

How to Manage Likes and Dislikes in Relationships

Ram (James Swartz)

2010-05-25

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1702>

James: Hi, Marina. It seems that we have hit another snag in our relationship and I would like to share some of my thoughts with you before we speak next week. It is important that we address this issue or I am afraid I will be unable to continue. Oftentimes a relationship is such that you cannot see the forest for the trees. It goes on and on and somehow both people forget the ultimate purpose.

The first issue is: What kind of a relationship is it? What do we want out of it? Do we go back to the way it was? Do we just cruise along with the way it is? Do we set up some kind of goal? Is it a purely spiritual relationship? Is it a purely worldly relationship? Is it some combination of the two?

The second issue is: Irrespective of the type of relationship it is, what rules operate to keep the communication positive? How do we deal with our likes and dislikes?

Since likes are not a problem, let's think about our dislikes. I will give two examples. I do not like your habit of calling me when you are in one of your famous angry/depressed moods, because you tend to strike out, tell me off and try to make me feel that I am not up to the mark in some way. For example, in a recent letter I expressed a positive feelings toward you and you wrote back something to the effect of that talk is cheap, why don't you call me on the phone? I certainly would have called, but my living situation did not permit it. I wonder how people got along in the old days without phones and email. They were stuck with the lowly post office. Anyway, that was the best I could do. I had a strong feeling, turned it into pixels and it did not seem to be enough for you. Even if you didn't like it, you could have just ignored it or even – heaven forbid – say something nice.

I do not care if you are in a bad mood, except generally, in the sense that I want you to be happy. But insofar as I become part of a problem in your mind, it is very unpleasant for me. If I did something that was calculated to piss you off or consistently broke agreements, etc. then I would be happy to hear from you about my shortcomings and you would certainly be justified in complaining.

If when you call and say you're in a rotten mood and it has nothing to do with me and could I be a shoulder to cry on for a while?, I would be happy to get that kind of call. Anyway, that is my main gripe. That is the reason I wrote you off years ago. You called me one fine Saturday morning and without so much as a by your leave started in on your favorite punching bag – George Bush, now it's Sarah Palin – in a very negative way. You were so fired up, so negative and obsessed that I could not break through the energy to say a word.

When I am in a bad mood – which is very rare (once or twice a year, and then only for a short time) – I have a rule which I follow religiously: stay away from people. I go into myself, think about the reason and get it all clear what the problem is all about – and it is always only about me – and it dissolves, and then I am good to go. I learned a long time ago that engaging with others when I was not right caused more problems than it solves.

I understand that you are not me and that you have a different approach. I'm sure you work a lot

on yourself alone but you also reach out and seek help, comfort, whatever, from others. This is a good approach too for someone with your temperament. I am not criticizing or judging you. You are you and I am me. You like some things about me and some things you don't. I like some things about you and some things I don't.

This is pretty much how it is with everyone. So the issue for any successful relationship is how much of the dislikes should be shared and if they are shared, what would be the reason for sharing them: Just to get them off your chest? To really look for a solution? To hurt the other person? To set the record straight? All or none of the above?

Your strongest dislike of me is my perceived arrogance. I say "perceived" because, as you know, I do not agree with you about it, although I understand why it does sometimes appear that I am arrogant. You think I am full of myself and out to let the world know, and this irritates you. Fair enough. You are certainly entitled to your opinion.

So if we are enjoying each other's company and our likes and dislikes are operating, how do we manage them? The likes are no problem; everyone likes to be liked. But the dislikes? What should I do with it? Should I blurt it out? Should I keep it to myself? Should I carefully and diplomatically make my feelings known without hurting the other person's feelings?

Dislikes are always a problem. A dislike directed to an impersonal object isn't much of a problem. I may not like your hairdo or the way you cook rice, but I am not going to make federal case of it. But when a dislike is directed to another person's behavior or character it takes on a different meaning because very often the person is not in control of it. I dislike the way you dither over things but I don't make an issue of it, because I know very well that you have very little control over your emotions. They just bounce back and forth like a ping-pong ball until they die under the weight of their own inertia.

They cause you a lot of suffering and you would have got rid of them a long time ago if you only knew how. It is just something you have to live with – Moon in Cancer – or whatever. My basic character is the same as it has always been. I am quite happy with it because it is what I was given by God. God for me is Moon in Cancer for you.

The way I solve the problem of my dislikes is to not let my mind dwell on them. I turn my attention to something positive. If you have a booger hanging out of your nose, I stare at your great tits. ☺

So the big issue is: How much of a role does the other person have in sorting out one's likes and dislikes? This is something we have to have a rule about. I am not saying that we should not have them, only how we deal with them. If I am truly arrogant, it does not make sense that you value me as highly as you say. If my self-confidence just triggers one of your dislikes, that is a different issue.

So think about this before we meet. It is important to me that we discuss it.

~ Love, James