



Connecting
Couples

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

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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)

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

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

Getting the Love You Want Workshops

September 13-15, Frederick, MD

October 18-20, Frederick, MD

Next Step Workshops

November 16-17, 2013, Frederick, MD

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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