

# Ask Connie—

## 4 Levels of Relationship

Connie Myslik-  
McFadden

Dear Connie,

**M**y boyfriend, Jake, and I have been together for almost two years. I know we love each other, and most of the time we get along well on a day-to-day basis. But we can't discuss religion or politics without getting into huge fights. Then we're both so angry we hardly speak for days. I'm beginning to question our decision to get married next spring. We come from different backgrounds—my family is quite progressive, his is really conservative... Is it possible to have a close, happy marriage under these circumstances?

Thanks, —Amy

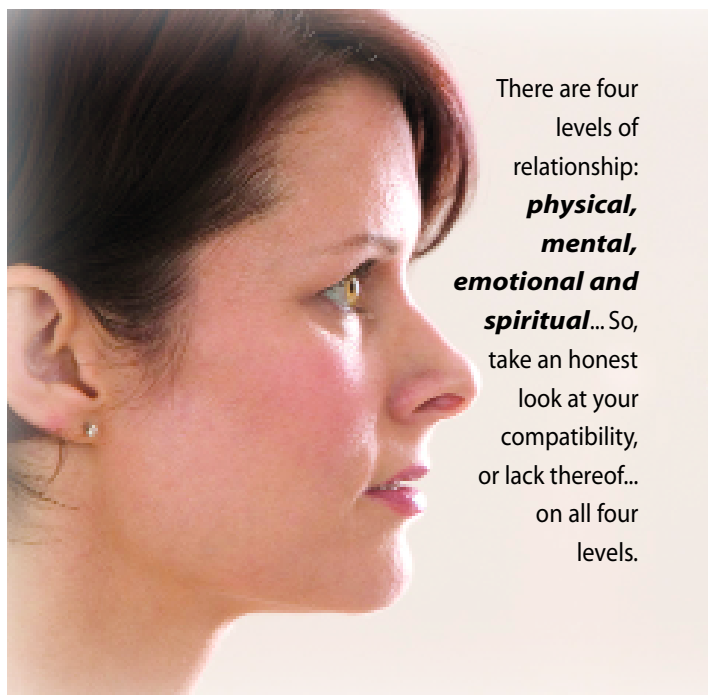
Dear Amy,

**I** understand and empathize with your concerns. Religion and politics are hot topics, generating passionate power struggles in couples, communities, and beyond. If you and Jake are contemplating marriage, it is important to find ways to respect and accept your differences rather than fight over them, as religion and politics will always be part of your lives. As you have discovered, trying to prove the rightness of your position generally doesn't change Jake's mind. Nor has Jake changed yours, despite how strongly he presents his arguments.



**Connie Myslik-McFadden**, MSS, LCSW, is a psychotherapist in Bozeman with 30 years of experience working with individuals, couples and groups. She leads workshops and retreats and teaches Dreamwork and Pathwork. Connie devoted 9 years to Jungian analysis, training, and supervision, after graduating from the Bryn Mawr School of

Social Work. She went on to graduate from the Barbara Brennan School of Healing, and Society of Souls, a kabbalistic school of healing. She is the author of "Gathering the Soul, a True Story of Spiritual Healing." Pathwork ([Pathwork.org](http://Pathwork.org)) and Imago Relationship Therapy ([www.GettingTheLoveYouWant.org](http://www.GettingTheLoveYouWant.org)) are two easily accessible sources for the theories upon which much of this column is based.



There are four levels of relationship: **physical, mental, emotional and spiritual**... So, take an honest look at your compatibility, or lack thereof... on all four levels.

What's important is that, instead of defending your views, you agree to listen deeply to one another, so you can better understand why you each hold such strong, disparate views. Those views have meaning—what do they mean to each of you? You each were exposed to family traditions, discussions, experiences that shaped you. Sharing what those were and how you came to the conclusions you did may be very helpful. Understanding creates compassion, even if you still don't agree.

Many of our most deeply held beliefs go unquestioned for years—sometimes decades! Quiet conversation, with a more open-minded attitude than either of you have demonstrated so far, could help each of you to reconsider the absolute "rightness" of your own point of view. A dualistic approach requires that one of you is right and the other wrong, when in reality there is usually a middle ground.

Looking at relationship from a broader perspective, it seems wise to consider your overall compatibility. There are four levels of relationship: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. In order to have union, or oneness, in a love relationship, there needs to be union on all four levels. Some people have a strong physical attraction and their sexual union may be blissful, but if they are not in synch mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, their sexual relationship will leave them feeling empty and separate. Others find mental sharing to be a strong bond—they have similar beliefs and interests and enjoy one another's intellectual companionship. But they may have difficulty being open physically or



emotionally. If two people are at different levels of spiritual development, the gap between them is apt to be painful for both. The highest level of union comes when two people in a love relationship achieve union on all four levels. This is not

easy, and most people find that there is at least one level that is a relationship challenge.

The hard work of getting to know oneself— one's higher self, one's lower self, one's mask—and in a spirit of compassion slowly transforming one's lower-self qualities (pride, self-will, fear, etc.), is the way to create unity within oneself and the possibility of union with a beloved.

So, take an honest look at the compatibility, or lack thereof, in your relationship with Jake, on all four levels. If you find great compatibility in most areas, it's quite possible that you can work towards accepting your differing views on religion and politics. Over time, you may find there is less conflict. On the other hand, if these differences are in areas of utmost importance to either or both of you, you might want to reconsider marriage. ■

*Good luck, Amy! —Connie*

**Do you have a relationship question?**

E-mail [mtlionlady@gmail.com](mailto:mtlionlady@gmail.com), or call 406-582-7450 and ask! E-mail sent to Connie is read only by Connie Myslik-McFadden, MSS, LCSW, and will be held in strictest confidence. No identities will be published.

Disclaimer: The responses to questions in this column are for information only. Never disregard professional advice or delay seeking it because of anything you read here. Working with a skilled professional is highly recommended.

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