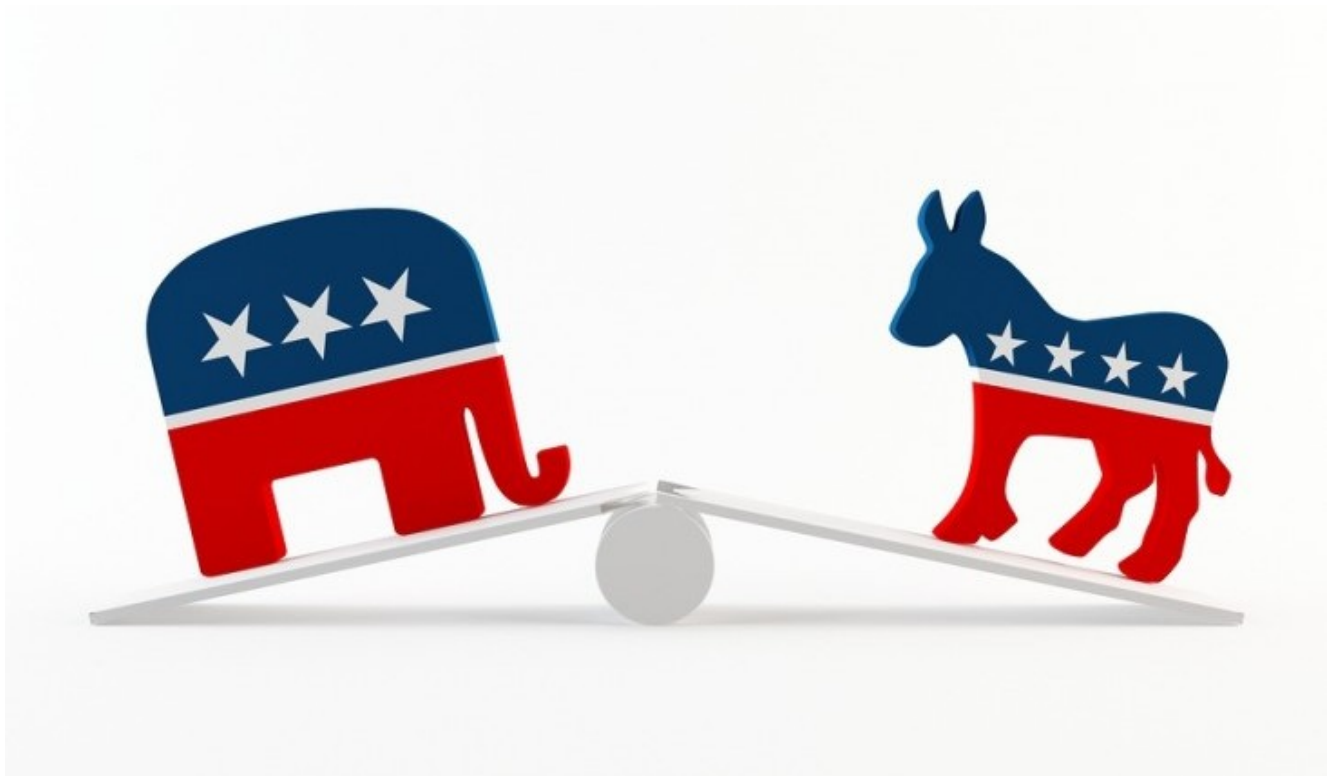


Can Politics Ruin Your Relationship?



By Mark Miller for GalTime.com

Relationship Politics...

There aren't many outstanding "inter-political" couples we can look up to. Up until last year we could cite Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger and Democrat Maria Shriver as peaceful partners, but they've since said "hasta la vista, baby." Arnold's back making movies and Maria's no doubt back dating human-sized men.

The most high-profile couple with opposing political beliefs (that is still together) is Democratic Strategist James Carville and Republican Consultant Mary Matalin. The two were

married in 1993, one year after they staffed opposing Presidential campaigns, and have said they don't talk politics at home. (Which is probably a good idea for relationship longevity for couples on opposite sides of various spectrums – not to talk politics, religion, or which of your spouse's friends or relatives you would "do" if given the opportunity).

So what about us normal folk – the people who don't make a living working and breathing politics, but still have opinions on the issues? Here are some additional tips on how to keep the peace with a partner of a different political party as this nasty election season heats up.

Don't bring it up: What's the first rule of Fight Club? "Don't talk about Fight Club." Politics can be just as brutal – though you usually don't have to wear a protective cup.

Agree to disagree: Even if we like to think of ourselves as "open-minded," most of us have our minds made up about major political issues. Your efforts to change your partner's mind will not only be unsuccessful, but could result in having heavy objects thrown at your head in a heated fight. You can often spot such people walking down the street. They're the ones with an omelet pan embedded in their skulls. Just smile understandingly and say, "I know... I know."

Focus on the positive: Your partner must have some other redeeming qualities besides their politics, right? After all, Albert Einstein and the Kardashians were able to carve out entire careers without mentioning politics, and how often do you even hear their names in the same sentence? Instead of emphasizing your differences, focus on your shared hobbies and opinions. Some middle-of-the-road interests to get you started: Pizza, football, puppies, The Beatles, light bondage. You know, those sorts of things.

Be up front: Sure, lies are fun and exciting, and lying gives you a thrill that nothing else can match, but... where was I

going with this? Oh yeah – be honest with your significant other about your beliefs, and be honest with yourself about how important those beliefs are to you. And, of course, be honest about how that spanking the other night was just a tad more painful than you'd expected. Or am I just bringing up too much of my own experience here?

Be respectful: Making fun of other people is great – but not when you're trying to develop a relationship. You don't have to agree with one another, but at least don't belittle the other person's beliefs. So, get in the habit of saying things like, "While I don't share your feelings about Mitt Romney (or President Obama), I respect them."

Share the remote: Don't watch Bill Maher in front of your partner if he or she is a Bill O'Reilly fan. DVR all your favorite programs, and sneak out of bed to watch them in the middle of the night while your partner sleeps. Or, watch clips online at work, like a real American. Or, use those shows as punishment for one another. If she overcooks or burns dinner, she must watch an episode of Bill Maher's show. If you forget her birthday, get ready to watch Bill O'Reilly's.

Show your true colors: If you're really itching to show your pride, passive-aggressively support your political party by wearing red or blue garb. Your significant other will never know that you are secretly campaigning, and if they call you out, you can make THEM look crazy. "OMG, you can't even look at the color red without thinking of Sarah Palin?!?" This is a technique known as "Gaslighting" – making someone think that they are actually going crazy. And romantic relationships don't get much more fun than that.

If all else fails, cut and run: Americans only get worked up about politics every four years (or two, if you're a midterm person). Tell your partner you've been called out of town on business until November 9. That will give him or her a few days after the election to stop gloating and/or crying.

Meanwhile you can sip drinks by the pool in sunny Canada. Dysfunctional? Of course. What's your point?

Politics aside, a wise person once said that the four most important words a man can use to ensure longevity in a relationship are "I'm sorry" and "Yes, dear." Although I'm also a big fan of flowers and an evening of love-making. Just be sure that neither the flowers nor the bed sheets are red, white and blue.