

5 mistakes good couples make that silently lower desire, mistake # 3

Not answering back

At first glance, not answering back seems like a lofty level of *tzidkus*. After all, Chazal tell us that:



“Those who are insulted and do not insult back, hear their debasement and do not respond — about such people does the pasuk say, ‘And his beloved ones [shall shine] like the sun coming out in [all] its might.’”

Of course that is true.

But what is also true is that the behavior of keeping quiet in the face of insult or aggravation is **not a requirement**, but a *middas chasidus* — above and beyond the call of duty.

And when it comes to behaviors that are *middas chasidus*, the rule of thumb is that they are only applicable to those who are actually holding at such a *madreigah*.

Otherwise, it can do more harm than good.

Decades of relationship research show that growing apart is a real, measurable process. And conflict avoidance — *read: keeping quiet to maintain the*

peace — can play a huge role in that continental drift of emotions.

Now, one may wonder:

What does that have to do with desire?

Isn't desire simply a matter of chemistry?

Sure it is!

And the active compound called **emotional attachment** is a huge part of that chemistry.

In a course on *shalom bayis* that I once attended, the *rav* who gave the course (a noted *dayan* and *mechaber sefarim*) mentioned that he once dealt with a case of a couple in which the husband was having difficulty finding his wife to be attractive.

“People were baffled by this,” the *rav* said, “because everyone knew that he had married the town beauty!

“But, really, there was nothing to be surprised about. A bit of questioning revealed that the emotional connection between them was very poor.”

Unspoken hurt doesn't disappear; it quietly converts into emotional distance, and desire cannot survive distance.

That is why it can be super important **not** to hold your tongue.

Of course, this does **not** mean that one should lash out or speak in a disrespectful manner. That obviously won't do the

relationship any good. Communication needs to be as respectful as possible
(*granted, oftentimes a tall order!*).

But what couples often struggle with is **healthy assertiveness**.

Conflict avoidance can feel much safer.

In the long term, though, that's just going to cause a chasm to grow between them — and desire is likely to be one of the first aspects of the relationship to take a major hit.

So if you want to rekindle desire, go and have that “fight.”

**Respectful conflict is not a threat to desire.
Emotional withdrawal is.**

p.s. If this resonated, take a moment this week to notice when you go quiet. Not because you've made peace — but because you don't want to rock the boat.



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