

10 DUMB MISTAKES VERY SMART COUPLES MAKE – MISTAKE #3

by Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier

<https://vimeo.com/77545604>

IT'S RESPECT FIRST, LOVE SECOND

A husband and wife are walking when suddenly he trips.

"Oy!" she cries out. "Are you OK?! I hope you're not hurt."

"It's OK. It's OK," he responds. "I'm fine."

Let's revisit the scenario. The same man and woman. The same street. They are walking when suddenly he trips, and she cries out:

"Klutz! What's wrong with you? Can't you even walk without tripping?"

What's the difference between Scenario One and Scenario Two?

In the first scene, they are a newly-married couple. In the second, they have been married for three years already.

While this is an anecdote, it illustrates a critical point. When a couple begins a marriage, there is a sense of newness and excitement. They are anxious to see each other; they enjoy each other's company. They are in the infatuation stage. But that stage was designed to be short-lived. Their job is to now build the real bond of love. And while many couples do focus on the love in their marriage, they allow one area to slip: respect. And when respect slips, the relationship starts to fray. Sadly, it's almost natural.

Dr. John Gottman, renown marital therapist, did an eye-opening study. He studied interactions between couples and then compared their reactions to other people. To do this, he sat a husband and wife across from each other and videotaped them while they discussed certain issues. Then he asked the wife to step outside, and he asked another woman to come in. He then asked the husband to converse about a similar subject with this stranger. He then brought the wife back in, and asked

the husband to leave. Again, he introduced another man and asked the wife to have a conversation with this stranger.

Here is what he found: regardless of whether the couples were newly married or long-time veterans, over and over, they were less polite towards each other than they were to utter strangers. They were also quicker to argue and less likely to accept the opinion of their spouses, as opposed to that of someone they had never met before.

Why is this? One reason is that we are socialized to be polite. Since childhood, we've been trained to use our manners and be courteous, and we remain true to that — outside the house. The problem is that often, within our own homes, we forget how we are supposed to act.

Interestingly, the Rambam gives us a formula for a beautiful marriage.

“Our Sages commanded that a husband must respect his wife more than himself and love her as much as himself. Likewise, they commanded a wife to treat her husband with exceeding amounts of honor. If a couple does this, their union will be beautiful and praiseworthy. (*Rambam Hilchos Ishus 15:19*)

The order the Rambam put things in is illustrative. “A man must respect his wife more than himself and love her as much as himself.” It's *respect* first, and *love* second. This point becomes a major obstacle in many marriages. After a few months, or a few years, the common courtesy and basic respect starts to weaken.

THIRD REALLY DUMB MISTAKE

And this is the third really dumb mistake that very smart couples make. They allow the respect to slip, and once that happens, the relationship starts to unravel.

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