

## Of Course I Hate You, We're Married Aren't We?

Hi! I'm Psychologist Dr. Rich O'Neill with this week's Checkup from the Neckup: Bridging irreconcilable differences, or Of course I hate you, we're married aren't we?!

Sixth grade, doctor's office, waiting for my allergy shot. Sniffle, sniffle. Flipping through a magazine, a brain twister. Something like, how many feet over a river does a bridge have to be if the river typically rises 10 feet during spring thaw? A) 12 feet; B) 15 feet; C) 20 feet; D) can't say.

I thought and I thought and I thought and finally I cheated and looked for the answer in the back. D) Can't say. How much the river **typically** rises isn't the issue, it's the maximum it ever rises, **if** you are gonna keep it from washing out. Ahhhhh! Pretty smart those engineers!

Same thing is true in relationships. In the early stage, the honeymoon period, the waters are calm; everything your little lovie-poo does is cute! Isn't that cute how he drops his shoes wherever he takes them off? Just like a guy! Wasn't that sweet how she pouted when we ran into my old girlfriend at Carousel Mall? She's so jealous!

But when we don't get what we want long enough, the sky turns dark, the cold rain falls, the angry river rises.

I'm so sick of tripping over his shoes. Didn't his mother teach him anything?

What does she expect me to do? Not even look at other women? She's so immature!

Part of the problem is the Kodak ads never show the snarling Ozzies and Harriets. We don't want to know that frustration, anger, and yes even the big H word HATRED, are part of all serious relationships, whenever he or she is **too** different from what we want.

We start thinking those **nasty** thoughts. Decades of relationship research show if we can't find a mutually satisfying solution, it's best to keep the nasty words to ourselves. Build the bridge higher by saying and doing at least 5 nice things to every not-so-nice one. Make that 20 to one, to get the bridge high enough for the tsunami of Hatred, which strikes when resentment boils up over too many nasty's and not enough nice. Yes, it happens to all of us.

But what to do in that roaring moment when our partner sends some verbals daggers our way? Of course we want to fight fire with fire. **That's the way we are.** Psychology speak: the natural human retaliatory impulse. **Revenge!** But there's the fork in the road: Feel it, think it, but **don't do it!** Dig down, take a deep breath, and send some nice anyway, or if that's **REALLY TOO HARD**, and sometimes it is, do whatever works to keep the sword in the sheath. Go for a walk. Talk with a friend. **Remember** you are **alike in your anger**, standing on that bridge together. You'll both be glad you did.

I'm psychologist Dr. Rich O'Neill. Thanks for listening.