

**The situation:** our family vacation in a one bedroom condo in Hawaii

**The problem:** Our daughter Molly wakes up from sleeping on a lumpy, scratchy, sorry excuse for a sofa bed mattress. It's not much thicker than a credit card.

**The discovery:** I sat on the edge of this folded out "thing" disguised as mattress and uttered a spontaneous, "Wow, what the heck is this thing anyway? Molly, how are you able to sleep on this? You haven't been complaining about this at all."

Molly: "What good would complaining do? It would just make me even more conscious of how bad it is."

Me: "Well, it would alert somebody to the problem."

Molly. "Just complaining won't solve anything. But if I think, 'This mattress sucks, I wonder if I can do something about it,' I think about how to solve the problem rather than dwelling on feeling bad." (This is one difference between being a martyr and a problem solver.)

My internal reaction: Hmmm, where did that attitude come from? If I had to sleep on this mattress from hell, I doubt I would keep it to myself. Then I thought, "Well, she's right. The more I grumble, the more I stay focused on being distressed and the worse I end up feeling."

Perhaps you're jumping ahead right now. You might be thinking, "OK Pete, I guess what you saying is to stop whining about what my partner is doing and put more energy into how can I improve things. A better approach would focus on how to make it easier for my partner to be more responsive to me. Or else stop complaining."

If that is what you were thinking, congratulations. Thinking about solutions that YOU can

implement is so much stronger than thinking what your partner can or should do. Because all we can ever do is change our response to a situation or make it easier for our partner to be more responsive to us. That's my marriage advice for today.

Take a moment to share a couple of ideas with me. Name a problem and what you did to improve it. Add your comment below.

You may also be wondering, "How did Molly get that great attitude, Pete?"

Well, that is for another column and much of it came from a source outside the home.

Till next time,

Pete