

Planning *and* spontaneity can bring smiles to couples

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Do you fight with your spouse over making plans for the weekend vs. just playing it by ear? Are you lost without your daily planner or do you feel pressured at every turn to be 'on' and have little time to just 'veg out'?

The balancing act between too little and too much can be very evident in our preferences for planning. And these differences can create hurt feelings or angry tirades...and used to bring a lot of couples to my office for counseling. See which of the following descriptions fit you most of the time.

Advance Planner

- If my husband/wife would make definite plans with me, I would feel more valued.
- I feel ignored when my friends won't commit to a future outing.
- I become angry when I spend time waiting for others.
- I feel unloved when no one seems to respond to my needs.
- I can relax when I know what the plans are.
- Part of the fun of doing something is the anticipation of it.

Spontaneous Planner

- My work life is too planned, thus I want to be in control of my free time.
- I like to do things, but want to be free to choose as my spirit moves me.
- Sometimes, I feel renewed by doing nothing.
- I feel unloved when I'm nagged and withdraw or get angry.
- I honestly don't know what I want to do, movie, dancing or nothing, until the time comes.
- I feel like I let people down when I change my mind; better not to plan.

Sometimes, our feelings are right on target.

If we're more of the advance planner, there may be a few people in our worlds who probably just don't like us, thus they won't make plans or keep us waiting. Then we spend, yet another, boring weekend doing nothing, held captive in the house, hurt and/or angry.

If we're more of the spontaneous planner, there are may be a few totally insecure people who only think of their needs and want to tie up our free time with their agendas. Then we spend, yet another, hectic and harried, no fun weekend, hurt and angry.

Sometimes, our feelings are not on target.

Try this instead. Make plans for spontaneity. Compromise a bit. Balance your desires with others. Homebodies need home time. Gregarious types need plans with others.

Sometimes opposites do attract and we can appreciate the differences when we see an effort to accommodate our styles and wishes.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Set aside a date night once a week for the advance planner to make a plan. Here's the feeling: "How nice, something to look forward to, get dressed up for. Watch me smile!"
- Set aside another date night for spontaneity, no advance planning allowed. The spontaneous planner gets to decide, at the last minute, what he/she wants to do, perhaps making hot fudge sundaes at home and renting a video. Here's the feeling: "Ahh, some 'veg out' time. Watch me smile!"

The rest of the week, we can take care of our own needs. 'Go, See Doers', take responsibility to do just that. Homebodies, don't mind being left alone. Each of us is ultimately responsible for our own happiness.