

# Personality Differences in Marriage

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Tips for Dealing with Personality Differences in Your Marriage

## 1. Remember why you fell in love:

- Often the characteristics that initially attract you to a person may be those that are very different from your own personality. This occurs because these differences are exciting and we feel that this person completes us in some way.
- However, over time in a marriage, those may become the things that put a strain on the relationship. So you may have fallen in love with someone because they are fun-loving and spontaneous but over time you start to feel that they are irresponsible or unreliable. So in these times it's important to remember the things you love about their personality.

## 2. Understand that differences are magnified during times of stress:

- It's important to understand that during times of stress such as moving, having a baby, or job changes, personality differences seem much bigger than in more peaceful times. Spouses should give each other a little more space and forgiveness during these times and recognize that there is rarely one "right" way to deal with stressful issues.

## 3. View yourselves as a team. This means:

- Play off one another's strengths. No one person is good at everything. When dividing up the tasks of life, each person should do what they are best at. For example, whoever is the more meticulous person should balance the checkbook and whoever is the most social person could initiate spending time with friends.
- Communicate openly. Even two people who are similar in personality can't read each others mind - this is especially true when two spouses have different personalities. This means they have different expectations and make different assumptions so communication is absolutely key. Communication means not only being willing to express yourself, but it means knowing how to listen, really listen, to your spouse.
- Compromise - sometimes it's important to ask yourself whether you'd rather "be right or be happy". When two people share life together there will be a need for compromise and in the end your willingness to compromise will probably make you a happier person.
- Recognize that no team wins every game. No marriage is perfect; but even people with different personalities can have happy, fulfilling marriages that get better and better with time.

Holly Deemer, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist who has experience assessing, diagnosing, and treating a variety of behavioral and emotional symptoms in children and adults. She particularly enjoys working with clients in the areas of anxiety, stress management, and depression and enjoys teaching parenting skills as well. She provides individual, couples, family, and group therapy at the Meadowbrook office.