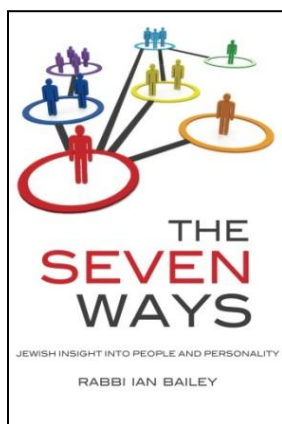


Why is it so Hard for People to Settle Disagreements? Why can't we Easily Find Win-Wins and Compromise Peacefully?

Why is it so hard for people to settle disagreements? Why can't we find win-wins and compromise peacefully?

One of the major reasons is that people, during conflict, feel physically threatened.



John Gottman, PhD., has done extensive research on couple and family interaction, monitoring physiology during both pleasant and unpleasant discussions. During discord, people's bodies almost always react as if they were under physical attack[1].

Though the feeling may be more intense with couples, the same true for other people who are in conflict (sometimes the latter have it worse). When we are in conflict, our body's behavior begins to change and our intellect and reasoning skills begin to suffer.

If you have a partner, a great deal of success in the relationship will come from speaking calmly, and using humor and positive statements to keep this vigilance to a minimum. Studies show that when people are in a calm, positive environment they have a high tendency to work out their differences[2].

When you are involved in an important community or family discussion, or daily business interactions, make sure to use proper body language to properly communicate your intentions. The message may not always be pleasant, as in business or management, but it one can avoid fights if one remembers the power of physiology and body language.



THE 7 WAYS
DISCOVER YOURS

A stark example of poor presentation which leads to bitter conflict is found in the book of Numbers: a man named Korach chooses to attack the head of Israel, Moshe (Moses), in dramatic fashion; he brings hundreds of people to accost the great sage, presenting a show-down rather than a respectful set of questions. He is proven incorrect in equally dramatic fashion.

It is our job to use our high level human intellect to prevail over our physical bodies. When we do so, we are doing a moral, religious act which can bring success *and* harmony to any situation.

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More thoughts: of course, as many wrote in to me, there are many reasons that people refuse to agree with others or compromise. There is ego involved, intolerance for others' opinions, selfishness, and more. Nonetheless, this physical phenomenon is ever-present. Observe people in conflict. A great deal of the communication is non-verbal, with increasing tense statements leading to defensiveness and more tense statements. You can see their bodies getting anxious and excited, and the more they are physiologically aroused the less they are able to listen to each other.

[1] Their bodies reacted with heightened arousal, fight-or-flight response, diffuse arousal, stimulated sympathetic nervous system, etc.

[2] For couples, Gottman argues, the answer to most marital problems is not to solve the problem-especially because 69% are inherently unsolvable ("perpetual problems", as he calls them). The key is to maintain calmness by self-soothing, humor and positive interactions, while finding ways to work around the perpetual problem.