

Being Right or Being in Relationship: Which Do You Choose?

by Stephen Reynolds

Throughout our lives, each of us has many opportunities to choose between ***Being Right*** and ***Being in Relationship*** with another human being. The choices we make at these intersections go a long way toward determining what type of life we have.

While many people profess to want to have a better relationship with someone they consider special, their behaviors often contradict this declared intention. The true measure of a person's beliefs are what they do, not what they say. If you want to know how much one person loves another, observe the choices they make around each other.

When one person does not get what they want from another, do they focus on trying to ***understand why their request does not work for the other person***, or do they repeatedly declare reasons why the other person "should" comply with their request?

When one person gives in to another in a conflict, does he or she do this freely and generously, making the concession ***a true gift***, or do they hold their concession as a "deposit" toward some future event when they will be "entitled" to get their way?

When one person is criticized by another, are they more likely to say, "You seem upset; ***what would you like me to do differently?***", or are they more likely to reply, "You're not being fair!"?

When one person is upset at something another person did, do they focus on ***non-judgmentally expressing their feelings***, or do they spend their time and energy pointing out why the other person was "wrong" to do what they did?

When one person takes exception to the tone or manner in which another is speaking to them, do they ***disclose how vulnerable they feel***, or do they accuse the other of being condescending?

A person who is more interested in being right will focus on what they are not getting from another person, and spend their time and energies attempting to communicate their unmet needs. A person whose greater interest is being in relationship will focus more on understanding what the other person's need are, and in learning more about how they can ***assist the other person*** in meeting those needs.

A key indicator of the state of a relationship can be seen when one person comes home upset about what happened during their day. A person whose partner is primarily interested in relationship will be asked to ***share more of their feelings*** about the day. A person whose partner is primarily interested in being right will be questioned more about why they took the actions they did during the day.

It is not "wrong" to want to be right. However, being right has its price. It is a barrier to intimacy and limits the depth of our relationships. And if we compound our need to be right with blaming the other party for the lack of depth in our relationship, we can almost guarantee the relationship will fail.



Individuals who exhibit a strong need to be right and/or to have things their way usually have unresolved internal issues that they project onto others. If these individuals can begin to catch themselves in their patterns, and declare to themselves and others their ownership of the responsibility for their actions --- they will be taking a critical first step in breaking their historic pattern, and moving toward achieving deeper, more meaningful relationships. If these individuals are unable to accept the responsibility for their behavior and its consequences, they will likely continue to doom themselves to a string of less-than-satisfactory relationships.

To test your own "Need to Be Right" quotient, complete the following exercise. While you will likely find that both answers to some questions will apply to you, pick the answer that is most often true for you.

- 1) If I am able to convince another person of my point of view on something, I am more likely to:
 - a) Feel glad I got my point across, or
 - b) Acknowledge the other person's willingness to consider new points of view.
- 2) When another person does not seem to be able to understand what I am telling them, I will more likely:
 - a) Rephrase what I am saying, or
 - b) Ask the person what portion of what I have said is unclear to them.
- 3) When another person tells me that one of my habits has annoyed them for a long time, I am more likely to:
 - a) Be irritated that they did not tell me sooner, or
 - b) Be grateful that they became comfortable bringing it up.
- 4) If I am excited about doing something with another person, only to find out they have little interest in it, I am more likely to:
 - a) Ask them why they are not interested, or
 - b) Inquire about activities they find exciting.
- 5) If another person and I have opposing views on how to do something, I am more likely to want to:
 - a) Focus the discussion on the merits of our positions, or
 - b) Learn more about how the other person came to their point of view.
- 6) If another person gives me negative feedback about something I did, and I disagree with their point of view, I am more likely to:
 - a) Explain why I took the actions I did, or
 - b) Check to see if I am understanding their feedback as intended.
- 7) If I am late for a meeting with a close friend, I am more likely to:
 - a) Tell them the reasons I am late, or
 - b) Tell them how I feel about being late.

- 8) If a friend borrows my car and upon returning the keys to me, my friend [who shows no evidence of being injured] tells me they were involved in an accident while driving the car, my first reaction to them is more likely to be:
 - a) Ask how the accident happened, or
 - b) Ask whether or not they have injuries I cannot see.

- 9) If I see a person running toward me bump into and knock down another person, I am more likely to:
 - a) Say to the person running toward me, “Hey, you just knocked a person down back there.”, or
 - b) Go to the person on the ground and offer assistance.

- 10) If I accidentally slam a car door on another person’s fingers, I am more likely to say:
 - a) “Oh, I am so sorry; I didn’t mean to do that.”, or
 - b) “Oh, I am so sorry; are you okay?”

Add up the number of a)’s and b)’s on your survey form.

<u>a)’s</u>	<u>b)’s</u>	<u>Your need to be right vs. being in relationship</u>
9 or 10	1 or 0	You have a very strong need to be right.
7 or 8	3 or 2	You have a strong need to be right.
4, 5 or 6	6, 5 or 4	You have a moderate need to be right.
2 or 3	8 or 7	You have a small need to be right.
0 or 1	10 or 9	You are very relationship oriented .

The above evaluation is based on how you see yourself. If you want to give yourself a more rigorous test, ask a friend [who you can trust to give you the unvarnished truth] to answer the survey questions as they relate to you. This second set of results is likely to not only be a more accurate indicator of your need to be right; these will also allow you to calibrate your perception of yourself.

We welcome your feedback on this article. Send comments to: Feedback@CGMediation.com

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