

# Keeping Challenges to a Minimum

In the last lesson you explored the common difficulties many couples have when they begin to live with each other. You're merging two households as well as two different ways of living.

In this lesson you'll explore how to keep challenges to a minimum. Most of what you'll learn is what you can do individually. **The challenge for many people is that this involves how you handle your inner life, the life of thoughts and feelings.**

## A Story about Elephants

Do you know the story of three blind men exploring an elephant for the first time? Since they're blind, they come to know the elephant by touch.

The first one is touching his trunk and declares, "Elephants are long and thin and move a lot."

The second one, at the back, says, "No, elephants are massive. Ugh, and they dump smelly stuff on you."

The third guy, touching the tusks says, "You're both wrong. An elephant is smooth and hard and has a sharp point at the end."

## It's All About Perspective

**The biggest disagreements between couples are a matter of perspective.** It's how each is viewing the same issue, but differently. You could say one is at the tusk of the elephant and the other at the back end getting dumped on.

When you begin wondering if your partner is intentionally misunderstanding you, remember that you could be examining different parts of the elephant.

**Your past experiences and personal preferences determine how you view a situation.**

**Let's look at some of these:**

## Legendary Love. Module 1. Lesson 4.

1. **Family Patterns.** Generally, what was important to the family, whether you liked it or not, is going to have an impact upon how you perceive things. The same is true for your partner.
  - One person may be from a family where family meals at the table were important, even if they're take out. Another family may have eaten in front of the television.
  - One person comes from a family in which you share every part of your day and the other from a family where you came home, changed clothes, and sat in front of the television the rest of the evening.
2. **Family Values. There is no one set of family values every family adheres to.** People value different things.
  - Some families value sharing what they have with others outside of the family, while others believe the best should be saved for "blood kin" only.
  - You may come from a family where you look your best whenever you step outside the house, and your partner may come from a family in which how you looked wasn't important. It was only about comfort.
  - Your values are based upon beliefs. Your beliefs determine how you act and respond to situations. **If you and your partner have opposing beliefs, you'll likely have a challenge in that area.**

### It's Not Personal

This may seem strange, but it's very important. **Most disagreements, no matter how difficult, are rarely about the couple. They're about the individual.**

They're about each person's beliefs, values, and habits and how they feel when someone has different beliefs, values, and habits.

When your partner does or says something different than what you would do, it's personal to them because it's about them. Even if they say you're wrong, it's based upon their perspective, their part of the elephant. It is all about them. The same applies to you.

## Legendary Love. Module 1. Lesson 4.

This is where communication is crucial. In fact, it's so crucial, the entire next module is about how to communicate in a healthy and productive manner.

### **Molehills, Mountains, and Feelings**

The molehills in your relationship are irritating things like squeezing the toothpaste from the middle rather than from the end. They don't need to become mountains which have you breaking up your relationship.

### **Little bumps become big mountains due to several factors:**

1. **Memories and hurts from the past.** When your partner's words or actions remind you of something painful in your past, it's like someone put you in a time machine. You hurt like you did then. You respond like you did then.
  - One way to identify if you have suddenly been thrown into the past is to ask yourself, "How old do I feel?" If it's younger than you are now, you're reacting to a past painful event and not just to what's happening now.
2. **You each have different perspectives.** This is such a common challenge it bears repeating. You may never agree on how you perceive things, but you can at least understand the other's view.
  - **Communication is the key.** Make time to sit together, holding hands, and talk with each other. Make an effort to understand where your partner is coming from.
3. **Not keeping your word.** If you've talked about something and agreed upon a particular action, do what you say.
  - Molehills stay molehills and even go away when you arrive upon a solution and follow your plan.
  - **Not keeping your word is a sign you don't think your partner's desires are important. It's a sign of disrespect.**

## **Legendary Love. Module 1. Lesson 4.**

### **Summary**

You will have challenges in your relationship. There's no way that's not going to happen. The key to keeping the challenges small is to understand that you each have different ways of viewing situations. Then you can talk about them.

In the next lesson, you'll learn about the challenge of thinking you made a mistake in moving in together. Before exploring that topic, please take a few minutes to reflect on what you've learned in this lesson.

### **Reflection**

1. List three ways you and your partner differ in how you look at things.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What past memories are often triggered by something your partner does or says?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What family traditions are you and your partner working to combine?