

THE PLATINUM RULE TRUMPS THE GOLDEN RULE

Oooops. Seems I may have stepped on a few toes with last week's column. I got lots of calls and there was lots of confusion about why the platinum rule is a far better way to treat others than the golden rule.

Let me explain.

The golden rule—"Do unto others as you want others to do unto you"—has merit. It is a good concept, a statement of good intentions. We all want to be treated kindly and lovingly and with consideration. By far the great majority of us would say that we intend to treat others the same way. At times though, if we take this rule literally, that is not how we're actually treating them.

I see the platinum rule—"Do unto others as they want to be done unto"—as the behavioral manifestation of the golden rule. It says that in order to treat others kindly and lovingly, we should treat them in the ways THEY consider loving and kind.

This comes up all the time when I counsel couple and families. It seems that we want to treat others in the way that feels good to us, in spite of the fact that they tell us loudly and repeatedly that that is not what they want.

This is problematic in many ways but none more so than when we are sick. Illness makes us feel more needy and vulnerable than usual, and we are less able to defend and fend for ourselves. So it is more threatening and hurtful when we aren't responded to in the way that feels best to us.

More often than not, couples are paired so that one partner wants to be tended and cared for when sick and the other wants to be left alone. Usually, but not always, it's the woman who wants attention and the man who wants to be left alone. And each of us, coming from our own perspective and with good intentions, treats the other in the way in which we want to be treated. So the man ignores the woman and she feels hurt and neglected and abandoned. And the woman tends the man and he feels suffocated and smothered.

If each of them were to treat the other in the way that he/she wants, she would make a concerted effort to leave him alone until he asks for help and he would remember to ask her how she feels and if he can do anything to make her more comfortable.

Extrapolate this out over the width and breath of the relationship. To him, sitting in his chair reading the newspaper, not bored, not depressed and not wanting to be disturbed. To her, cooking dinner in the kitchen, not wanting to be grabbed and kissed passionately right there, in the middle of it all.

I could go on and on.

So treat others the way THEY want and both of you will get more of what you want.