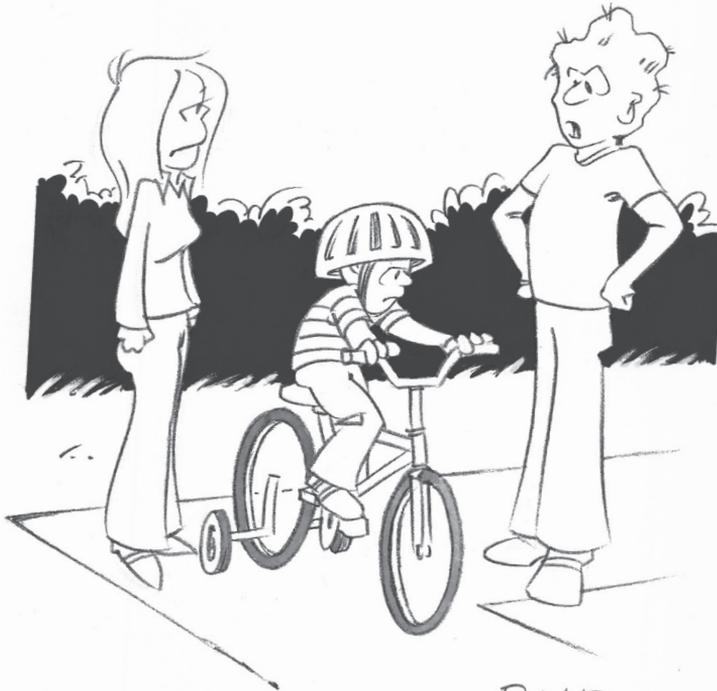


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≡ THE DIFFERENCES THAT DIVIDE ≡



"Nonsense! I never wore a bicycle helmet when I was a boy."

1 SECURITY:

PROTECTION and **PROVISION**

Tim: Our son Tommy learned to ride a bicycle without training wheels at the glorious age of three. I couldn't have been prouder.

Joy: I was proud of him, too, but three was a little early. I wanted him to be safe.

Tim: To see my son racing off down the sidewalk at only three was a real thrill for me. It was a part of my dream—kids who were free to go where they want, when they want. As I said in the last chapter, I grew up with a lot of freedom myself.

Joy: Sure, Tim had a lot of freedom, but what he's not telling you is that he's only alive today because of the sheer grace of God. Did he mention that he once set his pants on fire by mounting model rockets to his handlebars?

Tim: Batman's bike had those. It was very cool.

Joy: I imagine all the moms grabbing their children when Tim went riding by, scrambling into the house, and bolting all the doors. He had more visits to the emergency room in his first six years of life than Jackie Chan.

Tim: It was mostly for head injuries. Believe me, Joy's gotten a lot of mileage out of that.

Joy: Tim once burned down two of his father's prize evergreens in their front yard. He once shot a hole in his father's shoulder with a bottle rocket gone astray.

Tim: Now that you mention it, Dad did seem to be angry a lot.

Joy: I could write pages. When I grew up, I had a mother who always knew where I was going and who I'd be playing with. Is it any wonder that with Tim's history of freedom and independence, I would value security more than he does? I didn't go through twenty-one hours of labor with Tommy just to have him perish in his first adventure with his dad.

The Two Sides of Security

In your own marriage, one of you will instinctively place a higher value on *Security*. Security is the need to be safe, the desire to know that you and yours are first of all protected from harm. Several responses from our survey revealed a desire for Security . . .

- *I like to spend, and she likes to save.*
- *When we have a major purchase, he wants to buy new and the most expensive quality. I would prefer to spend less but still get the job done.*
- *I want to feel secure—in his love, in my home, in our marriage, with him versus his family, financially—and I would like him to lead us spiritually (I long for this).*
- *Why does he feel the need to spend the extra money we have instead of saving it?*
- *I always wait until he's in bed and then I double-check the door, because sometimes he forgets to lock it.*
- *Why am I always the one who tucks the kids in at night?*
- *Why does he have to save everything? Why can't he throw anything away?*

Dangers come in many forms—physical and emotional, real and imagined—and so the dream of Security is a tree that puts out many branches. There are two chief offshoots from this tree: the desire for *Protection* and the desire for *Provision*.

Protection: Safety First

Protection in its most basic form is the instinct for survival, but it covers a lot more. Protection also includes the longing for safety, stability, and even comfort. Commercials that air at Christmastime show families snuggled together around the fireplace, images of warmth and love and Security. A protected family is one that has everything it needs to be safe, warm, dry, and happy.

Provision: Preparing for Future Needs

Provision is the desire to make sure everyone has enough, a desire that makes it necessary to both collect and save. *Provision* is concerned not only about the present but the future. Sure, we have enough *now*—but what about tomorrow? “Look at an ant,” Proverbs advises us. “Watch it closely; let it teach you a thing or two. Nobody has to tell it what to do. All summer it stores up food; at harvest it stockpiles provisions” (6:6–8 THE MESSAGE). If you value Security, this may be your life verse.

Because Security looks to the future, it would rather save than spend. “Do we have to spend that much? It would be nice—but if we spend it today, we won’t have it tomorrow.”

Because Security wants to provide, it would rather collect than throw away. “I know we no longer need this, but what if we get rid of it and then we need it again? If we save it, we *have* it, and it’ll be there just in case.”

Because Security wants to protect, it has an aversion to risk. “Why do you want to try that? There are a lot safer things we can do that are just as fun.” It isn’t that the one who dreams of Security doesn’t want to have fun—it’s just that she’s valuing something more. A dream isn’t simply a matter of preference; a dream is a nonnegotiable, an essential priority. She’s willing to take risks, to seek adventure, and to seize the day—as long as everyone is safe. Security comes *first*.

By the way, in case you’re getting the wrong idea here, the dream of Security isn’t gender specific. We don’t mean to suggest that men are always the risk takers while women are always seeking to Protect and Provide. Our dreams are influenced by our family of origin, our built-in temperament, and the culture around us. Men who were born in the Great Depression era are often far more security oriented than men *and* women of later generations—and today’s difficult economy can produce the same effect. If your childhood home was unstable, you may have an increased desire for Security as an adult. If your childhood home was especially warm and secure, you may long to reproduce that environment in your own home. It’s difficult, if not impossible, to ascribe our deepest longings to a single cause. The point here is

INSIGHT

Take calculated risks. That’s not the same as being in a rush.

—General George Patton

that either one of you may have the dream of Security.

But there is one variable that tends to tip the scale of Security toward women—the arrival of children. As Joy said earlier, “I didn’t go through twenty-one hours of labor with Tommy just to have him perish in his first adventure with his dad.” Women have a greater original investment in children, and they often sense that the greater burden of the children’s Security continues to be theirs. Marriage is where life gets serious—but parenting is where life gets critical. Children are like a lens that focuses and magnifies the fears and longings of parents. We value our own Security, but we can get frantic about our children’s safety. We may have only a minor desire for Security as a single person or as a young married, but when children come along, we sometimes find that our minor desire has blossomed into a full-blown passion.

INSIGHT

**S-A-F-E is spelled
D-U-L-L.**

—Alan Clark

Differing Priorities

Security comes at a price. It often requires you to limit your freedom in some way—and that’s how the argument begins. If Protection and Provision are not your natural priorities, then your Security-minded partner can seem like a killjoy. Why can’t he lighten up? Why can’t he stop worrying about everything? You have to take *some* risks, or what’s the point of being alive?

But if Security is your priority, then your risk-taking partner seems just plain irresponsible. After all, it’s *safety* we’re talking about here, and surely that comes before everything else. Fun is good, risk is good, but let’s not get carried away. We are *responsible* here. Let’s not enjoy today at tomorrow’s expense.

When you discuss these issues in your own marriage—and you undoubtedly do—you may have never realized that it’s Security you’ve been discussing all along. That’s because Security is a *hidden* issue, remember? We fail to recognize the Security issue as such because it comes to us in the form of a dozen smaller, seemingly unrelated arguments. They don’t look like conflicts about Security—they look like arguments about money and irresponsibility and overprotecting the

kids. The goal is to look behind the *apparent* disagreement and ask, “What are we *really* fighting about here?”

Let’s observe a few disagreements from the marriages of couples we’ve interviewed and see if you can spot the root of *Security* underneath.

He: Isn't this a great vacation?

She: Yeah. Great.

He: How did you like the parasailing? Wasn't that incredible?

She: Uh-huh. How much did that cost, anyway?

He: Only forty bucks.

She: Each?

He: It was worth it. Where do you want to go for dinner tonight?

She: I was thinking maybe I could cook tonight. There's a little kitchenette in the room . . .

He: What's your problem, anyway?

She: What problem?

He: I went all out to plan this vacation—first-class airfare, beachfront hotel room, four-star restaurants—and all you do is drag your feet.

She: Does everything have to be so . . . expensive?

He: There you go again! You never want to have fun anymore.

The husband in the scenario above thinks they’re disagreeing about their approaches to fun. He fears that his wife no longer wants to be his recreational partner, something that’s very important to him. *She’s no fun anymore. . . . Maybe she’s getting older. Maybe she’s just getting dull! Before long all she’ll want to do is lie around the house and watch TV.*

He might also conclude that they’re fighting about money. *All she wants to do is hoard money! What’s the point in saving money if you never get a chance to **spend** any of it? We’re not going to be young forever. By the time she’s ready to spend some money, we’ll be too old to enjoy it.*

But they aren’t disagreeing about having fun, and they’re not disagreeing about money. Those are just the *apparent* conflicts. Underneath it all, they’re arguing about *Security*. She needs to know that this no-limits vacation won’t put them in debt for the rest of their lives. She wants to enjoy the present, too, but not at the expense of the future—not at the expense of *Security*.

He: Look what I found in the trash can. Our toaster!

*She: It's our **old** toaster.*

He: You weren't going to throw it away, were you?

She: Of course. We just bought a brand-new one.

He: But it still works. Look, I'll plug it in . . . See?

She: Why would we save the old toaster when we have a brand-new one?

We don't need two toasters.

He: What if the new one breaks? It's good to have a backup.

*She: Greg, our attic is **filled** with "backups."*

He: Why would you throw away a perfectly good toaster?

*She: If it was "perfectly good," why in the world did we buy a **new** one?*

*He: I just don't like to waste things. I guess **my** family didn't have money to burn like **yours** did.*

The husband's desire to save a worn-out toaster even after they've bought a new one seems downright irrational to his wife—and he has a hard time explaining it himself. He tries to offer a logical rationale—the need for a backup, the moral responsibility not to be wasteful—but deep inside, all he knows for sure is that it *feels* wrong. He doesn't want a toaster; he wants Security. If one toaster breaks, now they have another. They're *Protected*. Now they can *Provide*, even if it's only half-browned toast.

But the argument is about to get ugly. In his desperation to provide a rational explanation for his desire, he suggests that it's really all his *wife's* problem. His wife is *wasteful*, and, worse than that, she picked up the bad habit from her family. "The best defense is a good offense," the old saying goes, and this man has put it into practice. But he has forgotten another ancient piece of wisdom: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

This couple couldn't see the forest for the trees, and now they may spend the rest of the evening arguing about anything *but* Security.

She: Alex forgot his umbrella again.

He: You're kidding. Again?

She: Now I'm going to have to drop it off at his school.

He: Why?

She: Because it's supposed to rain this afternoon, that's why. I don't want him to get soaked to the bone on the way home.

He: Anne, we live a hundred yards from the bus stop.

She: It's far enough to get drenched. I don't want him to catch a cold.

He: Stop coddling him. Let him catch a cold; it's the only way he's going to learn to take his umbrella.

She: And when he catches a cold, who's going to take care of him all day? Not you, that's for sure. I swear, I don't think you'd put him out if he was on fire.

Conflicts over Security can be difficult because, to both partners, the issue seems so *obvious*. To her, the argument boils down to: *I care about the kids' welfare and you don't*. For him, the bottom line is: *If you don't stop babying the kids, they'll never grow up*. Both have good goals in mind—good *dreams*—but they're approaching the situation from opposite sides. They see the flaws in their partner's position, but they're completely unaware of their own blind spots. *Why doesn't he care about Alex? Why won't she stop smothering him?*

To make matters worse, the husband just used a loaded word.

"Stop *coddling* him," he said. The word means "to treat indulgently; to baby." His wife doesn't need a dictionary to know what it means—and she knows exactly what he's intending by it. In response, she suggests that his attitude is not only callous but selfish, since she is the one who will have to take care of the sick child. It's easy to be the risk taker when you're not the one who has to pay the price for it.

This couple began by talking about a forgotten umbrella, but in less than one minute they arrived at the root of the conflict, the issue of Security. The argument is a familiar one, but they've never been able to give it a name. They disagree, but they're not really sure what they're disagreeing *about*.

She: Here's one more bag. We need to put this in too.

He: Jane, we're only going away for three days. You've packed enough stuff to last us a month!

She: We've still got some room. You can squeeze it in over there.

INSIGHT

You can't put a price tag on love, but you can on all its accessories.

He: That's not the point. (Pokes at the bag) What is all this stuff?

She: (Crossly) Things we need.

He: We can't possibly need all this. Just once I wish we would set a one-bag limit. One bag for each of us, and that's it.

She: And what would you do when you got there and you forgot something?

He: I'd just do without it. Or I'd go to the store and buy it.

*She: You'd go to the store and buy things we already own. Now **that** makes sense. Stop making such a fuss over a few suitcases.*

He: That's easy for you to say; you don't have to fit it all in the trunk.

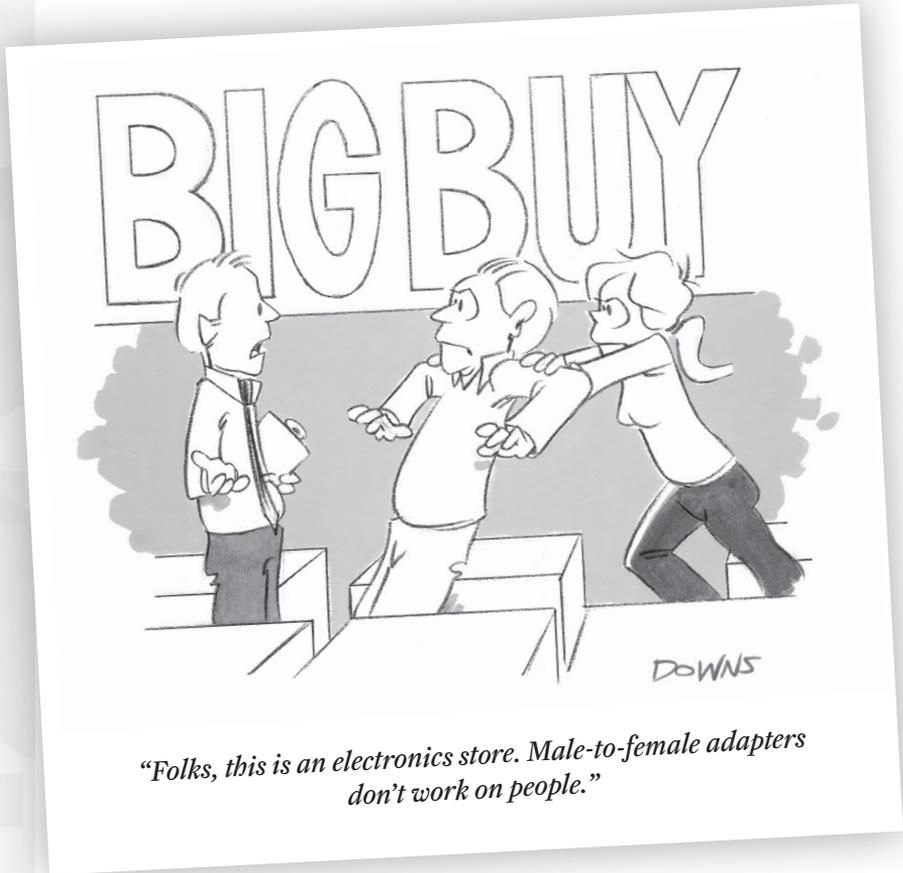
Every time they prepare for a trip, they end up in an argument. She overpacks—at least *he* thinks so. Each time a vacation approaches, he tells himself that *this* time he's just going to bite his lip and hold his tongue—but there always seems to be “one more bag” that sends him over the edge and sets the argument in motion.

He wants his wife to explain the need for “all this stuff.” She is not about to have to justify every item she's packed. She wants to make sure that wherever they go and whatever circumstances arise, they will have everything they need. At this point, he would just as soon go naked and hungry—at least until he needs something she brought, and then he's glad she packed it.

He would have a hard time explaining why this situation bothers him so much. He dreams of a vacation where he doesn't have to bother with all this. His wife reminds him that if he doesn't bother with it, he won't *have* it. “That's okay with me,” her husband would say. “Maybe it's okay *now*,” she would respond, “but wait until you don't have it.”

When it comes time for vacation, he just wants to *go*. She wants to go too—she just wants Security to go with them.

Do you recognize yourself or your mate in any of the scenarios above? They typify four areas where the dream of Security commonly surfaces. We could discuss many more, but now it's time to see how *you* relate to the issue of Security. Consider the following questions, and decide whether each one is truer of you or your mate . . .



"Folks, this is an electronics store. Male-to-female adapters don't work on people."

SECURITY INVENTORY—Protection	YOU	MATE
Who always thinks to make sure the kids are warm enough?		
Who is more likely to stay awake during a severe storm?		
Who is more willing to go parasailing or rappelling and take the kids along too?		
Who would rather block the bad channels on the cable TV or not get cable at all?		
Who would rather install Internet monitoring or blocking software?		
Who asks more often where the child is going and with whom?		
Who calls a child’s teacher about a mistreatment or confusion in the child’s classroom?		
Who always has his or her eye on the younger child?		

SECURITY INVENTORY—Provision	YOU	MATE
Who is more eager to save for the future?		
Who is more concerned about a financial plan for retirement or college?		
Who wants to make sure that the details of a trip are taken care of?		
Who makes sure that the family always has what it needs before going somewhere?		
Who saves things for some future use?		
Who is more concerned with providing a way for the child to make friends or get involved?		
Who thinks most about the family's material, social, or spiritual needs?		

Finding the Root

On a scale from one to ten, how important is Security to you? Place an X where you think you belong. Now put an O where you think your mate belongs.



Are there recurring arguments in your marriage that you think might be driven by the desire for Security? What are they about?

Do you think there is something from your past that makes your desire for Security especially important to you? Have you ever discussed this with your mate?

Do you think there is something happening in your life right now that could be heightening your desire for Security?

Dreaming Together: Security

The desire for Protection and Provision is an excellent dream—but when it goes too far, the dream has a dark side too.

THE GOOD SIDE OF SECURITY	THE DARK SIDE OF SECURITY
Safety	A fear of all risk-taking
Being well-equipped	Being overloaded
Minimizing risk	Minimizing options
Forethought and planning	Failing to trust in God's provision
Thinking of the future	Failing to enjoy today
Secure children	Overprotected children
Anticipating problems	Fear, worry, and anxiety
Spouse who feels protected	Spouse who feels limited

A Tip for Spouses of the Security-Minded

If Security is not your natural concern, what can you do to help satisfy your mate's greater desire for Protection and Provision? You can *address Security before mentioning risk*.

We have a friend who once raced home to bring his wife some exciting news. All the way home he imagined her response—first her disbelief, then her gradual, astonished realization, and finally her overwhelming joy. He barely made it in the door before he blurted out the news.

“Guess what!” he said. “We’re going to *China!*”

His wife just stood there, staring at him.

“Did you hear what I said? We’re going to China for *two weeks!*”

There was a long pause, and then his wife slowly said, “What about the kids? Can they come too? We can’t just leave them—who could take care of them for two weeks? What about the dog? And who would take care of our house? It’s the middle of the summer—someone would have to water the grass.”

This time it was his turn to stare. “I can’t believe you,” he said. “I tell you that we have a chance to visit China, and all you can think about is watering the grass.”

But she wasn't thinking about the grass—she was thinking about Security. She could be excited about the news, too, just as soon as she was sure that Protection and Provision were taken care of. China is great, but Security comes first.

Our friend realized later that he could have made things much easier for his wife if he had addressed her desires for Security *before* he brought up a potential risk. He might have said something more like this:

“I have some great news for you! I want you to know that this will affect the kids, and the dog, and the house—but I also want you to know that I've thought about all these things and we can take care of them. I know someone who can watch the kids, and I've taken care of the dog, and I've got the house covered. Are you ready? We're going to China!”

She may still have had *some* hesitation, and she still might have needed time to process all her concerns—but her husband would have gotten a lot better response if he had used this approach. The next time you want to suggest an activity that involves some risk—however slight the risk might appear to *you*—ask yourself, “Before I bring this up, how can I address my mate's desire for Security *first*?”

Let's revisit one of the scenarios from this chapter to see how this principle might have made a difference. Remember the husband and wife who were trying to enjoy a vacation together? *He* was enjoying himself, but *she* was not.

He: Isn't this a great vacation?

She: Yeah. Great.

He: How did you like the parasailing? Wasn't that incredible?

She: Uh-huh. How much did that cost, anyway?

Suppose instead that this husband applied the principle of *addressing Security before mentioning risk*. The conversation might have gone more like this:

INSIGHT

A family vacation is one where you arrive with five bags, four kids, and seven I-thought-you-packed-its.

—Ivern Ball

He: *Isn't this a great vacation?*

She: *Yeah. Great.*

He: *Look, I know that you're concerned about the finances. I want you to know that I've already thought it all through.*

She: *You have?*

He: *Yes, and I even made up a budget for us. I'd like us to do some things that are really different, even a little pricey—but I want you to know that we can afford it, and we're not going to have to go into debt. We can afford this.*

The wife would have been able to enjoy herself much more if her husband had first addressed the financial plan for the vacation. By addressing Security first, he could make it possible for her to be more comfortable with risk.

A Tip for the Security-Minded

If Protection and Provision are your instinctive dream, how can you maintain balance and avoid the dark side of Security? One good way for the Security-minded to accommodate the dream of her risk-taking partner is by *creating pockets of acceptable risk*.

The desire for complete Security can lead to a fear of *all* risk-taking.

INSIGHT

The best security blanket a child can have is parents who respect each other.

—Jan Blaustone

Without *some* openness to uncertainty, no one would ever have children, change jobs, make an investment, or travel more than a few miles from home. It all involves risk. We want our risk-taking partners to feel the freedom to dream dreams and shoot for the stars, but we

want our families to be safe too. We want them to feel protected, but not chained to the bed.

Those who value Security can't be expected to simply "lighten up," but they *can* look for areas in which they can feel free to resist the natural impulse toward Protection and Provision. These areas must be *within an overall safe environment*—that's why we call them *pockets of acceptable risk*.

Suppose that the Security-minded wife in our scenario had approached the vacation with our principle of *creating pockets of acceptable risk*. Their conversation might have sounded more like this:

He: Isn't this a great vacation?

She: Yeah. Can I make a suggestion, though? There's one way you could help me enjoy this vacation a lot more.

He: Really? How?

She: You know that I worry about our finances sometimes. Could we take a few minutes to decide how much we're going to spend on this vacation?

He: (Groan) You want to know what everything costs?

She: Not everything—just a bottom-line number, whatever we agree we can afford. After that, as long as we stay under that number, anything goes.

He may still resist the idea of having to make a budget—but he would change his mind if he could see what a difference this simple step would make in his wife's attitude. Of course, it's better for both of them if they do this step *before* they go on vacation, but at this point the wife has realized the vacation is costing more than she thought it would, and she's finding it hard to relax and enjoy it. She can't ignore her desire for Security, but if she knows that they at least have a bottom line, then she's created a *pocket of acceptable risk*. Within that pocket, she could feel free to take a few chances—much to her husband's delight.



Security

LOYALTY

Responsibility

Caring

Order

Openness

Connection