



Connecting
Couples

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

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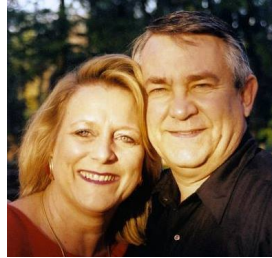
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Dear Friends,

We hope you are enjoying the changing seasons....it is quite lovely here on some days and then the cold returns to remind us to "chill" and not to rush things. I constantly need to remind myself to stop and appreciate the here and now, the wonderful love in my life, the joy of giving to another and the simple pleasures of coffee and Donna.

This Thought was inspired by a blog in the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine- NICABM. I hope you find it as interesting as I did.

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

MARCH: Shame vs Guilt

This month I want to offer thoughts that can help free us from some of our negative self - judgments, self-criticism, and self-rejection. After all, the more we judge ourselves, the more likely we are to judge those around us, particularly our own partner and children.

There is a fundamental difference between Shame and Guilt. Guilt is experienced when we do or think something that is against our true values. When I was little I stole a piece of rock candy from a store. I just opened up the box and took a piece to satisfy my curiosity about how rocks could be candy. I felt guilty. I still feel slightly guilty for this. This is known as "real" guilt or "healthy" guilt. It was a behavior that broke my own definition of right and wrong.

Sometimes "real" guilt is not so straight forward. I felt and still feel strains of guilt over the divorce I initiated 39 years ago. While it was in my best interest and I am glad for the life I have led since, the phenomenon of being divorced still went against my belief system and even against vows that I made.

"Healthy" or "real" guilt can be positive. It can drive us to seek forgiveness, to correct a wrong, and lead to healing. (In my case it can lead to a life path of becoming a renowned marriage coach. OK, I got a little carried away there.)

Then there is another form of guilt that I'll call "false" guilt, or "unhealthy" guilt. Again when I was little, I once placed some small stones on a railroad track. I don't recall why I did this, but I vividly recall feeling tormented for some time that I might have caused a train wreck and killed scores of people. I now laugh at my childhood ignorance of how physics works.

"False" guilt is a condition that severely plagues and limits many people. "False" guilt is born out of irrationally high standards we have developed to please someone (such as parents or the church.) Or it can result from irrational beliefs about how things work. "I know our son died because we didn't go to church as often as we should."

Shame is a very different animal. Shame is

an intensely painful feeling of being fundamentally flawed. It does not arise from a particular event, but is more of a chronic condition. Shame can begin in infancy and is more deeply wired in our brain than most other emotions. Shame is difficult to reverse. You can tell someone over and over they have nothing to be ashamed of and it will have no effect. I developed a sense of shame for feeling sexual in particular, and just alive and exuberant in general. My family was oppressively non-feeling about anything. And sexual things did not even exist.

Shame is brought about by an innate sense of unworthiness, probably fed by an environment of criticism, rigidity, or some other existential threat. It causes us to disconnect with others out of fear of being rejected. It can lead to clinical depression, substance abuse, or criminality.

The antidote for shame is stretching into pursuing healthy relationships and to nurture our connections and sense of belonging with others.

One more observation about shame and guilt. It is interesting to me to note that while most of us possess way too much shame and/or "false" guilt, there are a number of people who seem to lack any semblance of these feelings. They are often hardened criminals on one end of the spectrum and people in powerful positions (such as politicians or executives) on the other. The current diagnostic terms for these people are malignant narcissists, antisocial personality disorders, and psychopaths. The negative impact of such individuals is that they tend to diminish or destroy the lives of people around them. They can even infect the healthy systems of culture and order that most of us rely on for a moral and healthy life.

Maybe a bit of guilt and shame can have a useful purpose after all.

As always, I welcome your comments on my

thoughts. This Thought was inspired after reading a blog from the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine- NICABM.

David

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

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

Next Step Workshop

April 6, 2019, Frederick, MD

Getting the Love You Want Workshops

May 3-5, 2019, Frederick, MD

May 31-June 2, 2019, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"I'm selfish, impatient and a little insecure. I make mistakes, I am out of control and at times hard to handle. But if you can't handle me at my worst, then you sure as hell don't deserve me at my best." Marilyn Monroe

**"You've gotta dance like there's nobody watching,
Love like you'll never be hurt,
Sing like there's nobody listening,
And live like it's heaven on earth." William W. Purkey**

"You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams." Dr. Seuss

"A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you." Elbert Hubbard

"It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages." Friedrich Nietzsche

**"Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none."
William Shakespeare, All's Well That Ends
Well**

**"Have you ever been in love? Horrible isn't it?
It makes you so vulnerable. It opens your
chest and it opens up your heart and it means
that someone can get inside you and mess
you up." Neil Gaiman, The Kindly Ones**

**"Being deeply loved by someone gives you
strength, while loving someone deeply gives
you courage." Lao Tzu**

**"We're all a little weird. And life is a little
weird. And when we find someone whose
weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up
with them and fall into mutually satisfying
weirdness-and call it love-true love." Robert
Fulghum, True Love**

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

Sincerely,

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