Love without harmony [1]

Dear Alice,

Is it possible to love someone and just not be able to get along with that person? If so, how does one get over the loss of that relationship, especially when neither person wants to let go, yet it seems to be a necessity?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Yes, it is possible to love someone and just not be able to get along with that person. No relationship is conflict-free. The important thing is not whether you disagree, but how you disagree. Sometimes couples argue a lot because they have simply not developed simple, respectful ways of talking and listening. Sometimes they want to persuade the other person to change his/her opinion, behavior, or mind.

If this might be the problem, consider seeing a couple's therapist for the express purpose of learning how to disagree constructively. A couple can often make rapid progress toward a more harmonious relationship when poor communication is truly what's at issue.

On the other hand, in many cases, a relationship that has formed and endured despite constant disagreement and argument is a relationship that is perhaps not based on love between two independent adults, but rather between two co-dependent people, stuck in a challenging dynamic. Sometimes it's possible to sort out these kinds of relationships, usually via couples therapy. However, if you are a young, childless couple and your relationship is fraught with not being able to get along, and you try couples therapy and don't see reasonably rapid results (that is, some discernable easing of tension within six months), then it might be wisest for you two to move on and see if you can each find partners with whom you are more compatible.

Remember, it is important, when it comes to relationships, to use your head, as well as listen to your heart. A healthy relationship needs to make you feel good, not stressed or unhappy.
If you decide to dissolve the relationship, how do you get over that loss? It will probably be hard at first, and you may never get over it completely. What are your fears, how do you feel, what has changed, and how will you cope? Look to family and friends for support. Allow yourself time to grieve, and see a counselor or therapist if the grief and sadness linger for more than a year. With time, people heal and move on.

If, over time, you discover that your relationships all seem the same, where you care about one another but you disagree, then this is important information to have as you talk with a therapist, gain new perspective, and create new patterns. What is it that gets you to choose people with whom you can't get along? What do you bring to relationships that contributes to disharmony? When you can get to talk about and learn from these kinds of questions, you will be more likely to choose a more appropriate partner to love and with whom you can build a healthy, happy relationship.

Alice!
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