

Stonewalling: Is Your Partner Avoiding the Conversation?

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Short Communication

What is stonewalling you might ask? According to renowned psychologist Dr. John Gottman of the Gottman Institute in Seattle, WA, “Stonewalling occurs when the listener retreats from the conversation, shutting down from the speaker because they are feeling overwhelmed.” Imagine this scenario – your partner completely disregards you when you want to discuss a particular issue, whatever that may be, and instead turns away from you. How would that feel? Instead of addressing the problematic issues at hand, your partner is now walking away from the situation altogether. Of course, this is enough to cause you to feel ignored and disregarded. Stonewalling is one of the few marriage destroyers if kept up. The others being contempt, criticism, and defensiveness; which Gottman termed “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”. The best way to cope with it is to sincerely let your partner know how his/her stonewalling makes you feel and that you would like to solve your problems

as a couple by communication with one another. Bring up issues that bother you, talk about them openly and honestly. Being honest relieves you of the burden you’ve been carrying around for so long. Doing so releases tension in your relationship and helps the stonewalling behaviors not get repeated over and over again. Remember, problems get resolved by communicating, NOT withdrawing. This concept applies to any significant relationships other than just couple relationships as well. I’ve had a few encounters where I would be speaking and significant others, without realizing, would completely disregard me and walk away. This caused me to feel that whatever I had to say was of no importance or worthy of conversation. It is frustrating and not healthy for any relationship. Consider the situation before walking away from it. Are you and your partner stonewalling? Ask yourselves – how can you properly and successfully resolve this?

Until next time!!