
Removing Questions from Your Relationship Space

Thought of the Month: May 2007

Okay...here's the situation...

I come down to the kitchen on a Saturday morning of a workshop weekend. My intention is to go outside, blow the endless leaves off the sidewalks and parking area, vacuum the family room, and then help Donna with any leftover preparation for breakfast so we are ready for the couples arriving in one hour.

Donna greets me with, "Why are you wearing that good sweater?" (Now, many of you are thinking, "So what's wrong with that question?" and many of you, probably living with the first group, are thinking, "Yeah, that's like the questioning I get all the time.") Back to the kitchen...

I'm sure Donna is thinking, "I just bought that for him and he'll get it messed up and then I'll have to try to clean it!" (Remember, Donna grew up learning to look out for all possible outcomes of situations, trying to prevent bad things from happening, and taking care of whatever went wrong. So her question is perfectly understandable from her world.)

The only problem is that her "Why..." question irked me and I retorted with some sarcastic quip that I have "conveniently forgotten". (You see, it triggered a whole reservoir of feelings I carry from growing up hearing that I wasn't capable...I didn't do things right...I had done it wrong...a perfectly understandable response from my world.)

Well, we dissolved this potential powder key with a brief dialogue. (Brief because we already had lots of understanding and dialogue about our stories.) The point is...

Are your questions to your partner (or your children) creating positive energy and connection in your Space or are they polluting your Space:

- "Why do you drive so fast?"
- "Why don't you listen to me?"
- "Why don't you spend more time with the kids?"
- "Why do you spend so much money?"
- "Why don't you ever want to have sex?"
- "What did you do with the keys?"
- "Are you really going to have another drink?"
- "Why is your room always such a mess?"

Most questions in a relationship have the potential to be disconnecting and off putting. They immediately put the lizard's defensive measures in motion in our partner (or children)...just as the adversarial relationship set up in press conferences between the President/White House staff and the media with all those questions.

The questions above (which are very common, I think) all contain an implied statement of feeling and/or fear on the part of the sender. It is precisely this authentic, conscious expression of feeling and/or fear that can foster positive energy and connection in the space. It could sound like this:

- "I feel scared when we drive at this speed."
- "I feel like you don't care about what I think when it seems you don't hear what I say."
- "I just love watching you and the kids play together."
- "I am concerned that we will have to work extra years before we can retire and enjoy time traveling together."
- "I feel so close to you when we have sex."
- "I'm afraid I'm going to be late when I have to hunt for the keys."
- "I am concerned about your drinking."
- "I feel scared that I'm not teaching you how to take care of things and that you won't know how to take care of really important things when you are grown up."

Your partner (or child) will respond far more positively and generously to these sincere statements of feelings which focus on you rather than on them and what they are doing wrong. If they don't respond, just ask them to mirror! (The greatest gift can occur if both you and your partner get very curious about how the feelings connect to your story...remember the 90 - 10 Principle.)

Here's the challenge for the month...try going 48 hours making statements about your feelings/fears, eliminating questions and let us know how it goes.

We'd love to hear from you. Let us know about your questions, experiences, thoughts about and/or ideas for these new "Thought of the Month" notes.

With great encouragement and hope,
David and Donna