
The Safe Approach

Thoughts of the Month: May 2008

Have you ever seen one of those billiard trick shot experts make an eye-popping shot with ease? How can they make it look so easy?

I'll tell you-it's all in the set up. They take great care in placing the balls in just the right way to guarantee the success of the shot.

Now, what does this have to do with couples and families and the messy interactions we get into? My observation with many couples is that they lack the skill or consciousness of the safe set up or approach with their partner or their children.

"You never help around the house or with the kids and I'm getting sick of saying this to you!" UNSAFE APPROACH!!!

"Honey, I'm feeling overwhelmed with all the things to do. Would you be willing to talk with me about how we can team up and manage things differently?" SAFER APPROACH!!!

The first quote is a knee jerk reaction (probably stemming from a childhood story) that starts an age old battle with the couple. The second quote is an expression of need and a request for help rather than a complaint.

How about these...

"I can never talk to you about anything important! You just always do your anger thing and never listen!" UNSAFE APPROACH!!!!

"I would like to set a time with you to safely discuss something that may be difficult for us. Would you be willing to try that with me?" SAFER APPROACH!!!

The first quote is a harsh set up that rules out any productive connection. The second quote is a safer appeal to the genuine intention of staying connected around a difficult topic.

My tip for the month is this:

Spend some time and thought on your set up or your approach. Take a few deep breaths and move to a more conscious part of your brain (even a hailstorm like me has one in there somewhere.)

Then you can speak from a place of your core values, those things you value and want, like staying connected, being generous, having fun together, and being a team. This will take you out of the knee jerk reactivity (that lizard we all know so well) of speaking from your core hurts, like being discounted, rejected or unloved.

For a really good book on this subject, see *The New Rules of Marriage* by Terrence Real.

For a real treat to yourselves, sign up for our June 14 -15 *Imago Again...New Support and More Connection* which works on the day to day use of Imago tools and ideas.

With great encouragement and hope,
David and Donna

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