Compromises: How much is too much?

May 5, 2009 By Kate Ferguson

Apologies for being so behind on my blogging. The whip has been cracked so I will get cracking! I will blog every week...I will blog every week...I will blog every week!

During a recent series of meetings with a colleague about a project we discussed doing together, a number of issues arose which gave me insights into how important it is that partners be comfortbale with what they agree to do in a relationship. Further thought about it led me to draw a parallel between what happened in my business relationship and what can happen between friends or lovers.

The issue concerned how comfortable my colleague would be in agreeing to comply with a request I made as a condition for us working together on a project. Without getting into specifics, I knew that my colleague wanted me to work on the project with her but was uncomfortable with the compromise I asked her to make. As we dickered back and forth, it soon became clear that if she complied with my request, she'd resent me from that day forward.

In our personal relationships, too, this principle holds true. When we comply with a partner's request, for whatever, and make concessions to keep our partner happy at the expense of compromising when we deeply resent it, it sets the stage for a deep-rooted animosity which can manifest in ways we may hardly recognize. That is why, in relationships, it is so important to acknowledge that you may indeed "win the battle but lose the war" when you get what you want from a reluctant partner.

In love relationships, often one partner wants to please or appease the other to keep the relationship harmonious. And so they are careful to avoid disagreeing with or denying the other some request. These kinds of compromises or outright surrender are simply bad news.

Relationship dynamics usually don't change from situation to situation. Feelings are feelings and they remain the same no matter what kind of relationship we have. Therefore, in any relationship, it is important to avoid pressuring a partner into doing something he or she is against. But neither should we give in to pressure from a partner to do something that we find abhorrent.

The truth is, when someone feels forced to do something they dislike or pushed into a compromise they resent, animosity builds and eventually may explode to destroy a relationship from within.

As difficult as it was to say no to working with my colleague, I realized that, sooner or later, if I

worked with her on this project, I’d resent her as she’d surely resent me should she agree to my request.

With that in mind, I thanked her politely, but passed on working with her on the project.

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