

Separate Vacations?

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“My wife won’t let me go.” Astonishingly this was said by a man who longed to go canoeing with my husband, Les. Sounds like a mother-son dynamic going on, don’t you think? Anyway it got me to thinking about how Les and I take separate vacations, regularly and fairly frequently. I long to be with people and he longs for isolated wilderness.

So he has “his ventures” and I have “her ventures.” Then we put effort into “our times.” Both of us like to explore new territory—he’s more interested in the sights and I in the people and culture. Last March we had an adventurous time visiting our daughter, Katie, in Taiwan followed by a visit to friend Sheilagh in South Korea. Then each year we attend the Banff Couples Conference for our couple enrichment. It is there better than anywhere else that we have learned that our coupleship flourishes when we support each other in being the best of who we are.

Years ago when Les was on a solo venture in Algonquin Park I was home fussing because a bear in the same park had molested a camper. For three days I didn’t know if he had become the bear bane. Upon his return I asked him to curtail his solo outdoor trips and he kindly agreed henceforth, only going with groups of people—often trips through the University of Calgary. Also we began “compromised camping” where we took a tent trailer here and there in Canada.

Now I’m a matured woman, with grown children and Les is back to some solo ventures while I go where I please to speak, to learn or to hang out with my grandchildren or in my mother’s garden. We negotiate, support, and sometimes compromise to come to mutual agreement. As Kahlil Gibran wrote, “Let there be spaces in your togetherness . . . the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other’s shadow.” Our primary relationship is one where hopefully we are supported in all we want to be, have and do. The discussion, struggle and tension to arrive where two people bloom in each other’s good will is well worth it.

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