

Woman Realizes That She's Been Accidentally Abusing Her Husband This Whole Time... Wow.

My "Aha Moment" happened because of a package of hamburger meat. I asked my husband to stop by the store to pick up a few things for dinner, and when he got home, he plopped the bag on the counter. I started pulling things out of the bag, and realized he'd gotten the 70/30 hamburger meat - which means it's 70% lean and 30% fat.

I asked, "What's this?"

"Hamburger meat," he replied, slightly confused.

"You didn't get the right kind," I said.

"I didn't?" He replied with his brow furrowed. "Was there some other brand you wanted or something?"

"No. You're missing the point," I said. "You got the 70/30. I always get at least the 80/20."

He laughed. "Oh. That's all? I thought I'd really messed up or something."

That's how it started. I launched into him. I berated him for not being smarter. Why would he not get the more healthy option? Did he even read the labels? Why can't I trust him? Do I need to spell out every little thing for him in minute detail so he gets it right? Also, and the thing I was probably most offended by, why wasn't he more observant? How could he not have noticed over the years what I always get? Does he not pay attention to anything I do?

As he sat there, bearing the brunt of my righteous indignation and muttering responses like, "I never noticed," "I really don't think it's that big of a deal," and "I'll get it right next time," I saw his face gradually take on an expression that I'd seen on him a lot in recent years. It was a combination of resignation and demoralization. He looked eerily like our son does when he gets chastised. That's when it hit me. "Why am I doing this? I'm not his mom."

I suddenly felt terrible. And embarrassed for myself. He was right. It really wasn't anything to get bent out of shape over. And there I was doing just that. Over a silly package of hamburger meat that he dutifully picked up from the grocery store just like I asked. If I had specific requirements, I should have been clearer. I didn't know how to gracefully extract myself from the conversation without coming across like I

have some kind of split personality, so I just mumbled something like, "Yeah. I guess we'll make do with this. I'm going to start dinner."

He seemed relieved it was over and he left the kitchen.

And then I sat there and thought long and hard about what I'd just done. And what I'd been doing to him for years, probably. The "hamburger meat moment," as I've come to call it, certainly wasn't the first time I scolded him for not doing something the way I thought it should be done. He was always putting something away in the wrong place. Or leaving something out. Or neglecting to do something altogether. And I was always right there to point it out to him.

Why do I do that? How does it benefit me to constantly belittle my husband? The man that I've taken as my partner in life. The father of my children. The guy I want to have by my side as I grow old. Why do I do what women are so often accused of, and try to change the way he does every little thing? Do I feel like I'm accomplishing something? Clearly not if I feel I have to keep doing it. Why do I think it's reasonable to expect him to remember everything I want and do it just that way? The instances in which he does something differently, does it mean he's wrong? When did "my way" become "the only way?" When did it become okay to constantly correct him and lecture him and point out every little thing I didn't like as if he were making some kind of mistake?

And how does it benefit him? Does it make him think, "Wow! I'm sure glad she was there to set me straight?" I highly doubt it. He probably feels like I'm harping on him for no reason whatsoever. And it I'm pretty sure it makes him think his best approach in regards to me is to either stop doing things around the house, or avoid me altogether.

Two cases in point. #1. I recently found a shard of glass on the kitchen floor. I asked him what happened. He said he broke a glass the night before. When I asked why he didn't tell me, he said, "I just cleaned it up and threw it away because I didn't want you to have a conniption fit over it." #2. I was taking out the trash and found a pair of blue tube socks in the bin outside. I asked him what happened and why he'd thrown them away. He said, "They accidentally got in the wash with my jeans. Every time I put in laundry, you feel the need to remind me not to mix colors and whites. I didn't want you to see them and reinforce your obvious belief that I don't know how to wash clothes after 35 years."

So it got to the point where he felt it was a better idea — or just plain easier — to cover things up than admit he made a human error. What kind of environment have I created where he feels he's not allowed to make mistakes?

And let's look at these "offenses": A broken glass. A pair of blue tube socks. Both common mistakes that anyone could have made. But he was right. Regarding the glass, I not only pointed out his clumsiness for breaking it, but also due to the shard I found, his sad attempt at cleaning it up. As for the socks, even though he'd clearly stated it was an accident, I gave him a verbal lesson about making sure he pays more attention when he's sorting clothes. Whenever any issues like this arise, he'll sit there and take it for a little bit, but always responds in the end with something like, "I guess it just doesn't matter that much to me."

I know now that what he means is, "this thing that has you so upset is a small detail, or a matter of opinion, or a preference, and I don't see why you're making it such a big deal." But from my end I came to interpret it over time that he didn't care about my happiness or trying to do things the way I think they should be done. I came to view it like "this guy just doesn't get it." I am clearly the brains of this operation.

I started thinking about what I'd observed with my friends' relationships, and things my girlfriends would complain about regarding their husbands, and I realized that I wasn't alone. Somehow, too many women have fallen into the belief that Wife Always Knows Best. There's even a phrase to reinforce it: "Happy wife, happy life." That doesn't leave a lot of room for his opinions, does it?

It's an easy stereotype to buy into. Look at the media. Movies, TV, advertisements - they're all filled with images of hapless husbands and clever wives. He can't cook. He can't take care of the kids. If you send him out to get three things, he'll come back with two — and they'll both be wrong. We see it again and again.

What this constant nagging and harping does is send a message to our husbands that says "we don't respect you. We don't think you're smart enough to do things right. We expect you to mess up. And when you do, you'll be called out on it swiftly and without reservation." Given this kind of negative reinforcement over time, he feels like nothing he can do is right (in your eyes). If he's confident with himself and who he is, he'll come to resent you. If he's at all unsure about himself, he'll start to believe you, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Neither one is a desirable, beneficial outcome to you, him or the marriage.

Did my husband do the same to me? Just as I'm sure there are untold numbers of women who don't ever do this kind of thing to their husbands, I'm sure there are men who do it to their wives too. But I don't think of it as a typical male characteristic. As I sat and thought about it, I realized my husband didn't display the same behavior toward me. I even thought about some of the times I really did make mistakes. The time I backed into the gate and scratched the car? He

never said a word about it. The time I was making dinner, got distracted by a call from my mom, and burned it to cinders? He just said, "We can just order a pizza." The time I tried to put the new patio furniture together and left his good tools out in the rain? "Accidents happen," was his only response.

I shuddered to think what I would have said had the shoe been on the other foot and he'd made those mistakes.

So is he just a better person than me? Why doesn't he bite my head off when I don't do things the way he likes? I'd be a fool to think it doesn't happen. And yet I don't remember him ever calling me out on it. It doesn't seem he's as intent as changing the way I do things. But why?

Maybe I should take what's he always said at face value. The fact that these little things "really don't matter that much to him" is not a sign that he's lazy, or that he's incapable of learning, or that he just doesn't give a damn about what I want. Maybe to him, the small details are not that important in his mind — and justifiably so. They're not the kinds of things to start fights over. They're not the kinds of things he needs to change about me. It certainly doesn't make him dumb or inept. He's just not as concerned with some of the minutia as I am. And it's why he doesn't freak out when he's on the other side of the fence.

The bottom line in all this is that I chose this man as my partner. He's not my servant. He's not my employee. He's not my child. I didn't think he was stupid when I married him - otherwise I wouldn't have. He doesn't need to be reprimanded by me because I don't like the way he does some things.

When I got to that point mentally, it then made me start thinking about all the good things about him. He's intelligent. He's a good person. He's devoted. He's awesome with the kids. And he does always help around the house. (Just not always to my liking!) Even more, not only does he refrain from giving me grief when I make mistakes or do things differently than him, he's always been very agreeable to my way of doing things. And for the most part, if he notices I prefer to do something a certain way, he tries to remember it in the future. Instead of focusing on those wonderful things, I just harped on the negative. And again, I know I'm not alone in this.

If we keep attempting to make our husbands feel small, or foolish, or inept because they occasionally mess up (and I use that term to also mean "do things differently than us"), then eventually they're going to stop trying to do things. Or worse yet, they'll actually come to believe those labels are true.

In my case it's my husband of 12+ years I'm talking about. The same man who thanklessly changed my car tire in the rain. The guy who taught our kids to ride bikes. The person who stayed with me at the hospital all night when my mom was sick. The man who has always worked hard to make a decent living and support his family.

He knows how to change the oil in the car. He can re-install my computer's operating system. He lifts things for me that are too heavy and opens stuck jar lids. He shovels the sidewalk. He can put up a ceiling fan. He fixes the toilet when it won't stop running. I can't (or don't) do any of those things. And yet I give him grief about a dish out of place. He's a good man who does a lot for me, and doesn't deserve to be harassed over little things that really don't matter in the grand scheme of things.

Since my revelation, I try to catch myself when I start to nag. I'm not always 100% consistent, but I know I've gotten a lot better. And I've seen that one little change make a big improvement in our relationship. Things seem more relaxed. We seem to be getting along better. It think we're both starting to see each other more as trusted partners, not adversarial opponents at odds with each other in our day-to-day existence. I've even come to accept that sometimes his way of doing things may be better!

It takes two to make a partnership. No one is always right and no one is always wrong. And you're not always going to see eye-to-eye on every little thing. It doesn't make you smarter, or superior, or more right to point out every little thing he does that's not to your liking. Ladies, remember, it's just hamburger meat.