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IN THE MAGAZINE: **MAD FOR EACH OTHER**

When their marriage of passion wasn't always a good thing, Allsion Glock and her husband turned to an international peace negotiator to help them fight fair.

When I was seven months pregnant with my second child, I ripped my kitchen door off its hinges. I was upset with my husband about something or other and chose to communicate it by transforming myself into a human wrecking ball. After the adolescent door-dismantling, I vigorously battered the teapot and scattered an entire box of Godiva chocolates across the floor, thundering around the house in my maternity leggings until I calmed down and was forced to clean up the mess.

I am an angry person, the sort of misanthrope who looks around and sees a heaping helping of injustice in the world and gets, well, pissed. My husband, Nick, is not an angry person, but he possesses a childlike expectancy about life, which makes him a joy to be around, until he is not—at which point he becomes a frenzied lunatic like me.

The same week that I pulled my Frances Farmer, Nick put his head through the ceiling. He was ranting and jumping up and down because of something




I'd done or not done or could have done better (the trigger for our fights is never as vivid as the aftermath). As his head bored through the drywall, I collapsed in hysterical laughter. So did he. We sat there gasping for breath, bits of ceiling coming down like hail, and it occurred to me for the first time that we were kind of pathetic.

Once, we'd fancied our behavior symptomatic of our mutual passion, à la Burton and Taylor—reprehensible conduct followed by frenzied lovemaking and extravagant jewelry purchases. But after three years and two kids, it had become obvious that our anger was vaudevillian, ego-driven, and pointless, and that if nothing else, our house was in peril. We needed help. We knew it would require either counseling or a Mason jar's worth of horse sedatives. We reluctantly chose the former.

Because we are both skeptical of conventional therapy (too passive, too painstaking), Nick and I decided to meet with nonviolent-communications specialist Kelly Bryson. Bryson, director of the Center for Compassion in San Diego and author of *Don't Be Nice, Be Real* (APC, 2002), has spent eighteen years spreading his techniques for frank, judgment-free exchange by holding seminars among such fractious groups as Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; Serbs, Muslims, and Croats in the Balkans; and leaders of the right and left political wings in Israel. Comparatively, our marital scuffles seemed a joke. So we made an appointment and fought ceaselessly the whole week prior, like addicts on a last binge before rehab.

It is pouring rain the afternoon we meet Bryson in a hotel suite in New York. When we enter the room and shake off our wet clothes, I am immediately alarmed by the sight of a guitar. I shoot Nick a look, but he is distracted by another, more horrifying vision—a large plastic bag with a tuft of fur poking out. I want to run, to catch the first cab home to Argument Land. But Nick has already sunk into the couch and is sticking his hand inside a fuzzy jackal puppet head.

"Uh, darling . . ." I start.

"*Hoowwwlllllll*," he yelps, tilting the puppet's snout toward the ceiling.

"*Howwwlllll!*"

Grudgingly, I sit down.

Bryson is a tall, slightly disheveled man with thinning gray-blond hair that flops over his expansive forehead. His basic MO for both couples and warring nations is to get them to communicate their grievances clearly and honestly, and to withhold judgment when hearing out the adversary—what he calls "empathic listening"—so that one can imagine the situation from the other side.

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