

There is a good article in *The New York Times Magazine*, (April 18, 2010, p. 56, Tara Parker-Pope) about the negative health effects of a distressed marriage.

A stressful marriage can be as bad for the heart as a regular smoking habit. It can also weaken your immune system and make wounds take longer to heal.

It probably doesn't come as a surprise to a lot of people that a distressed relationship can have an unhealthy effect on your body. (I will resist Tiger Woods jokes here.)

Improve your ability to disagree and your body will thank you as well. Seems like a win-win.

So here is a tip. In your next disagreement simply ask your partner, "What is the outcome you wish for this discussion?"

The vast majority of the time, when couples argue in my office and I ask each person if they know the outcome of the discussion that their partner wants, I see a rather stunned look on their face.

They either are clueless or guess wrong close to 90% of the time. What is especially interesting is that each person usually struggles to get clear on what exactly the outcome is they are seeking.

When the emotional brain is the ringmaster in an argument, the logical brain is a disengaged bystander. Couples can argue for one heck of a long time while neither person has a clue about the desired outcome.

It seems just knowing the outcome jump starts a more collaborative effort in the discussion.

So during the next disagreement re-engage your logical brain and do your body a favor by asking, "So honey, what is the outcome you want in this discussion?" To share your experience using this question, type it into the box below and click "Add Comment."

Till next time,
Pete