

Believe the Best

by Shaunti Feldhahn

There are some big-expectations days (anniversaries, birthdays –and Valentine’s Day!) that are great opportunities to demonstrate love for your spouse. Yet *because* these days come with high expectations, all of us know they are also potential traps for landmines of disappointments! Take a typical couple planning for Valentine’s Day.

Susan is privately hoping for a new piece of jewelry like so many of her friends have gotten the last few years. So when David presents her with a waffle iron, she’s hurt – doesn’t he *know* that you give *personal* gifts on Valentine’s Day like jewelry or perfume? He’s only thinking of himself because he’s the one that loves waffles.

David is confused—didn’t she dog-ear that page in the Williams-Sonoma catalog? Then he’s upset. Why did she react like this, after all he did to find, buy, and surprise her with the item she obviously wanted? She has no idea how long that took – fighting the crowded mall during lunch break, missing lunch, and late to a meeting just to get that waffle iron ... and she’s sulking!

What is going on? Well, like many of us, Susan and David

are frustrated for one main reason: they are assuming that the other has bad intentions right now. He only got me the waffle iron because that’s what *he* wanted. She doesn’t appreciate everything I do for her. But if Susan and David would look beyond the hurt and be willing to see each other’s true intentions, things will dramatically change.

How do I know? Well, I certainly have been in Susan (or David’s!) shoes before myself! I’m guessing you have, too! But more to the point, for my most recent book (*The Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages*) I’ve spent the last three years studying what the happiest couples do differently that is making them so happy. And one very, very clear pattern is that they stop themselves from making these negative assumptions and instead remind themselves that their spouse cares. Which means they respond better... and it becomes a positive cycle that protects the marriage instead of hurting it.

Take a look at [this short piece](#) about this particular finding from the book – and see whether it gives you some ideas for how you might respond differently the next time you get a waffle iron for Valentine’s Day!

Resources

[Click to hear me share this secret on video.](#)

[Click to see an overview of my research and a few more secrets from *The Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages*](#)

This article was drawn from *The Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages*.
[Click here](#) for more about the book.

[Check out the blog](#) for more tips on having a highly happy marriage!

