

Five Arguments All Couples (Need To) Have

Joanna Harrison is an experienced couple therapist, former divorce lawyer, wife and mother, all of which have led her to conclude that relationships are hard work, and that we all need all the help we can get. She is a senior clinician at Tavistock Relationships and also works as a consultant to parents and separating couples at Family Law in Partnership.

Five Arguments All Couples (Need To) Have

And why the washing-up matters

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To Rupert, you've made this book
possible in so many ways

'The opposite to love is not hate. These two always co-exist so long as there is a live relationship. The opposite to love is indifference.'

Henry Dicks, 1967

'If we choose to live with someone in an intimate relationship – whether of the opposite or the same sex, whether legal spouses or not – we are confronted with the problems of sharing space, physical and mental.'

Ronald Britton, 2003

'I hope husbands and wives will continue to debate and combat
over everything debatable and combatable,
Because I believe a little incompatibility is the spice of life.'

From 'I do, I will, I have', Ogden Nash

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Introduction

A couple in therapy were talking about their new mattress. One of them liked to sleep on a hard mattress, and one liked to sleep on a soft mattress, and they were happy that they had recently found a mattress that could work for both of them, hard on one side, and soft on the other. They laughed and said ‘If only our relationship could be like that – where we could both have it our way without having to argue or make any compromises with each other.’

I’ve worked in the field of couple relationships since 2004, first as a family lawyer and then as a couple therapist, and I’ve heard many arguments that couples have as they try to deal with loving and living with someone different from themselves. I’ve also seen them find different ways to resolve frustrations and tensions, sometimes finding a way to manage them within the relationship, sometimes thinking that separating is the answer. But I’ve yet to

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find a perfect mattress version of a relationship, where everyone gets their own way – so quit now if that’s what you’re hoping this book will offer you.

What I do hope to offer you is a sense that you are not alone when you argue with your partner about certain things. And also, by showing you snapshots of my experiences with couples,* I want to help you to understand what your arguments might really be about, so that you can make better use of them, stop having them so often and recover from them better. And crucially, if you have children, to improve the environment in which they are growing up. (Even if you are separated, it is still important to think about how the way you relate to each other might impact your children.)

The five arguments

Over the years of working with couples, I’ve noticed that there are five areas which come up again and again as areas of tension (areas that are also familiar to me from my own relationship and from the relationships I see and hear about in the world around me).

These five areas are what is meant by the ‘five arguments’ in the title. I could have called them ‘The Five Areas Couples Often End Up Having to Navigate With Each Other Throughout Their Whole Relationship’ but it wasn’t quite as catchy.

*The case studies in the book are all fictional but are inspired by my experiences working with people on their relationships. For more details of my approach and my working context, see Appendix 1.

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These are:

- *How we communicate with each other.*
- *How we deal with each other's families.*
- *How we deal with sharing out all the jobs that need doing.*
- *How we manage distance between us.*
- *How we feel about each other's bodies.*

I think of these five 'arguments' as being the inevitable consequences of sharing space with each other in a relationship – space that is not only physical but also mental. Each 'argument' has its own chapter. We need to find ways to communicate about the space we share (chapter 1). We need to understand what we each bring into the space from our family, culture and history (chapter 2). We need to work out who is going to do what when it comes to the work required to manage our space (chapter 3). We need to figure out how we manage distance within our joint space (chapter 4). And we need to think about how our bodies relate to each other in the space we share (chapter 5).

There's also a chapter for couples who become parents (chapter 6), because having a child or children in this shared space can make all these areas of tension more complicated. Chapter 7 looks at endings to relationships, and chapter 8 discusses the idea of getting professional help for your relationship.

Rather than thinking that arguments or difficult conversations are to be avoided at all costs, some offer a relationship the potential to grow. When we come up

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against each other's different ideas, we have an opportunity to learn about the things we both care about and to learn more mutually agreeable ways of doing things (as well as learn where each other's limits are). I find this idea conveyed vividly by the Japanese art of mending broken pottery known as kintsugi, which celebrates and draws attention to the breakages and repair of an object. Repair is so important. If we can better understand what is going on between us in our relationships when we argue, and repair with each other after we argue, it can give us an opportunity to strengthen our relationships and to get closer to each other.

I am not at all encouraging or advocating arguments that get out of hand, or that pose risk to the people arguing. Some arguments are hostile, risky, dangerous, out of control or violent. If you are at risk or feel as if you might be at risk in your relationship, or if there is sustained conflict that never gets resolved, then it is important that you seek direct help. We know that frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict can harm children, which makes getting help crucial. Appendix 2 lists resources to which you can turn.

Is this book just for couples who argue? We don't argue, so why is this book applicable to us?

Of course, if the differences of ideas between you don't cause you any trouble or stress, then maybe you've found a way of accepting everything about each other – and that's great. But it isn't always the case that couples who don't argue have no tensions to deal with. Keeping silent about issues may mean that resentment builds up or may

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result in a loss of connection or a withdrawal from each other. So even if you don't argue, there may be some important areas covered in this book that relate to your situation.

Why the washing-up matters

Sometimes – well, often – the themes of these five arguments express themselves in disagreements or arguments about seemingly small things. Couples often seem to worry about whether it is appropriate to bring their issues about domestic matters to therapy – an argument about the washing-up, or towels left on the bed, or what happened when one of them took a shower. (I hear about showers often, particularly from parents, perhaps because it can become surprisingly complicated to have a shower when you have a small baby.)

When it comes to washing-up, I have heard it all. When to do it, when not to do it. Why won't you do it, or why won't you just leave it? Disagreements about how best to stack the dishwasher. Why do you leave bits in the plug? Why don't you rinse the cloth? The tension in these arguments helps couples define themselves as separate people, and there can be a playfulness to it. Without the inherent incompatibility of some ideas, life could get rather boring (at least that is Ogden Nash's view, as in the quote at the front). But sometimes it's important to look at this day-to-day stuff at a deeper level, which is why I never get bored hearing about it.

So much of our lives together as a couple plays out at the level of the familiar daily stuff. We may see a shoe left in the middle of the room and in a split second see

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it as a representation of our partner's attitude, or their ideas about something (whether or not we've got it right). And while the backdrop of our lives is familiar, there can also be a less familiar layer attached to it. Our deeper fears and frustrations, and the things we may find it difficult to express openly with each other, can often express themselves in the domestic world around us. We ourselves – let alone our partners – may not be conscious of this deeper layer, and so part of the work of being in a relationship is becoming more aware of these more hidden aspects. If, when I am working with a couple, we can understand something about why they had a row about the washing-up or why it is a place of conflict between them, then perhaps we can learn something important about them and see what might need attention in their relationship. My work is often to try to explore those meanings with a couple.

Take Ashley and Evie. Ashley has left his plate in the sink without washing it. Evie thinks it should be washed as soon as it is used. This is something that they argue about – quite often in fact, given how often the washing-up needs doing. If we think about it only as an argument about plates and sinks it might just seem like a storm in a teacup (just to bring more crockery into it). But if we were to look at it through a different lens, there could be significant aspects to understand. It could say something important about Evie's more general feelings about the division of labour in their relationship. Or perhaps it could be a sign that they aren't good at communicating with each other in a productive or thoughtful way about things that need to be done. Perhaps it reflects the way things have

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been done in the different households in which they've grown up. Perhaps it touches some particular nerve in them that they don't yet understand. Though both of them may feel there is a 'right' way to do it, this becomes irrelevant now they are in a relationship; what is more important is that they find a way that feels manageable because it's something they have to deal with every day. With each chapter I hope to offer a different lens on what could be going on if you're arguing about the washing-up.

How to use this book

I'm not in the least suggesting that you use this book to deconstruct every argument you have, whether or not it's about washing the dishes. While I may have the opportunity to think about a couple's conflicts in detail, a therapy room is a very particular space in which this can be done, sometimes painstakingly, with the help of a thinking observer. Life outside a therapy room is different and you can't spend hours deconstructing everything. But I hope to share some of the thinking from inside the consulting room to give you a wider range of possibilities to consider as reasons for the tensions you have with your partner (as opposed to them just being irrational and annoying about petty things). The presentation of the couples in the book may differ in lots of ways from your own personal experiences and circumstances, but I hope that there will be aspects from which you can extrapolate and reflect upon in relation to your own situation.

I use the word 'you' throughout. Sometimes I may be voicing things as if speaking to someone in an existing relationship, or even both people, but this book isn't just

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for you if you're in a relationship. It may offer a perspective on a relationship you've been in but are in no longer, or you may want to learn some more about what goes on within relationships.

Throughout the book there are ideas for you to reflect on either personally, or, if you are in a relationship, to think about together. Whether you both read the book is a matter for discussion. There is no right answer, but I do know that it probably isn't helpful for one of you to read it and use it as a way of telling your partner what's wrong with your relationship (or with them!) without giving them a chance to read it too.

Reading about this sensitive topic of our private lives can stir up issues. I am reminded of the time I came home having been talking with a couple about an argument over putting the bins out. The first thing I did was get cross with my own husband about the bins not being out. Often reading or hearing about themes sensitises us (as when we learn a new word and then somehow hear it three times in a week), so go gently on yourself and your partner if the issues in the book seem to hit a nerve or ring true. If they do, then perhaps it is a sign that these need attending to. If it feels too difficult or sensitive to reflect together on some of the issues presented here, then that may be a sign that therapy could be a safer way to do this, in a space with a third person. There's advice in chapter 8 about how you might think about getting help from a therapist.

Where is the love?

I realise that I haven't mentioned the word 'love' yet. It seems to me that couples can get to feeling more loving

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with each other when they can attend to some of these core five issues. When it comes to love, figuring out a way to deal with the tensions, even if they are only about the washing-up, matters. This is the version of love that is about hard work rather than magically living happily ever after because you are perfectly compatible.

This hard work isn't just a case of making sure that you have a date night or that there are occasional bunches of flowers or cups of tea (though these things can have real value). The real work, as I hope to illustrate, is in trying to hear and understand each other better, and in doing so, figure out something that works well enough for you both. (This will also inevitably involve coping with disappointments about things that you can't get to work in the way you hoped.) Rather than offering a manual full of advice where I tell you what to do and what not to do, I hope the chapters that follow can provide a set of extra lenses for increasing understanding of yourselves and each other, and of what the hard work of relating to each other better might involve.

So, let's go ...

Communication (aka ‘you never listen to me’)

I’m seeing a new couple for the first time. They sit in the chairs in my consulting room and we introduce ourselves. ‘So,’ I say, ‘perhaps we could start by thinking about what it is that has brought you here today.’

One of them starts. ‘Well, I suppose what we are really struggling with is communication.’

His partner nods. ‘It’s like we always get in a knot. We can’t seem to have conversations about things without getting cross with each other. Even the small things.’

Like so many of the couples who have sat in the same chairs as these two, the issue of communication is at the top of the list of things they want help with. Couples tell me they have difficulties such as:

- they don’t seem to be on the same page as each other, or they misread each other
- they can’t talk to each other at all about anything difficult
- if they do talk to each other then it turns into a less

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constructive kind of conversation where they are full of anger or upset, or

- once the conversation has become angry or upset, they can't get back on track.

It's early days, but my work with this couple will be to help them look at what they are struggling with and to try to explore whatever it is from new angles – which is easier for me to do since I am not them, and from where I'm sitting I can see in real time the way in which they communicate. By thinking about the problems they have with this, we may work together to find a way of communicating that works better for them.

I'm clearly not sitting in real time with you. However, by showing you some of the ways that some couples struggle with this area, I hope to give you new angles from which to think about the ways in which you communicate in your relationship. In order to have any of the 'arguments you (need to) have' productively, you are going to need to think about communication, so it seems to me appropriate for this to be the subject of the first chapter.

You never listen to me!

A regular complaint from people I work with is that their partner doesn't listen to them, and that their partner can't seem to hear what they are saying, even though they feel as if they've been telling them something 'for years'. Sometimes I ask them what being listened to would be like and it seems that their idea of being listened to might mean having things their way; that if their partner would agree with them, then they would feel like they had been heard. But the two things

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aren't the same. Being listened to by your partner isn't the same as being agreed with (just as listening to them isn't the same as agreeing with them). Nevertheless, there is a huge value, often underestimated, in being able to listen to each other helpfully. What seems more important than someone getting their own way is actually there being enough room for each partner's different feelings and views to be aired. This creates a starting point from which to agree a decision or outcome mutually.

Here's an example of a very familiar dynamic that often stops couples having the conversation they need to have.

Sarah and Tomas are a couple in their late twenties who have been together for a couple of years. Their lease is up and they are thinking about where to live. One of the options is further away from where they both work centrally. This situation is bringing up different worries for them.

SARAH: I really don't want to live an hour away from work even if it does mean we can try and save a bit more.

TOMAS: Oh, I'm not worried about that. I honestly think you'd get used to it in no time. I really think that financially it makes sense.

SARAH: But I find it stressful enough commuting thirty minutes, let alone double that.

TOMAS: I really think you would find it okay. Loads of people manage it. It'll make such a difference to have less rent to pay.

SARAH: I wish you could listen to me!

TOMAS: What do you mean?!

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If we stop and pause just here at this point in the conversation, it's starting to feel as if they are getting into a battle of ideas. Both of them have relevant concerns, but neither is feeling that their concerns are being heard by the other, and neither is showing the other that the other's concerns have been heard. Sarah seems to have started to panic that Tomas isn't listening to her and isn't registering her worry. She is now getting upset:

SARAH: Why can you never see it from my point of view? I suppose it's your way or nothing.

TOMAS: No! That's not what I mean. Can you just chill out?

SARAH: No! I don't want to chill out! Can you just try to see it from my point of view!

TOMAS: I really don't think that the journey time should be the main factor – you'll get used to it. It's normal for lots of people to commute that far.

SARAH: Oh well I'm sorry I'm not normal. Fine, we'll do it your way.

TOMAS: Why do you always have to get so angry about things? It's impossible to talk to you.

Both of them are getting more irritable as the conversation goes on. If I was working in therapy with them, I'd ask them to pause at this moment and reflect on where the conversation is going, to notice the intensifying emotion and to think about how to slow it down. It seems that Sarah is getting more and more anxious that Tomas doesn't see her point of view and Tomas is getting worried that his concerns about money aren't being heard. They

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are both relying on different approaches to deal with their growing feelings. Sarah is getting angrier, louder and a bit sarcastic. Tomas, on the other hand, is turning to logic and seemingly rational arguments, and ‘what it’s normal for people to do’. This seems to have an impact on Sarah – is the implication that she isn’t normal? And it perhaps gives a sense that her opinion isn’t valued. As their emotions start to run higher, these override any capacity to have a productive conversation and it feels as if this is a conversation that isn’t going to help them work out any kind of satisfactory solution.

Getting this wrong with each other may be an inevitable stepping stone on their path of learning to communicate better. If they can see this conversation as getting them to a place that doesn’t work for them, they can then take the view that there may be a different way that’s going to be more effective. They need to find a way to listen to each other differently.

Contrast:

SARAH: I really don’t want to live an hour away from work even if it does mean we can save a bit more.

TOMAS: Yeah, I know, you keep saying that. What’s that about do you think?

Now, even though Tomas may have his own set of feelings about the situation, he has acknowledged Sarah’s feelings, is being curious about them and is giving her a space to describe them. This changes the whole shape of the conversation that follows.

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SARAH: I just feel like it's hard enough to get organised in the mornings already; let alone doing it with half the time.

TOMAS: Yes – I know that is your least favourite thing.

Tomas has shown that he has heard what she said. She might feel she has been listened to. He is managing to wait for a chance to air his own feelings and his view of how things should be.

SARAH: It would be nice to have a bit more space though, and I know money is on your mind.

Because Sarah feels listened to by Tomas, and her thoughts have been given space, she feels it's safer to explore the other side of the argument, to explore his views. Even if Tomas doesn't agree with her concerns, he hasn't diminished them (or her sense of herself) by saying that normal people wouldn't have those concerns or by trying to talk her out of her feelings. Because of this she doesn't have to hold on to such an extreme position any more. She experiences her concerns as having been noticed and this means that she doesn't need to turn the volume up to try to be heard.

TOMAS: Yeah, it would make a big difference, I think that's what I'm really thinking about.

SARAH: Oh I don't know, it's so hard deciding, how are we going to manage it! I guess we should start looking and see how we feel about it all.

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This now has the feel of a shared project in which they are both involved, rather than one in which they are obstructing or thwarting each other.

TOMAS: Good plan. I'm sure we'll figure it out.

Although the conversation starts in the same way, this time Tomas's capacity to acknowledge Sarah's position by saying 'Yeah, I know, you keep saying that' radically changes the course of the conversation (even though her concerns are different from his). Instead of being caught up in a defensive conversation, they can feel a bit more optimistic and collaborative.

Acknowledgement is such an underrated friend but it can be so helpful. If you are able to acknowledge what your partner has said (which doesn't mean that you're agreeing with their ideas) then that creates a link between you. It shows that you have heard what your partner has to say. Sometimes we worry that if we acknowledge what our partner is feeling then it means that their feeling 'wins' or becomes more important.

Tomas might at some level, conscious or not, feel that if he gives space to Sarah's worries about living an hour away then perhaps her ideas will win the day. Instead, the opposite seems to happen. In feeling that her view and her feelings have been acknowledged, Sarah can relax a bit and be more interested in Tomas's ideas too. They seem to be creating a dynamic in which there is enough room for both of their ideas to be heard, rather than it being a battle for one set of ideas. This doesn't take away the need for them to decide what they are going to do, and

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there will still be compromises between them, but they are giving themselves a better setting, or framework, in which to make that decision, simply by clarifying that they've heard each other.

Tomas also opens up the conversation with his question 'What's that about?' He is curious about Sarah and that seems to mean a lot to her. It's not always easy to be curious. Sometimes we are so caught up in our own feelings or our own wish to get our point across that we can forget to be curious. Or so worried that we won't be listened to that this becomes all we think about. We are waiting for the other person to finish speaking so that we can start. When we can listen only for the purpose of trying to comprehend each other it can be a total game-changer.

Good curious openers

- *What do you think that's about?*
- *What do you mean?*
- *Can you help me understand that?*
- *Would it help to talk about this?*

Thinking about small details can change the big picture. The acknowledgement and curiosity in the second conversation create a more relaxed exchange. If you don't feel heard, it makes sense to try to speak more loudly or more angrily or by bringing in evidence or rational arguments. You might feel that you have to express your feelings more vehemently – which is how things can get polarised. One minute you're mulling around some ideas with your partner and the next, when you start to feel they're not hearing you, you're nailing your colours to the

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mast and your partner is nailing their colours to the mast and it's not even clear that you had those colours in the first place, or at least in the technicolour in which they now appear. Sometimes this relates to experiences we've had over and over again in our histories, where we haven't been listened to by the people close to us. This can make us particularly sensitive to people expressing different ideas to ours and particularly worried that there won't be room for us to put our point of view.

If, on the other hand, you feel heard, as Sarah does in the second conversation, there's more room for mixed feelings to emerge – 'Oh I don't know, it's so hard deciding'. Their conversation becomes much less of a 'my way or your way' conversation and much more about trying to figure it out together rather than each of them trying to impose their vision on the other.

This also means that they can capitalise on each other's ideas and styles. Sarah is taking care of one aspect in their life: how rushed they are going to feel, how stressed they might get if they have less time; Tomas is taking care of the financial side of things. If they can each move away from feeling that they need to fight to be heard, they can make better use of the other's different – and potentially complementary – resources. What is happening is that they are creating a more robust setting for thinking about things, because they aren't thrown off course by the other having a different idea.

This shift from having conversations in an unproductive as opposed to a productive way will be an important transition for them as a couple in terms of better communicating. It is in that sense an argument they need to have.

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Ideas for reflection

- *How easy is it for you to listen to someone? Next time you are in a conversation, tune into how you are listening to the other person. Notice – do you interrupt, do you feel like you need to say your side of things, are you listening to understand them or with a thought in your mind about what you want to say next? Do you stay with the thing they are telling you, or do you move on to a different subject?*
- *Generally, are you optimistic that you will get listened to by other people?*
- *How do you feel you were listened to in your family?*

Why do you feel you need to fix everything!

The importance of acknowledgement and curiosity comes up in another conversation between Sarah and Tomas and is one that I see often with couples when they have different approaches to dealing with each other's upset or difficult feelings. Tomas's style is to be a problem-solver. When Sarah is struggling with something, he wants to offer her practical solutions. Indeed, this is a skill he has at work. However, Sarah isn't so keen on this approach. When Tomas offers her a solution, it might make her feel as if he isn't listening to her or perhaps can't manage what is being said – or perhaps that she is inadequate in some way.

Tomas is the complete opposite. When he is upset, he would prefer Sarah to give him advice or a solution. Instead, she seems to him to want to talk about his problem at greater length, when he just wants to move on and think about something else. They both tend to offer

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each other the response they would like for themselves rather than the one geared to the other.

TOMAS: How was your day?

SARAH: Bad actually ... I couldn't stop worrying about where we are going to move to and how it's going to work and I was a bit distracted.

TOMAS: Oh no! You shouldn't let it get into your work day.

SARAH: Yeah but I just kept thinking about it and imagining what it would be like doing the commute.

TOMAS: You know what, you should promise yourself that you'll only think about it when you get home – there's nothing you can do about it at work anyway.

SARAH: That's not the point. Anyway, it doesn't matter, I sort of feel like you don't get it.

So Tomas has his idea of how to help her but in fact from her point of view, he doesn't 'get it'. And what Sarah doesn't 'get' is that it's because he cares that he is trying to offer her a solution. She feels that in telling her how to deal with it differently he is closing down the space she needs to talk about it. They are coming at this conversation with good intentions but with completely different mindsets and they need to find a way to manage this. If they can be more aware of these aspects of each other then they will be able to offer a response that is more tailored to what each of them is like and more understanding of the ways in which they might get it wrong with one another.

Knowing these things about one's partner is a constant

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work in progress. I think a helpful question to keep in mind is ‘what do you need?’ This brings the conversation back to something simple, a space where both people can talk about what they might need. It doesn’t mean that there will be an easy answer, but at least if needs are known they can be considered.

SARAH: That’s not the point. Anyway, it doesn’t matter, I sort of feel like you don’t get it.

TOMAS: Okay – I seem to not be getting it. I do want to get it. What would help? What do you need here?

SARAH: Nothing really – just for you to register that I’m finding this all hard and to be able to tell you about it.

TOMAS: I do know that you find it really hard; I think sometimes you think that I forget that.

SARAH: I don’t think that, it’s just that for me sometimes I need to say things again; it helps me to be able to say it out loud to you; and I need you to know that you don’t need to come up with an answer for me when I’m talking about a problem.

TOMAS: It’s hard – that’s just what I’m like ... I hope you can see I’m only trying to help.

SARAH: It helps me to be reminded of that. I think I just need to know that you know that this is what works for me when I am feeling upset about something. I’m sure I get it wrong with you sometimes and perhaps there’s a way you’d like me to be helpful to you when you are feeling upset?

TOMAS: One of the things I like you to do when I’m upset is when you break down the problem for me.

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You're really good at seeing what needs to be done to sort something out.

There is something dynamic here – they are having to work hard at making themselves understood rather than expecting each other to get it right first time. By asking 'what do you need?' Tomas creates a space for Sarah to convey what she is feeling. It also creates a space in which each of them can clarify things with the other about how to respond when they are feeling upset about something. They've given up an idea that they will instinctively know what the other one needs, and they are now working hard to actually find out what it is – which they may also need to work out for themselves too.

This dynamic can also come up when couples are talking not about problems external to their relationship (as in Sarah's bad day) but also in problems within their relationship. A 'problem-solver' may feel that if their partner is complaining about something that has happened between them in the past, then nothing they can do will change it and therefore the only solution may be to offer an apology. This may help – but the partner who isn't a problem-solver may need the experience of knowing that their partner has heard their complaint (and needs to process it by talking about it). They may not need a solution – more to know that by talking about it they are being engaged with. It can be baffling for someone who wouldn't talk more than once about something in the past to hear their partner talking about it over and over again, but this may indicate that their partner feels they aren't being listened to.

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Ideas for reflection

- *If you have a problem, what makes you feel better? A concrete solution or being able to talk about it? Or both?*
- *What do you know about your partner in this area?*
- *What does your partner know about you in this area?*

You just don't get it!

Tomas is upset and cross that Sarah ate on her way home from the gym without telling him. He had gone out to the shops to get dinner and had made it for them both.

TOMAS: That's so thoughtless of you. It would have been helpful if you could have let me know.

SARAH: Sorry, I was just so hungry after my class – it doesn't have to be a big deal, does it?

TOMAS: Well, next time can you tell me?

SARAH: How about next time you tell me that you are planning to make a big deal out of dinner?

Both of them feel that the other one could have communicated better. In making the shift to being in a couple, their communication needs to be upgraded to take the other one into account. One of the huge and disappointing realities we have to face about our partners is that they aren't mind readers; they don't think in the same way we do, don't know about the things that might upset us, and don't respond to what we've said in the way we assume they will. Having to bridge the gap with words can often feel like a poor substitution.

This need to spell things out to our partners – things