

Generation

The power of negotiation

As June approaches and brides and groomsmen finish planning their perfect weddings, I thought it might be a good idea to share some tips with couples ready to take the plunge.

As all of us married folks know, there's a big adjustment after the honeymoon bags are unpacked, the newness wears off, and everyday stress quickly takes over.

Unfortunately, in today's busy, complex world, even the happiest two peas in a pod face the challenge of harmoniously getting along.

When my husband and I were first married, we didn't have many arguments, but those that did surface required that all the windows in the house be closed.

As years passed, I realized that most of the arguments weren't worth arguing about, so instead of closing the windows, I tried "reasonable persuasion."

After 30 minutes to an hour of cooling down, I'd



Peg Demarco

hunt for him in the house and say: "You know, this silence is silly, so why don't we save time? You're right and

I'm wrong. Let's figure out how we can make it better."

It wasn't easy to be the first one to cave into breaking the silent treatment, but trust me — it works.

Couples get used to spousal quirks, and eventually the "twilight years" of growing old together begin to take shape. It should be a happy time: Mom and Pop sitting on the front porch in white rocking chairs, basking in the glow of true love.

Pretty picture, but do Mom and Pop still argue? They sure do, because they're human, but there's

a new dimension when gray hair sets in.

My husband and I used to argue about money, kids, my cooking, why Google maps often don't work, or why I don't pay off my credit card the day after I make a purchase.

My husband's theory of having plastic is that it's OK, but he quickly pays it off before it has had time to breathe. I, on the other hand, keep Visa in business.

What we tend to bicker about these days seems to be solved by careful negotiation.

For example, lately we can't seem to agree on the temperature of the house. While the thermostat is always set on 70, his thermostat is set on 60 while mine is set on 80.

After negotiation, I bought him an extra-heavy bathrobe and blanket, and I wear my cotton Capri pants all year round, even in a snowstorm.

How to load the dish-

washer correctly also became another hot topic for us. It wasn't worth an argument as long as the dishwasher worked, so I decided to let him rearrange the bowls to his liking without as much as a word before pushing the on button.

Whether to take the interstate when we travel used to irk him because he always went on Interstate 40 while I tend to avoid it when I can. Now, when I take the wheel, he knows that the next words out of my mouth will be, "Enjoy the downtown Morganton view."

Solving the problem of watching CNN all day long was easy by putting a TV in the den for me and another one in the living room for him.

I like CNN, but not eight hours a day.

My hubby is retired and I'm still working, so he is up all night and I'm up all day. I can tell by the dishes found in the sink the next morning, which

he rearranges after I put them in the dishwasher.

I'm on deck for cooking him a tasty plate of scrambled eggs, pork chops or chicken, but he insists on making his own hamburgers because he doesn't like the way I flatten them.

After 17 years, I still can't figure out why my burgers are not flat enough, but like I said earlier, we've learned to negotiate. He has had the distinction of being in charge of his own burgers for as long as we've been together.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle summed it up best: "Anybody can become angry. That is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way — that is not within everybody's power and is not easy."

Peg DeMarco can be contacted at pegdemarco@earthlink.net.