

Why do we allow  
pride to create so  
much damage to our  
marriage?

## 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.

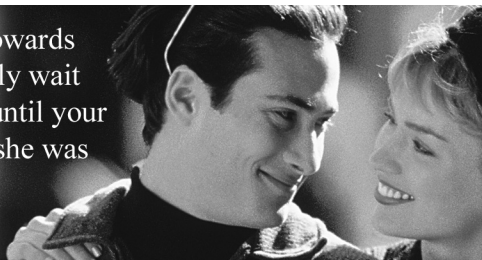
“Brad, I’m the oldest child in my family.”

“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.”

If you were driving towards a cliff would you really wait to change directions until your spouse admitted that she was wrong when she said turn left?



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.

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.”

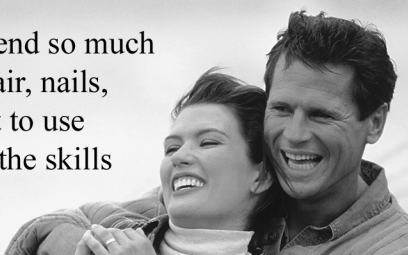
“Because it sounds like an underwear company?”

“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 aneurysm. “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

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?



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