

Chapter 2 - Microscope Man

Personality

This guy doesn't miss a thing! He micromanages every last aspect of his life. Everyone from colleagues to his family thinks of him as anal-retentive. His motto is, "A place for everything, and everything in its place." This includes you!

Patty, a new client, came into my office to work on self-esteem issues, though it turned out what she really wished to address was her new relationship of six months. She loved Alex because he was organized and together, whereas Patty had a tendency to be scattered and unfocused. She didn't mind his chiding about her disorderly office, late credit card payments, or an out-of-place lock of hair. She thought this was his way of helping her to be a better person.

But when he started commenting on her choice of outfits, saying, "I know you love red, but it's a terrible color for you," or "That outfit makes your butt look too big," she began to feel overwhelmed by Alex's relentless perfectionism.

One morning she woke up to find him staring intently at her face. "Before saying, 'Good morning,' or asking me how I slept, he told me, 'You have a new line under your eyes, and you know your crow's feet are getting worse.'"

This is *Microscope Man* at his classic and insufferable worst. Sure, we can have sympathy for him and understand that he is likely the product of an overbearing mother or critical father. Still, how many of us would want to live under his incessant, critical gaze? For him, the world must hew to his design.

Often *Microscope Man* fears his own inadequacy and compensates with perfectionism. When he spots a speck of white lint on the black shirt of life, he is quick to comment. This can happen in just about any setting, and he is notorious for making people around him feel uncomfortable and self-conscious, a bit like driving next to a cop.

Things to Do

Microscope Man is often not even aware that he has a problem. From his perspective, the trouble is, "the damned imperfection of this world and the fools who don't get it."

First and foremost, do not allow him to criticize you. Tell him in your own words that his critiques of you are not acceptable. Let him know it makes you feel uncomfortable and that you want him to notice and tell you what he likes about you. Be clear that you value a supportive environment.

If he can start to relax and ease off on his controlling tendencies, maybe he can catch a glimpse of the perfection within the imperfection and the beauty that comes from accepting life at face value...

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