

On Facts and Opinions:

Sean was regarded as opinionated. "Roy Keane is the best player we have had ever," he says at work. "No" his pal replies, "You think he is the best player". "No", says Sean, "I know the difference between a good and a bad player, and what I am saying is fact. Period." "That's just your opinion", says his pal. "Wrong! It's a fact," retorts Sean.

Do you know anyone who speaks with great certainty about everything, someone who makes statements such as "Utter nonsense!" "That's complete rubbish!" or "You are wrong there and I'll tell you why!", when someone disagrees with him or her.

Such people are often insufferable. While often dominating in a group conversation, they are unpopular as close friends or confidants. Their philosophy is "I *think* I know, therefore I *do* know!" They talk as if their opinions are irrefutable facts.

Being right is very important to such people, even when they are dead wrong. They fail to realise that there is a big difference between *fact* and *truth* on the one hand, and *opinion*, *belief*, *taste*, and *preference* on the other. What is more, what is wrong is not the same as what we dislike or disapprove of.

A fact can be tested or checked. A belief, opinion, personal taste, or preference cannot: For example, peas are nicer than beans; sun-holidays are better than home holidays.

Every person has a right to express opinions without being ridiculed or shouted down with supposed facts. It is important to avoid attacking or labelling those who disagree with us. It is funny how often we consider our own opinions to be facts, and other people's facts to be opinions! In domestic quarrels between partners or family members this is often how arguments escalate. When one partner speaks *as if* their opinion was fact they upset the other who is trying to express an opinion.

When not dealing with clear-cut facts practise saying "It seems to me... You may not agree with me here... It is my impression... It is my opinion...."

Avoid saying things like "You are wrong... These are the facts... I know I am right here... You don't understand the situation..."

If someone says to you that "You are wrong there." Or "That is not the case..." or tries to argue you down with a patronizing argument it is important to assert yourself and respond by reminding the other that you are entitled to your opinion. "You obviously have a different view of this situation than I. But I see it differently..."

In marital relationships this fact vs. opinion argument can be repetitive. Different personality types but greater or lesser value on their opinions. Some people will be excessively modest and qualify a great deal of what they say by continually emphasising that "It is *only* my opinion" in a way that actually devalues it. This is typical of dependent, co-dependent, or avoidant types. On the other hand narcissistic,

self-absorbed, controlling types tend to be *opinionated* in a way that elevates their opinion to the status of gospel or fact. Anyway, that's just my opinion for today!