



Connecting  
Couples

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## Thought of the Month News and Notes

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**Issue: #79**  
**November 2015**

**Dear Friends,**

**We hope you are happily looking forward to some delicious food this next week, complete with the added love that comes with all of the preparations and traditions. I know families that ask that each individual prepare his or her "specialty." The whole group can't wait for that traditional dish, even when it comes from a can! My friend LOVES the jellied cranberry sauce, straight from the can and just sliced. Well, at least the prep is easy!**

**This Thought may challenge your view of balance and what is "okay" in dealing with strife and stress with your partner and especially with all of the family and friends that will be part of your widening circle this holiday season. I hope you gain some new insight.**

**As always, if you need us, just call.**

**Donna and David**

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### **NOVEMBER 2015: The Magic Balance**

**For my Thought this month I am utilizing some of the thinking of John Gottman, a marriage researcher, who is now a friend of Imago thanks to the efforts and generosity of Harville Hendrix.**

**Donna and I often preach that appreciations**

are so very important and that it takes five appreciations to bring the relationship "bank account" back to balance after just one criticism or negative contribution to the Space.

Gottman talks about "the magic ratio", a balance of five positive feelings or interactions to every one negative feeling or interaction. Indeed he uses this balance to predict the stability and even the future of the relationship. He says quite simply that a relationship needs a preponderance of positive things to negative things to be successful.

I want to share a few observations about these truths.

First, you notice that he does not advocate that you have no anger or negative feelings. Besides being impossible, this is not even desirable. Gottman believes that small doses of anger or conflict from time to time can actually keep a marriage alive and exciting.

I know that I have said for a long time that I'd rather have a couple who fights than one who seems to be complacent or is indifferent to each other. We can learn to manage the negative energy. It's when the negative stuff takes up too much space or evolves into contempt or other hardened feelings that the trouble emerges. So make an assessment with your partner today. Are you letting protest and negativity use up too much of your energy? Then make a plan to bring it back into balance. Indeed the balance or the proper equilibrium is what allows a couple to bicker now and then.

The other observation is that the balance does not require a thought out or formal appreciation. Just a smile or a touch or a kind word or gesture moves the dial. This is just not that complicated. Even our dog, Ben, relaxes into a puddle when one of us begins to touch him a bit. Certainly our

family members want and deserve as much. Funny thing, though...we have to consciously and intentionally do these positive things. We have to think about it. We have to make an effort.

The last observation is that, according to Gottman's research, it doesn't matter how loud a couple gets with each other in their negative moments. A couple who yells and screams at each other may still have a stable and healthy relationship as long as they spend five times as much energy being loving and making up. I actually relish in working with couples who are "out of control" sometimes and report this as their problem. I feel like we have energy to work with. These couples usually apply the same passion to the loving times. We just need to find the right balance.

So, we are nearing Thanksgiving. What a great time to get your negativity back in check and to flood your relationship with positive words and actions.

I love any comments you wish to make about these thoughts.

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**

**December 4-6, 2015, Frederick, MD**

**January 8-10, 2016, Frederick, MD**

**February 26-28, 2016, Frederick, MD**

## **Next Step Workshops**

**April 23-24, 2016**

## **QUOTES OF THE MONTH**

**Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see a shadow. Helen Keller**

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

**Find a place inside where there's joy, and the joy will burn out the pain. Joseph Campbell**

**Positive anything is better than negative nothing. Elbert Hubbard**

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

**Your smile will give you a positive countenance that will make people feel comfortable around you. Les Brown**

**Live life to the fullest, and focus on the positive. Matt Cameron**

**When you wake up every day, you have two choices. You can either be positive or negative; an optimist or a pessimist. I choose to be an optimist. It's all a matter of perspective. Harvey Mackay**

**You're going to go through tough times - that's life. But I say, 'Nothing happens to you, it happens for you.' See the positive in negative events. Joel Osteen**

**When you wake up every day, you have two choices. You can either be positive or negative; an optimist or a pessimist. I choose to be an optimist. It's all a matter of perspective. Harvey Mackay**

**I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, but I am realistic enough to know that life is a complex matter. Walt Disney**

**When you are enthusiastic about what you do, you feel this positive energy. It's very simple.**

**Paulo Coelho**

**Trust in dreams, for in them is hidden the gate  
to eternity. Khalil Gibran**

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

**Sincerely,**

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

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