

The North Fulton Marriage Newsletter

Volume 2 - July 2008

Dressed like a Slob

One of my favorite TV shows is the original CSI. The lead character, Gil Grissom (played by actor William Petersen), heads up the Las Vegas Crime Lab. Gil is a nerdy, quirky, yet assertive, detailed, diligent and passionate criminalist who always “follows the evidence.” On many occasions during the show, his understudies will be perplexed about how he solved a mystery. Gil will often respond with “I am a trained observer.” That line always cracks me up, but it also illustrates a serious point—there is no end to what you can learn or discover if you simply observe.

Quite recently I was practicing my own observation skills while my wife and I waited on a plane at the Atlanta airport. As my wife passed the time reading magazines and playing Tetris, I spent my time watching and listening to the many folks sitting around us. There was a young couple sitting right behind me, and for roughly an hour they participated in a verbal argument. It was fascinating. Here they were, headed off to a remote tropical location, bickering. The couple was with a group of couples, and apparently as they were making their way through the airport from a connecting flight the husband did something that infuriated his wife and he was now paying the price. Their conversation was essentially about how, as they were walking through the airport, he walked off in a direction without her and she took this very personally. Right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable, she was hurt. But as I listened to their conversation I never once heard her husband say “you feel hurt.” In fact, if he could have just said those words, things might have defused more quickly. Instead, he tried to justify his behavior and at the same time effectively criticize her for being too sensitive. Maybe she was, who knows? But, this young lady felt hurt and she began to lash back in revenge to make her husband also feel hurt. At one point she told him, “You always dress like a slob when we go somewhere.” Now, when she said this, I very slowly turned around to observe what this gentlemen was wearing (yeah right, I had whiplash I turned around so quick). The husband was wearing the following: cargo shorts (wrinkled), t-shirt (wrinkled) and a pair of flip-flops. I smirked and then very quietly began to observe what I was wearing at the time: cargo shorts (wrinkled), t-shirt (wrinkled) and a pair of flip-flops. Uh-oh. Guess I was dressed like a slob too. Not to worry, not my wife, time to move on. The wife was hurt and this was a direct shot at her husband’s self-esteem. Not good.

There are three primary lessons about marriage to be learned from this observation at the airport: 1.) We (being married folk) too often take things personally, 2.) We often do not identify and respond to our spouses’ feelings (i.e., you feel hurt because I walked off and left you), and 3.) When we get hurt, we often seek revenge by attempting to hurt our spouse (i.e., you are dressed like a slob). If we can, in turn, work toward not taking things personally, identifying and responding to our spouses’ feelings, and trying to avoid seeking emotional revenge against our spouse, then we may find more satisfaction in our relationship. The final lesson here is that if you are ever at the airport with your spouse, watch what you say. You may be sitting next to a “trained observer.”

John H. Pruett, Jr., MS, EdS, NCC, LPC

Founder & Owner

Georgia Professional Counseling Center, Inc.



Georgia Professional Counseling Center, Inc.

602 Abbey Court, Alpharetta, GA 30004

www.licensedtherapy.com

Phone: 770-656-9711