

Spirituality is an often intensely personal expression of one's relationship with God, self, and others. While both Judaism and various Christian denominations encourage us to share a spiritual relationship with our spouses or with an even wider circle, there are probably no two people who don't have significant differences in their relationship with God. For this reason alone, finding common ground eludes most people, who encounter difficulty doing so, at least for a while. One must be committed to this process over the long haul, if one is to have any chance of success.

Often, couples long for a unique sense of intimacy, and many want to include God in the relationship they share. But when this proves to be difficult, or an arena of conflict, disappointment and discouragement can follow. Another hindrance is the naïve belief that other couples have a great spiritual life and that no one else has problems like we do. This is certainly not true and likely an illusion. Surprisingly, many couples throughout history, even those judged famous or admirable, have revealed that they didn't share much of their spiritual life with one another. Sometimes people are so different that they just may not understand each other's experience with God or modes of relating to Him. Some people like to read more, some prefer to pray, some speak during prayer, and other feel the spoken word to be an intrusion on holy moments. Another cause for variation is each person being at a different place in their lives, both exterior and interior, dealing with different issues. Then again, there will be some common areas and places and practices that can be easily shared

While there will always be obstacles, it is a good thing to work and try and find even one or two areas where genuine connection with one's partner is possible. I generally advise couples to find those points of connection without forcing the issue, allowing each partner to be him- or herself in the process, seeking to grow individually and together.

Because obstacles of various kinds may exist and may show up unexpectedly, it is important to watch one's attitudes. Are you prideful against your partner? Do you feel threatened with their differentness? Do you feel inferior when noticing their areas of spiritual gifts, strength and confidence? Do you "should" each other and really have an agenda that is designed to change the other to be more like yourself? Don't.

Realize that God is in the midst, and that he does and will work in each of you and in different ways. The challenge and opportunity is to cooperate with him through willingness, humility, patience, and love, always looking for commonalities, respectfully treasured, and tenderly nourished.