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The Truth About Taking Separate Vacations

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So your husband just told you he wants to go away for Labor Day... with his friends, not you. When one person in the relationship suggests separate vacations, one of three things

happens:

1. A fight ensues: "Separate vacations? What's next? A divorce?!"
2. You book your plans on back-to-back laptops, while murmuring: "Great. What an innovative idea! We can really use that time apart to rejuvenate and appreciate each other."
3. Your cell phone blows up with third party opinions of what this means... to everyone else outside your relationship.

But separate vacations don't have to mean your lives are going in separate directions. In fact, if your husband wants to take a five-day fishing trip with the guys, this may be the perfect time to grab your best friends for a spa getaway, or take off on a yoga retreat.

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"When my mate and I take separate vacations, it's very important because it allows us to explore our own personal interests," says couples coach Keith Dent. "You get the opportunity to fellowship with the friends in your life that have the same interests as you." And while separate vacations can be a great way to strengthen bonds with friends, they can also strengthen the bond between you and your mate. Here's why...

1. It's Good to Miss Each Other

According to relationship expert April Masini, the old saying "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," is typically true for most of us. "A week apart once a year is not going to ruin your relationship – it's going to make a healthy relationship stronger. You're also setting a good example for kids that you can have a romantic relationship with independence built in."

2. You Can Do What You Love

If your ideal vacation includes an early-morning cup of coffee with a great view of the mountains, but your husband's dream getaway is a beach destination with no wake-up call, separate vacations give you a chance to do exactly what you want to do – without having to compromise. And while compromise is vital for any marriage, separate vacations are the one instance where it's not absolutely necessary.

"There are two individuals in a relationship with individual needs, wants, likes, and dislikes," says certified life coach Natalie Vartanian. "Instead of feeling like you have to convince or force your partner to do what you like, go and fill that need yourself. Whatever it is that calls

you or compels you to have that 'down time' or vacation time, you can make that be the focus and the priority for you."

3. You Can Support Each Other

Your separate vacations don't have to be simultaneous. You can actually use them to help support each other when one person in the relationship needs a break.

"If he's just come off a big trial and needs a week to sleep and read spy novels, and you're swamped at work – send him off with a framed photo of you for his hotel bedside while you take care of business at home," suggests Masini. "You may need a spa getaway at a time when he can't leave town and he can hold down the fort while you detox."

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When Separate Vacations Don't Work:

There are, of course, a few exceptions to the rule when it comes to separate vacations. If you're taking a vacation because you need time away from your spouse, then you have bigger problems that need addressing. Also, if you're taking separate vacations because you're taking 'a break' from each other, then it's not likely that your separate vacations will result in a rejuvenated relationship.

"Taking 'a break' from a relationship does not work," says Masini. "Don't mistake separate vacations in a healthy relationship for taking a break in a relationship riddled with trouble. If you 'take a break' from a relationship, then that is when you should expect each other to behave as if you're both single."

However, taking separate vacations is very different from "taking a break." If you're taking a week away to enjoy some "girl time" with your sister or best friends, then you are not likely putting your relationship at risk. Just be sure that both you and your spouse agree your separate vacations are a good idea and then be respectful of any worries or concerns he or she may have.

Lastly, don't forget to still plan a few vacations together with your husband. Just as a little bit of alone time can be vital for keeping your relationship strong, a little bit of alone time for the two of you can help solidify your romantic connection and emotional bond!

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