



Connecting
Couples

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

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Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! And, no, I will not mention the word "resolution" well, other than a passing mention. How about a new concept? Why not think about applying the word, "revolution" to your plans and goals for yourself this year? The concept was recently mentioned to a Connecting Couples' team member and it really resonated!

Instead of feeling a bit challenged by a goal, she decided that she would just revolve a bit--- maybe a one quarter turn or maybe a full revolution. This could be adding a salad and removing one cookie or pausing before responding with criticism, and taking a breath instead. I guess it's more like taking baby steps instead of going in for a full makeover.

This Thought is a long one and maybe, just maybe a good chapter for a book (you know, the one I hope to write someday?) but I think you'll find some gems within...please let me know what you think.

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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**JANUARY 2015: "5 Myths That Can Work
Against Your Conscious Relationship"**

We all believe many things to be true.

Things that just seem natural. Things we saw growing up. Things we are told. Things that "feel" right. We hold these truths in our minds and hearts. We could call them myths. A myth is a story we tell that attempts to explain a part of our world experience. It may have elements of truth or be completely off the mark. An example would be the belief that handling a toad will give you warts.

While most myths are harmless and are just an artful way of describing a phenomenon, there are some myths that desperately need de-bunking. Growing up in the South I actually knew people who believed that African-Americans had no souls. And that electing John Kennedy would be the beginning of a Catholic take-over of the world. Wow!

I believe there are many myths we hold about relationships that work against the joyful connection that we really want. Permit me to de-bunk 5 of the most interesting ones.

1. "Constructive criticism can be helpful to a relationship"

There is no such thing as constructive criticism! Generally the "constructive" part of criticism lies in the belief of the critic about their motive. Now I am talking about a personal relationship here. I recognize that constructive criticism has a place on a ball team, or in business.

If you want to test what I am saying, then the next time you offer your "constructive" criticism to your partner or to your child ask them, "Did that feel good?" or "Was that helpful?" Alcoholics Anonymous is one of the most successful movements the world has ever seen, and yet constructive criticism and advice giving are completely out of bounds.

2. "I need to say everything I think and feel to my partner"

40 years ago the prevailing thought in the therapy world was that a person needed to "get it out" in order to feel better. We had "primal scream" therapy and cathartic groups where people were encouraged to splay out all their feelings about their parents, their partners, the other group members. We gave them rubber bats to hit with. This was supposed to be therapeutic. Now we believe that encouraging people to scream everything they feel just produces more rage and devastation to everyone. It is not just anger that is best kept to ourselves. As Donna confesses in our workshop, "I have LOTS of helpful, important information and thoughts to share. However, a while back I learned that sometimes the best thing was for me to keep my mouth shut!" This in no way means that anger and tough feelings are bad and shouldn't be expressed. It's just means we have to use safe structures for managing and sharing those.

3. It's necessary to get to the "Truth" about an issue.

"You never told me you were going to buy a new car!" "Yes I did tell you I was thinking about buying a car. You just don't remember!" OK what do we do with this? The problem with holding out for the "Truth" is this...whose truth?

The other problem is that even if a couple does arrive at a certifiable truth, then one is right and the other is made wrong. And this is disconnecting. Remember, the purpose of your relationship is not to solve problems or to find "The Truth". The purpose is to connect safely and lovingly with another person. (And you have tools to use in order to experience this.)

4. "If I am unhappy in this relationship, then it's because of you!"

This one is the hardest to de-bunk. Here's why: when we fell in love we generously

(and wrongly) ascribed all our oceanic feelings of sweetness and light to this person who stimulated our physiology, our new optimism, and our happiness. So it is logical to now ascribe our misery and pain to the same person.

It is wrong to do so.

Your partner does not set out to make you unhappy. No more than your children set out to make you unhappy. In our heart of hearts most of us Imago devotees know that it is in the complex intersection of our two childhood stories and the way we are seeking safety through learned adaptations that we create our own nightmare...with the exquisitely matched assistance of our partner.

5. "I know about the childhood story, but my childhood has nothing to do with this conflict"

The pain of the moment is sometimes so great that we doggedly assert that "this one" is outside the bounds of Imago theory and all that childhood stuff.

I can only say that even though I have tried to say this to myself, too, it never really pans out. It never fails that a current conflict or frustration which shows up more than once is connected in some way to our childhood and thus to some deprivation we felt or to some adaptation that we learned.

I have for a long time had an especially sharp reaction to any perceived double standard that was put on me. I could not figure out what that had to do with my childhood. My next older brother could have complained about unfair expectations, but I was always the "baby", the "golden boy" of the family. Only recently have I recalled some instances where more was expected of me growing up than anyone else. It's a work in progress.

I hope you will react and respond to any of this. I would love to hear what you think.

(Maybe I can learn to create a "blog.")

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

February 20-22, 2015 Frederick, MD

March 20-22, 2015, Frederick, MD

May 1-3, 2015, Frederick, MD

Next Step Workshop

March 7-8, 2015 Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Watch out for the joy-stealers: gossip, criticism, complaining, faultfinding, and a negative, judgmental attitude. Joyce Meyer

To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing. Elbert Hubbard

In marriage there are no manners to keep up, and beneath the wildest accusations no real criticism. Each is familiar with that ancient child in the other who may erupt again. We are not ridiculous to ourselves. We are ageless. That is the luxury of the wedding ring. Enid Bagnold

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism. Norman Vincent Peale

I'm not everybody's cup of tea. But sometimes criticism can be hurtful. Be respectful. I'm a good piano player, I can sing well, I write good songs. If you don't like it,

fair enough. But give me a break. Elton John

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

Sincerely,

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

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