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Couples

Donna Reeves Bowman, LCSW-C & David L. Bowman, MDiv

Thought of the Month News and Notes

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**Issue: #47
January 2013**

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! We wish you the best of happiness and love in this new year, one of new opportunities, beginnings and fresh hope.

January is not fraught with must-do items for us and really not much effort is spent in making resolutions. It feels that in every day of our lives and relationships, we are striving for a closer connection to those we love and those who are part of our lives, like you! The weather encourages us to stay inside, build a fire and build little bridges to love, little pieces of memories and little conversations toward understanding. No big efforts, just little....sometimes "little" is okay!

We are here for you in your big issues and little ones, just remember to keep in communication---we WANT to hear from you!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

JANUARY: "Are You Keeping Score?"

We live in a world where keeping score is normative in nearly everything we do! We text our kid at her soccer game and ask, "Are you winning?" The state police keep score of our traffic violations. I think I am down to one or two points....Donna says three is "trouble." Some people keep score with their net worth. It tells them how "well" they are doing. How about our credit score...that crazy number that says people who really need a low interest rate cannot get it while those who do not have money worries can get low or no interest anytime they want? So keeping score is all around us and a part of us. A high score feels good and a low score feels bad.

Now to the point of this Thought...keeping score is deadly in relationships. That's right! Someone once said, "You can be right or you can be in relationship." You can put your energy toward winning or you can put your energy toward being connected. It's that simple! Keeping score is saying to your Partner, "You owe me" rather than "We are in this together and I want to figure it out."

It can start in an innocent way. A young couple with a baby bickers, "But I changed the diaper the last time. It's your turn!" I think we fall naturally into keeping score and we don't realize how destructive it can be. Again, as with competing (and all relational experiences), Imago says that keeping score is connected to our childhood story. Many of us who had siblings became painfully cognizant of how much more our siblings got than us...no matter what the birth order. That experience carries right into our intimate relationship.

Imago also tells us we don't have to live in our childhood or relate to each other as children. We are not compelled to express our hurt and frustration by hounding our Partner with the inequity of their contribution to the relationship compared to ours. This is really bad strategy for improving the relationship.

I have three ideas for those who would like to remove score-keeping from their relationship. They are:

- 1. Reserve score-keeping only for board games and other family games that are meaningless;**
- 2. Flood your Partner or your children with appreciations. It will neutralize any score-keeping they are tempted to do.**
- 3. (Here's the BIG ONE.) Do away with that account you have kept of all the things your Partner had done "wrong" (i.e. all those things that have disappointed you or hurt you.) No matter how much you "deserve" to keep it!**

Now build a bank account of your positive actions toward your Partner and toward the relationship. (Remember....each person is 100% responsible for the relationship 100% of the time!) Build that up and sign that bank account over to...your Partner! It is an unconditional Gift in the interest of your relationship!

I get it....this is a VERY hard thing to do. It is unnatural. It is a spiritual discipline.

As always, I love your feedback.

David

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Getting the Love You Want Workshops

**February, 8-10, 2013, Frederick, MD
April 12-14, 2013, Frederick, MD**

Next Step Workshop

March 16-17, 2013, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude." William James

"Find a guy who calls you beautiful instead of hot, who calls you back when you hang up on him, who will lie under the stars and listen to your heartbeat, or will stay awake just to watch you sleep... wait for the boy who kisses your forehead, who wants to show you off to the world when you are in sweats, who holds your hand in front of his friends, who thinks you're just as pretty without makeup on. One who is constantly reminding you of how much he cares and how lucky his is to have you.... The one who turns to his friends and says, 'that's her.'"

"No man is worth your tears, but once you find one that is, he won't make you cry"

"You want me to act like we've never kissed, you want to forget; pretend we've never met, and I've tried and I've tried, but I haven't yet... You walk by, and I fall to pieces." Patsy Cline

"You can't stop loving or wanting to love because when its right, it's the best thing in the world. When you're in a relationship and it's good, even if nothing else in your life is right, you feel like your whole world is complete." Keith Sweat

"There is no feeling more comforting and consoling than

"There is no feeling more comforting and consoling than knowing you are right next to the one you love."

"True love is like a pair of socks: you gotta have two and they've gotta match."

"Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for awhile and leave footprints on our hearts. And we are never, ever the same."

"There is no feeling more comforting and consoling than knowing you are right next to the one you love."

"You learn to like someone when you find out what makes them laugh, but you can never truly love someone until you find out what makes them cry."

"Well, it seems to me that the best relationships - the ones that last - are frequently the ones that are rooted in friendship. You know, one day you look at the person and you see something more than you did the night before. Like a switch has been flicked somewhere. And the person who was just a friend is... suddenly the only person you can ever imagine yourself with" Gillian Anderson

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
Bowman & Associates, PA**

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Issue: #48
February 2013

Dear Friends,

2013 is rushing by and we are caught up in the momentum! February feels like it is a respite from the major holidays but the advent to a few minor ones---well some people think they are minor, anyway.

Valentine's Day is fun in our household, as it is an opportunity to splurge on a few chocolates and to tell each other, family members and friends what they mean to us. Soon we'll have St. Patrick's Day where we all feel Irish, get a little silly, wear green and risk drinking green colored beverages! This month we have Groundhog Day, Love Your Pet Day (20th) Be Humble Day (22nd) and who doesn't love National Tortilla Chip Day on February 24th?! I just discovered National Sleeping Day on the 28th though there is no record of its origin---maybe the creator was sleeping on the job!

I recommend taking time to just have fun and celebrate life's less serious side. Fun is always well, FUN! It might just be what will help you and your partner to lighten up and celebrate each other and your relationship! Sometimes all the little tricks we try just don't work and we struggle to get back to "where we were" at the end of a workshop. If you are challenged with dialogue issues, this Thought may help!

We are here for you as you begin this new year with hopes and dreams for big and little accomplishments. Remember to keep in communication---we WANT to hear from you!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

FEBRUARY: You May Need a Coach

We are grateful to be able to provide a

wonderful and powerful experience for couples known as the Getting the Love You Want Workshop. We absolutely know that this weekend has changed many lives for good and has saved many marriages. It is humbling and deeply meaningful to have participated in eleven hundred relationships over 13 years.

As terrific as the weekend is, I do not have the illusion that all relationships are cured of their core conflicts after the weekend. And I don't expect that all couples who leave the workshop are able to safely communicate safely in "dialogue." I know we weren't.

I compare it to a group skiing lesson which often introduces folks to the thrill of navigating down a slope of snow on a couple of thin boards. It is exhilarating to be sure. But graduating from a group ski lesson does not prepare anyone for the difficult situations encountered on a double black diamond slope. I'm guessing many couples could benefit greatly from some coaching sessions from a qualified Imago coach/therapist.

Here are some indicators I've thought of that might suggest some professional coaching could ease and enrich your relationship. I hope you identify with some of these:

- 1. You and your Partner are not even trying to dialogue after a while because you had some hurtful attempts at it;**
- 2. One of you or both of you are requesting dialogue in order to "change" the other. (Be honest, now;)**
- 3. Your time together is all used up in just getting the kids to bed and taking care of family chores;**
- 4. You've forgotten what to say or when to say it in the mechanics of the dialogue, itself;**
- 5. You have something so difficult to discuss that you are afraid to bring it up because you know it will not go well...even as you try to dialogue;**
- 6. You've fallen into a "comfortable" state of parallel, functional, and unconscious relating;**
- 7. You've lost touch with that deep compassion you had for your Partner's childhood story when you left the workshop;**
- 8. You've lost touch with how impactful your own childhood story is on your adaptive behaviors and how they scare your Partner;**
- 9. You are nurturing a resentment toward**

your Partner that keeps you from wanting them to know you better (Intimacy= Into Me See;)

10. One or both of you are not convinced that the childhood has anything to do with the frustration you are now feeling;

11. You have forgotten or are doubting the 90-10 Rule;

12. You are not being affectionate or sexual with each other because it isn't safe;

13. You go through the dialogue, but never truly feel "gotten" (validated;)

14. You are having the famous "half-assed" dialogues. (Donna and I perfected those for a while.)

15. You feel a deep impulse to connect with you Beloved, but it just doesn't seem to happen. And you're losing hope that it ever will.

These are a few of my thoughts about how to know some coaching might help.

I would love your additional thoughts on this, as you are the experts on this subject.

Donna and I will help direct any of you to a great Imago coach in your area. Just ask us.

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

It is a curious thought, but it is only when you see people looking ridiculous that you realize just how much you love them. Agatha Christie

A man falls in love through his eyes, a woman through

A man falls in love through his eyes, a woman through her ears. Woodrow Wyatt

Forget love, I'd rather fall in chocolate! Unknown

"I laugh, I love, I hope, I try, I hurt, I need, I fear, I cry. And I know you do the same things too. So we're really not that different, me and you." Colin Raye

"Lust fades, so you'd better be with someone who can stand you." The Story of Us

Gravitation cannot be held responsible for people falling in love. Albert Einstein

"Love at first sight is possible, but it pays to take a second look." Unknown

Love-a wildly misunderstood although highly desirable malfunction of the heart which weakens the brain, causes eyes to sparkle, cheeks to glow, blood pressure to rise and the lips to pucker."

Many a man has fallen in love with a girl in a light so dim he would not have chosen a suit by it. Maurice Chevalier

Love is the gross exaggeration of the difference between one person and everyone else. George Bernard Shaw

Nothing takes the taste out of peanut butter quite like unrequited love. (Charlie Brown) Charles Schultz

True love comes quietly, without banners or flashing lights. If you hear bells, get your ears checked. Erich Segal

The perfect lover is one who turns into a pizza at 4:00 A.M. Charles Pierce

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

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Issue: #49
March 2013

Dear Friends,

Spring is here and with it comes a sense of renewal and hope. It is not a stretch to consider that our relationships may need some renewal also. No matter the stage of a relationship, it is vital that it remain dynamic, changing and adapting to the realities of life, new circumstances and the advent of new relationships in all aspects of life. Are there new co-workers? New friends? New family dynamics? It is amazing how one new thing can change everything!

We can see the new buds just beginning in our garden and are hopeful that they flourish and are not tamped down by sudden snow or storm. It is our hope that you see the buds of renewed energy and hope in your relationships. Let us help where we can do so!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

MARCH: A New Way to Be in Relationship

I was twelve years old when I heard the now famous words from JFK's inaugural address, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

These words have an immutable truth, somehow. Most everyone knows this phrase, even those who never saw John Kennedy. Imagine this phrase applied to other aspects of life:

Parenting: "Ask not what your children can do for you; ask what you can do for your children."

Religion: "Ask not what your synagogue/church/temple can do for you; ask what you can do for your

synagogue/church/temple."

Environment: "Ask not what your environment can do for you; ask what you can do for your environment."

Now how about this... "Ask not what your relationship can do for you: ask what you can do for your relationship."

Almost everyone approaches their relationship with the question, "What's in it for me?" People who call us for help for their relationship are usually feeling, "I'm not getting my needs met". Occasionally, some will say "Neither of us feels fulfilled".

Almost NEVER does anyone say "I think the relationship needs something more or different from me and I want to find out what that is."

"ASK FIRST WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIP!"

Let me give you some reasons why this approach will change your Relationship. (Did I mention it will also change your life?)

- 1. It is more proactive and productive than trying to get someone to meet your needs. Ghandi said, "Be the change you want to see."**
- 2. It is more responsible. Remember...if we are not getting our needs met it is probably because our Partner is not experiencing the relationship as safe enough to stretch and give us what we need (even when they long for us to be happy.)**
- 3. It is a spiritual truth. "You must deal with the log in your own eye, before removing the speck in your Partner's eye" "It's better to give than to receive. " The Jewish Midrash informs us that, "the giver in small things becomes the receiver of much"**
- 4. It will relieve your Partner's despair and will revive their interest in meeting your needs.**
- 5. It will make you a healthier, more grateful, more whole, more alive person.**
- 6. It will move you from Victim to Victor in your life.**

AND, just as a bonus...it will contribute toward healing the Planet....relationships between parents and children, siblings, friends, colleagues, employers/employees, corporations, political positions, countries, future generations, etc, etc, etc....

As always, we welcome your comments, challenges, and questions.

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

If there are flaws they are in ourselves, and our task therefore must be one not of redesign but of renewal and reaffirmation, especially of the standards in which all of us believe. Elliot Richardson

Endings: sometimes a season of sorrow and grief. Endings: what must precede new beginnings. Life is an endless cycle of endings and beginnings. Renewal and rebirth cannot occur without endings - as the new year's crop can only be planted and flourish in the decay of last year. Jonathan Lockwood Huie

In the spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours. Mark Twain

A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity. The Buddha

A little Madness in the Spring Is wholesome even for the King. Emily Dickinson

Believe in the goodness of life.

Believe in the power of time to heal and to renew.
Believe in the power of forgiveness and gratitude.
Believe in the gift of rainbows and butterflies.
Believe in the laughter of children. Jonathan
Lockwood Huie

Love that does not renew itself every day
becomes a habit and in turn a slavery. Khalil Gibran

Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe
full of slush. Doug Larson

Rest when you're weary.
Refresh and renew yourself, your body,
your mind, your spirit.
Then get back to work. Ralph Marston

In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell
like dirt.- Margaret Atwood

To be interested in the changing seasons is a happier
state of mind than to be hopelessly in love with
spring. George Santayana

An optimist is the human personification of spring.
Susan J. Bissonette

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

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Issue: #50
April 2013

Dear Friends,

We continue to be astounded by the resilience of the human spirit! The recent national events that have rocked the United States and the awesome and totally selfless acts of individuals responding to an inner call to action give us hope for the world, for us and for our children and grandchildren.

Most of us will never have to respond to such major catastrophes and we wonder, would we be up to the challenge? With this big thought in mind, maybe we can step back a bit and look at our own little world. Could it be that stepping up to the challenge might be reaching out to a partner, loved one, co-worker, neighbor? Not in a big way but in a loving and personal way. A kind word, a touch, a smile. What are your expectations about your place in the "big picture?" Maybe by starting "little" we will eventually do something "big"-----or not! But if we take a little step today, we may find our expectations will astound us!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

APRIL: The End of Expectations, The Beginning of Real Love

I suppose we all have expectations about all sorts of things. I know I expected that at this stage of life we would be near financial independence and would be vacationing in exotic places for half the year. It hasn't exactly worked out that way. I also expected to lose 30 pounds by May 1. That's also going to be very difficult at this point!

On the other hand, I really had little expectations about what it would be like to be a grandfather. It has turned out to be a spectacular joy. I think fondly about Abby every single day.

Isn't it odd that sometimes we are wonderfully surprised when our expectations are at their lowest? This brings me to my newest thought about relationships. (This thought is a corollary of last month's ideas.) Our happiness and satisfaction in relationship is probably inversely proportional to our expectations. In other words, the fewer expectations we set up, the more satisfied we probably are.

Don't get me wrong. I have compassion for people who find themselves disillusioned, sometimes bitterly so, in their experience of marriage and intimacy. But let me ask you this, "Are you better served by focusing all your energy on your disappointment or by working on your own contentment and serenity and your appreciations of what is good?"

I'll never forget the privilege I had as a 20 year old Seminary student to have a small group meeting with the late Granger Westberg, a granddaddy of the pastoral counseling movement and a pioneer of the holistic health movement. His famous book "Good Grief" is in 50th anniversary edition now on Amazon. He said to us (43 years ago:) "'Gratitude' is the best 'attitude' for health and aliveness. And resentment in any form is a plan for sickness and death." An amusing thought for a twenty year old has evolved into a life principle for a 63 year old. (I wish I could tell you I live by it all the time. Donna wishes this too.)

I love the character played by Katherine Hepburn in "On Golden Pond". She is a somewhat crusty woman herself, but she maintains a PMA (positive mental attitude). She encourages both her husband and her daughter who are prone to negativity about life and about their relationship. She clearly has not gotten everything she has wanted in life, but when negativity swirls around her she will have no part of it. When her husband is

mentally failing, she fearfully and courageously says "You're my Knight in shining armor. Don't you forget it. We're going to get back on that horse and I'm going to be right behind you, holding on tight....and away we're going to go..go..go."

What a model for any of us to follow the next time we are fearful of not having our expectations met by our partner or by our relationship.

Try something! Write down all the major joys and disappointments of your life. Keep going until you have 5 positive things to every 1 negative. Study it. Then share your list with your partner and family. You'll be moving toward health for you and those around you.

Note: I love any feedback you have from reading this thought. I'd even like to hear if it should be shorter or more expanded. Personal stories are the very best. Thank You.

David (and Donna)

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Women marry men hoping they will change. Men marry women hoping they will not. Albert Einstein

Why does a woman work ten years to change a man, then complain he's not the man she married? Barbra Streisand

If it's true that men are such beasts, this must account for the fact that most women are animal lovers. Doris Day

"Love is everything it's cracked up to be. That's why people are so cynical about it...It really is worth fighting for, risking everything for. And the trouble is, if you don't risk everything, you risk even more." Erica Jong

Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute, and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. That's relativity. Albert Einstein

"Love is like quicksilver in the hand. Leave the fingers open and it stays. Clutch it, and it darts away." Dorothy Parker

"Love is friendship set on fire." unknown

"Love is an ideal thing, marriage a real thing." Goethe

"Love is the master key that opens the gates of happiness." Oliver Wendell Holmes

"Maybe love is like luck. You have to go all the way to find it." Robert Mitchum

"Love stretches your heart and makes you big inside." Margaret Walker

"Love is more than three words mumbled before bedtime. Love is sustained by action, a pattern of devotion in the things we do for each other every day." Nicholas Sparks

"We're all a little weird, and life's a little weird. And when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall in mutual weirdness and call it love." Dr. Seuss

"To love is to receive a glimpse of heaven." Karen Sunde

"A love song is just a caress set to music." Sigmund Romberg

"Love is an act of endless forgiveness, a tender look

which becomes a habit." Peter Ustinov

"Love is like a violin. The music may stop now and then, but the strings remain forever." unknown

"Love doesn't make the world go round, love is what makes the ride worthwhile." Elizabeth Browning

"Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,
A medley of extemporanea;
And love is a thing that can never go wrong;
And I am Marie of Roumania." Dorothy Parker

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Issue: #51
May 2013

Dear Friends,

As we close Spring and the weather warms up to summer, we are conscious of change...in the weather and the national sense of hope and resiliency. Our hopes and prayers are with all of you, those affected by the recent events, those who have loved ones involved and those of us who have love and empathy for our fellow Americans. We keep you in our thoughts!

Are you doing what you can to take care of yourself, your loved ones and friends? Often we tend to reach out to others, to respond to what we perceive is a greater need and in doing so, neglect those closest to us. Perhaps turning off the television, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr...social media and media in general and focusing on the here and now with our loved ones can give us a better perspective. Take a walk, read a story to a child, give a loving touch or just a smile to someone. For you, too, take a moment and breathe! All will be fine as long as we have hope and love.

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

MAY: The Issue is not the Issue

Couples often come into an appointment and are asking to work on (or sometimes rehash) a conflict they recently had. Here's the funny part. Quite often one or both of the partners cannot remember exactly what their fight was about. They remember the negative feelings but not the issue.

Want to know why? The issue is not the issue.

It's crazy. Couples can get into knock down, bar the doors, emotionally laden power struggles around a text message unreturned. Or around who was supposed to pick up Jenny from soccer.

Donna and I once had a three day standoff having to do with me (of course) putting some plates in a cupboard where they did not belong (according to Donna.) Now let me ask you: "What could be so important about where plates are put that two very intelligent, peace-loving, and highly trained, well reputed Imago coaches would go at each other with such vociferousness?" (I'm not making this up.)

Some of you know us well enough to answer this. We've danced this number many times before. I felt criticized for yet another small mistake that any "reasonable" person should just get over. I dug in. Donna felt again the sense of having to take care of everything while I was being oblivious or uncaring. She had had enough. Incensed would be the word.

Going deeper. When things calmed a bit we came back to what we know and teach. Of course the stories of childhood are involved. The incident triggered for me an apparently still open wound of being shamed for not doing things quite right. Somehow that feeling lodged in me with my father, who I wanted to impress but just never made it. He was not a mean man. Donna drew it back to a story of having to take care of things that other people did not want to or know how to take care of. This feeling of being responsible and taken for granted is deep and can still get triggered.

Here's the point: When we were able to name the negative feelings behind the incident and then get to the childhood hurts underneath it all, we were able to turn the conflict into an opportunity for compassion and understanding.

Just do this. In the next "conflict" you get into as a couple, stop and think "Is this issue really driving this energy, or is a deeper and more profound sense of disconnection, fear, or disrespect involved. I'll bet that many women

reading this will find a fear of disconnection, of not feeling supported, of feeling uncherished at the heart of it. And I'll bet that many men will find a sense of being disrespected, criticized or shamed in some way at the heart of it.

And then go deeper. Apply your own childhood story and that of your partner to the conflict and see if the dots don't connect. It takes some searching to be sure but the discovery can save your relationship a lot of heartache. Perhaps there are no issues- only temporary disconnections.

We love any feedback that you have. Also I'm learning to work our Facebook page. Be patient. I'm old. Oh, and be sure to "Like" us! There is a link in the Quick Link box above.

Why not consider a repeat of the workshop? Many couples have found that doing the workshop again is a real boost to their connection. *And at half price it's a bargain.*

Coming up: June 14-17----July 19-21-----
September 13-15

Second level "Overcoming Reactivity"-
November 16-17

David (and Donna)

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July 19-21, Frederick, MD

September 13-15, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**"By changing nothing, nothing changes." Tony
Robbins**

"Today is the first day of the rest of your life."

Anonymous

"All great changes are preceded by chaos." Deepak Chopra

"Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward." C.S. Lewis

"Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together." Marilyn Monroe

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect." Mark Twain

"When in doubt, choose change." Lily Leung

"If work were so pleasant, the rich would keep it for themselves." Mark Twain

"If what you're doing is not your passion, you have nothing to lose."

"Remembering you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart." Steve Jobs, Stanford commencement address 2005

"Use what talents you possess, the woods will be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best." Henry van Dyke

"Fear, uncertainty and discomfort are your compasses toward growth."

"The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one." Elbert Hubbard

"To create more positive results in your life, replace 'if only' with 'next time.'"

"If you run you stand a chance of losing, but if you don't run you've already lost." Barack Obama

"As soon as anyone starts telling you to be "realistic," cross that person off your invitation list." John Eliot

**"I can accept failure, everyone fails at something.
But I can't accept not trying." Michael Jordan**

**"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world;
the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the
world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on
the unreasonable man."George Bernard Shaw**

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
Bowman & Associates, PA**

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Issue: #52
June 2013

Dear Friends,

Ah, summer! Is there any better time to sit on a deck with a glass of sweet tea and just "be?" Wouldn't it be delightful to face the summer as a young child with the thrills of lazy days, bike rides, swimming and playing hide-and-seek until your Daddy stood on the porch and whistled you home? Nostalgia is a great way to beat stress and be in the here-and-now. Try listening to some of the music you loved in high school--it can bring back the joys of less complicated days and heighten the relaxation of summer days ahead.

We try also to grasp at the simple joys in complicated times and we wish for you the same. This month's Thought is a round about way to step back from reactions that complicate life, be a little more relaxed and maybe a lot less inclined to react without taking time to give your Partner or loved one the benefit of caring thought.

We hear from you so often about what a difference the Workshop has made in your lives. We would like to invite you to think of a couple you know who could really use the workshop. We will send the referring persons a copy of the new Imago best seller "Making Marriage Simple". Helping heal the planet and receiving a free book.

Don't you want a couple you care about to have the tools that benefit your relationship? Our next workshop is July 19-21. Don't wait...share the joy!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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JUNE: Forgiving Your Partner (for Being

Themselves)

I know...it sounds a little funny. But the more I've observed myself and others, the more I believe there is something to this. I'm thinking today of those much smaller "issues" that keep coming up again and again as an affront to us. Things such as....our Partner always being late....or when our Partner needs us to load the dishwasher in just a certain way.

I'll give a D & D example that may help. Donna is an organizational wizard. She co-planned the international Imago conference when it was in D.C. She thinks through the way things can work best in our own life right down to the way the refrigerator is organized with which items going into certain colored containers. Some of you are thinking, "What's wrong with that?" Others are thinking, "Sounds obsessive to me." Neither of these thoughts is useful.

What I have found to be most constructive is to withhold my reptilian irritation at "being told how things work best" and to bring into focus my compassion for Donna's Story. Growing up it was important for her to orchestrate many things so that life would work best for everyone. The oldest of four children, she became proactive, preventive, and skilled at keeping life running smoothly.

Don't get me wrong. It used to rankle me that over and over again, I was "criticized" for not doing things "right." That's why I use the word forgiveness. It's more than just accepting your Partner's different world. It's actively integrating the reason for the behavior and offering positive compassion for something that could cause real conflict.

Oh, before I forget...Donna has learned to forgive me for my "exuberant periods." You know how Van Gogh had a Blue Period in his work? Well, I have had many exuberant periods of obsession in my life. There's my Horticulture Period, my Woodworking Period, my Stock Market Period, my Classical Music History Period, my Model Rocket Period, my Thai Cooking Period, my Model Railroad Period, and my Opera Period. Still to come are my

future periods of Learn to Play the Saxophone and Hike Every National Park.

Donna can clearly get frustrated when so much of my energy and attention (and our life) are consumed with my passions. But she also knows my Story of being dissuaded and scolded by my Father when I expressed my energy and exuberance for many things. It felt punishing and shaming for him to call me down for jumping around, making noise, and asking so many questions.

So...here's the deal. The next time your Partner is doing that thing again that irritates you or seems designed to disrespect you, control you or criticize you, just ask yourself one or both of these questions. "Is this a behavior they genuinely (and brilliantly) learned as an adaptation in their childhood to stay safe and survive?" "Is this an expression of that part they had to hide in their childhood?"

If you can see your Partner with new eyes and hear them with new ears, you can develop a compassion and connection that will serve your relationship well.

David (and Donna)

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September 13-15, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

A handful of patience is worth more than a bushel of brains. Dutch Proverb

Our patience will achieve more than our force. Edmund Burke

It is very strange that the years teach us patience - that the shorter our time, the

greater our capacity for waiting. Elizabeth Taylor

There are two cardinal sins from which all others spring: Impatience and Laziness. Franz Kafka

Patience has its limits. Take it too far, and it's cowardice. George Jackson

We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world. Helen Keller

The fates have given mankind a patient soul. Homer, The Iliad

If I have ever made any valuable discoveries, it has been owing more to patient attention, than to any other talent. Isaac Newton

How can a society that exists on instant mashed potatoes, packaged cake mixes, frozen dinners, and instant cameras teach patience to its young? Paul Sweeney

The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it open. Arnold H. Glasgow

Patience serves as a protection against wrongs as clothes do against cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you. So in like manner you must grow in patience when you meet with great wrongs, and they will then be powerless to vex your mind. Leonardo da Vinci

I am extraordinarily patient, provided I get my own way in the end. Margaret Thatcher

There will be a time when loud-mouthed, incompetent people seem to be getting the best of you. When that happens, you only have to be patient and wait for them to self destruct. It never fails. Richard Rybolt

As anyone who has ever been around a cat for any length of time well knows,cats have enormous patience with the limitations of the human kind. Cleveland Amory

Patience is the companion of wisdom. Saint Augustine

Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections but instantly set about remedying them - every day begin the task anew. Saint Francis de Sales

When traveling with someone, take large doses of patienceand tolerance with your morning coffee. Helen Hayes

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

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Issue: #53
July 2013

Dear Friends,

This Thought finds us living quietly and contentedly on vacation. Just like you, we struggle with balance and taking time for the joy of just living! Letting our bodies, minds and spirit go "quiet" is one way we achieve balance. Walks together with no real need to talk and mull over schedules, workshops, sessions...we just let it "be" and somehow it all takes care of itself! Quiet allows us to dream a little, hold hands and watch the sunset, take a moment to listen to nature and realize that there is no real reason to rush through life. For awhile at least, a snail's pace is a GOOD thing!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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JULY: What About Constructive Criticism?

Donna and I have been pounding the drum for removing negativity from all relationships (including our own.) We feel it is the singularly most important action you can take to transform your Relationship.

Most people nod approvingly when they hear us say this. At the same time, I can sense several other thoughts going on for many of you. One goes like this, "I am not being negative. I am just expressing myself." BE CAREFUL! As Donna says in the workshop, we usually express ourselves in relationships by sharing, "what we don't get"; "what we don't want," "what our Partner is not doing." (i.e. "You don't hold my

hand anymore." "I don't feel I can trust you.") If these statements are not negative, tell me what they are. Abundant language is the corrective here. "You know I love for us to hold hands." "I long to trust you."

Another thought people have and often verbalize is this, "What about constructive criticism? What's wrong with that?" Harville Hendrix used to say, "There is no such thing as constructive criticism in an intimate relationship." Let me explain his position.

No matter how nicely you think you are framing your "constructive criticism" and, regardless of your "good intention," you are likely pointing out how your Partner is not acting in some way you think they "should" be acting. For example, my dear wife, Donna, spent 20 years trying me to drink my coffee quietly. No matter how she said it, her "expectations" of me were clear...drink my coffee in a way she found acceptable! And, we now know that our expectations and our attachment to outcomes are certain paths to disappointment and conflict in relationship.

It's hard, isn't it? It's hard to learn to say things like, "When you clean up the kitchen it brightens my whole outlook on life." And then to just notice and appreciate your Partner's smile. (In the interest of full disclosure and "showing up," I used to think that the only way an athletic coach could really do their job was to offer "constructive criticism." As I think about it...every one of these (e.g. "Focus....quit worrying about missing....THINK!" or "You have to quit worrying about the defense....just shoot.") would be more powerful (and thus, more effective) if shared with abundant language. (e.g. "I know you can hit that basket. I know you can focus on the goal.")

One more thing about "constructive criticism"....in our 30 years of marriage, Donna has yet to "criticize" me for anything I wasn't already aware of about myself. Think about it. All the wasted negative energy you express and your Partner already knew their shortcomings. (The same goes for my criticisms of her, by the

way.) All we are doing with our "constructive criticism" is heaping shame upon the One we love most. How crazy is that?

Of course, we are really all just telling our story. Yes, I know. We have to be pretty confident and safe and self-actualized to remove negativity (in any form) from our relationship. But, think about the alternative? Isn't it a worthy goal?

David (and Donna)

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Next Step Workshops

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Don't pay any attention to what they write about you. Just measure it in inches." Andy Warhol

"Don't criticize what you can't understand." Bob Dylan

"To avoid criticism say nothing, do nothing, be nothing." Aristotle

"I am my own biggest critic. Before anyone else has criticized me, I have already criticized myself. But for the rest of my life, I am going to be with me and I don't want to spend my life with someone who is always critical. So I am going to stop being my own critic. It's high time that I accept all the great things about me." C. JoyBell C.

"He has a right to criticize, who has a heart to help." Abraham Lincoln

"I pay no attention whatever to anybody's praise or blame. I simply follow my own feelings." Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

"But instead of spending our lives running towards our dreams, we are often running away from a fear of failure or a fear of criticism." Eric Wright

"How much easier it is to be critical than to be correct." Benjamin Disraeli

"I have already settled it for myself so flattery and criticism go down the same drain and I am quite free." Georgia O'Keeffe

"You can't let praise or criticism get to you. It's a weakness to get caught up in either one." John Wooden

"Don't criticize what you don't understand, son. You never walked in that man's shoes." Elvis Presley

"When art critics get together they talk about Form and Structure and Meaning. When artists get together they talk about where you can buy cheap turpentine." Pablo Picasso

"It is much more valuable to look for the strength in others. You can gain nothing by criticizing their imperfections." Daisaku Ikeda

"The pleasure of criticizing takes away from us the pleasure of being moved by some very fine things." Jean de La Bruyère

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
Bowman & Associates, PA**

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Issue: #54
August 2013

Dear Friends,

It's almost Fall and children are going back to school, new backpacks, new clothes and anticipation of new adventures. As we bid farewell to the lazy days of summer, we start to get excited ourselves about the approach of new adventures and new opportunities to learn and grow. A friend recently got a new smartphone and bemoans the fact that she must not BE smart! She is off to "phone school" that dreaded Sunday morning at the Verizon store where only the remedial students go.

How about you and your partner? Are you up for a new opportunity to learn? Sometimes we think that a marriage license or just living with another person is so easy that we don't need any more "learning." I suggest that due to the baggage alone, a coach or guide to help us to learn new ways is an awesome opportunity. Why not let us help you and your partner. Wouldn't learning something new create more opportunities to love and be loved? We have lots of workshops and opportunities coming up. See the links below and on the side panel.

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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AUGUST: Why Can't My Wife Be Like My Dog?

In the great musical classic, "My Fair Lady," Pickering (played in full sexist fashion by Rex Harrison) ponders lyrically: "Why can't a woman be more like a man." I have been spending a lot of time with our dog, Ben, and it has caused me to ponder: "Why can't my wife be more like my dog?"

Think about it! Our big black lab/great Dane hybrid is always pleasant. He doesn't expect much. Actually he doesn't expect anything. He loves it when I pet him. He likes me to get close and play with him, but he never complains when I forget to show him affection. He likes it when I feed him and never complains that we don't ever go out to eat. Sometimes we just are in a room together in silence and he never once has insisted that I share my feelings with him. Even when I am in a foul mood he is his steady lovable self. No reactivity to my moods.

He loves to go anywhere with me in the car and he never complains about my driving or asks if I really know the directions for where I'm going. I got pulled over for speeding once and he just sat quietly without shaming or blaming. He just looked at me with his adoring brown eyes as if to say, "I'm sorry." Sometimes I go somewhere without him and he has not once asked me where I am going or when I will be back.

We can watch a whole Nationals baseball game together and he doesn't seem at all bored. When I come in the house Ben always greets me with a joyous wag of the tail and a lick. When he comes into a room where I am located, he always comes over to check and see if I'm ok. Then he goes and minds his own business. On a more revealing note, he doesn't mind that I go out to pee in the yard. No embarrassment for him. In fact he often goes with me. And if I am browsing and happen to linger on a picture of Heidi Klum in a bikini, he doesn't make a big deal of it. I guess he pretends to not even notice.

When I get sloppy and leave my clothes on the floor he sees it as a good thing and promptly lays down on them. All kinds of things are broken around the house and Ben never even mentions any of them. He's happy with things just as they are.

So why can't my wife be more like my dog? Hmmm. You know if she was just like my dog... after 30 years I could likely have become a reclusive porn-addicted slob living in a

broken down dump who only watches sports,
has no friends and can never find his way
anywhere on the first try (and then, only after
running out of gas on the way.)

Thanks, Donna , for being who you are for
me...just who I need!

David (and Donna)

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***Be sure to watch this space or check our web
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December 6-8, Frederick, MD

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November 16-17, 2013, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you
were to live forever." Mahatma Gandhi**

**"The more that you read, the more things you will
know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll
go." Dr. Seuss, I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!**

**"It is not that I'm so smart. But I stay with the
questions much longer." Albert Einstein**

**"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember,
involve me and I learn." Benjamin Franklin**

"I am not a teacher, but an awakener." Robert Frost

**A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more
than you love yourself. Josh Billings**

**There are three faithful friends - an old wife, an old
dog, and ready money. Benjamin Franklin**

"[Kids] don't remember what you try to teach them. They remember what you are." Jim Henson

"A person can learn a lot from a dog, even a loopy one like ours. Marley taught me about living each day with unbridled exuberance and joy, about seizing the moment and following your heart. He taught me to appreciate the simple things—a walk in the woods, a fresh snowfall, a nap in a shaft of winter sunlight. And as he grew old and achy, he taught me about optimism in the face of adversity. Mostly, he taught me about friendship and selflessness and, above all else, unwavering loyalty." John Grogan, Marley and Me: Life and Love With the World's Worst Dog

"That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way." Doris Lessing

"I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. In each, it is the performance of a dedicated precise set of acts, physical or intellectual, from which comes shape of achievement, a sense of one's being, a satisfaction of spirit. One becomes, in some area, an athlete of God. Practice means to perform, over and over again in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired." Martha Graham

"I've seen how you can't learn anything when you're trying to look like the smartest person in the room." Barbara Kingsolver, The Poisonwood Bible

God will prepare everything for our perfect happiness in heaven, and if it takes my dog being there, I believe he'll be there. Billy Graham

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

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Issue: #55
September 2013

Dear Friends,

Fall is in the air and we are energized! We love our conversations with you and the special notes and e-mail messages about how our workshops have impacted your relationships. You didn't know you could contact us? You didn't think that your issue was "important" enough? You can and it is!

So often, today's challenges leave us all in our heads-- technology, work problems, family dynamics and the roller coaster day to day just coping with life on this beautiful planet in the 21st Century! We NEED each other! Oh yes, we've all heard remarks that no tombstone would have the caption, "I wish I had attended one more meeting!" Well, I have never seen that message either and I know it wouldn't be my choice. But, share time with a loved one, friend or acquaintance? Yes, I'm there! Our workshops are a way to spend time with couples in a special connection. We know you loved your workshop and have shared this with those you know who may be struggling.

Remember, we ALL need each other. Let's not forget to reach out. Take advantage of the workshops and opportunities coming up. Reach out to a friend or co-worker or someone who can benefit from the energy and caring we can provide.

We have room for just a few more couples for the Next Step Workshop in November on the 16th and 17th. There is room for YOU!

[See the links below and on the side panel.](#)

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

SEPTEMBER: The Anatomy of Anger

This is one I feel I have covered before, but it seems to crop up so often, we will look at it again. (I experience this with couples in our workshops and in my office....as well as with Donna more often than either of us would like.)

First, let's review the assumptions:

- 1. Most of us do not enjoy anger and the resulting behaviors.**
- 2. Anger between couples can be about the fiercest and most powerful emotion found on the planet.**
- 3. Anger and aggression are protective mechanisms, just as in other mammals.**
- 4. Frustration is just a polite word for anger.**
- 5. Anger is a secondary emotion.**
- 6. We say things in anger that we don't really mean.**

Let me explain how anger is a secondary emotion. Say your child runs out in the street and is nearly hit by a car. Your response might well be one of anger and scolding, "How many times have I told you to look before entering the street?" Are you really angry? Isn't the first and strongest emotion terror? Your child scared you to death and the response popped out as anger...the secondary emotion.

Guess what?!?!? It's the same with your Partner! When they do something that makes you angry, I'll bet that underneath you are afraid of something. Perhaps it is about being disconnected, discounted, embarrassed, abandoned, invalidated, bossed around, misunderstood, taken for granted, invisible, etc., etc., etc.

The next time your Partner "makes" you angry, ask yourself, "What am I afraid of? What am I afraid will happen? What is lying beneath this reaction of anger?" Then ask yourself, "What is the attending hurt beside this fear? How will it hurt me to feel...invisible...embarrassed... abandoned...taken for granted....etc?" THEN...NEXT...most important of all, ask

yourself, "What does this remind me of from my growing up?" It is uncanny how this path of inquiry will begin to make sense to you. It requires some courage, persistence, curiosity and maturity to go through these steps but the payoff is great.

So, in summary, anger is a secondary emotion driven by some personal fear and hurt. Underneath it all lies a childhood hurt or injustice that is still waiting to be validated and fully healed. (By the way, when your Partner is the one who is angry, just apply the same concepts and questions. You might want to analyze it within yourself quietly and with curiosity. Most people are not up for analysis when they are in the Lizard's grip.)

You may want to even post this "formula" around your house as a reminder when Lizards show up in your Relationship, your home, at work, etc: $\text{Fear} + \text{Hurt} = \text{ANGER}$

So, go forth....be angry....just be sure you are also curious!

David (and Donna)

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December 6-8, Frederick, MD

Next Step Workshops

November 16-17, 2013, Frederick, MD (Only room for a few more couples!!)

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear. Rosa Parks

**Anger is a wind which blows out the lamp of the mind.
Robert Green Ingersoll**

**Love is what we were born with. Fear is what we
learned here. Marianne Williamson**

**Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the
intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one
who gets burned. Buddha**

**We fear violence less than our own feelings. Personal,
private, solitary pain is more terrifying than what
anyone else can inflict. Jim Morrison**

**When angry, count to four; when very angry, swear.
Mark Twain**

**The fear of becoming a 'has-been' keeps some people
from becoming anything. Eric Hoffer**

**Some movie stars wear their sunglasses even in
church. They're afraid God might recognize them and
ask for autographs. Fred Allen**

**Speak when you are angry and you will make the best
speech you will ever regret. Ambrose Bierce**

**No good work is ever done while the heart is hot and
anxious and fretted. Olive Schreiner**

**In order to succeed, your desire for success should be
greater than your fear of failure. Bill Cosby**

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Issue: #56
October 2013

Dear Friends,

We just returned from New Orleans and got an energy boost: Imago positivity and Creole jazz! Such a fun and unique combination! One cannot be sitting on the sidelines when revitalized by the thinking of Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt.

A change in environment, sounds, smells, energy--all of these are both thought-provoking and when we are open to it, able to tweak our complacency and open us to the experience. For us, the experience was both challenging and affirming! We challenge you and your partner to try a new "take" on positivity this month as well take a trip in your mind. If you cannot get away from your normal environment (like a fun trip to New Orleans) maybe change a little something in your day-to-day view--re-arrange furniture, create a little nook to escape and dream, step away from the everyday chaos and try something new. If mornings are chaotic, take the family out to an early breakfast or donuts during the work/school week. Yes! During the week! Watch to see how family members and your partner are re-vitalized, at least in the short-term. Read on for our challenge for the month.

We have two open spaces for our Next Step Workshop on November 16-17. If this is not a good time for you, perhaps a friend and his or her partner would benefit. Be sure to let them know.

See the links below and on the side panel.

I hope you have "liked" us on Facebook and encouraged friends and family to do so also. Please share our "Thought" with those who may be interested--you never know when your thoughtful "share" makes the difference in a couple's life and relationship!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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OCTOBER: The Zero Negativity Challenge

Having just returned from the Imago conference in New Orleans, I will share with you the latest thinking of our founders, Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt. They are currently practicing zero negativity in relationship as a way of promoting healing and growth.

I'll explain. You decide. The idea of the Zero Negativity Challenge is to agree to take negativity out of your Relationship each day for one month. Negativity is any negative comment or behavior...any critical comment or behavior...any devaluing comment or behavior. In short, anything that is experienced by your Partner as negative is deemed as negative. Notice the determination of negativity resides with your Partner. So the statement, "I wasn't meaning to criticize" is of no use. It's all about what your Partner experiences as negative.

Now...how will you know? It's very simple. The person who experiences something as negative simply says, "Ouch!" Then the Partner who created the "Ouch" has a chance to ask for a "Do Over." This is a second chance to move whatever was negative to an expression of Connection and Abundance. (None of this should sound new to anyone reading this as Donna and I have been preaching "Do Overs" in our workshops for years.)

So, for one month, commit to "no negativity" each day and then evaluate it. (AND, if your Partner is not in a place to participate....trust me....eliminating your contribution of negativity in your relationship is still transforming!) If there was no negativity (i.e. no "ouches") then you get a + (Harville and Helen use smiley face stickers on a monthly calendar.) If you have a negative interaction, you get a - (or frowny face.) OR, if you had a successful "Do Over", you add a "Repair" to the - or frowny face. You try for all positives for a month but, realistically,

you will likely have some frowny faces. In that case, you make an agreement for another month. (The couple who shared at the conference said it took three months before it became "natural.")

The equally important part of the Challenge is to share three appreciations each day with your Partner. This is done for a month. Each appreciation is new...one you have never shared with your Partner. (The couple from the conference said they had to pay such attention to finding new appreciations, they didn't have time or energy for negativity....go figure!)

We are interested in how you might do with this Challenge. Please let us know what you think, what questions you have, how we may support you and how it goes!

David (and Donna)

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS...LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES
COMING UP!**

Be sure to watch this space or check our web site for future opportunities.

Next Step Workshops

**November 16-17, 2013, Frederick, MD
(Only room for a one more couple!!)**

Getting the Love You Want Workshops

December 6-8, Frederick, MD

January 3-5, 2014, Frederick, MD

January 31- February 2, 2014 Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

People deal too much with the negative, with what is wrong. Why not try and see positive things, to just touch those things and make them bloom? Nhat Hanh

Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will. Zig Ziglar

Positive anything is better than negative nothing. Elbert Hubbard

Always turn a negative situation into a positive situation. Michael Jordan

You must not under any pretense allow your mind to dwell on any thought that is not positive, constructive, optimistic, kind. Emmet Fox

Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive results. Willie Nelson

In order to carry a positive action we must develop here a positive vision. Dalai Lama

I've always believed that you can think positive just as well as you can think negative. James A. Baldwin

Chaotic people often have chaotic lives, and I think they create that. But if you try and have an inner peace and a positive attitude, I think you attract that. Imelda Staunton

Fortune cookies are a good idea. If the message is positive, it can make your day a little better. Yao Ming

I was going to buy a copy of "The Power of Positive Thinking", and then I thought: What the hell good would that do? Ron Jaworski

Don't miss the sunshine because you're thinking of the rain. Stay positive, focused and present! Ricardo Housham

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
Bowman & Associates, PA**

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Donna Reeves Bowman, LCSW-C & David L. Bowman, MDiv

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Issue: #57
November 2013

Dear Friends,

Happy Thanksgiving! How many times have you said that greeting this week, to friends, colleagues, fellow shoppers and anyone you happened to meet? I lost count for myself but must admit that I really enjoy this little segue into the full blown holiday season!

It is the special season for gratitude, for thankfulness and we can spread the love without embarrassment. We say this often to you, but can never say it too often: we are grateful for you! You are ever present in our thoughts and lives, in our workshop planning, our conversations, our happiness in your successes and our worry during your times of stress and difficulty. We are hopeful that you also feel some gratitude for our presence in your lives. We are hopeful that when you have an issue, a question or just want to share happiness, that you think of us! We ARE in this together; more than any business relationship, we are partners with you for success and happiness and LOVE.

So, once again, Happy Thanksgiving! Thank you for being part of our lives.

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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NOVEMBER: "Hidden in Plain Sight!"

Many people who come to Imago are puzzled by our invitation to look into their Story and their Partner's Story. What do you mean, my Story? I don't remember my Story! What if I didn't have a Story? One woman said, "I don't like my Story. Could I have someone else's?"

Let's get simple, fanel Your Story is simply the



way you learned to adapt to your environment in order to stay safe and survive. We're not judging anything here. Everyone who makes it to adulthood has shown some brilliance in their adaptive behaviors (i.e. the formation of their Story.)

If your home was violent or chaotic, then you may have learned to stay out of the way or keep to yourself a lot. Or, you may have learned you had to fight back. (Of course, your Partner may be way frustrated by your "unresponsive" behavior or scared of your "fighting back" behavior.)

If your home was detached and full of neglect, you may crave attention and be sort of hailstormy. Or you may have denied that you needed attention. (Of course, your Partner may experience you as needy/demanding or cold and unemotional.) Everybody has a Story. Bill Clinton has a Story that contributed to the way he acted as President. George W. Bush has a Story that contributed to the way he acted as President. Everybody has a Story.

Why is our Story important? It provides conscious information that leads to understanding behaviors that could otherwise be experienced as frustrating or, even mean.

Our Partner has little use for our adaptations, whatever they were. (Remember, they see us whole and fully alive.) AND, at the same time, when hearing our Story can develop great compassion for how brilliant they were and how they still fit into the context of our life. AND, learning our own Story actually allows us to become conscious and choose freedom from our adaptations that are no longer useful.

We are NOT little kids anymore. We have already survived (even if our lizard doesn't know that and continually tries to convince us we have to do what was necessary many years ago!) Through compassion for our Story, our Partner can invite us to grow into more mature behaviors that serve our intimate adult relationship. AND, of course, we are doing the same for our Partner.



It's right under your nose. You are telling your Story every time you move...or think...or get mad...or cry...or drink too much...or hide in your cave...or desire affection....or withhold affection...or long for appreciation...or..... It is impossible not to be telling our Story! And...we will tell our Story until we don't need to tell it anymore because it has been heard, validated and we feel safe enough to live in full aliveness, no longer needing our brilliant adaptations.

Happy Storytelling!

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice. Meister Eckhart

Thanksgiving Day is a jewel, to set in the hearts of honest men; but be careful that you do not take the day, and leave out the gratitude. E.P. Powell

**So once in every year we throng
Upon a day apart,
To praise the Lord with feast and song
In thankfulness of heart.
Arthur Guiterman, The First Thanksgiving**

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. John Fitzgerald Kennedy



Remember God's bounty in the year. String the pearls of His favor. Hide the dark parts, except so far as they are breaking out in light! Give this one day to thanks, to joy, to gratitude! Henry Ward Beecher

Thanksgiving Day comes, by statute, once a year; to the honest man it comes as frequently as the heart of gratitude will allow. Edward Sandford Martin

**Our rural ancestors, with little blest,
Patient of labour when the end was rest,
Indulged the day that housed their annual grain,
With feasts, and offerings, and a thankful strain.
Alexander Pope**

What we're really talking about is a wonderful day set aside on the fourth Thursday of November when no one diets. I mean, why else would they call it Thanksgiving? Erma Bombeck, "No One Diets on Thanksgiving," 26 November 1981

It has been an unchallengeable American doctrine that cranberry sauce, a pink goo with overtones of sugared tomatoes, is a delectable necessity of the Thanksgiving board and that turkey is uneatable without it. Alistair Cooke

Thanksgiving dinners take eighteen hours to prepare. They are consumed in twelve minutes. Half-times take twelve minutes. This is not coincidence. Erma Bombeck

Thanksgiving, after all, is a word of action. W.J. Cameron

**He who thanks but with the lips
Thanks but in part;
The full, the true Thanksgiving
Comes from the heart.
J.A. Shedd**

Thanksgiving was never meant to be shut up in a single day. Robert Caspar Lintner

We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!

Sincerely,



**David and Donna Bowman
Bowman & Associates, PA**

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Issue: #58
December 2013

Dear Friends,

Donna and I send our love and best wishes for you and your loved ones this holiday season. Most of all, our wish for us all is for peace--- peace in our hearts, peace in our families, peace in our world.

Wouldn't the world be a lovely place if peace reigned? We all know how difficult this seemingly simple concept is to achieve but as human beings, we never, ever give up hope!

We also never, ever give up hope on our relationships and in the goal to achieve a peaceful partnership full of love and understanding. Our Thought this month is another exercise to help us to fully understand and accept our partner. Our hope is that this will resonate with you and remind you and your partner that this journey we are all on, takes one step, one word, one touch, one moment at a time--and each one is there for us to understand, to cross the bridge and truly see our lives through our partner's eyes. I hope this will be a gift to you!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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DECEMBER: "Crossing the Bridge"

OK! Let's talk "Crossing the Bridge!" NO image has

been more helpful to couples in conflict than the mental idea of crossing the Bridge to understand your Partner.

What do people in committed relationships want? Do they want their Partner to turn themselves inside out and change their very nature? No!

Do they want their Partner to grovel and always accommodate every wish? NO!

Do they want their Partner to supply them with every comfort available to human beings? No, again!

People in committed relationships want MOST to be heard and understood. We want someone to see our life through our eyes...to hear our every word with compassion and understanding! EVEN when they think we are wrong! EVEN when they don't agree! We want a Safe Haven...a place to be Ourselves...weird sometimes...off base sometimes...but always met with validation and free of criticism! It's just what kids want! We are all little kids in our emotional life.

Here's where the Bridge comes in. We give the greatest gift imaginable when we willingly leave our Land and cross over the Bridge to be fully present in our Partner's World. Donna and I have been married 30 years. I have never been more aware that her World is a vastly different place than my Land. Things hurt her and scare her and frustrate her that I just don't get. I used to laugh at her for being so different. That was a mistake! I used to get reactive when she put forth something I disagreed with. No good!

Our wonderful mentor, Hedy Schleifer, says that it's more than a visit. It's an "Encounter." A "visit" can denote something passive....a passing glance. An Encounter is a Journey to a new place in order to take it all in...to digest and let it affect us...to move us...to leave us changed.

Many people visit the Grand Canyon. The average visit is three hours. The lucky ones Encounter the Grand Canyon. They experience the heat...the dryness...the enormity...the power...the mysterious changes of light. They hike, ride mules, float the river, sleep by the rising river, witness the stars at midnight and the sun at dawn.

Our visit to our Partner's world is not a polite, obligatory, self-serving endeavor. It is a genuine desire to learn something we don't yet know. It is a hunger to immerse ourselves into the world of our Partner....to feel their plight...to rejoice in their joy...to know their Story! And it has to be done in safety. "Nothing is learned when people do not feel safe." (A quote from a client.)

Go ahead! Try it! Work at making your visit to your Partner...to your children...to the person at the airline counter...to your colleague...to your employer...to your employee.....with no thought of yourself. Empty yourself for a time and give your full energy to the one who is yearning, praying, crying for your full energy, attention, and your understanding.

Let me know what happens!

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves. Carl Jung

Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain but it takes character and self control to be understanding and forgiving. Dale Carnegie

Never do today what you can put off till tomorrow. Delay may give clearer light as to what is best to be done. Aaron Burr

All truths are easy to understand once they are

discovered; the point is to discover them. Galileo Galilei

You don't need strength to let go of something. What you really need is understanding. Guy Finley

Everyone hears only what he understands. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant. Robert McClosky

To understand the heart and mind of a person, look not at what he has already achieved, but at what he aspires to. Kahlil Gibran

Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood. Marie Curie

Don't believe what your eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation. Look with your understanding, find out what you already know, and you'll see the way to fly. Richard Bach

Furious activity is no substitute for understanding. H.H Williams

If we are to live together in peace, we must come to know each other better. Lyndon Johnson

A matter that becomes clear ceases to concern us. Friedrich Nietzsche

The reality of the other person is not in what he reveals to you, but in what he cannot reveal to you. Therefore, if you would understand him, listen not to what he says but rather what he does not say. Kahlil Gibran

I am so clever that sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I am saying. Oscar Wilde

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