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that'slife

A GUIDE TO PERSONAL GROWTH



have the beliefs and opinions they do without necessarily sharing those views,” says Trina Green, a therapist at Seacrest Recovery Center in Boynton Beach. “The healthiest way to handle differences in opinions is to agree to disagree. You can have a thought-provoking discussion on topics, including the election; disagree; and still love each other.”

“The best way to talk about politics is to pick a time when both parties are calm, have the pre-agreed-upon intent to remain calm and lay some ground rules for the conversation.”

— Terri Finnigan, marriage and family therapist, Whole Health Psychological Center

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Keeping Love Alive Despite Political Preferences || BY LINDA HAASE

After more than 20 years of marriage, Mary Matalin and James Carville have learned a thing or two about each other.

Things are harmonious when they're discussing their two daughters or their move from Washington, D.C. But there's one thing this opinionated couple will never agree on: politics.

She's a staunch conservative. He's a steadfast liberal. Their conflicting views have been splashed all over the media: She was George H.W. Bush's campaign director, and he was Bill

Clinton's campaign manager. And they always take opposing stands as political commentators. We can only imagine the turmoil during this contentious election.

But, despite it all, they are very happy together.

“As with any marriage, part of the trick is realizing you can't change your spouse even if you wanted to,” Carville wrote in “Love & War: Twenty Years, Three Presidents, Two Daughters and One Louisiana Home.” “I'd rather stay happily

married than pick a fight with my wife over politics.”

As one of the most combative elections of all time rages, we figured there are many two-party couples that could use a bit of advice on how to remain loyal to their candidates *and* their spouses (and not particularly in that order).

“It is always important in a relationship to be able to see your partner's feelings and beliefs from their world. You can understand why they



Agreeing to disagree can be very healthy, notes Terri Finnigan, a marriage and family therapist at the Whole Health Psychological Center in West Palm Beach. However, she warns, that should happen only after both people feel like they've been heard.

“It's important to note that ‘heard’ does not mean agreed with,” she says. “The best way to talk about politics is to pick a time when both parties are calm, have the pre-agreed-upon intent to re-



believe that their political views define them, it's imperative not to feel rejected if your partner disagrees with you.

"Remind yourself that your partner's views are not a rejection of who you are as a person," advises Finnigan.

And, for those who live with someone determined to convince others to see things his or her way, we send our sympathy and this advice via Finnigan.

"If you feel that your partner is fixated on trying to convince you that he or she is 'right,' you can put up a kind boundary," she says. "Start out by validating and affirming your partner, and then join him or her in the emotion. Follow that by telling him or her that you are unavailable for the conversation."

How to do that? She suggests saying, "I love you very much, and I get that it's hard to disagree on this. It's

hard for me, too. I'm feeling frustrated right now and am not willing to have an unproductive conversation."

Remind yourself that your partner is more than his or her political views. He or she is still the person who lifts you up when you have a

bad day and shares your achievements with you.

"Take the time to actively focus on everything else that you love about your partner, even if his or her political views are not one of them," suggests Finnigan.

And, when the election results roll in, here's some sage advice.

"Be 'big' for each other," Finnigan says. "That means congratulating the partner whose candidate won and genuinely supporting the partner whose candidate lost. If you want to have a giant burst of emotion – elation or devastation – see if you can wait until you're around fellow supporters of your candidate."

And think about this perspective from Carville, who's been there.

"We have the Republican-versus-Democrat dynamic, sleeping with the enemy or whatever," he wrote. "But what two married people have ever been exactly alike? How boring." ○

AT THE BALLOT BOX

Vote understanding that differences are manifestations of individual strengths.

Vote without compromising. You don't want to regret your choice later.

Don't allow voting to have power over your marriage or relationship.

Vote your truth.

Source: Trina Green, therapist, Seacrest Recovery Center