



## Getting to Know Your Family - 05 Dealing With Differences

### ***Get To Know Yourself and Your Spouse***

One has to get to know both the virtues – as well as the weaknesses – of both himself and his spouse.

Every couple has some areas in which they are similar in, as well as areas in which they are different. There is a fair share in every home of differences between spouses, both in the amount of differences as well as in the magnitude of their differences.

To give some examples, if one of the spouses is very neat and his wife is very messy, this will greatly bothersome to the neat spouse. If he's very frugal with money and she has no concept of saving money, this will also be very bothersome to the frugal spouse.

Spouses should become aware of the areas in how they are similar, and in the areas which they differ in.

In addition to this, there is always one particular virtue which both the husband and wife excel at. And along with this, there is always one major weakness that they both possess – equally.

It is clear that differences between spouses cause difficulty and tension between them. Their differences present a problem in bonding together, because it hard to bond with someone who is very different from you. But every couple can find their common qualities that they share and use those common qualities to feel a connection to each other and thus bond with each other.

However, it should be noted that even their good qualities can present a problem in the marriage. Sometimes the husband will want to prove to his wife that he's better and more successful than her in that good quality which they both possess. His ego won't allow him to accept that they're equally good at one area; he might want to show her that he's better than her even in the area which they are both good at.

### ***The Biggest Problem Is When We Don't Know The Root Of Our Problems***

A person's biggest weakness is the source of all his problems in life. The big weak spot in each person's life always seems to keep coming back, again and again, rearing its ugly head. It always manifests in a person's life as long as he is unaware of it. Therefore, a person has to figure out what his biggest personal weakness in his life is, and then he will be able to become aware of what's causing all his problems.

When a person feels that his home is dysfunctional, it seems to be that his home contains many problems, but the truth is that there is only one underlying problem that is causing all the trouble. The root problem is that each of us has a particular weak point, which keeps coming back again and again; it is always one major weak point in our personality that is responsible for all our problems.

Really, the problem is that a person doesn't see the **root** of all his problems. A person tends to see all

kinds of various “problems” in his life, without tracing them all back to the one single root which they are branching out of. That is the problem – when a person doesn’t see the **root** of all his problems.

### **Running Away From Difficulty Vs. Dealing With It**

Before the wedding, if we ask any *chosson*: “Are you aware that your *kallah* is different than you?” Everyone will answer, “Yes, I know.” After the wedding though, the *chosson* finds himself frustrated and bewildered with his wife’s differences. What changed? Didn’t he already know before the wedding that there would be differences? The answer is something like, “I knew we were different, but I didn’t think we would be *that* different...!”

What a person should do is see the differences and **deal** with them. Without being able to deal with differences, a spouse might come to *understand* his spouse, but it won’t be enough. He has to actually *deal* with the differences, and it is not enough to merely understand the other’s personality. Otherwise, the husband will contemplate divorce and seek a new spouse.

*Baruch Hashem*, though, we all want to be married only once. Therefore, we must learn how to deal with the differences – and it will not work if we expect our *kallah* to change after the wedding.

Life is complex. Everything in life is complex and multi-faceted; marriage as well is complex. It is a complex combination of both the husband’s best points and weakest points, as well as the wife’s best points and weakest points.

### **Dealing With Disappointment**

When a person is in *shidduchim* (dating), he does research as best as he can. He thinks he knows his future spouse well. After the wedding, the spouses find things about each other that they never could have imagined. We cannot rely on even the best research. Rather, the approach we need to have is that we will prepare ourselves to deal with the inevitable differences that we will find in our spouse – *all* of them.

When a newlywed husband begins to notice a glaring difference between him and his wife, he might become so disillusioned and feel, “We are just not for each other.” There are newlyweds who want to get divorced right after the wedding for this reason: “We are just not for each other.” People contemplate divorce like this even after being many years with children.

This really stems from a deeper problem in the person. When a person can’t deal with differences between himself and his wife, it’s really because he never learned how to deal with difficulty in his own life before marriage. It is a sign that he has spent his whole life running away from having to deal with problems, and that is how he wants his life to be like – “When there is a problem that I can’t deal with, I run away from it.”

Let’s say a newlywed husband is disappointed with the girl he married, and he’s immediately contemplating divorce, feeling that he’s right, that the woman whom he married is just impossible to deal with. He should ask himself: “Did I ever, for even once in my life, solve my issues I had with any of my own friends...?”

When a person is disappointed with his spouse, he should know that divorce and remarrying to a new spouse will **not** solve his issue. Those who do get divorced are apt to be thinking, “This time I’ll be smart. I will only seek to marry a woman who is very deep and intellectual, unlike my ex-wife, who was not a very smart person.”

This is not the solution. The solution is that the person has to **change his perspective on life**. The

new change of perspective is: “When I have a problem, I will learn how to **deal** with it, instead of running away from it.”

The point of this is not because it’s a consolation that many people go through the same problem as well (as Chazal say, “Suffering of the masses is half the consolation.”). It’s more than a consolation. It is about acquiring an inner perspective to have in life, to realize that this is the way life is supposed to be: dealing with our difficulties.

As long as a person can’t accept this fact of life, he will seek all kinds of advice to work his around the problems and make things easier for himself. He’ll seek the comfortable route to take in life, and all kinds of practical advice on how he can make things easier for himself. But he will just be running away from the real solution to his issues.

When a person faces a difficult life situation, it’s really coming from a lack of wisdom about life (which are called “*Hilchos De’os*”). It’s not because he doesn’t know what to *do* – it’s because he doesn’t know how to *think*. Life is not about knowing “what to do” and “what not to do”, but about how to act with wisdom. It is written, “*All of them, You made with wisdom.*” We mainly need wisdom in life, and seeking “advice” won’t help us for this.

If we do seek advice, it should be because we are trying to learn about the wisdom of life, and not because we simply want to know “what to do” in the superficial sense.

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