

Are You an Expert or a Scholar?

When it comes to your own marriage, is it better to be an expert or a scholar?

You might find yourself frequently thinking “I know what he will say” or “I know she doesn’t want to do that”. You have come to “know” your partner so well you believe you know what he/she thinks, wants, likes, dislikes, desires, or needs. She likes to have vanilla ice cream with chocolate sprinkles for dessert every Friday. She likes to line dance but would never want to go to a NASCAR race. He watches Late Night with Letterman every evening and prefers Italian food to sushi, but he would never go to a yoga class. Spending years with one person does provide the comfort of the familiar. Predictability offers order in our chaotic world. However, knowing someone, **really** knowing him includes accepting that he will change and grow. It means being willing to discover her anew as the years go by.

There is a saying that says, “An expert knows everything there is to know about his topic. A scholar knows everything that is currently known about his topic, but is aware of how much is yet to be learned.” If you are an expert on your marriage, watch out! You are likely constantly making assumptions that perhaps would have been true once but no longer. Maybe those assumptions are based in your experiences with each other over the years. Maybe you no longer look to see what is new or undiscovered in your partner. So, you start to feel bored, as if everything about your lives together is predictable or routine. You may think, “After all these years, what else is there to learn?” If your partner ‘refuses to cooperate’ with your view of him, you might find yourself saying, “We’ve drifted apart” or “I guess I never really knew him”. After all, you’re the expert! You **know** what kind of activities he likes and what kind of food she likes or what he likes to do in bed and what she doesn’t like to do in bed.

To be a scholar in your marriage means recognizing that you can’t possibly know everything there is to know about your spouse. That he is always evolving and growing as a person just as you are, and you have to stay open to the possible discoveries and treasures to be found in him. The fact is, we all change. But if you are an expert you won’t recognize the changes because you will have your blinders on and will only see what you originally came to know of your spouse. The scholar will be open to all the things he still has to learn. So, become a **scholar** and help your marriage THRIVE.

Risa L. Davis-Ganel, LCMFT
Licensed Clinical Marriage and Family Therapist
St. John’s Station, Suite F
3355 St. John’s Lane
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042
443-865-0298
www.risaganel.com