

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

Christi and JJ disagree over having children

A few months after their marriage at Stanford Memorial Church, Christi and JJ navigated into the waters of marital discord. On the horizon was a conflict over whether or not to have children.

“I’ve changed my mind,” Christi said. “I do not want to have children.”

“Why not?” asked JJ, disappointed.

“I just don’t want to spend my life picking up after other people,” Christi said. Having grown up in an alcoholic home, Christi felt she already had raised children — that is, her two alcoholic parents.

JJ loved his wife, but sometimes he worried. Since their wedding day, increasingly he saw how extreme her moods could be.

“Well, I hope you change your mind again,” he said, trying to make light of the situation. “About the children, I mean.”

“Not likely,” said Christi, looking angry.

JJ wondered what to do. When his wife got into dark moods, he felt lost.

Months earlier, he had encouraged

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Christi to see a therapist; and she had gone for a while, during which time things got better. But then she had abruptly quit.

“Why did you stop therapy?” he asked her.

“I just didn’t feel comfortable,” Christi said.

“What didn’t you feel comfortable about?” he asked.

“I don’t want to talk about it!” shouted Christi.

JJ backed off. More and more he was confused by his wife’s anger. Obviously she was upset, and he wanted to help her, but he didn’t know what to do. He wished she had continued with the therapist.

Christi looked at JJ and appeared to read his mind. “The therapist objected to my unwillingness to have children,” she said. “That’s why I quit.”



Christi and her billionaire husband JJ on their wedding day.

JJ was surprised. Why would her therapist object to that?

Christi read his mind again. “Because the therapist has four children herself,” she said. “And now she is telling all her patients that it is important to have children. By doing that, I feel she is invalidating my feelings.”

JJ didn’t know what to say.

It seemed a surprising and somewhat extraordinary thing to claim. He wasn’t sure he believed Christi’s interpretation, but he wanted to be supportive.

“That’s called counter-transference,” JJ said, “when a therapist imposes her personal life onto a patient’s life.”

“I know that,” said Christi, angrily. “I’m not an idiot. Why do you treat me like I’m an idiot?”

“I don’t think you’re an idiot,” said JJ. “I think you are a beautiful and intelligent woman, and I love you very much.”

Christi just scowled.

“What a mess,” JJ thought to himself.

More tomorrow.