



I'M MARRIED TO A CONTROL FREAK. WHAT DO I DO?

By Drs. Les and Les Parrott -
SYMBIS Blog - February 1, 2023

Being in a relationship with a controlling person—especially in a marriage—can be quite a challenge. Before we jump in,

the first thing you need to know is that there's hope; it's possible for your spouse to get a handle on their controlling tendencies.

First, you need a little more insight into what factors might be driving their controlling nature. You'll also need some tools for communicating with them. And of course, they'll need to keep an open heart. Let's start by talking about a possible reason why your spouse might be controlling.

UNDERSTAND WHY THEY'RE MOTIVATED TO CONTROL

Many control freaks are motivated by anxiety. They're laser-focused on their environment under control because they believe it will help them feel better. It's incredibly hard to struggle with anxiety, often people will do anything they can to get in control of that feeling.

If your spouse is anxious, this might explain why they might act like a bossy, pushy supervisor rather than, a husband or wife. Consider the possibility that your spouse is overwhelmed. Allow yourself to feel empathy for them.

At the same time, it's normal for you to feel frustrated or angry with their controlling behavior. After all, your control freak's actions affect you directly. That's where the next step comes in.

LET YOUR SPOUSE KNOW HOW THEIR CONTROLLING AFFECTS YOU

People sometimes need a little push into self-awareness. Pick a time that works well for the two of you to sit down to talk, and let your spouse know (*as tenderly as possible*) how their controlling behavior is affecting you. The setting, time, and atmosphere need to be as non-threatening as possible to put you both at ease.

Try to open this dialogue with something like, *"I'd like to talk with you a little bit about something. Sometimes, it feels like you're overly controlling toward me. I don't want to fight; let's just talk about it."*

Keep in mind that this will be a conversation-opener for you. It will likely not be the only talk you'll need to have about this to work through both of your feelings—particularly if they don't see themselves as controlling. It may take more than one conversation, but it's possible! Lead with kindness and love.

IT'S POSSIBLE TO CREATE MORE PEACE WITH A CONTROLLING SPOUSE

Once you've opened a dialogue with your spouse, you can explore ways to address the anxiety they may be feeling and the reasons why they control. With plenty of thoughtful communication and some ongoing effort from both of you, it's possible to create more peace in your marriage. Professional counseling can help if you're having a difficult time handling these issues.