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## What's in a Name

By Dan Hope

The Hendersons were a happy couple.

But by no means were they perfect. Brad refused to watch *What Not to Wear*. Melanie hated SportsCenter. Brad constantly forgot to take out the garbage. Melanie would frequently leave her makeup all over the vanity. Brad forgot the exact date of the first time they kissed. Melanie couldn't care less about Kobe Bryant's shooting record.

But despite all the things that didn't match up, Brad and Melanie did. They had learned how to give and take, and they were happy together, albeit not in front of the same TV.

That's why it was such a shock to find a disagreement that they just couldn't handle.

Brad and Melanie were very excited to have children. When Melanie started to suspect she was pregnant, they rushed to the grocery store to buy pregnancy tests. Brad felt mildly embarrassed that it was the only thing they were buying. He could almost hear the cashier thinking, "So what have you guys been up to?" But soon it was over and they were back at home, huddled over a little stick with a window that may or may not have contained a plus. After arguing for several minutes over what shade the vertical bar had to achieve to actually constitute a plus, not a minus, they finally agreed that they were pregnant. After a long hug and some nervous, but happy, giggles they settled down and let reality sink in.

"You know what this means?" Melanie asked.

Brad's head was suddenly full of shopping lists. Bottles, diapers, and doctor's bills floated through his head, all bearing enormous, red dollar signs. "I'll need to get a second job?"

"What? No. I mean we need to pick a name."

"Oh," Brad said, quite relieved. "That part's easy. We're just going to name him after my great-grandfather."

Melanie was immediately indignant that he had picked a name without even consulting her. After all, she was the mother. To make matters worse, she was always suspicious of names dating back more than one generation. "There are two problems with that idea. First, you haven't even consulted me, and second, we don't even know if it will

be a boy.

Brad was puzzled. "I thought the first kid in every family was a boy." Melanie stared in disbelief. "Isn't it?" he said, suddenly uncomfortable in his wife's incredulous gaze. He had the distinct feeling that he might have said something wrong. Unfortunately, male intuition is vastly different than female intuition in that men don't get any warnings until *after* the damage is done.

"Brad, I'm the oldest child in my family."

"Right," he said quickly. Then he thought about it. "Ohhhh."

"Look, whether it's a boy or a girl we need to do this together. So let's just be civilized about this. Ok, what's your great-grandfather's name?"

"You're going to love it. His name was Delbert."

Melanie swallowed her tongue in surprise. She immediately forgot about civility.

"You want to name our child Delbert!" she cried. "I can't even think of a more idiotic name. You're practically dooming him to constant bullying."

"C'mon now," Brad said, a little peeved because his ancestors were most certainly not idiotic. "We won't call him Delbert all the time. We can call him Del."

"Like the farmer in the dell? Like Dell Computers? No matter which way you look at it, he's doomed to dorkdom."

"Ok hotshot, what've you got?"

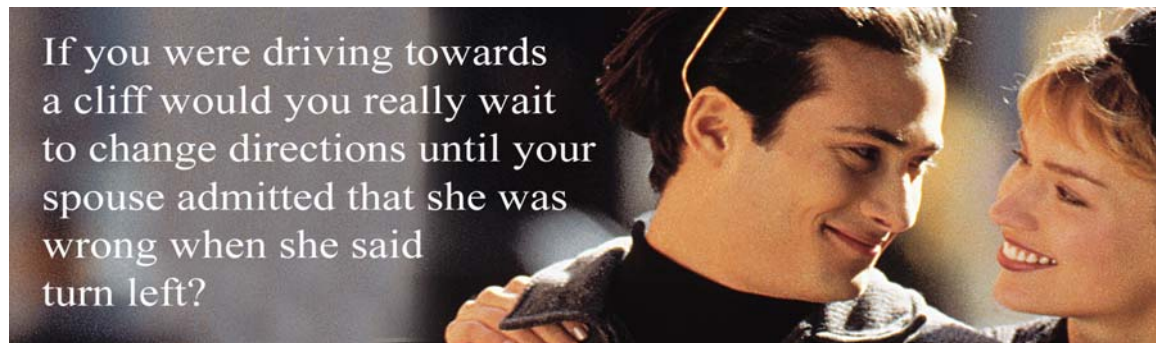
Melanie smiled. What more perfect way to calm the argument than with the name that was undeniably perfect. "Well, we don't actually have to worry about whether it's a boy or girl because I have the best name for both. We'll name our baby Leslie."

Brad almost fainted. "You'll give my boy a girl's name? Why don't you just put a dress on him and paint his nails! And I'm not paying for ballet lessons; let's just get that straight right now."

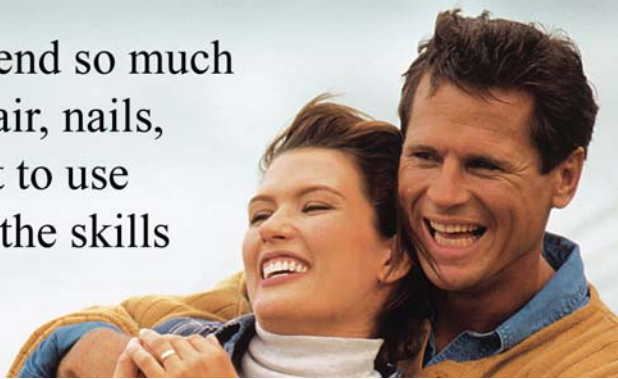
The Hendersons were not a happy couple.

That night turned out to be a long one. As soon as Melanie heard the name Delbert, she had sensed that this could turn into a big conflict. As was mentioned, female intuition is vastly superior to male intuition because it comes before the storm. Unfortunately, most women are too sure that they are in the right and just head into the wind anyway. Intuition is like an appendix: nobody uses it.

Melanie was worried because she never thought they would disagree on something so simple as a name. Brad was still mad about having an "idiotic" great-grandpa.



Why are we willing to spend so much time and money on our hair, nails, skin, etc. but are reluctant to use time and money learning the skills to improve our marriage?



They spent the next few days avoiding the topic of names. But that also meant that they never talked about the baby. Eventually it became too much for them and they softened a little. They hugged. They apologized. They laughed at how stupid they had been. They promised to be a team, to make a joint decision.

“You know, I’m not even that big on Delbert anymore,” Brad said, enjoying the feeling of being close to Melanie. He’d spent the last few days politely but firmly kept at arms length.

“That’s good, because I never was,” Melanie said.

“So what now?”

“Well, we won’t go into this thinking we have the answer,” she said, smiling ruefully. “We’ll just throw names out there and start narrowing them down.”

“Ok. I’ve been thinking and I’ve got a few good ones. How about Haner?” Melanie just looked at him. “Oh c’mon Mel, it’s a masculine name.”

“Because it sounds like an underwear company?”

“What? It’s just, kinda...you know.” Brad tried a growl to see if that would make it sound any more masculine.

It just made Melanie cringe. She tried to restrain herself. She was going to be the adult here, even if it gave her an aneurism. “Ok...that’s one option.”

Brad seemed to take encouragement from the fact that she didn’t dismiss it outright. “How about this one? I thought you might like this because we can use it for a boy or a girl. We’ll call our baby Amsterdam.”

Melanie decided to walk away before she did something that might harm the baby.

The Hendersons were still not a happy couple.

They eventually came to the decision that they would stick to more common names. This made Melanie a little less anxious and gave Brad a way to focus. They started a list where they couldn’t cross names off; they could only circle the ones they liked. It quickly became apparent that none of the names had been circled twice. And there were definitely a few names that begged to be crossed out.

Brad didn’t like the name Mary because he had a crazy Aunt Mary. Melanie didn’t want a child named Amy because that was the name of a cheerleader in her high school that had always made fun of her. Brad didn’t want a son named Michael because he knew a geek with that name. Melanie’s old boss was named Brian so that was out of the

question. They both started to like the name Megan, until it was revealed that Brad once had a girlfriend by that name. That was the point where the list got torn up.

The Hendersons were really not a happy couple.

They knew they still loved each other. They knew they loved the baby. They just couldn't figure out why this was such a big problem. Melanie was nearly half way through her pregnancy and all the changes in her body were making her uncomfortable. The mood swings and cravings were leaving Brad uncomfortable, and it was even worse when Melanie had them too.

Brad was disappointed. He wanted a boy, but they found out they were having a girl. He couldn't even come up with any good girl's names. He had started dismissing each of Melanie's names not because he disliked them but as a retaliation for being turned down so often.

They hadn't talked about names for weeks. They had both reached a point where peace was more important than a name. But as the due date neared, they knew a decision was inevitable. When they would thumb through a magazine or a book, their eyes would stop at each name, silently agonizing over whether their daughter would be named Sandra, or Andrea, or Allison, or Apple Blossom. They were beginning to scrape the bottom of the name barrel.

One day Melanie flipped through her family photo album. She came across a picture of her sitting on her grandma's lap. Brad asked, "Who's that?" He immediately wished he hadn't because the answer to the question would be a name, and probably one he'd heard.

"This is my grandma. She died when I was three. I don't remember much about her, but my mother always said she was such a strong woman."

"I'll bet she was. She'd have to be to put up with your grandpa," Brian said.

"She was amazing. I hope our daughter grows up to be like her."

Brad couldn't resist. "What was her name?"

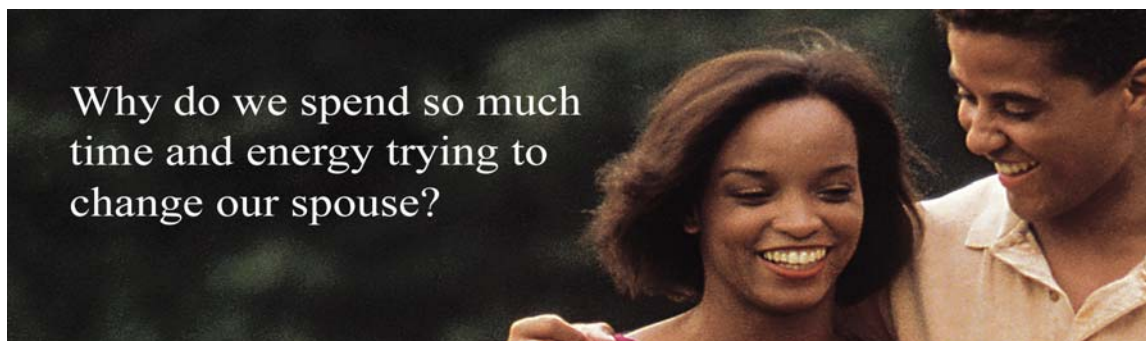
Melanie hesitated, knowing what Brad was going to say. "Her name was Olivia."

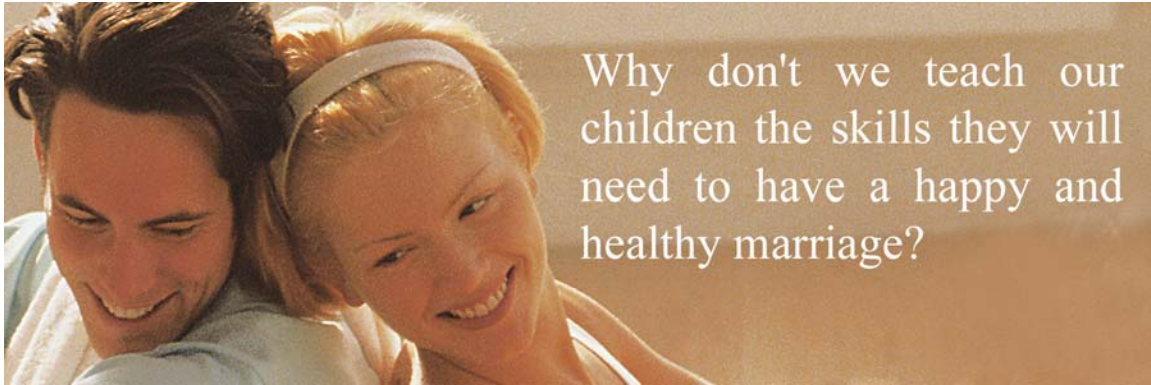
Brad thought for a moment before turning back to his book. "I don't like it."

The Hendersons were a scared couple.

Melanie's water broke in the middle of the night while they were in bed. Brad was actually grateful for that because when she rolled over to tell him she was in labor, he thought he might have wet the bed.

Brad made a frantic rush for the door, then a frantic return for the overnight bag, then





and even more frantic return for his pregnant wife. Then he stood still, worried that he was forgetting something else. After a minute, he remembered the task at hand and rushed out the door once again.

By the time they had finished getting a speeding ticket from a very skeptical police officer and made it to the hospital, Melanie was in a lot of pain. Brad wasn't prepared for it. He had never seen this much pain on anybody's face, let alone on his wife's.

He immediately forgot all the months of disagreement and focused on trying to fix it. He became more and more frustrated when he couldn't do anything but stand there and watch. He couldn't fix it! It was his job to protect her; he felt it in his bones, and he was about to go crazy. He could only watch as she did the hardest thing she had ever done. It was the hardest thing he'd ever done.

As he watched her helplessly, he marveled at how strong she was. He was sure he couldn't do it. She tensed up so hard that her arms became strings of tendons. Her face contorted so much that for long moments he couldn't look at her. But he still couldn't stop thinking about what an amazing woman she was.

Time seemed to move in slow motion. But then, suddenly, it was all over. The nurse handed Brad a tiny bundle. He looked down at a little face that was just as squished as his wife's had been only moments ago. He looked back and forth at the two most beautiful women in his life.

"Mel."

"Yeah honey," Melanie said, too exhausted to lift her head.

"I love you."

Melanie smiled. She didn't reply because she didn't have to. He knew. He looked back down at his newborn daughter. He knew she would grow up to be a strong woman too, just like her mother.

"And I love you, Olivia."

The Hendersons were a happy family.

# Ounce of Prevention Worksheet

There is a story about a farmer who plowed his fields but never planted them. Reading this story and not implementing what you learned will get you the same result as the farmer who plowed but never planted.

In math we learn that  $2+2=4$ . In marriage we learn that 1 man + 1 woman sometimes = a disagreement. Disagreements in marriage are inevitable. What is not inevitable is how we choose to handle the disagreements. Unfortunately most disagreements are handled in ways that damage our relationship. However, it is also possible to learn to handle disagreements in ways that can strengthen our relationship. To do so we need to follow a few simple guidelines.

1. Never have a disagreement when one or both of you are upset. Researchers have found when your heart rate climbs 10% above its normal resting rate you are no longer in control of the rational portion of your brain. This explains why you later regret things you say when you are upset. While it is true you can sometimes resolve a disagreement while you are both upset, you have to ask yourself the question, "At what cost?". Instead of continuing the heated disagreement CALL A TIMEOUT. Set a time when you will continue the discussion after both of you have calmed down. When you are calm you are more likely to use the rational part of your brain to solve the problem in a way that can strengthen your marriage.
2. Before you discuss possible solutions make sure both of you completely understand the other persons position.
3. Be willing to compromise. Many times you will find that the compromise is actually better than the solution you wanted. A common barrier to compromise is pride. Beware of pride. Sometimes our pride will blind us to seeing the better solution.
4. Don't discuss a disagreement when you are tired or hungry. Everyone has been told "Never go to bed angry" This is actually good advice if you implement it by taking a timeout from the disagreement and agreeing to continue the discussion the following day. Unfortunately, many people interpret it as meaning you should try to resolve the disagreement before you go to sleep. Even if you come to some sort of resolution the damage that is done to your relationship is just not worth it. One reason why so much damage is done is because your brain is like a muscle in that it requires a lot of energy to function properly. If you are tired or hungry your brain is not able to perform to the best of its ability. Wait until you are well fed and well rested to continue the discussion and you will find that it will become much easier to resolve the disagreement.
5. Be respectful and use a respectful tone of voice. If the phone rings during a heated conversation both you and your spouse know that whoever answers the phone will do so using a respectful tone of voice. If you have enough self-control to do that for someone who may turn out to be a complete stranger why not make an extra effort to provide that same courtesy for your spouse.

Take the time to write down a specific plan on what you are going to do differently the next time you find yourself in a disagreement with your spouse.