Is there such a thing as too much honesty in a relationship?

Dorothy Horton, PsyD, answers your questions in her latest Ask Doctor Dee column.

September 3, 2018 By Dorothy Horton

Q: Is there such a thing as too much honesty in a relationship?

A: Yes, definitely—if the honesty is deliberately hurtful. It's best to be honest with your partner in a kind and considerate manner, with an understanding of how words can affect a loved one's feelings and touch his or her emotions.

As I conducted research for this column, I found someone's comparison of honesty to "raw eggs" to be very thought-provoking. An egg in this state can be nasty and if chugged down could expose a person to food poisoning. Cooked eggs, however, taste better and are safer and easier to consume. This example also applies to honesty in a relationship.

In other words, honest talk shouldn't be raw—that is, mean-spirited or disrespectful—even though these chats may convey some difficult truths or expose uncomfortable issues. Individuals in a relationship can converse with each other in a way that doesn't offend or demean. After all, the goal of honesty in an intimate partnership is to build trust and love.

Couples must also remember that words can wound. Therefore, the language of honesty should never be cruel, rude or insulting. This type of malicious speech can seriously damage a relationship.

Ultimately, honesty between partners isn't just about telling the truth. Being truthful with a loved one means communicating openly with that person in order to strengthen and improve the relationship, not destroy it.

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