Level Up Your Relationship!

Tips, Tools, and Strategies for Creating a Character Champion Relationship.

Communication Tip #2- **Leveling Up Your Blue Mindset**

So imagine: your partner says “You’re so inconsiderate…you don’t really care about me.” Your first instinct is to defend yourself and say “That’s not true,” or counterattack with a putdown of your own. How often have you used the counter-productive strategy where you would actually say that *of course* you care about your partner’s feelings, and then you go on to list the gazillion reasons why your partner’s perspective is wrong?

Be aware that if your communication approach to an emotional plea (often coming from a Blue Mindset) is too logical and analytical (coming from a Green or Gold Mindset), your partner may end up feeling even more upset.  While a logical answer may seem like the most sensible way to respond, I want to let you know that this is the WRONG way to respond. Believe it or not, good communication is often counterintuitive. What a Green or Gold Mindset may see as logical, rational communication can escalate a sensitive emotional situation, which may even blow up in your face if you’re not careful.  BOOM!!  Tears, and a night on the couch.

You may ask me, “Dr. K., I kinda get it how counter-attacking can cause problems, but why is it a problem to get defensive and explain my position? After all, I have a right to defend my character when it’s being assaulted. Also, if I explain my position, I will prevent my partner from thinking poorly of me. My partner will see the error in his or her thinking, and the logic in my ways.  ...So what’s the problem with this response?” The problem is that you’re not seeking to understand what your partner is saying. Your need to protect yourself is greater than your need to understand your partner’s feelings and concerns, so your partner's feelings and concerns are not being heard or addressed.

This is when you can level up to a Blue Champion Mindset, so that your partner feels heard and understood.  Your Blue Champion Mindset is the part of you that comes from a kind, caring, empathic viewpoint.

How do you do this?

1. All emotions make sense on *some* level, so DON’T dismiss your partner's feelings even if they don’t seem to make sense.
2. Prepare to listen without making any interruptions whatsoever.  First take some deep breaths and maybe a short time-out to help calm your own nervous system.   When you listen without any interruption, your partner knows that you’re really trying to understand why he or she is feeling a certain way.
3. Try saying something like this: *“Your feelings are important to me.  I want to understand what’s really upsetting you. Help me understand from your perspective how my actions triggered those feelings in you.”*  This acknowledgement of your partner’s feelings, and of your role in causing them, may take some of the wind out of his or her sails. This discussion needs the time that it takes for your partner to feel truly heard, and that you really do care.
4. Really listen to what your partner is saying, even if you vehemently disagree, and even if your partner’s delivery seems obnoxious or off-putting.  Really try to be like a detective and understand his or her feelings and point of view. To empathize does not mean to agree, it means to *understand.*

Once your partner feels *understood,* he or she is much more likely to be receptive to you explaining your perspective and be ready to problem-solve. However, you need to defuse the emotional bomb first…otherwise, all of your other communication won’t work.  **People don’t care what you know, until they first know that you care!**

So here’s the bottom line: Use the magic duct tape, and resist the impulse to be reactive. RESPOND, DON’T REACT.  Learn to use your Champion Self to rationally detach from a stressful situation, so that you can use a smarter and more sensitive communication tactic.