



Connecting Couples

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

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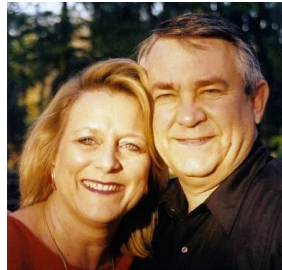
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Issue: #104
January 2018



Dear Friends,

Welcome to a brand, new, crazy, cold (or hot in the west) 2018! My business partner and I, (okay, Donna and I) had a tiny, little retreat recently to plan for this momentous year. We get so excited about the possibility of meeting new couples, of planning workshops and adding to the many ways we have of making relationships better.

Sharing is caring and sharing is what we do! We pull together ideas and techniques that have proven to work and improve communications with every kind of couple. If you think your relationship is struggling with an issue we've never heard before, you may be wrong. We have heard a lot in the years of helping couples, giving Parenting workshops and in riding the roller coaster of our own issues (and those our loved ones.) We can help! Let us know what YOU and YOUR partner need.

This month we are holding our favorite workshop on parenting. If you haven't been to one and have children in your lives, I highly encourage you to join us! It may not be too late to register, call me if you are interested 301-404-7711.

Let me know if you have any questions.

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

**JANUARY:
How to Improve Your Relationship
(In 5 not-so-easy steps)**

Sometimes I am asked, "What are your best tips for having a successful intimate relationship?" The following are my best ideas for actionable things anyone can do with a little preparation and meditation.

- 1. Remove criticism and name calling and negativity of any kind from your relationship. You can have negative feelings about anything without being negative or ugly in your reaction. Your partner and family should be the last people you hurt.**
- 2. Find a way to tell your partner each day how important they are to you. Do this even if you are in a bad space with each other.**
- 3. Make an appointment and ask for a visit for any item that could be conflictual. Do not run from conflict but handle it strategically and respectfully.**
- 4. Share at least one specific appreciation each day for your partner.**

5. Make some physical connection with your partner each day. A fifteen second hug is a good example. Again learn to do this even when things are not so great between you. Learn to drop your pride and offer generosity.

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 9-11, 2018, Frederick, MD

March 16-18, 2018, Frederick, MD

May 4-5, 2018, Frederick, MD

Next Step Workshop

April 21-22, 2018, Frederick, MD

Parenting Workshop

February 3-4, 2018, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

The best thing to spend on your relationship is time, conversation, understanding, and honesty.

Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care for people will hear them and be influenced by them for good or ill. Buddha

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind. Rudyard Kipling

We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.

Epictetus

Science may never come up with a better office communication system than the coffee break. Earl Wilson

Communication is a skill that you can learn. It's like riding a bicycle or typing. If you're willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life. Brian Tracy

There is only one rule for being a good talker - learn to listen. Christopher Morley

A lasting relationship isn't about marriage. It's about compatibility and communication. And you both need to want it to work. Goldie Hawn

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard. Anne Spencer

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

Sincerely,

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

Bowman & Associates, PA, 7823 Chestnut Grove Road, Frederick, MD 21701

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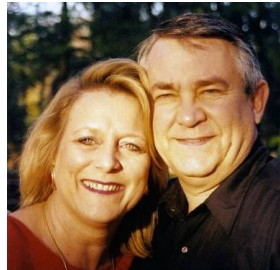
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Issue: #105
February 2018



Dear Friends,

Have you ever felt frustrated with your Partner's response to something you said? Or even angry? Sure, we all have! Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a little "therapist" on our shoulder who would whisper some words of advice at this time? Words that would nip the problem in the bud and open up an opportunity for clarity or understanding or at least words that might resolve an issue?

This Thought is an idea that might just work like a little therapist on your shoulder. Read on and try it! Let me know how it goes.

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

FEBRUARY: "Ouch" and "Oops"

Therapy

Maybe it's time to try something different. I'm calling it "Ouch" and "Oops" therapy. You can do this at home. First the background:

I believe all couples want to connect with each other in the most joyful and fully alive way possible. Just like when they first met: So respectful, so attentive, so fresh, so energetic, so forgiving. It's Nature's trick, complete with phenethylamine and all the other drugs that accompany romance. After a while, we find that the drugs have worn off and we begin to trigger each other in ways that make us think, "What happened here?"

It is not the triggering issue, but rather the reactive response that gets us into trouble and can, if we are not conscious, lead us down a path of disconnection. My most common situation with couples is they are both wonderful people, who are committed to each other, and who have the abiding impulse to love each other and to make each other happy. They almost have it all. But, alas...they trigger each other constantly in their day to day interactions and, because they have not mastered the skills of dealing with those triggers, have now formed a narrative of each other as hateful, unloving, and perhaps even, mentally unhinged Partners.

Furthermore, since one of them is a turtle (avoider) and one is a hailstorm (volatile pursuer), they have lost touch with what each other is needing or even saying. All of it is misunderstood as coming from an evil or malevolent place.

Here is where "ouch" and "oops" can be helpful. It's really very simple. When your

Partner does or says something offensive or hurtful, you simply say "ouch". Then the Partner knows it is automatically time to say "oops"

Now for the beauty of this therapy:

- 1. The words "ouch" and "oops" carry no blame or shame. They simply represent ownership in the current situation.**
- 2. They immediately convey the feelings in the situation with no argument over the behaviors.**
- 3. They represent a stopper in the escalation and give the couple time to let the newer brain get involved.**
- 4. These words can move us to understanding and compassion without more words. (Always a good idea)**
- 5. It offers the real chance to move from conflict to conversation.**
- 6. It avoids the deadly path of silent resentment from one and confusion from the other.**
- 7. It may be that no more needs to be said. How efficient is that!**

Give this simple "therapy" a try sometime soon and report back to me.

Oh, and don't miss the opportunity for our second level workshop, "The Next Step...Overcoming Reactivity." It's April 21-22. Call at 301-404-7711 or register here: [Next Step Overcoming Reactivity](#)

See you in April!

David

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Wise men speak because they have something to say; Fools because they have to say something. Plato

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place. George Bernard Shaw

We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak. Epictetus

Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it. Robert Frost World, Othe

Good words are worth much, and cost little. George Herbert

Falling in love is a chemical reaction. But it wears off in a year. That's why you need a strong line of communication... which includes laughter. Yakov Smirnoff

Everything becomes a little different as soon as it is spoken out loud. Hermann Hesse

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

Sincerely,

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Bowman & Associates, PA**

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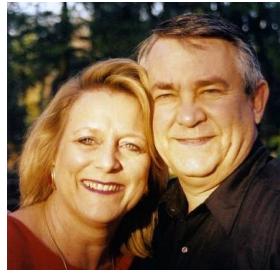
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Issue: #106
March 2018



Dear Friends,

As Spring approaches, some of us are enjoying the Easter season and/or Passover traditions, some or all are thinking of spring break and maybe all of us are looking forward to renewal in the new season. I have been so grateful for the abundance in my life and loves and want to share some thoughts about living into abundance. I hope you will share some of your thoughts with me, too!

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

MARCH: LIVING INTO ABUNDANCE

It's one thing to think abundant thoughts. It is quite another to actually live an abundant life. I feel like a novice at living in abundance

but, nevertheless, I want to share some tips that may help.

1. Develop your abundant thinking.

It is a challenge and an art. We live in a world of deficit. Everyone wanting just a bit more. Decide what is actually enough. As you look at your Partner, list the wonderful qualities that are the foundation of your love. And forget the frustrations that are thorns in the experience of abundance and contentment.

(Energy follows attention!)

2. Learn to respond positively to any situation.

If you hate cleaning the bathroom, become thankful that you have a bathroom to clean. Matthew Henry, the English minister and author, describes his prayer of thanksgiving after he was robbed:

"I am thankful that I have never been robbed before"

"I am thankful that even though he took my money, he spared my life"

"I am thankful that even though he took all I had, it wasn't very much"

"And I'm thankful that it was I who was robbed and not I that did the robbing"

3. Concentrate on gratitude.

Expressing gratitude and appreciations expands the neuropathways that carry positive energy in our brains. This is true no matter what else is going on with us. With new and expanded capacity for positive energy we will notice that more positive things actually fill our life and the things that are negative are not so threatening.

4. Share your wealth and abundance.

As an individual and as a couple, develop a generosity about life that freely gives to others. No score keeping. Someone has said

that whatever we freely give away will return to us in some form...tenfold.

5. Practice celebrating other people's good fortune.

There is a natural tendency to look out only for ourselves and to begrudge others who get things we "should" have had. But just try whooping it up with someone for no reason other than to share in their joy. Then reflect on how much better and cleaner it feels.

6. Celebrate the now.

Look around you right now. If you are alive, that's great. If you are healthy, even better. If you have a Partner who loves you no matter how imperfectly, you are almost there. If you can appreciate the moment, just this moment...you're in paradise.

7. Dream your highest dream of an abundant future.

I can get caught up in "Wow, I probably only have 20 years or so left." Deficit thinking. Anxiety and desperation can set in. Or I can think "Wow, I've probably got 20 years left." Think of all the cool stuff I can do and the relationships I can support in 20 whole years. Whatever your dream, focus on it often. Write it down. Share it with your Partner. Invite their dream.

I hope these thoughts help move you into a bit more abundant and joyful life and relationship.

David

p.s. you can still register for our next step "Overcoming Reactivity" workshop on April 21-22. We look forward to inspiring you again! [Register Here](#) or call 301-404-7711

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Next Step Workshop

April 21-22, Frederick, MD

Getting the Love You Want Workshops

May 4-5, 2018, Frederick, MD

June 1-3, 2018, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

I try to be grateful for the abundance of the blessings that I have, for the journey that I'm on and to relish each day as a gift. James McGreevey

To live a pure unselfish life, one must count nothing as one's own in the midst of abundance. Buddha

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much it is whether we provide enough for those who have little. Franklin D. Roosevelt

Doing what you love is the cornerstone of having abundance in your life. Wayne Dyer

Not what we have But what we enjoy, constitutes our abundance. Epicurus

Talent is always conscious of its own abundance, and does not object to sharing. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

The key to abundance is meeting limited circumstances with unlimited thoughts. Marianne Williamson

Abundance is a process of letting go; that

which is empty can receive. Bryant H. McGill

For me, the opposite of scarcity is not abundance. It's enough. I'm enough. My kids are enough. Brene Brown

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

Sincerely,

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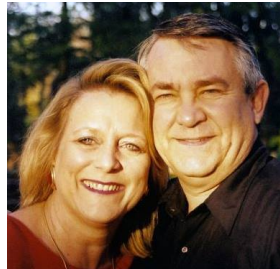
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Issue: #107
April 2018



Dear Friends,

We hope you are feeling the stirrings of warmth and spring...we are! When we can stroll down our lane and not wear heavy jackets, boots and hats we are encouraged! Children are thinking about the real possibility of summer and adults are planning that road trip, vacation or weekend get-a-way!

This Thought is meant to challenge you couples and to give you a little assignment. I hope you will try it! And, if you do so and find you need a little support, *please read to the end.* I have a NEW idea that might be just what you need!

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

APRIL: THE INVISIBLE SUNBURN

This month I want to give all you couples a tip for how to manage those places in your relationship where you trigger each other. I believe that for most couples there is 85% or more time where they are loving, caring, peaceful, generous, and harmonious with each other. The remaining 15% or less is where all the trouble happens.

This is where some comment or some behavior triggers the Partner into reflexive defensive behavior where the Lizard brain gets activated. The Lizard response then elicits an equal Lizard response in return and all semblance of peaceful and relaxed connection with each other is lost.

This scene can develop in an instant and is seemingly uncontrollable because, of course, it stems from unconscious childhood adaptations that were so very important in helping us stay alive. No wonder we fall back to our defenses so easily. These adaptations are hard wired into us and become the default response when we feel threatened, no matter how small or unintentional the threat was, and no matter where it is coming from. And the longer this scene is rehearsed, the harder it is to change.

Wouldn't it be great if we had a way to stop this unconscious and escalating Lizard Romper Room? Thinking about our defenses in a new and conscious way is helpful, but not sufficient. We need to act differently in these situation as well.

Perhaps an image can help. Think of yourself as having an emotional Sunburn. It never goes away. It doesn't even hurt all that much anymore unless someone touches it or bumps it. Your Sunburn might be around being abandoned...or dismissed...or criticized...or controlled. There are lots of types of Sunburns.

While you are at it, try and decipher what your Partner's Sunburn is like. In a quiet, safe moment, invite your Partner to talk about your Sunburns together. You know...HONESTLY. "I've discovered I almost always get reactive when...." And, "Tell me what I do or say that activates your Sunburn." No blame. No judgment. Just a little different way of examining and taking ownership for the 100 % contribution each of us makes to our difficult moments.

Be Care-full. Be sure you open your heart to knowing how your Partner's Sunburn got there (i.e. the childhood story.) If they don't know just use your imagination. Nobody creates a Sunburn for fun. It happened out of neglect or some deprivation for all of us. It's essential information that will make Compassion and Connection more available.

Come to think about it, this image of the Sunburn is sort of a prequel to the article on "Oops and Ouch" which got lots of attention. We obviously need new images and new language sometimes to shake us out of old patterns. Let me know how it goes.

(On another note: I have recently changed my ways in that I am finding success and convenience to work with couples with Face Time sessions. I will only do it if I have met the couple and know them (i.e. workshop, earlier sessions, etc.) If you are wanting more Connection, more understanding of what is happening or just feeling stuck (and you are not working with a coach or therapist), we could give it a try. Call me at 301-404-7711 or email at David@ConnectingCouples.net to talk about possibilities. A session or two could make life a great deal brighter.

David

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May 4-5, 2018, Frederick, MD

June 1-3, 2018, Frederick, MD

July 20-22, 2018 Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about
creating yourself. George Bernard Shaw.**

**Twenty years from now you will be more
disappointed by the things that you didn't do
than by the ones you did do. So throw off the
bowlines. Catch the trade winds in your sails.
Explore. Dream. Discover - Mark Twain.**

**Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap
but by the seeds you plant. Robert Louis
Stevenson.**

**We don't see things the way they are. We see
them the way WE are. Talmud.**

**I have found that if you love life, life will love
you back. Arthur Rubinstein**

**Clothes make the man. Naked people have
little or no influence in society. Mark Twain**

**If you think you are too small to make a
difference, try sleeping with a mosquito. Dalai
Lama**

**The reason people find it so hard to be happy
is that they always see the past better than it**

was, the present worse than it is, and the future less resolved than it will be. Marcel Pagnol

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

Sincerely,

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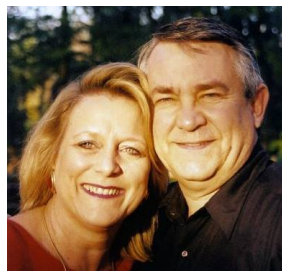
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**Issue: #108
May 2018**



Dear Friends,

Summer is almost here and I hope you are looking forward to a little more quiet time and maybe a lot more time with your partner. These times are fraught with danger...a simple question can lead to major misunderstandings. I preach a lot about this so please, read this Thought and let me know if it helps!

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

MAY: Let's Clear Something Up

I feel like a broken record. I have preached often on the theme of the big misunderstanding between men and women in their relationship. But because I keep seeing this theme played out, I fear that many have slept through my sermons.

Here I go again!

Often, the scenario of conflict in intimate relationships has to do with misunderstandings. The misunderstanding goes like this: David tends to feel that when Donna expresses any hint of dissatisfaction with the relationship that she is setting out to criticize him. He reacts badly to being criticized (see childhood story,) When he reacts with anger or silence, Donna interprets his action as disconnecting and as unloving. She ramps up her emotional investment in getting him to really "hear" her. David now forms the narrative that his wife is either crazy or contemptuous. She picks this up as meaning she can never have her "voice" about seeking to make things better for herself (see childhood story.) She then shuts down in grief or raises the emotional intensity even more.

A real example of this scenario was a number of years ago when David and Donna had a car whose engine gave up the ghost. The car people suggested that maybe the oil had not been changed as much as required. (Guess who changes the oil!) On the way home in the new car Donna innocently asked, "Did you remember to change the oil regularly?" (If there are hundreds of men reading this and blowing their own gaskets, then I'm on the right track.) David said nothing but inside was building an urge to drive the both of them into a tree. (While probably not changing oil exactly on the manual's time line, David felt that his maintenance was probably no worse than average.)

David felt so disrespected to be questioned this second time about his competence (see childhood story again.) Donna was surprised that her question was seen as critical as she was just seeking information that would help

their life be safer and less problematic (see childhood story again.)

Once again, the sermon:

Men- you have got to understand that women are always seeking to be safely connected in the relationship and longing to be cherished as a desired partner in that connection. When you experience her as nagging or criticizing or contemptuous or anxious or crazy, it is most likely because she does not feel safe in that connection and not because she hates you or wishes you harm or disrespect.

Women- you have got to understand that men want, above all else, to have you be happy with them. Any sign of your unhappiness can trigger feelings of doubt and shame. When you experience him as reacting in anger or shutting down, it is most likely because he does not feel respected for trying his best to provide you with that happiness.

I know this is a dreadful cycle, but it is so, so real.

If you have read this, have a sit down with each other and dig out the morsels of truth in it for your relationship.

As always, we welcome your responses to this thought or to any other concern. If you want a face time session, or an intensive, we can arrange it.

David

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June 1-3, 2018, Frederick, MD

July 20-22, 2018 Frederick, MD

August 24-26, 2018, Frederick, MD

Next Step Workshop

September 15-16, 2018, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Any fool can know. The point is to understand." Albert Einstein

"Understanding is the first step to acceptance, and only with acceptance can there be recovery." J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

"Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves." C.G. Jung

"Just because you don't understand it doesn't mean it isn't so." Lemony Snicket, The Blank Book

"Rabbit's clever," said Pooh thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit's clever."

"And he has Brain."

"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit has Brain."

There was a long silence.

"I suppose," said Pooh, "that that's why he never understands anything." A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh

"Don't you understand that we need to be childish in order to understand? Only a child sees things with perfect clarity, because it hasn't developed all those filters which

prevent us from seeing things that we don't expect to see." Douglas Adams, Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency

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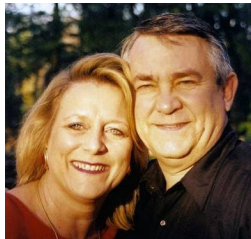
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Issue: #109
June/July 2018



Dear Friends,

If you happened to notice that this is a June/July Thought, you are more detail oriented than I. Usually I just click and start reading. We had a little glitch this month, one of the major internet providers, which shall remain nameless, suffered a huge problem and service was suspended all over the nation! I am using that excuse PLUS I was in a vacation state of mind and this just got out late. Hopefully you will be waiting for another July Thought....we shall see!

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

JUNE/JULY: THE INTENTIONAL DIALOGUE

The Intentional Dialogue is a wonderful tool for making better connection with our life partner, our children, or anyone who is present in our life. In fact, I think of it as a way of being in connection more than as a tool or technique.

While people are universally astounded at the power of dialogue in the workshop, most folks find it difficult to practice in real life. Let me see if I can help with several tips:

- If your lizards have become activated to the point that you want to inflict some sort of pain/negativity on your partner, then the dialogue will not work. Better to step back, breathe deeply, run around the house, or whatever it takes for you to come back and send or receive a message from the newer part of your brain. I recommend telling your partner something like, "I cannot do this right now safely. Let me make an appointment to come back as soon as possible."

Real dialogue is just a series of visits back and forth to each other's world. If you enter someone's world locked and loaded with anger or too much fear, the visit will do more harm than good! Likewise, if you invite someone into your world but are waiting to jump him/her with negativity, he/she will likely leave and not come back.

- If your partner has already launched into a tirade from the reptilian part of their brain, then it's best to stay present and as calm and silent, (and curious,) as you can. Just contain with silent mirroring. At the end you can validate the outburst with "I get how angry/afraid/disgusted you are." Replace retaliation with presence and connection.

- If you want to have a dialogue with your partner but are afraid they won't listen, then the invitation is all important! "Would you be willing to come into my world for a bit to hear something important to me?" This always beats, "We have to talk!"

- Finally if you are with someone who does not know the dialogue process or refuses to use it, your best bet is to temporarily suspend what you want to say and just enter his/her world for a bit with the mirroring/validating/empathy skills that you know and that you wish he/she would use with you. I call this the "golden rule" of Imago. **DOING FOR ANOTHER**

WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO EVENTUALLY DO FOR YOU.

You'll be surprised how contagious the process is.

David

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August 24-26, 2018, Frederick, MD

September 28-30, 2018, Frederick, MD

Next Step Workshop

September 15-16, 2018, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Once you have dialogue starting, you know you can break down prejudice. Harvey Milk

Change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the people who are doing something you don't believe is right. Jane Goodall

A conversation is a dialogue, not a monologue. That's why there are so few good conversations: due to scarcity, two intelligent talkers seldom meet. Truman Capote

In true dialogue, both sides are willing to change. Nhat Hanh

I knew by heart all the dialogue of James Dean's films; I could watch Rebel Without a Cause a hundred times over. Elvis Presley

Choose the path of dialogue rather than the path of unilateral decisions. Pope Benedict XVI

Real answers need to be found in dialogue and interaction and, yes, our shared human condition. This means being open to one another instead of simply fighting to maintain a prescribed position. Malcolm Boyd

A pas de deux is a dialogue of love. How can there be conversation if one partner is dumb? Rudolf Nureyev

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

Sincerely,

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

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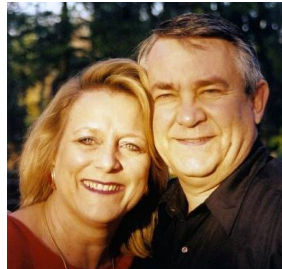
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Issue: #111
July 2018



Dear Friends,

We hope your summer is going swimmingly...and by that, I hope that you really are swimming! And playing softball and camping and relaxing by the lake or ocean. The best thing for your relationship and your family is to play a little and take time away from your usual setting. If a vacation isn't in the budget, a long drive to a new place, a full cooler of great food and snacks and a sense of adventure. Enjoy! Refresh!

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

**JULY: Be Careful with Your Partner's
Childhood Story**

Donna and I are clear about the value of learning about and developing compassion for your partner's childhood story. The

emphasis on this effort is what often transforms the space and energy in a relationship. It is also what differentiates Imago from other modalities of couples' work.

Now I would like to remind us all to treat our partner's story carefully. It is a sacred story. And the more painful or horrific it is, the more sacred it becomes.

A few pointers:

1. Ask for permission to make any comments or responses that involve your partner's story. Treat it as their private and protected information.

2. As much as you think you know or have heard, resist the temptation to get too far ahead of where your partner is in telling a piece of their story. Better to be a follower here than a leader.

3. Remember that while the story may be utterly disdainful and disgusting to you, it is often a mixed story for your partner. The same caretaker that administers abuse is also the caretaker that is loved in many cases. Temper your rage with an understanding and a validation that the story may well be confusing in many respects for your partner.

4. If you violate the sacred space of the partner's story (no matter what your intention was) just back out and ask for a "do-over" or whatever forgiveness appeal is authentic for you.

I always love your feedback on what I have written here. Also, you have the chance to really deepen and solidify your connection by registering for our "Overcoming Reactivity" workshop on September 15-16.

[CLICK HERE: Overcoming Reactivity Workshop Registration or call at 301-404-7711.](#)

We will look forward to reuniting with some of you.

David

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"One love, one heart, one destiny." Bob Marley

"All I ever wanted was to reach out and touch another human being not just with my hands but with my heart." Tahereh Mafi, Shatter Me

"We are all different. Don't judge, understand instead." Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

"If we have no peace, it is because we have

**"forgotten that we belong to each other."
Mother Teresa**

"More smiling, less worrying. More compassion, less judgment. More blessed, less stressed. More love, less hate." Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive." Dalai Lama XIV, The Art of Happiness

"Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and it's beauty." Albert Einstein

"It is an absolute human certainty that no one can know his own beauty or perceive a sense of his own worth until it has been reflected back to him in the mirror of another loving, caring human being." John Joseph Powell, The Secret of Staying in Love

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

Sincerely,

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Bowman & Associates, PA**

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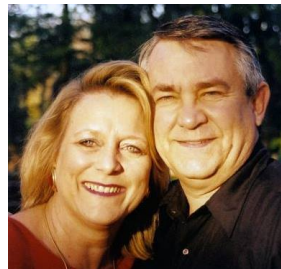
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Issue: #112
August 2018



Dear Friends,

The days seem to be getting a little shorter and the mornings a little darker. I have a feeling that Fall is not too far away, though the weather seems to defy predictability. Speaking of predictability, do some of your conversations and interactions with your partner seem to have a very predictable trajectory? Like, one minute things are going okay and the next, you are insecure, upset and frustrated? If so, read on! I think this Thought might be of help.

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

**AUGUST: Love and Respect
(Our Archetypal Needs)**

The year is 4,000,000 B.C. Thup is a large burly male who is entering his later years of

life. He is 32. Thup has been with Amor since they were children. Amor is a female who has borne Thup's offspring and has managed the cave they call home.

Thup comes in around dusk and a familiar scene is played out. He is down and grumpy as the hunt has not gone well for days. When Amor seeks to talk she finds Thup utterly unresponsive. She senses he is irritated with her and asks about what is wrong. She gets no answer and proceeds to tell him about the new variety of fruit she found in the valley. Thup does not share her excitement and Amor begins to feel he is angry with her. He sure seems angry. She begins to cry. Perhaps Thup does not want to be with her anymore. Thup is not sure what she is crying about but is pretty sure she is disgusted with him, maybe for not bringing home any game to go with her fruit. He has no idea what to do so he just goes into his cave (OK.... deeper into his cave.) His woman could never understand the emptiness of a male without game.

After a good cry, Amor decides to think more about Thup. He is a good male and has always provided well for the family. She begins to imagine that maybe he is worried about getting older. Maybe the younger hunters are being more successful. It has been a while since she has noticed his efforts or shared her admiration for him.

She decides to do a strange thing. She goes and finds him. She simply sits beside him... with no words. She puts her hand in his as though to say I understand and I'm here. After a long silence she notices tears streaming down Thup's face. She says nothing, but quietly opens her heart to what his life must be like. Meanwhile Thup feels the relief of realizing that Amor is, in fact, not disgusted with him. She seems warm and

respectful. And after a while he begins to tell her about the difficulties of the hunt as well as many other worries he has. Amor feels loved, connected and reassured that Thup does not want to leave her.

Thup and Amor proceed to have a great evening enjoying the new variety of fruit that she found.

David

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Attitude is a choice. Happiness is a choice. Optimism is a choice. Kindness is a choice. Giving is a choice. Respect is a choice. Whatever choice you make makes you. Choose wisely." Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

"I am fond of pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals." Winston S. Churchill

"The truest form of love is how you behave toward someone, not how you feel about them." Steve Hall

The happiest people on earth are not those who live on their terms, but those who change their terms for the one whom they love and respect..

"I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university." Albert Einstein

Treat yourself with love and respect, and you will attract people who show you love and respect

If we respect each other, our world will be natural, loving, wonderful and exceptional. love and respect are like fraternal twins in such godly oasis, everyone wins.

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

Sincerely,

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

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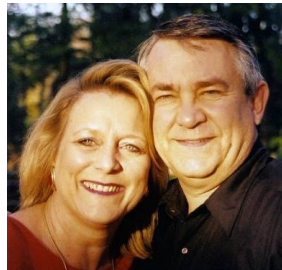
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Issue: #113
September 2018



Dear Friends,

Every individual is different, every couple, unique! That's what makes life so delicious. We never know exactly what to expect and even though too much mystery can be stressful and tiresome, a surprise now and then just keeps the juices flowing. I'm not talking about an elaborate or scary surprise but just a little something that warms the heart and reminds us that life is good. Read on and let me know what *you* think!

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

SEPTEMBER: Surprise!

Esther Perel has posed a thoughtful series of questions that go like this: "How can a comforting and monogamous relationship also provide enough excitement to keep that relationship enlivened." Or: "How can you maintain erotic energy in a relationship with someone you are sure of, and used to, and

utterly familiar with?" Out of these questions she has gone on to study the nature of affairs and is a leading expert in helping understand this phenomenon.

I have some thoughts that may help.

I believe couples do need the confidence and safety of their Partner's respect and love. We do need romance: the words, actions, sights, sounds, and touches that define love and that are passed back and forth between couples. We need this kind of romance on a regular basis.

But we also need the excitement generated by receiving unpredictable surprises which take us back to our erotically charged romantic days. How do we bring back the pleasure of the unexpected and the unpredictable? Practice being a detective. Listen for offhanded comments.

"That parasailing really looks like fun"

"I heard that restaurant is amazing"

"I love Chris Pratt movies"

"Remember when we used to"

These are clues to our Partner's secret wishes or dreams.

Donna is great at this. In fact I have to be careful in what I say these days. "That speedboat is awesome" could wind up with us parking a boat in our driveway with nowhere to use it. She did provide an awesome surprise about a year ago. She told me to pack my bags on a Friday evening. She then drove us off into Pennsylvania with me wondering (and guessing) all the way what sporting event or concert was playing.

When we drove into Reading, Pennsylvania I thought she had totally flipped. She parked the car and we walked down a rather deserted street (What is in Reading, PA?) Then a small marquee began to come into view. Then I saw it! "An evening with Mel Brooks." What a surprise! This 90 year old legend standing there on stage (after a

showing of Blazing Saddles of course.) Then an hour and a half of pure joy and animation from my idol.

I want to note here that Donna does not even like Mel Brooks movies except for "High Anxiety" and "Life Stinks". (I should remind her that we both laughed our way through "The Producers" in Washington, D.C.) The point is that your surprise needs to be something your Partner would find exhilarating, and not just something "you" would like.

Also, bear in mind that not all surprises have to be as dramatic as a trip to see Mel Brooks in person. Bringing your Partner a favorite coffee can unlock the very same endorphins that gave us excitement when we first fell in love.

So Make a Plan! Surprise Your Partner!

As always, your comments are welcomed. Also, if you have a topic in mind for a Thought, please let me know.

David

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

A real man only lies to his woman when he's surprising her. Mitch Cuento

Always try new things in life and you will be able to live a life filled with surprises and

excitement. Anurag Prakash Ray

**We think that we know what life has to offer,
but life never fails to surprise us! Anmol
Andore**

**Expectation hurts a lot when it is not fulfilled.
When you don't expect, every moment is a
surprise and surprises give happiness and it is
happiness which counts. Anil Sinha**

**Remember that life's most treasured
moments come unannounced. Unknown**

**One of the most beneficial and valuable gifts
we can give to ourselves in this life: is
allowing ourselves to be surprised! Unknown**

**If there was no tomorrow, there would be no
surprises; if there was no yesterday, there
would be no memories; if there was no
present, there would be no moments. Payton
Macdonald**

**In the end..you'll see who's fake... who's true
and who would risk it all for you... and trust
me... some people will totally surprise
you. Unknown**

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

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
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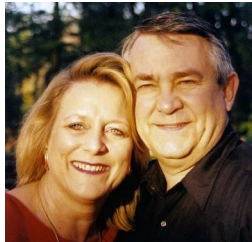
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**Issue: #114
October 2018**



Dear Friends,

Recently, I met an old friend at a coffee shop. We used to have great talks and enjoyed each other a lot. We were always able to disagree and this time, all I said was "What's Going On, Anyway?" and he immediately knew to what I was referring. We ALL want to know! Read on, I have some ideas.....

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

OCTOBER: What's Going On, Anyway?

Everywhere I go people are asking the question "What is going on?" It's a reasonable question. There are lots of things in our existence around which this question is appropriate.

There is an ever increasing amount of mass shootings in this country. There is a huge increase in anti-Semitic fervor and behavior.

There is meaner political discourse than I ever remember (and I'm fairly old.) Racial, ethnic, and sexual issues have grown increasingly tense.

The current theme seems to be abject suspicion of anyone who is not me, or at least like me (as in a part of my clan.) And people are angry. One side is angry at the leadership of the country, while the other side is angry at the first side's protest. There is no coming together.

Individuals are angry and impatient. I was moving slowly and legally into the lane to go into our local Wegman's the other day, and some guy blared his horn gunning around me almost tearing my bumper off. Boy, was he mad! But, at what? I couldn't have held him up more than a few seconds.

And families are angry. Members of the same family are not speaking to each other for various reasons.

What is going on, anyway? Well, I am that Imago Relationship guy, so I'll take a shot at this question based on what I know.

Many of you know our dog, Ben. He is big and as gentle as he is big. He has a tumor in his mouth. It's sad, but he is still very lovable. The other day I tried to gently see into his mouth to check on the growth. He growled and moved away from me. Had I kept trying, I believe he would have turned vicious...so outside of his nature...and so understandable if he was in pain and scared. He experienced me (his best pal) as a source (or potential source) of pain and a threat to his safety. It occurred to me that this is what's going on in the world.

While Connection is our Essence, and while the ultimate survival of the planet probably hinges individuals staying Connected (see Independence Day) we are experiencing the loss of Connection on a global scale. Some blame it on electronics. Some blame it on the lack of religion or reliance on the wrong religions. Some blame it on the erosion of traditional norms and values. Some blame it on sheer greed and the thirst for power. What does seem clear is that people are

feeling unsafe. And, just like Ben, when we feel unsafe we lose connection...even with our "best pals." We feel disconnected because the world (every experience and everyone in it) becomes about our personal survival.

And, when we feel disconnected, we become anxious and self-absorbed. And then a very critical thing happens. We lose the concept of "the Other." (Remember, our Lizard is only interested in our personal survival, still living in that symbiotic belief that "You must be like me!") "The Other" is no longer a source of comfort or healthy tension for us. "The Other" becomes an object of fear and disdain. Not only do we lose empathy for "the Other" but we develop dire and aggressive strategies to ward off "the Other." Perhaps strategies to even kill off "the Other"...metaphorically or literally.

We then create a story about our world that is a projection of our very worst fears and our deepest desires to survive. We create enemies where there were none. The transgender person is not understood so then is to be feared. The immigrant speaks a different language and all of a sudden is a mortal threat to our "way of life" and must be stopped.

It's all rather silly. Nowhere is this sillier than in intimate relationships where most of our behavior is really about restoring Connection (remember the joyous and infinite flow of connection in the romantic days.) Our frustrations and fights are in protest of feeling disconnected.

I guess I'll just keep on trying to heal the planet one couple at a time.

Warmly,

David

Your responses are always welcomed and appreciated.

Also if you want to:

***Save your marriage...or move from
desperation to hope...or get your partner to***

really listen to you.. or go from constant pain to great relief...or just need a refresher, then please call.

We can do FaceTime/Skype/Zoom for a session or more (Only, if you are not already working with someone. Or, we can work with your therapist in conjunction with a one-time intensive with us.)

You will be surprised at how quickly you might find relief. 301-404-7711

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Communication - the human connection - is the key to personal and career success. Paul J. Meyer

Since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special attention to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstances, are brought into closer connection with you. Saint Augustine

I think 'The Color Purple' is so bursting with love, the need for connection, the showing of the need for connection around the globe. Alice Walker

People crave comfort, people crave connection, people crave community. Marianne Williamson

The reason 'Hamilton' works is because there is no distance between that story that happened 200-some-odd years ago and now, because it looks like America now. It helps create a connection that wouldn't have been there if it was 20 white guys on stage. Lin-

Manuel Miranda

What most people don't understand is that UFOs are on a cosmic tourist route. That's why they're always seen in Arizona, Scotland, and New Mexico. Another thing to consider is that all three of those destinations are good places to play golf. So there's possibly some connection between aliens and golf. Alice Cooper

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

Sincerely,

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



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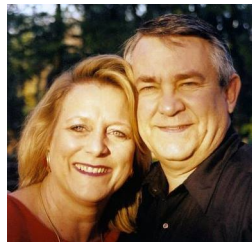
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**Issue: #115
November 2018**



Dear Friends,

I'm sure we have all heard multiple comments and opinions on the state of division and friction in our world, politics and in our families. It seems that mere conversation can be an avenue for strife and disagreement and when we add social media to the mix, you can anger or alienate someone you have never met! Well, I can't solve the communication problems in the world but I do know quite a bit about helping couples solve their communication issues.

I would like to share some secrets about men. Often we wonder what makes them "tick" and I think I know! Please read on.

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

**NOVEMBER: The Secret to a Man's
Heart**

I know the title may sound a little melodramatic but I don't care. I believe I know something about men that is vitally important. However, it escapes their Partners all too often in the brutal facts of trying to successfully live together in this complicated world.

Allow me to go back 24 years to when my father was 83 and nearing the end of his life. I had heard from wise mentors that "the big conversation" was important for a man to have with his father, especially if the relationship had any loose ends about it.

But what could I authentically come up with for my final "big conversation" with my father? Could I say, "I just loved all the times you played ball with me?" Hardly. Could I say, "I loved how you coached my little league team?" No, I was afraid to even ask to play little league what with all the farm work. Could I say, "Thank you for teaching me about girls and relationships and how to be a good lover?" Not really. I saw an emotionally paralyzed man whose only comment on women was that they are bad drivers. He also denigrated the smutty dancers on the Red Skelton show. Could I say, "Thanks for the confidence you had in me and for teaching me about success?" Are you kidding? My father saw himself as a failure, beaten down, and unlucky. He also unwittingly projected a criticism on me for many things I tried to do. And when I had obvious successes, there was no comment; no celebration.

So what do I do for "the big conversation"? I decided to share with him appreciations that were real...things I could honestly say. Like how he went to work every day to single-handedly provide for a family of six. And, like how when he came home the farm work started. Like how he got laid off from a big company and still managed to keep the farm going. Like how he was faithful to my Mother, to the family, and to the church. Like how he quit smoking when the deacons made that a condition of him joining the Deacon Board. Like how he revived his love of fishing and

joined me while I was learning the art of catching small mouthed bass.

I kept emotion out of the conversation for the most part...for his sake and for mine too. But I did go heavy on the word "respect", for this was true. I found that I could say that I respected this man in many ways with complete enthusiasm. I did almost all the talking. He sat there with the same stoic look (some would call it a scowl) that I had known for 45 years. As I was leaving I told him I loved him and gave him a hug. He sat in stunned silence. I had never uttered such a thing or touched him before in my memory. It was nerve racking for me.

He died a week later. My Mother confided in me that a big change had come over him after my visit; some peace about his heart failure condition; some sense of relief.

A man needs to know he is respected. He needs to know he has had a positive effect on the people closest to him, especially his Partner. He will never ask for this respect outright. To do this would bring shame. Those around him will need to discern this DESPERATE need in a man, no matter how subtle it shows up. You'll have to dig it out. No matter if it shows up negatively in angry or disconnected behaviors. In fact, most of the refusals that men exhibit to showing up lovingly are the result of feeling a deficit of respect. Replenish this deficit and you'll get a new man, a loving man, and a man at peace.

So try this. If there is a man in your life find a way to tell him of your genuine respect for him. No matter how empty he leaves you feeling sometimes. And don't stop there. Give specific examples of authentic respect you and others have for him. Tell him you believe in him...in his essence as a good man. Do some thought beforehand. Spell it out as simply and as honestly as you can. Don't expect any reply. Just see what happens.

And tell me about it! Please!

David



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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**Most good relationships are built on mutual
trust and respect. Mona Sutphen**

**The bond that links your true family is not one
of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's
life. Richard Bach**

**We live in a diverse society - in fact, a diverse
world - and we must learn to live in peace and
with respect for each other. Stan Lee**

**Football is like life - it requires perseverance,
self-denial, hard work, sacrifice, dedication
and respect for authority. Vince Lombardi**

**Honest communication is built on truth and
integrity and upon respect of the one for the
other. Benjamin E. Mays**

**Be a warrior when it comes to delivering on
your ambitions. And a saint when it comes to
treating people with respect, modeling
generosity, and showing up with outright
love. Robin S. Sharma**

**Different people have different opinions, and
it's okay to respect all of them. Juan Pablo
Galavis**

**Without feelings of respect, what is there to
distinguish men from beasts? Confucius**

**I look for these qualities and characteristics in
people. Honesty is number one, respect, and
absolutely the third would have to be loyalty.
Summer Altice**

Respect your partner. Be happy in your partner's happiness. Divyanka Tripathi

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

Sincerely,

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



Connecting
Couples

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

Thought of the Month News and Notes

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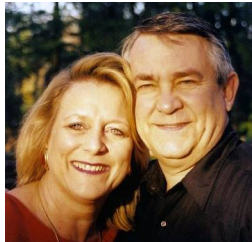
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**Issue: #116
December 2018**



Dear Friends,

Donna and I wish you the joys of the season, Christmas, Hanuka, Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice or whatever you celebrate with those you love. For many, the holiday season is difficult as we miss loved ones who are no longer with us as well as other challenges to a "happy" approach to the most "wonderful time of the year." Yes, we know, it isn't so wonderful and it is stressful and challenging for many. If you are having difficulty with your connection to others and need to bounce things off someone, I am here. Please, reach out to me. 301-404-7711.

Last month I shared some secrets about men, this month, I would like to give you insight in how She wants to be cherished.

[Be Sure to "Like" Us on Facebook!](#)

Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

DECEMBER: Her Need to be

Cherished

I thought it best after talking about what men need last month, to use this month to write about what women need most (I think.) I know I'm like a broken record to some of you, but I really do think women want to be cherished above all else. It occurs to me, though, that we men do not really know what that means. It's vague to us. It sounds right, but HOW?

It's like that scene in "The Break Up" where Jennifer Anniston's character says "Gary, it's not that I want you to do the dishes: it's that I want you to Want to help me with the dishes." Of course, Vince Vaughn's character is completely dumbfounded. This makes no sense to him. And yet the scene is painful because he really does want more than anything for her to be happy with him. Which, as you know by now, is what my research says men want most of all in relationship.

So let's look at the concept of being cherished, which I admit, as a man, is pretty foreign to me. It sounds girly. Do I have to wear an apron? Do I have to discuss my feelings? Do I have to go to the ballet? So let my try and describe what I believe it means for Donna to be cherished by me. (By the way, I don't think she has ever used the word cherished in talking about our marriage.) More confusion for us men. What???? We're supposed to figure something out that has not even been brought up? Gee Whiz!

She wants trust to be paramount. Not the trust that I will be faithful. No. That's a given. She wants me to trust her. That she's so important in my life that I will share my greatest joys and my deepest longings with her. That I will mix it up with her. That I will reveal myself. Intimacy: In To Me See. When a man doesn't say anything, even in conflict, his wife experiences this as hostility. I have needed lessons on being vulnerable. Being cherished is to be trusted by me.

She also needs me to understand her; as in listening to her and not fixing her. Fixing, even with the best of intentions, is

experienced as a put down. Condescending. Not caring. Not understanding. Men like me have this tragic tendency to not understand feelings that I do not feel myself. Being cherished is Donna knowing that her experience is true and valid and that her voice is powerful for me to hear. (And, as Donna has often had to remind me.....she doesn't need a "fix"....she already knows what to do. She just needs to be understood.)

Being cherished is also feeling safe and secure. Yes, physically and financially safe. But way more vital and subtle in the modern world is the emotional safety of feeling an enduring openness and kindness from me. No hidden resentments. A man's anger is not only a turn off for his wife but it scares her right out of connection.

And, also being cherished is her knowing that I choose her above all others. Even above all else. She needs to know that I am thinking of her. That she is at the top of my awareness. That I will stop everything for her if need be. That I will stretch out of my comfort zone for her, even to the minute level of remembering dates (especially, her birthday...my bad) and appointments. Of keeping enough gas in the car (our own inside story.) That I have a real sense of who she is and what she is up against and that I honor that deeply.

These are some of my musings about what it means for a woman to feel cherished.

Note to men: I wrote a booklet called "How to become an irresistible husband: A man's playbook". Let me know if you'd like me to send it.

Remember, Donna and I are open to intensive sessions with one or both of us to assist you in your journey. We also do Face Time for couples who would like that convenience.

David

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

January 11-13, 2019, Frederick, MD

February 8-10, 2019, Frederick, MD

March 8-10, 2019, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Once again, we come to the Holiday Season, a deeply religious time that each of us observes, in his own way, by going to the mall of his choice. Dave Barry

There's something about a holiday that isn't all about how much money you spend. Hilarie Burton

A holiday is an opportunity to journey within. It is also a chance to chill, to relax. It is when I switch on my rest mode. Prabhas

Sharing the holiday with other people, and feeling that you're giving of yourself, gets you past all the commercialism. Caroline Kennedy

If it's not messy and it doesn't drip over the sides, it's not a holiday hot chocolate -it's just an average hot chocolate. Alex Guarnaschelli

A summary of every Jewish holiday: They tried to kill us, we won, let's eat! Alan King

'A Christmas Story' has become such a special part of the holiday season for so many families. Peter Billingsley

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

Sincerely,

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