

‘But You Never Said...’ Why Couples Remember Differently

March 31, 2015

The Wall Street Journal:

Carrie Aulenbacher remembers the conversation clearly: Her husband told her he wanted to buy an arcade machine he found on eBay. He said he’d been saving up for it as a birthday present to himself. The spouses sat at the kitchen table and discussed where it would go in the den.

Two weeks later, Ms. Aulenbacher came home from work and found two arcade machines in the garage—and her husband beaming with pride.

“What are these?” she demanded.

“I told you I was picking them up today,” he replied.

She asked him why he’d bought two. He said he’d told her he was getting “a package deal.” She reminded him they’d measured the den for just one. He stood his ground.

“I believe I told her there was a chance I was going to get two,” says Joe Aulenbacher, who is 37 and lives in Erie, Pa.

...

How can two people have different memories of the same event? It starts with the way each person perceives the event in the first place—and how they encoded that memory. “You may recall something differently at least in part because you understood it differently at the time,” says Dr. Michael Ross, professor emeritus in the psychology department at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, who has studied memory for many years.

...

Andrew Christensen, a distinguished research professor in the psychology department of the University of California, Los Angeles, couples therapist and co-author of “Reconcilable Differences,” says couples should try to accept that there is not one version of what really happened to get past troubling memory differences. And the discrepancies may be innocent—no one is lying. Focus on the truth of the emotions of the event, and not what really happened.

Read the whole story: [*The Wall Street Journal*](#)