



iQuestions Faculty, Michael and Amy Smalley

Question:

My fiancé and I are arguing about having kids. She wants to start a family right away, but I want us to finish our educations and get stable jobs first. What should I do?

Answer:

MICHAEL: I want you to know that is totally normal. You are not the only engaged couple in history who has had some conflict before their wedding day. But here's the deal, you need to understand that what you're arguing about is maybe on the surface.

AMY: You think that what you're arguing about is when to have children. But really, what you need to start doing is get deeper into the conversation.

MICHAEL: You need to ask yourself, "Why do I want these children?" or "Why is this so important?"

AMY: Ask, "Why is it so important?" "What is it that I'm feeling here?" "As a woman, what is going on with me?"—and take turns, share your feelings and needs. Don't focus in on the solutions. What you want to do is establish understanding, and you want to validate each other's feelings.

For example, "You know what? I understand that right after you get married, having a baby soon after would be very stressful." Talk those issues through.



MICHAEL: I think what will happen is that you will start to find out, “Oh, this isn’t really about *how many* kids we want, or *when* we even want to start having kids. It’s really about feeling invalidated about this subject or feeling controlled about this subject.”

When you start getting into that level of discussion, then you are finally really talking about what the difficult issue is, and you are not staying on that surface, in other words.

By the way, on the surface, nothing gets solved. But when you start talking about, “I’m feeling controlled, I’m feeling invalidated, I feel like my opinions are being rejected,” when you get to that level, then you can actually start finding solutions.

AMY: It is amazing how those solutions do come up, because after you reach a level of understanding and you validate— for example, when I feel like Michael “gets” me, and understands where I’m coming from, it’s amazing what kind of concessions I can make, because I know that we are on the same team.

And that is truly what you want to do in your relationship. You want to stay on the same team. So, once you’ve established that you’ve got that understanding, then you’re ready to brainstorm. You’re able to say, “Let’s try this solution out and see if it works.”

MICHAEL: I think the last thing we want to say is, if you get stuck and feel like “we can’t come to a solution on this,” get someone involved. Get a mediator, a counselor, a friend, a parent, or maybe even a pastor who can help the two of you get on the same page.