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**Confide For Less Anger In Your Marriage**

**By Dr Tony Fiore**

Jose and Juanita have been married for 17 years, and basically love each other, yet have been

fighting over the same issue almost every night of those years: She likes it cold at night and he likes it warm in their house and bedroom. She had just opened their bedroom windows for the night. When she left to visit the bathroom, she heard Jose follow her and close all the windows.

Let's eavesdrop to see what we can learn about this fight and what to do about it. --(curtain up)--

Juanita: (to Jose) "I can't sleep unless the windows are wide open. You know that, but insist on closing them every night, just so I'll be miserable. You are selfish and inconsiderate."

Jose: (to Juanita): "This is my house too. Why should I have to freeze? You always get your way. It is so cold in here you could hang meat! Are you trying to get me sick? No NORMAL person would want it this cold!" (curtain down)

IS THIS A SOLVABLE PROBLEM? Depends on the specific marriage. For some couples, the solution would be a simple compromise of some sort; for instance, buy a room thermometer and agree to always keep the room at an agreed upon temperature both could live with.

In many marriages, however, a problem like this is not easily solved—it becomes "perpetual"—and trying to "solve" it only creates anger and tension. For Jose and Juanita, this unfortunately was the case. Why is a simple problem like this not solvable for our couple and in many other marriages? Could be many reasons, but the usual culprits are:

(1) The couple is engaged in a "power" or "control" struggle. This means the fight isn't about the issue anymore—it is about who will win or lose.

(2) The temperature issue goes deeper and is emotionally tied into other personal or marital issues. If this is the case, the more pressure put on the person to "change," the more the person resists.

For instance, turns out that Juanita literally panics if in a room without air flow due to issues in her childhood. Depriving her of fresh air flow literally makes her want to fight for her life. CONFIDING

## Confide For Less Anger In Your Marriage

**MAKES THE DIFFERENCE** Let's now listen in on what Jose and Juanita could have said that may have made a **HUGE** difference in their communication. This is because now they are speaking from their hearts —combining empathy (seeing things from the viewpoint of the other) with assertive communication (honestly speaking your feelings and thoughts in a forthright manner)

Juanita (should have said something like):"I feel that I don't have to put up with this, although I also feel bad that you have to suffer. I tell myself that if you really loved me, you would want me to be comfortable at night. I also ask myself why should I always give in? I work hard all day too and deserve some consideration. All I'm asking for is a decent night's sleep, but then, I wonder if I am being too selfish." Jose (should have said something like):"I do really love you and I want you to be comfortable too, but it gets so cold in here at night for me that I can't sleep. We both want a good night's sleep and want to be able to continue sleeping together in the same room. Let's find a way to discuss it so it doesn't make us so angry at each other."

Granted, it is not easy to confide when in the heat of marital battle. Consequently, it is often better to first take a time out, calm down and then communicate what is in your heart. The following communication tips will help:

### FOUR COMMUNICATION TIPS

Tip 1– Don't only focus on the issue. Also discuss your feelings, thoughts, and inner conflicts surrounding the issue. Confide what is going on in both your heart and your mind.

Tip 2– Look at how you communicate with each other **ABOUT** the issue. Focus on the process of communication.

Tip 3– Give up needing to be right all the time. Wise and successful married people have discovered that often it is preferable to be happy than to be right!

Tip 4– Convey to your partner that you love them enough to want to join them so together you can find a way to deal with the issue or problem.

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### **Seek Marriage Help from the Right Sources**

**By Ted Belfour**

## Confide For Less Anger In Your Marriage

If you need marriage help, don't make the mistake most people do. Don't talk to a member of the opposite sex about it unless that person is functioning in a professional capacity.

For example, a woman believes her husband doesn't give her as much attention as he should. She should never talk to a male coworker about the situation even if he is considered to be a dear friend. If he is sympathetic to her and they grow closer, more marriage problems are sure to follow. Depending on the workplace, conversation about the woman's situation might even be misconstrued as sexual harassment which is never appropriate in the work place.

The best person to discuss marriage help with is your spouse. If that just is not possible - either because your spouse is not willing or because there is a chance you might be harmed for trying to talk about your problems and concerns - talk with a trained professional. Visit a counselor or minister to talk about your marriage problems. They are trained to look at situations objectively and know how to maintain your confidentiality.

If you do not have a minister or know a counselor, you can find one discreetly by looking at your local phone book. Search under "counseling" or "marriage counselors" to find several to call. Some communities may even have counseling services free of charge for some situations. If you have a close friend you can confide in, ask if they have heard anything about the counselors you find. At work you can always pull that "a friend of mine is looking for a counselor. Have you heard of any?" trick.

If the advice you receive from the minister or counselor does not strike a chord with you, go somewhere else. That does not mean that if the advice is not what you want to hear, to leave it behind, however. When you seek help for your marriage, you need to be open minded enough to accept that some of the responsibility or blame may be your own.

Remember, the first step to solving any marriage problem is to seek help. If you and your spouse both agree, try going to a counselor together. The professional may prefer to see you individually after an initial meeting with the two of you together. If you are both willing to find marriage help, you will need to be accommodating and adaptable as you work through your problems and the counseling process.

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