
David's Latest Puzzle!

Thoughts of the Month: October 2007

Here it is! Why do we treat other people...the general public, perfect strangers...with greater respect and generosity than we do our partner or our family?

Years ago, I remember an uncle of mine who was kind and funny and experienced as generous by everyone who knew him. I liked him myself and I always felt attracted and energized by this jolly fellow.

On one weekend I stayed in their home and I was horrified at the way this man treated his own family. He criticized his wife (my aunt) mercilessly. He put down his kids (my cousins) in every move they made. I was so confused at the stark discrepancy in how this man behaved with his family and how he seemed in "the world."

Is this you? Or anything like you? Why do we feel we can lose our generosity or respectful posture once we cross the threshold of our own home?

Do we take our partner for granted? ("She knows I love her and I'm just criticizing her for her own good!")

Do we feel like we can let down our guard and be who we "really" are (e.g. crabby, grouchy, unavailable, silent, stingy, etc.) with our spouse and family? ("They'll understand...I've had a tough day.")

We had better rethink these assumptions! If we truly believe Imago concepts then we know that our partner will be much more triggered by our actions and our attitudes than the general public. So it is really stupid for us to think we can act with less care and sensitivity around our partner. We actually have to ramp up our sensitivity.

If a stranger tracks mud into our house we are so forgiving and polite about it. That's natural, I suppose. But if our family member does it, we tend to read them the riot act.

Maybe it's because we have unresolved frustrations or a persistent negative image of our partner:

*"He never cares about how hard I work to keep a nice house."

*"She never laughs at any of my jokes."

*"He never pays attention to what I need."

*"She is always too 'busy' to relax and have fun with me."

These negative images we gather of our partner can get crystallized in our minds and our imaginations. They can prime us to be less generous and forgiving with them than we would be with others with whom we have no history.

Well, guess what? Our negative images are fueled by our childhood story. Our partner only taps our story. (You knew this, right?) Beyond that we fell in love with our partner for some very positive and essential reasons. (Still true!!)

So the answer is to grow a greater consciousness about how we are treating each other and why. Back to Dialogue again and again!

With great encouragement and hope,
David and Donna

Copyright © 2007 - 2012 Bowman & Associates, P.A. All rights reserved.