

## Fun With the Couple From Hell: Opinions of Mike Elkin

- \* The quality of our relationships is the quality of our lives.
- \* If you are in a couple, the quality of the space between you and your partner will determine the quality of your life more than any other factor, with the possible exception of major health issues
- \* Energy directed toward improving the quality of the space between a person and their partner is more useful than energy expended toward any other goal.
- \* There are two major emotions: love and fear. The presence of fear blocks awareness of love.
- \* When a couple has a bad relationship, the relationship is conducted by their protective parts: their armies. Armies are not renowned for their relational skills.
- \* Protective parts-armies-soldiers are very similar, regardless of who they think they are fighting for. They are like football players; regardless of who they play for, they are all playing the same game with the same understanding of it:
  - They are the Good Guys and the others are the Bad Guys.
  - They see any ambiguous stimulus as an attack until conclusively proved otherwise.
  - They reject awareness of information which they perceive as inconsistent with their mission.
  - When what they do fails, they do it harder. They send in more troops.
- \* Protective parts will always see the problem as outside the person they are part of, and see it as a moral problem. The solution is for the other person to stop being a Bad Person and work toward becoming a Good Person.
- \* Protective parts, although very motivated to be helpful and effective, NEVER are.
- \* Protective parts NEVER protect. What they invariably do, and all they invariably do, is to energize and attract that which are trying to protect against.
- \* It is not useful to point this out to them.
- \* It *is* useful to respectfully inquire what will allow them to feel safe enough to warily withdraw, and allow their concerns to be addressed by Self (or at least, a Self-like part)
- \* Moral problems cannot be solved.
- \* The most important need we have is not physical survival, but innocence: the sense of being a Good Person
- \* This is complicated (and motivated) by the fact that many of our most easily accessible parts are convinced that we are worthless and unlovable, and that if we were fully and completely known, we would be despised and rejected.
- \* Every fight between members of a couple is about the same thing: who is the better person. Who is more loving, generous, flexible, intelligent, competent, useful, forgiving, integrated, truthful of the pair.
- \* During a fight, each member of a couple attempts to prove to the other that they are morally defective-bad and wrong.

\* Anger is always based on a moral judgment. The judgment is based not on what was done, but on a theory of what motivated what was done.

\* Because, regardless of content, any angry communication asserts "You are bad and wrong", it is listened to from a protective part which must make it wrong. The concerns expressed by angry parts are never heard, because to give them credence means accepting yourself as bad and wrong.

\* Protective parts will block the perception of information inconsistent with their understandings. This is why a couple can have the same fight hundreds of times without becoming aware of each other's concerns.

\* The most painful experience available to human beings is SHAME: the experience of having our badness witnessed, by other people, or parts of our mind.

\* Being witnessed by Self is the opposite of SHAME. It is the experience of having the things that you believed made you bad being loved as they are

\* If you cannot keep someone out of where they do not belong, you cannot let them in at all.

\* I have never met anyone who has won a fight.

\* The art of self defense is learning to keep people out of where they do not belong without getting into fights.

\* The less fear based, protective energy is manifest, the easier it is to perceive love.

\* Sex only really works between peers.

\* Power and intimacy, like light and dark, or love and fear, are in direct inverse relationship