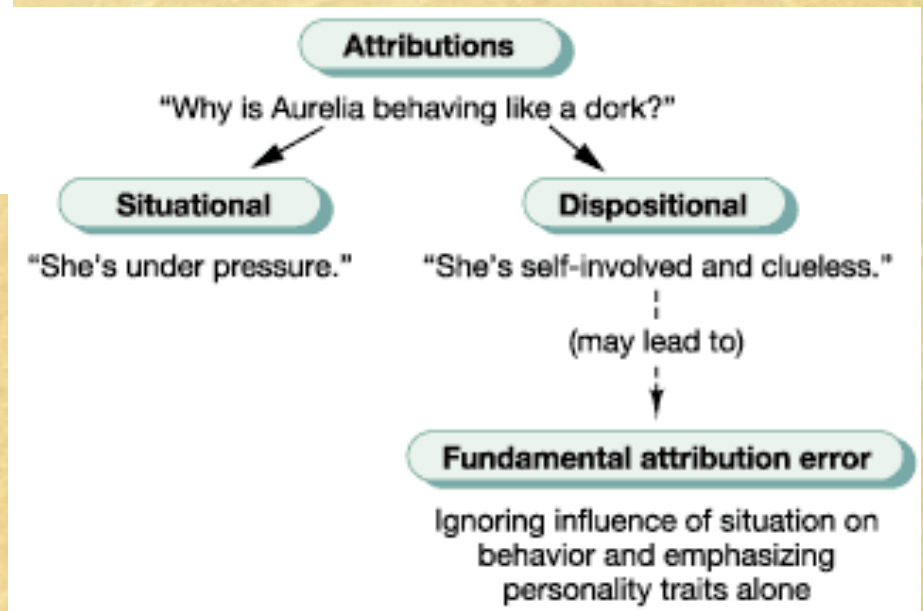
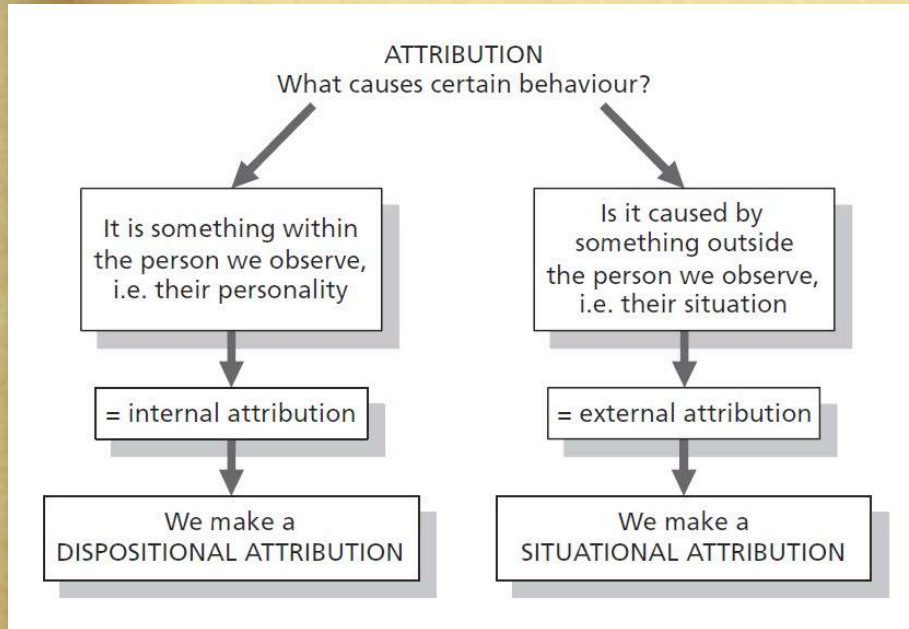
Rav Wolbe (Shiurei Chumash, *Parshas Vayeira* 18:9) comments that it is amazing to think that there was a necessity to endear Sarah to Avraham. Chazal tell us that when Avraham married Sarah he was twenty five years old. When the angels paid their visit he was ninety nine - nearly seventy five years after their wedding. Endearing one's wife upon her husband would seem to be something necessary for a couple who were just married as opposed to a couple many years past their golden anniversary! Nevertheless, the Torah tells us that an essential aspect of marriage is ensuring that the husband and wife appreciate each another.

Cutting Slack

- ◆ “*Nachisa b’chasdecha*, you led us out with chesed.”
- ◆ Chafetz Chaim explains that it was our performance of and predisposition towards chesed that caused You to lead us out. When we do chesed with one another, Hashem does chesed with us.
- ◆ Social Psychologists Ned Jones and Victor Harris coined the phrase “fundamental attribution error” or “correspondence bias” to describe the phenomenon of people's tendency to place an undue emphasis on internal characteristics to explain someone else's behavior in a given situation, rather than considering external factors.



Fundamental Attribution Error



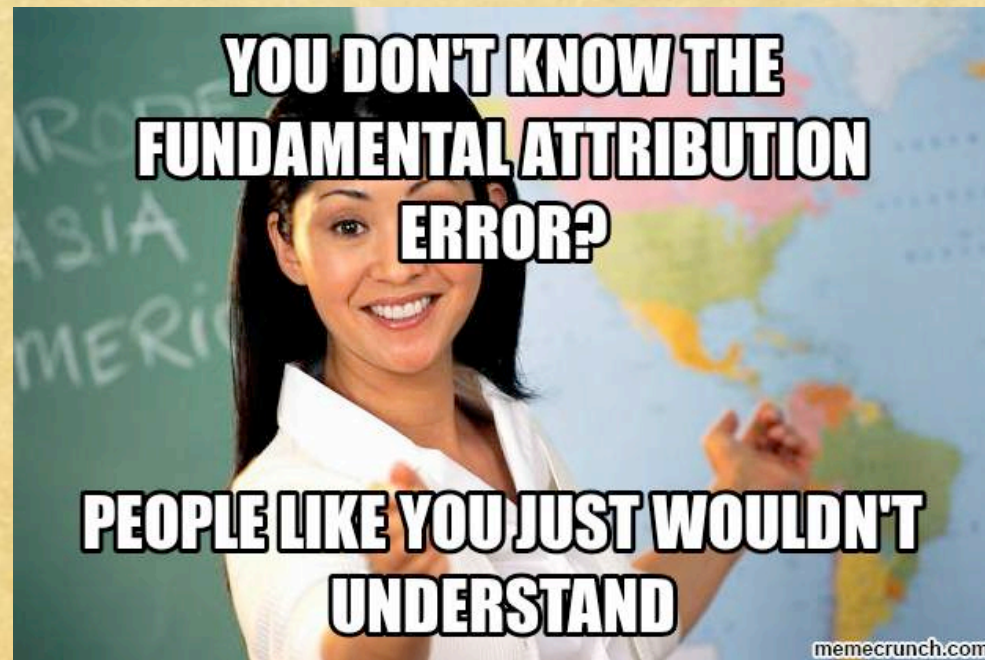
Cutting Slack

- ◆ In other words, when we see someone behave in a certain way we reach conclusions about their internal personality rather than ascribe the behavior to outside factors.
- ◆ Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert explained it this way
“...in everyday life people seem all too willing to take each other at face value and all too reluctant to search for alternative explanations for each other’s behavior.”
- ◆ When someone runs through a red light we assume they are reckless instead of considering that they are driving someone to the hospital in an emergency.
- ◆ If we see someone kick a vending machine we assume they have anger problems whereas if we do kick the machine it is because our snack got stuck.



Cutting Slack

- ◆ If someone is impatient in the line at the drugstore we may assume he is nasty instead of realizing he is a considerate person who's rushing to get home with the medicine for his sick, miserable child.
- ◆ When other people's cell phones ring during a movie, it's because they're inconsiderate boors. If my cell phone rings during a movie, it's because I'm a conscientious mother who needs to be able to get a call from a babysitter.



- ◆ When couples were unhappy, they only saw 50% of their partner's positive interactions.
- ◆ Tendency to minimize our own errors and attribute them to temporary circumstances.
- ◆ But maximize errors of spouse and attribute to lasting, negative personality traits.
- ◆ Think about attitude in courtship, engagement and bring that into marriage.

Woman = אישה = Wife

Rambam – Never stop treating your wife like the woman you were once courting

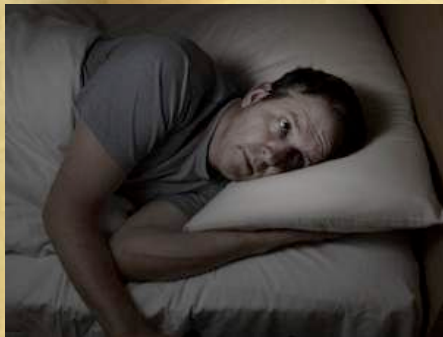


Benefit of the Doubt

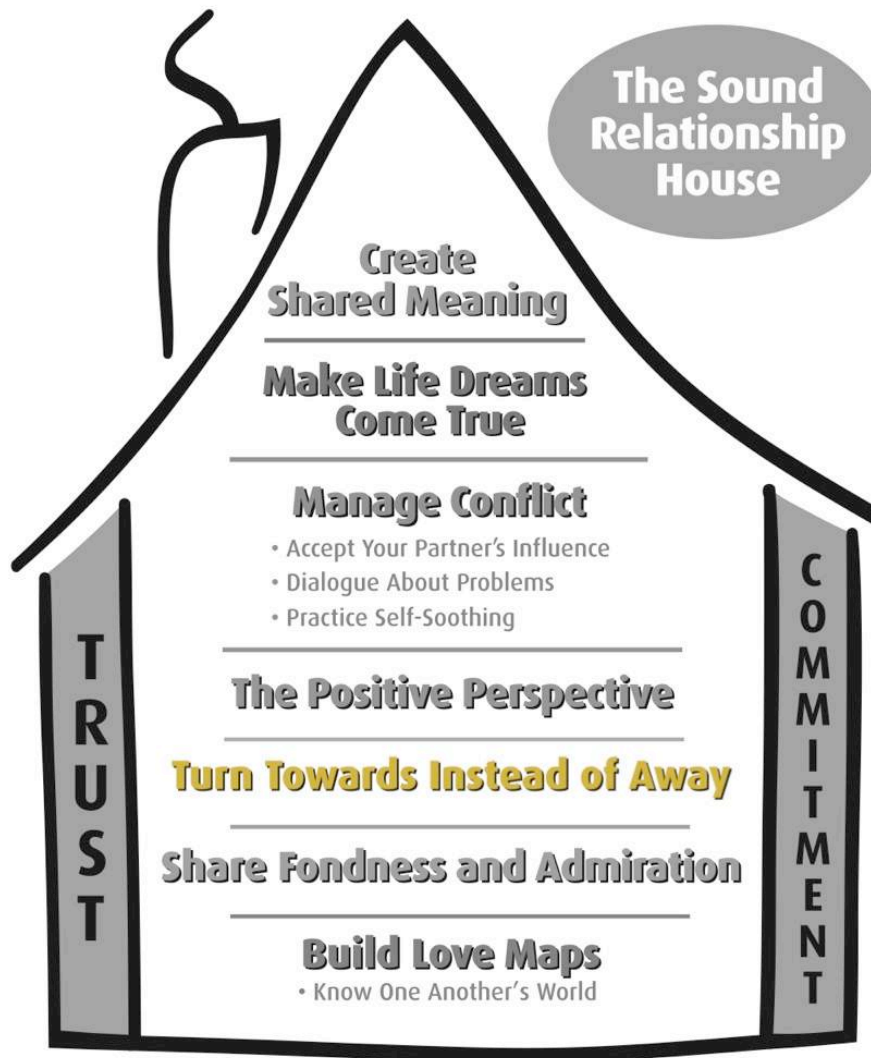


- ◆ Israeli war hero and Statesman Moshe Dayan was once stopped for speeding by a military policeman. Dayan argued: “I only have one eye. What do you want me to watch – the speedometer or the road?”
- ◆ The quality of so much of our life experience is contingent on which eye we use to see. It is not so contingent on *what* we see, but rather *how* we see. The Mishna in Avos (5:22) encourages us to be the students of Avraham Avinu and not Bilam Ha’Rasha. Avraham is characterized by having an *ayin tova* while Bilam lived with an *ayin ra’ah*.

Attitude



- ◆ According to researchers in England, the average couple fights in their bedroom 167 times a year. What do they fight about? The survey found they fight about leaving a light on to read, the temperature in the room, allowing the children to sleep in the bed, snoring. By far, however, the number one issue couples fight about in their bedroom, (drumroll please)... hogging the blanket.
- ◆ The gemara in Sanhedrin (7a) says - when a couple's love is strong they can sleep on the edge of a sword with room leftover. When their love is weak, a bed that is sixty amos or 90 feet wide will feel cramped.
- ◆ The bed is an objective size; the blanket has fixed dimensions. What determines if it feels cramped or spacious? Our attitude.

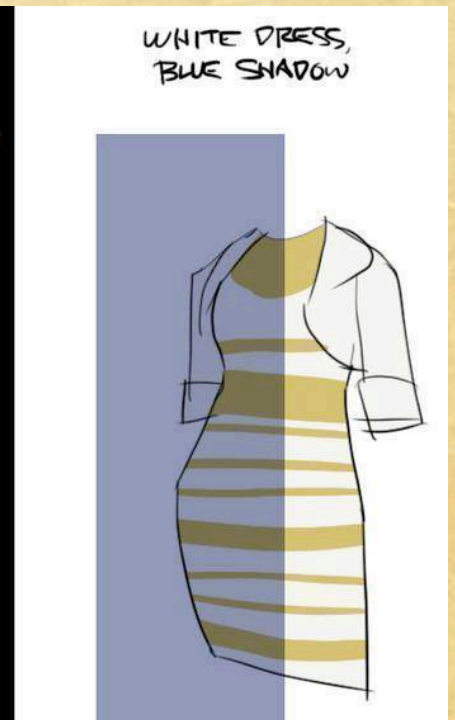
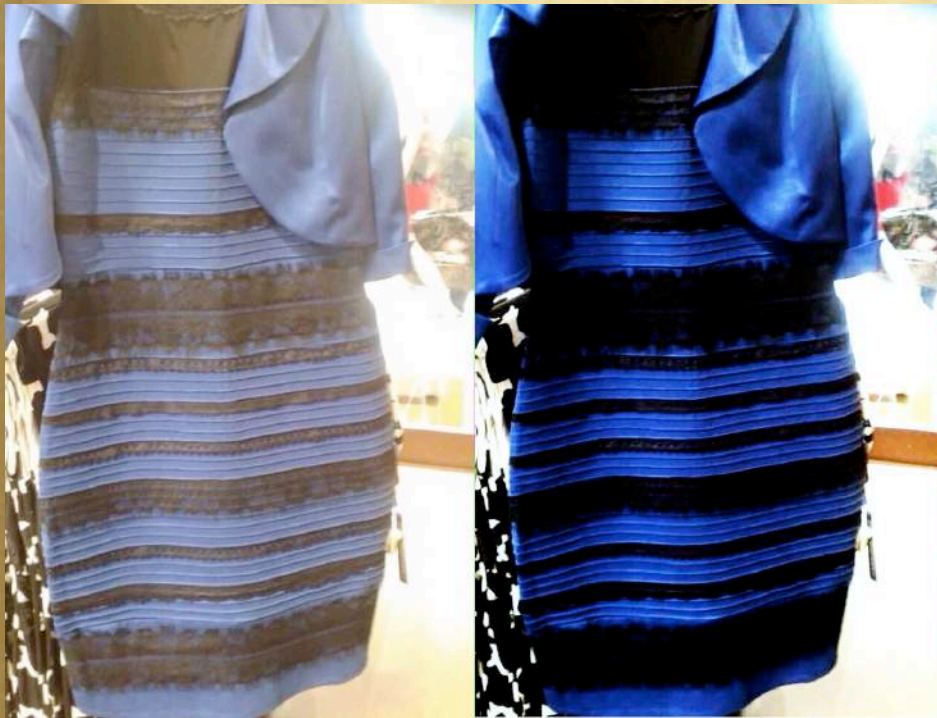


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Manage Conflict

- ◆ We already spoke about conflict being inevitable. Key to healthy marriage is learning how to manage it effectively
- ◆ What are the core issues? What are pressure points?
- ◆ What triggers escalation?
 - ◆ Defensiveness
 - ◆ Criticism
 - ◆ Contempt
 - ◆ Belligerence

Perspective



Perspective



Young woman
Or
Old woman?

Both – depends on perspective

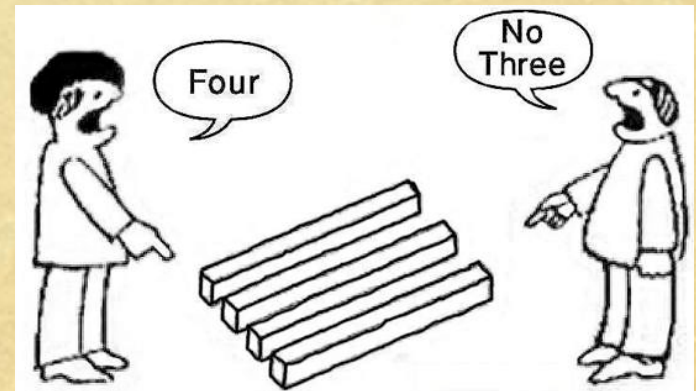


Message of Sefer Bamidbar, Issues Could be Seen Two Ways:

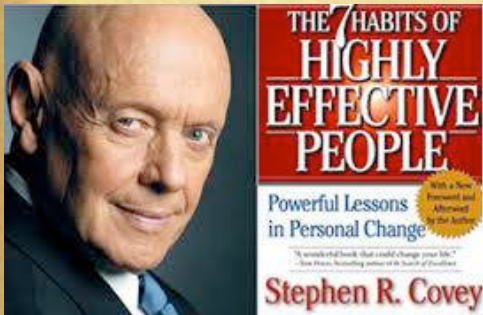
- Manna
- Meat
- Meraglim
- Korach

Perspective

- ◆ Couple must agree that in every interaction there are at least two valid realities, not just one.
- ◆ Therefore, focus is not on facts, but on perception.
- ◆ Goal is not to be right, goal is to be productive.
- ◆ Must try to understand partner's reality, their perspective with agreeable frame of reference.
- ◆ Must validate partner that they have been heard and understood. Heard does not mean able to repeat back word for word.
- ◆ It means able to repeat back to partner's satisfaction.



Stephen Covey - Habit #5



*“Seek First to Understand,
Then to Be Understood”*

~ Stephen Covey (“Habit 5”)

Stephen Covey – Habit #5

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.

--Stephen R. Covey



your eCards
someecards.com

Eliminate criticism

- ◆ No blaming, no “you” statements.
- ◆ Talk about your feelings, not the other persons
- ◆ State a positive need. Within every complaint is a longing, and likely a recipe.
 - ◆ Negative need: You talked about yourself all of dinner
 - ◆ Positive need: I need you to ask me about my day



Defensiveness

- ◆ Don't react defensively with righteous indignation or victim-hood to ward off an attack.
- ◆ Accept responsibility for at least part of the problem.
 - ◆ Modeh b'miktzas
 - ◆ “Fair enough,” “good point”
 - ◆ Example:
 - ◆ It's not my fault that we're always late, it's your fault.
 - ◆ Antidote – Well, part of this is my problem, I need to think more about time.

Contempt

- ◆ Statements that come from position of superiority
- ◆ Antidote: Build culture of respect and appreciation.
- ◆ Contempt is biggest obstacle to intimacy
- ◆ Tzelem Elokim – all equal, nobody greater than another.
- ◆ Have what to learn, allow influence and become better
- ◆ Gemara and Midrash replete with statements about being incomplete without marriage...

Stonewalling

- ◆ Emotional withdrawal from interaction. Looking away, continuing to text, being unresponsive.
- ◆ Stonewalling can be worse than actually having a fight
- ◆ Antidote is to self soothe in order to stay emotionally connected and carry on a healthy conversation.
 - ◆ Example of Achashveirosh who needs to take a walk after hearing about Esther's identity

Perspective Content or Contentious?

♦ אִוִּיהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאָנְנִים, רַע בְּאָזְנֵי יְהוָה; וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה, וַיַּחַר אָפוֹ, וַתִּבְעַר-בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָה, וַתֹּאכַל בְּקִצָּה הַמַּחֲנֶה. בַּוַּיְצָעַק הָעָם, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה; וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה, וַתִּשְׁקַע הָאֵשׁ.

- ♦ 11:1 And when the people **complained**, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.
11:2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

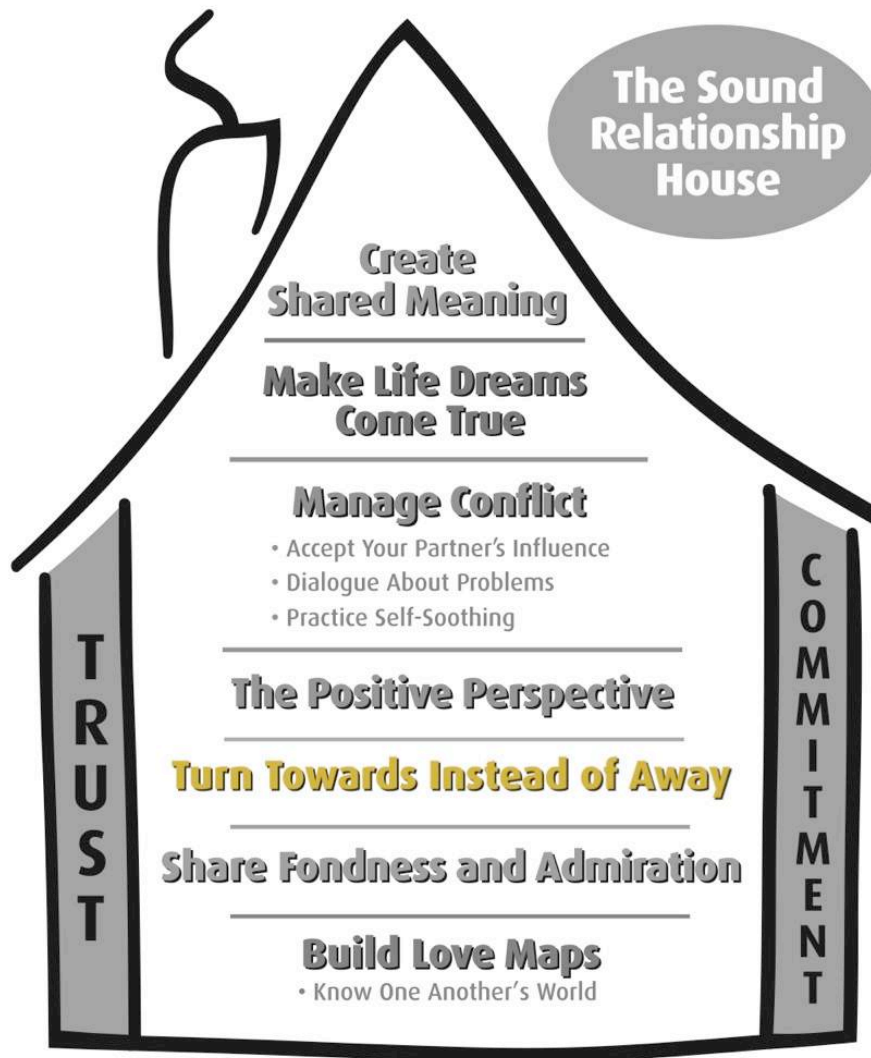
♦ דעת זקנים מבעלי התוספות

(א) ויהי העם כמתאוננים. כאוננים על המת ומתאבלים על מה שהיה הקב"ה רוצה להכניסן לארץ כי היו קטני אמנה ודואגין מן המלחמה:

R. Paysach Krohn story about “Zeh lo chashuv”

Resolving Conflict

- ◆ Softened Startup –
 - ◆ “In every conflict there is a conversation the couple needed to have, but the fight occurred instead.”
 - ◆ How and in what context do we begin the conversation?
 - ◆ Is it personal or is it issue based?
 - ◆ Focus on how your behavior makes me feel not projecting motivation or other’s emotions.
 - ◆ Goal is to move from gridlock to dialogue on the issue.



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