

Becoming Clear About What Is OK and What Is Not

"I've accepted his behavior for so long, I'm not sure what's not OK!" We can become so desensitized to inappropriate behavior that we find ourselves wondering: is it OK for him to do that? Here's one way to know:

Would you find it acceptable for a child to act the way he's acting? Would you think it's acceptable for a stranger to treat you that way?

- yelling
- swearing
- being lazy or irresponsible
- telling others what to do
- name-calling
- throwing things

Those behaviors are not acceptable. Neither are attempts to control your behaviors, values, or thoughts – whether through:

- demands
- use of his feelings to manipulate you (anger, disappointment, devastation)
- use of Scripture ("the Bible says that I am the head of this household")
- instilling fear (yelling, throwing things, stomping around, slamming doors)
- belittling (name-calling or implying that you are weak or stupid)
- or being lazy (refusing to do things so that you are running yourself ragged trying to keep up and compensate for his irresponsibility).

Does your spouse act any of those ways toward you?

Another way to know what is acceptable is to become aware of your feelings about it. This could be very difficult if you've repeatedly told yourself how to feel (happy, submissive, kind-hearted, gentle) instead of treating your feelings as valid.

Allow yourself to feel your reaction to your husband (exasperation, dismay, resentment, indignation, etc.)

Then *use those feelings as information* to recognize that what your husband is doing is not appropriate. Your feelings will inform you of what boundary was crossed, or what tactic was used?

Once you find yourself questioning his behavior:

- *trust your perception (tell yourself that you are right)*
- don't get talked out of it (by him or by yourself)
- *communicate to him* that his behavior was not acceptable
- and *refuse to engage* in a discussion about it (you don't need to READ: reason, explain, argue, or defend your stance)

You can know that you are being *respectful* if:

- you acknowledge that his opinion is different than yours and that he has a right to that opinion (but know that you don't have to agree with it or give his more weight than yours)
- you remain calm
- you do not accuse or slander him (speaking truth is not slander, dear friend)
- you do not try to control his opinion or argue with him about it
- you do not READ (reason, explain, argue, or defend).

Disagreeing is not disrespectful!

The more you ground yourself in reality and the full character of God, the better you will get at understanding what is acceptable behavior and what isn't. You got this!