

BE CURIOUS, NOT FURIOUS:

A Path to Stronger Marriages

By Sara Freed

Misunderstandings and miscommunications are inevitable in the intricate dance of marriage. It's easy to misinterpret a spouse's behavior or make assumptions about their intentions.

Before we know it, we can find ourselves caught in a cycle of frustration, reacting with anger rather than seeking to understand. The mantra "Be curious, not furious" offers a powerful reminder: when we approach our spouse with genuine curiosity rather than blame, we open the door to deeper connection and empathy.

The Trap of Assumptions

One of the most common pitfalls in marriage is assuming we know why our spouse acts the way they do. When we make these snap judgments, we often filter their actions through our own emotions or insecurities.

For instance, imagine a husband who comes home from work and barely says a word. His wife, feeling ignored, might immediately think, "He's upset with me" or "He doesn't care." She may withdraw or respond coldly without pausing to ask what's going on, creating further distance. Her husband may simply be mentally drained from a difficult day at work, needing a few moments to decompress.

When we assume the worst without seeking clarity, we risk creating conflict where none was intended. Our own interpretations become the story we believe, even if it's far from the truth.

Choosing Curiosity Over Fury

Curiosity allows us to press pause on our emotional reactions. It invites us to slow down, ask questions, and truly listen. Instead of assuming we know why our spouse behaves a certain way, we approach them with genuine interest and care.

In the example above, instead of respond-

ing with coldness or defensiveness, the wife could gently say, "You seem a little quiet tonight. Everything okay?" This slight shift in approach transforms the interaction. It conveys care and concern rather than blame, creating space for her husband to share openly.

Curiosity Creates Closeness

When couples become curious about each other's inner worlds, they foster emotional intimacy. Being curious means asking thoughtful questions about your spouse's thoughts, feelings, and experiences—beyond the surface-level conversations about daily logistics.

For example, instead of asking, "How was your day?" which often elicits a one-word response, try something more specific:

- "What was the best part of your day?"
- "Was there anything that surprised or challenged you today?"

These questions encourage your spouse to share more deeply, helping you understand them on a richer level.

Turning Conflict into Connection

Disagreements are bound to happen in any marriage. However, when couples approach conflict with curiosity rather than defensiveness, they turn tension into an opportunity for growth.

For example, if a couple argues over how to spend Yom Tov, they might initially respond with frustration. One spouse might say, "You never consider what I want!" while the other fires back, "You're always so controlling!" This kind of exchange only drives them further apart.

Instead, approaching the situation with curiosity might sound like:



• "I get the sense that you feel strongly about this. Can you help me understand why it's so important to you?"

• "I feel a little unheard here—can we talk about what's bothering us?"

These questions show a willingness to understand the other person's perspective rather than simply defending your own.

Active Listening: The Key to True Curiosity

Curiosity isn't just about asking questions, it's about genuinely listening to the answers. Active listening means giving your full attention without interrupting, rushing to fix, or formulating your subsequent response.

When your spouse shares their thoughts, show that you're engaged:

- **M a k e** eye contact and put away distractions.

- **R e -**flect back what you hear to confirm understanding: "So you're saying you felt overwhelmed today?"

- **A s k** clarifying questions: "Can you tell me more about what bothered you?"

These small but powerful behaviors signal that you care about their experience and are genuinely interested in their feelings.



Creating a Culture of Curiosity

The best marriages are built on a foundation of curiosity. Regularly showing interest in your spouse keeps the relationship vibrant even outside of conflict.

Make it a habit to ask thoughtful, open-ended questions. Even if you've been married for years, you might be surprised by what you learn. Share your thoughts and dreams as well, inviting your spouse into your inner world. This ongoing curiosity prevents stagnation and keeps your relationship fresh and connected.

Conclusion

In the journey of marriage, adopting the mindset of "Be curious, not furious" is a powerful tool for fostering empathy, patience, and deeper connection. When we slow down, ask questions, and genuinely listen, we replace frustration with understanding.

Instead of jumping to conclusions, let us strive to approach our spouses with curiosity and compassion. In doing so, we build a marriage grounded in love, trust, and the willingness to truly see and hear each other—even in the moments of tension.

Sara Freed is a professional relationship and marriage coach based in Monsey, New York, with over a decade of experience helping couples strengthen their relationships. Combining the timeless wisdom of Judaism with her life experience and advanced training in evidence-based coaching modalities, Sara empowers couples to move from conflict to connection. Her compassionate, practical approach equips clients with the tools and skills to transform struggling relationships into thriving partnerships. Sara is passionate about helping couples foster more profound understanding, rebuild trust, and create lasting harmony in their marriages. Website- www.sarafreed.com



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