

10 DUMB MISTAKES VERY SMART COUPLES MAKE – MISTAKE #6

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I'M NOT READY TO CHANGE THE MOST POPULAR RADIO STATION IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION

If you're not ready to change, you're not ready to get married

R' Ben Tzion Shafier / The Shmuz

The station that almost everyone in western civilization is tuned into is W.W.I.I.-FM or *What's In It For Me?* W.W.I.I.- FM, however, isn't just a wavelength or something that people occasionally listen to. It's actually a lifestyle that we are trained in from birth.

You see, from the moment that you arrived into this world, it's been all about you. What do you need? What will serve you well? What's best for you? As an infant, it was all about *your* schedule and *your* nap. When it was time for school, the first question your parents asked was, "What's the best school for you?" Then came camp. Again, one focus: where would you gain the most? When it came time for high school, the criteria was, "Which environment will be best for you? Where will you grow the most?" Then came seminary, and once again—where would you flourish?

And that's pretty much the way life goes. What's best for you, where will you gain the most. . . and then you get married. And presto — the world changes. There's someone else in the picture. Now, it's not just where I want to go for Shabbos. She also has an opinion. It's not just what color I think the living room should be painted. He also has feelings about it. Suddenly, there's another human being who has his own set of needs and desires, a person who has her own wants and preferences. For most people, marriage is the first time in their lives that they actually have to take someone else into account.

That's not to say that you didn't do things for others up till now. Of course, you were a good friend,

and did favors for people, and helped out at home. But that's the point — it was *chessed*, helping others, doing for others. Marriage is different. Your wife isn't someone who you have to take into account sometimes. She's someone who is there **all the time**. Your husband is not someone that you're generously volunteering to help. It someone you *have to* take into consideration. All the time. And, out of nowhere, you find yourself sharing everything — from toothpaste to vacations to home furnishings. From what time you go to sleep at night to which car you drive. And this other person doesn't do things the way that you do.

The adjustment is especially difficult because you marry someone from the *opposite* gender. It's not until you get married that you begin to realize quite how different men and women really are. "He does everything, I mean *everything*, differently than I do..." "She cares so much about the smallest, pettiest things..." And suddenly you realize that the individual you are married to thinks differently and values different things than you do. It's like he comes from a different planet.

There is, however, a bigger part to this.

Part of a Successful Marriage Is about Growth

If you've ever been to an orthodontist, think back to when he first put spacers on your teeth and then tightened the wires on your braces. A day or two later, your entire mouth was sore. It was difficult to chew. It was difficult to talk. And it felt that way for a while. It hurt because the dentist was nudging your teeth to move. He was asking them to change position. And change often comes with pain.

This is a good analogy for marriage. Before you were born, HASHEM chose the ideal person for you to share your life with, build your home with, and grow with. Growth doesn't come easily.

Often it's your spouse's very nature that forces you to change. It's the fact that he's so disorganized or that she's always late. That he's so self-conscious, and she's always nervous. One thing is guaranteed — your spouse's disposition, way of doing things, and attitudes will be different than yours. And you're not going to change them.

Many of us get uneasy with this. We're comfortable in the zone we're in. And now we are being asked to do things differently — and it's not pleasant. Rather than accept it, we let out the battle cry, "She should change!" "Let him stop doing things that way, and the trouble will go away."

But that is exactly what it is: a cry that leads to a battle. Because these are things that can't be changed. It's part of who your spouse is. For your marriage to succeed, you have to be flexible enough to make room for him or her — whether you like a particular trait or not.

Marriage demands adjustment. But it's not because, "He's so difficult," or "She's so demanding." And it's not because, "He just does things to annoy me," or, "She just has to have her way all the time." It's because each person has a different nature, temperament, and interests. HASHEM matches couples perfectly for their ultimate success. That success includes much growth and much change.

If they both are willing to change, they will live together in peace and harmony. If they aren't — they will suffer.

And this is the sixth really dumb mistake that very smart couples make. They aren't willing to change. And if you're not willing to change, you're not ready to get married.

The Marriage Seminar, a 12-part comprehensive guide to a successful marriage, is available at ***the Shmuz.com***. You can download it, listen online, or access it on the ***Shmuz APP*** - for Iphone and Android. CDs of the ***Marriage Seminar*** can be obtained by calling ***the Shmuz*** office at 866-613-TORAH (8672).