

Maintaining Individuality Amid Marital Unity

by Jean MacKenzie

It is said that when two people marry they become one. Your interpretation of what this marital unity means can have a great impact on your relationship. A perspective that feels the need to relinquish individual identity can cause problems while a failure to establish a marital identity can be equally destructive.

For those who attempt to give up their identity as an individual there will be a long arduous road ahead. The task is virtually impossible. Each person is comprised of a distinct set of qualities, talents and characteristics that makes them unique. Suppressing the expression of your individuality will only lead to personal unhappiness and marital discord.

You see, becoming one in marriage has more to do with working together as a team rather than melding together indistinguishably. The strength of the team lies in the strength of its members. If you and your spouse work to develop your individual strengths, talents, and interests; if you each strive to be a better person, spiritually, emotionally, and physically then you each have more to contribute to the team.

Dr. James Dobson has said that having diverse interests and activities breathes life into a marriage. My husband and I share many interests including cooking, gardening, and outdoor adventure and these common interests provide some important connection in our relationship. On the other hand, our individual interests allow a sense of space, and variety that wouldn't be there if we were too similar.

My husband has a thing for tae kwon do. A couple of hours at the dojang re-energizes him and puts a smile on his face. I will probably never take up tae kwon do, mostly because I have other priorities. I do however, like seeing my husband get out and taking pleasure in this activity.

I like to play music and while my husband is a great appreciator of music and even musically gifted I think spending as much time on music as I have would be frustrating for him. Nonetheless, he is always encouraging me to get out the door to band on Monday nights because he knows that going to band will change my demeanour for the rest of the week.

This diversity of interests not only provides some variance in the activities we participate in but also adds some much needed variety to our social interactions. Just because we are in a committed relationship doesn't mean we should spend all our free time together. There is a lot of truth to Eleanor Roosevelt's maxim, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." and the absence doesn't have to be a long one for this effect to take place.

So, if becoming one in marriage doesn't involve giving up your identity what does it mean? How do you establish a marital identity? Obviously self interest can be carried too far and sometime couples don't spend enough time together. How do you establish a balance between "I" and "We"? These questions I will explore in my next article, Establishing A Marital Identity.

About Jean

Jean is a marriage and couples counsellor whose approach in working with couples involves the development of techniques for solving current problems and achieving unending growth in

relationships. Jean strives to assist couples of various backgrounds in learning to solve their own challenges because a couple that knows how to problem solve can keep their love—and their marriage—alive forever.

Jean also offers Catholic counselling to couples wishing to incorporate the Catholic faith into the counselling process, helping couples to develop a relationship pleasing to each other and God. Jean has a Master of Arts in Counselling from the Franciscan University of Steubenville and has trained in marriage and family therapy.

So, if you think that your relationship could use a little help-- or even a lot of help,--give Jean a call today and take that important first step in turning your marriage into a “happily ever after” story.

Where do you start?

Look no further.

1. **Go to www.jeanmackenzie.com and sign up for my free newsletter “Happily Ever After: A Guide to Healthy Relationships,” filled with helpful tips on how to nurture your relationship.** You will also receive the free report, **“10 Tips for Resolving Anger in Your Relationship.”**
2. **Call today for a free, no obligation, 20 minute phone consultation.** We will discuss your problems and together decide how I might be able to help you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jean sees clients in her office in Fredericton, NB and offers telephone and online counselling. She can be reached at:

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