



Connecting
Couples

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

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In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

[LaSplash online
magazine](#)

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Issue: #70
January 2015

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! And, no, I will not mention the word "resolution" well, other than a passing mention. How about a new concept? Why not think about applying the word, "revolution" to your plans and goals for yourself this year? The concept was recently mentioned to a Connecting Couples' team member and it really resonated!

Instead of feeling a bit challenged by a goal, she decided that she would just revolve a bit--- maybe a one quarter turn or maybe a full revolution. This could be adding a salad and removing one cookie or pausing before responding with criticism, and taking a breath instead. I guess it's more like taking baby steps instead of going in for a full makeover.

This Thought is a long one and maybe, just maybe a good chapter for a book (you know, the one I hope to write someday?) but I think you'll find some gems within...please let me know what you think.

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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**JANUARY 2015: "5 Myths That Can Work
Against Your Conscious Relationship"**

We all believe many things to be true.

Things that just seem natural. Things we saw growing up. Things we are told. Things that "feel" right. We hold these truths in our minds and hearts. We could call them myths. A myth is a story we tell that attempts to explain a part of our world experience. It may have elements of truth or be completely off the mark. An example would be the belief that handling a toad will give you warts.

While most myths are harmless and are just an artful way of describing a phenomenon, there are some myths that desperately need de-bunking. Growing up in the South I actually knew people who believed that African-Americans had no souls. And that electing John Kennedy would be the beginning of a Catholic take-over of the world. Wow!

I believe there are many myths we hold about relationships that work against the joyful connection that we really want. Permit me to de-bunk 5 of the most interesting ones.

1. "Constructive criticism can be helpful to a relationship"

There is no such thing as constructive criticism! Generally the "constructive" part of criticism lies in the belief of the critic about their motive. Now I am talking about a personal relationship here. I recognize that constructive criticism has a place on a ball team, or in business.

If you want to test what I am saying, then the next time you offer your "constructive" criticism to your partner or to your child ask them, "Did that feel good?" or "Was that helpful?" Alcoholics Anonymous is one of the most successful movements the world has ever seen, and yet constructive criticism and advice giving are completely out of bounds.

2. "I need to say everything I think and feel to my partner"

40 years ago the prevailing thought in the therapy world was that a person needed to "get it out" in order to feel better. We had "primal scream" therapy and cathartic groups where people were encouraged to splay out all their feelings about their parents, their partners, the other group members. We gave them rubber bats to hit with. This was supposed to be therapeutic. Now we believe that encouraging people to scream everything they feel just produces more rage and devastation to everyone. It is not just anger that is best kept to ourselves. As Donna confesses in our workshop, "I have LOTS of helpful, important information and thoughts to share. However, a while back I learned that sometimes the best thing was for me to keep my mouth shut!" This in no way means that anger and tough feelings are bad and shouldn't be expressed. It's just means we have to use safe structures for managing and sharing those.

3. It's necessary to get to the "Truth" about an issue.

"You never told me you were going to buy a new car!" "Yes I did tell you I was thinking about buying a car. You just don't remember!" OK what do we do with this? The problem with holding out for the "Truth" is this...whose truth?

The other problem is that even if a couple does arrive at a certifiable truth, then one is right and the other is made wrong. And this is disconnecting. Remember, the purpose of your relationship is not to solve problems or to find "The Truth". The purpose is to connect safely and lovingly with another person. (And you have tools to use in order to experience this.)

4. "If I am unhappy in this relationship, then it's because of you!"

This one is the hardest to de-bunk. Here's why: when we fell in love we generously

(and wrongly) ascribed all our oceanic feelings of sweetness and light to this person who stimulated our physiology, our new optimism, and our happiness. So it is logical to now ascribe our misery and pain to the same person.

It is wrong to do so.

Your partner does not set out to make you unhappy. No more than your children set out to make you unhappy. In our heart of hearts most of us Imago devotees know that it is in the complex intersection of our two childhood stories and the way we are seeking safety through learned adaptations that we create our own nightmare...with the exquisitely matched assistance of our partner.

5. "I know about the childhood story, but my childhood has nothing to do with this conflict"

The pain of the moment is sometimes so great that we doggedly assert that "this one" is outside the bounds of Imago theory and all that childhood stuff.

I can only say that even though I have tried to say this to myself, too, it never really pans out. It never fails that a current conflict or frustration which shows up more than once is connected in some way to our childhood and thus to some deprivation we felt or to some adaptation that we learned.

I have for a long time had an especially sharp reaction to any perceived double standard that was put on me. I could not figure out what that had to do with my childhood. My next older brother could have complained about unfair expectations, but I was always the "baby", the "golden boy" of the family. Only recently have I recalled some instances where more was expected of me growing up than anyone else. It's a work in progress.

I hope you will react and respond to any of this. I would love to hear what you think.

(Maybe I can learn to create a "blog.")

David (and Donna)

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March 20-22, 2015, Frederick, MD

May 1-3, 2015, Frederick, MD

Next Step Workshop

March 7-8, 2015 Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**Watch out for the joy-stealers: gossip,
criticism, complaining, faultfinding, and a
negative, judgmental attitude. Joyce Meyer**

**To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing,
and be nothing. Elbert Hubbard**

**In marriage there are no manners to keep up,
and beneath the wildest accusations no real
criticism. Each is familiar with that ancient
child in the other who may erupt again. We
are not ridiculous to ourselves. We are
ageless. That is the luxury of the wedding
ring. Enid Bagnold**

**The trouble with most of us is that we would
rather be ruined by praise than saved by
criticism. Norman Vincent Peale**

**I'm not everybody's cup of tea. But
sometimes criticism can be hurtful. Be
respectful. I'm a good piano player, I can sing
well, I write good songs. If you don't like it,**

fair enough. But give me a break. Elton John

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

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

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Issue: #71
February 2015

Dear Friends,

Here is hoping that you are staying well and warm! I can't resist spending a lot more time by the fire, looking out at a winter wonderland and a lot less time being "busy!" How about you? Does the weather have anything to do with your good or bad mood? Your patience with your partner or children? Stay healthy both in mind and spirit: before you know it, we will be experiencing spring along with all of it's glories!

I hope this Thought helps to give you an opportunity to think about expectations, yours as well as what you think are the expectations of others. Take my challenge and drop your expectations! Be prepared to be surprised!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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FEBRUARY 2015: "The End of Expectations: The Beginning of Real Intimacy"

When we shared this concept about expectations at our workshop last weekend, you could feel the world stopping for our 18 participants. To drop your expectations just feels impossible, counter-intuitive, and not even desirable. I could almost hear the "yes, buts" forming in people's minds.

Let me make the case for dropping expectations.

Intimacy (or Into Me See), as I like to think of it, has one requirement. That requirement is SAFETY. We can have many things in a relationship without feeling safe, but intimacy is not one of them.

Safety is born out of unconditional love. Unconditional love means.....well.....no conditions. We could substitute the word expectations for conditions. There can be no conditions for intimate relationships.

This is different than the relationship of parenting or coaching a team. Expectations in these realms are needed to shape and help people learn and become. These are hierarchical relationships in which one has information about the other that the other needs.

In the non-hierarchical relationship of adult intimacy, there is no need for shaping or expectations. My Partner already knows what she needs without me telling her. She even knows what I need in most cases. And any expectations that I hold are likely to be experienced as (guess what...) criticism.

Expectations which are unmet lead to anxiety. And trust me...many of your expectations will be unmet. And the resulting anxiety ensues for both the "expectee" as well as the "expected." Now each has all this anxiety to deal with and there is no room for safety and the normal impulses of intimacy, such as empathy, generosity, physical affection, respect, and all the other good things.

Now you may be saying to yourself "I don't think I have harmful expectations for my Partner." Good for you! Now, go into a small room by yourself, quiet your mind and enter your heart of hearts for a time. See if there

are any of those "justified" expectations that you are carrying without actually speaking. Things like 'I expect her to have sex with me' or 'I expect him to be nice to me'. I believe we carry expectations that we don't even know about.

Do me a favor. End all your expectations of your Partner for a week. Accept your Partner for a week **JUST AS THEY ARE**. Tell them what you are doing.

And then watch things change. (And give me a report, please. Thanks)

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed." Alexander Pope

"My expectations were reduced to zero when I was 21. Everything since then has been a bonus." Stephen Hawking

"I'm not in this world to live up to your expectations and you're not in this world to live up to mine." Bruce Lee

**"When you stop expecting people to be perfect, you can like them for who they are."
Donald Miller**

"Expectations were like fine pottery. The harder you held them, the more likely they were to crack." Brandon Sanderson

"Today expect something good to happen to you no matter what occurred yesterday. Realize the past no longer holds you captive. It can only continue to hurt you if you hold on to it. Let the past go. A simply abundant world awaits. Sarah Ban Breathnach

**"Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die."
Gautama Buddha**

Coffee has given me unrealistic expectations of productivity. Anonymous

How beautiful it is to stay silent when someone expects you to be enraged.

"You are your own worst enemy. If you can learn to stop expecting impossible perfection, in yourself and others, you may find the happiness that has always eluded you." Lisa Kleypas

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

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

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magazine](#)

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Issue: #72
March 2015

Dear Friends,

This month I am sharing some thoughts from a book I find inspiring. Don Miguel Ruiz wrote *The Four Agreements, A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom* in which he discusses communication and how fraught with the potential for misunderstanding and frustrations. I have chosen a few key elements to share with you and have added my own thoughts.

I hope you will take this opportunity to explore his ideas, your reactions and gain some insight as to how it may apply to your relationships. Please let me know what you think!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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**MARCH 2015: The Four Agreements:
Using ancient Toltec Knowledge in Relationships**

Don Miguel Ruiz has captured some valuable truths for life in his popular book, *The Four Agreements, A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom*. The following is an overview of the meaning of each of The Four Agreements,

based on the writings of Don Miguel Ruiz.

I found a nice summary of his thoughts from [this link The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom](#) which I have copied below and added my thoughts as to how I think these apply to Relationships.

Be Impeccable with Your Word

Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love. Impeccable means "without sin" and a sin is something you do or believe that goes against yourself. It means not speaking against yourself, to yourself or to others. It means not rejecting yourself. To be impeccable means to take responsibility for yourself, to not participate in "the blame game."

Regarding the word, the rules of "action-reaction" apply. What you put out energetically will return to you. Proper use of the word creates proper use of energy, putting out love and gratitude perpetuates the same in the universe. The converse is also true.

Impeccability starts at home. Be impeccable with yourself and that will reflect in your life and your relationships with others. This agreement can help change thousands of other agreements, especially ones that create fear instead of love.

My thoughts:

I've noticed that people truly desire that their intimate Partners be truthful with them. If we do not know someone's truth we have to make it up, and that usually leads to far worse imaginations than the truth would ever be. Another ancient passage says "The

truth will set you free."

Don't Take Anything Personally

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

We take things personally when we agree with what others have said. If we didn't agree, the things that others say would not affect us emotionally. If we did not care about what others think about us, their words or behavior could not affect us.

Even if someone yells at you, gossips about you, harms you or yours, it still is not about you! Their actions and words are based on what they believe in their personal dream.

Our personal "Book of Law" and belief system makes us feel safe. When people have beliefs that are different from our own, we get scared, defend ourselves, and impose our point of view on others. If someone gets angry with us it is because our belief system is challenging their belief system and they get scared. They need to defend their point of view. Why become angry, create conflict, and expend energy arguing when you are aware of this?

My thoughts:

This is the 90-10 rule in reverse. Whatever your Partner is feeling or reacting to is 90% about them and not about you. This awareness can move you from reactivity to compassion.

Don't Make Assumptions

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid

misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life. When we make assumptions it is because we believe we know what others are thinking and feeling. We believe we know their point of view, their dream. We forget that our beliefs are just our point of view based on our belief system and personal experiences and have nothing to do with what others think and feel.

We make the assumption that everybody judges us, abuses us, victimizes us, and blames us the way we do ourselves. As a result we reject ourselves before others have the chance to reject us. When we think this way, it becomes difficult to be ourselves in the world.

Take action and be clear to others about what you want or do not want; do not gossip and make assumptions about things others tell you. Respect other points of view and avoid arguing just to be right. Respect yourself and be honest with yourself. Stop expecting the people around you to know what is in your head.

**My thoughts:
This is what makes the dialogue so healing. It takes us away from assumptions that so easily cause emotional poison. Remember, your Partner is not you. They are a wholly (Holy) other entity with their own validity about everything.**

Always Do Your Best

Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

Doing your best means enjoying the action without expecting a reward. The pleasure comes from doing what you like in life and having fun, not from how much you get paid. Enjoy the path traveled and the destination will take care of itself.

Living in the moment and releasing the past helps us to do the best we can in the moment. It allows us to be fully alive right now, enjoying what is present, not worrying about the past or the future.

Have patience with yourself. Take action. Practice forgiveness. If you do your best always, transformation will happen as a matter of course.

My thoughts:

My take on this is a bit different than the book. I think it can mean to always bring your best self to your Partner and your family. I know it is so easy to let down and be reactive with those close to us in ways we would never risk being at work or even with other friends. But I think our Partner deserves the best, most conscious, most respectful self we have to offer.

I really value your feedback on my articles. Thanks for reading!

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Think like a man of action, and act like a man of thought." Henri L. Bergson

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do." Helen Keller

"Man often becomes what he believes himself to be. If I keep on saying to myself that I cannot do a certain thing, it is possible that I may end by really becoming incapable of doing it. On the contrary, if I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning." Mahatma Gandhi

"If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." Dr Wayne Dyer

"When you get to the end of the rope, tie a knot and hang on." Franklin D Roosevelt

"Your attitude, not your aptitude, determines your altitude." Zig Ziglar

"So many of our dreams at first seems impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable." Christopher Reeve

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

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

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Issue: #73
April 2015

Dear Friends,

I must admit, I've got it! And, I've got it BAD!!! No, not the munchies but Spring Fever!! No more snow, no more shoveling the porch, no more cold! Just a long view of balmy weather, skies of blue (maybe a little cloudy-rainy, but hey, California has a drought!) and some sweet tea and falling asleep on the porch. How about you? Are you feeling a bit rejuvenated? I hope so. Next question, how is your relationship feeling? Cold and snowy or balmy and full of renewed energy? I hope it is the latter. If it is the former, don't forget to let us know if you need us!

This Thought is very personal to me. You are all special to Donna and I and I felt strongly that I wanted to share my feelings about loss and grieving with you. I hope you will reach out to me if it resonates with you.

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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APRIL 2015: Helping People Grieve

I am writing this one day after the 20th anniversary of our daughter's death in a car accident. In some ways it seems like yesterday when I had to tell Donna that her 16 year old Stephanie died instantly.

While this is not a thought for couples, I trust my readers will indulge me. I have gathered some thoughts that I think may be useful around the phenomenon of grief...which is Universal in so many ways.

I'll grant you that I have had special opportunities around the topic of grief, both personally and as a result of a fine Seminary education and 15 years as a pastor. I had two different classes with the indomitable Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. (She was tiny but very feisty as she stuck it to us Seminary students for being vague on our feelings about "after-life"). I also had the privilege of knowing Granger Westberg who wrote the classic little book "Good Grief" which remains an important guide for grieving people.

I'll make this simple. What a grieving person needs most is for people to have the courage to approach them and to be willing to talk and share with them about the loved one who is no longer present.

There was a huge outpouring of people who gathered when Stephanie died to talk about her life and to share deep and funny stories about her. (She was quite a force in her 16 years...we have pictures and additional stories if you want to know more!) This was comforting to all of us.

However, after some time, there came to be a strange silence in which her name was conspicuously not mentioned, especially at parties, reunions, graduations and weddings. I'm sure that people did not know what to say. The continuing thought of our Loss was too horrible to mention. The mention of her might somehow make us relive our worst nightmare or that bringing up the Loss would remind people that tragic things could happen to them, too.

We recently attended a wedding for our niece. She was a happy bride...Stephanie's

cousin and 10 years younger than Stephanie would be. We love her and her husband and are very happy for them! We were also sad...and very lonely sitting there thinking about Stephanie while no one mentioned her name. It was as if she never existed in our family. I understand the strange absence of her name. I do not fault people for this. I just felt sad. Please know that it is possible (and important) for those who have lost to feel both Joy and Pain at the same time. Our Sadness of the past does not diminish our Joy of the present. Acknowledging our loss invites our celebration of the present.

I appeal to you, if you know of someone who is grieving a loss, whether it be the loss of a child, or a partner, or a parent, or a pet...please move toward their grief and mention the loss and acknowledge the loved one. You'll be giving them a wonderful gift by validating the relationship they had and by having the courage to share their pain. We know how important validation is, and it is not limited to people who are alive.

One last thing...there are many things that bring us grief: the loss of a marriage, the loss of a job, a foreclosure, a miscarriage, an addiction, a troubled childhood story, and on and on. Losses are best healed when named, recognized, honored, and shared.

Thank you for sharing this part of our family's Journey. I welcome your feedback to this article.

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Every area of trouble gives out a ray of hope; and the one unchangeable certainty is that nothing is certain or unchangeable. John Fitzgerald Kennedy

"It's spring fever.... You don't quite know what it is you DO want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!" Mark Twain

"If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies." Nadine Stair

"Spring is nature's way of saying, "Let's party!"" Robin Williams

**"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush." Doug Larson
Three grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for. Joseph Addison**

"For a spring training drill, Yogi instructed his players to: "Pair off in threes"" Yogi Berra

**First a howling blizzard woke us,
Then the rain came down to soak us,
And now before the eye can focus -
Crocus. Lilja Rogers**

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul - and sings the tunes without the words - and never stops at all. Emily Dickinson

My great hope is to laugh as much as I cry; to get my work done and try to love somebody and have the courage to accept the love in return. Maya Angelou

Hope is patience with the lamp lit. Tertullian

All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them. Magic Johnson

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

[LaSplash online
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Issue: #74
May-June 2015

Dear Friends,

I can hear the slam of screen doors across the nation. School is out! No more homework, tests, teacher meetings, oh...and not much structure! I don't know about you but as a parent, shuffling kiddos off to learn brought a bit of peace and quiet to our little castle. Summer brought quite a lot more chaos, noise, mess but oh, such joy! Donna and I miss the sound of laughter, endless questions and mini-crises, though enjoying our adult "children" is our consolation.

I wanted to share some thoughts that have been helpful to parents who have attended our workshops on Conscious and Connected Parenting. Perhaps this may be helpful for you. Let us know if you need us!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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MAY-JUNE 2015: A Magic Parenting Moment

So you are caught up again in that familiar scene with your teenager. They are doing or not doing something that seems so obvious and so reasonable to you.

And you are saying the same things and losing it like you have so many times before:

"Why is it so hard to do an hour of homework and then have free time?"

"Why is it such a struggle to get teeth brushed and ready for school?"

"What's so hard about the one little chore of changing the cat litter after all the things your mother and I provide for you?"

"Is it that hard to pick up a room enough to at least walk around?"

And you've heard enough of "I hate you" or "FINE" or "WHATEVER". You know...that teenage vocabulary designed to make you feel bad and make them feel exonerated and cool. (Stephanie once came home and announced to her mother that she was the worst parent in the world. And she could prove it because she had taken a poll with all her friends and they agreed.)

It is an endless battle. You feel like a victim, trying to parent respectfully and getting abused by this child who has become a "terrorist" in your own home. I know many of you are feeling this way....or at least moments of feeling this way.

I could now explain this experience in various ways:

"Kids are just seeking connection."

"It is their job to make your life miserable so they can differentiate and discover their own boundaries."

"Kids go through stages where they test the boundaries of what is acceptable to learn how to behave."

(At this point I am glad you are reading this and are not close enough to throw sharp objects at me.)

Let me suggest something you may not have thought of. You can create a magic moment with your child by sharing with them a story of when you were in their shoes. Get ready to be a bit vulnerable. Share a time when you didn't want to pick up your room. Or a time when you had chores you hated. Fill the story out with details of how you felt and who said what to whom.

I'll guarantee your kid will be paying rapt attention.

Seth reminds me of a time I shared with him how my father would scowl and grump if he felt I was making too much noise. I mimicked exactly how he would say "BE STILL, BE STILL." And I told him how it left me feeling shamed and diminished. Seth says it helped him understand me, especially in times where I could be impatient or short and grumpy with him.

You be the judge, of course, regarding how much information you want to reveal. What makes this become a magic moment of connection and understanding is as follows:

- 1. Believe it or not your child is very interested in your life and in what made you the human that you are.**
- 2. It breaks the conflict cycle when you invite your kid across the bridge to your world.**
- 3. It reduces the power hierarchy that the child (especially teenagers) experience and feel they have to fight against.**
- 4. It shows respect for your child by sharing something that is deeply held by you.**

One caution: You cannot use this to "teach a lesson". It is better as a tool for connecting and being human and vulnerable. It helps to validate your child's experience. Funny how you being human and vulnerable will allow your kid to calm down and become human also.

As always, I love your feedback.

(FYI: Donna and I have shelved the "Conscious and Connected Parenting" workshop due to apparent lack of interest. If you register popular demand for this through email responses we could reinstate it. We love sharing it and it is always powerful.)

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"The best words of wisdom that a parent can say to their child is "I Am proud of you"." Unarine Ramaru

"You raise them half-decent, and they grow up and leave. They move to Miami or California-- someplace with gourmet groceries and nude beaches because you've reared them to cook good and be liberal minded. It's just the opposite with your failures-- them kids stick to your tail like a cocklebur. You'd think it would be the other way around, but it's not. No matter how old I get, this will always amaze me." Michael Lee West, American Pie

"The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice." Peggy O'Mara

"From the time he was young, he dressed the way you told him to dress; he acted the way you told him to act; he said the things you told him to say. He's been listening to somebody else tell him what to do... He hasn't changed. He is still listening to somebody else tell him what to do. The problem is, it isn't you any more; it's his peers." Barbara Coloroso, Kids Are Worth It!: Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline

"If from infancy you treat children as gods, they are liable in adulthood to act as devils." P.D. James

"A mother is a child's first looking glass into the world." Richelle E. Goodrich, Smile Anyway: Quotes, Verse, & Grumblings for Every Day of the Year

"The greatest mark of a father is how he treats his children when no one is looking." Dan Pearce, Single Dad Laughing

**"You can't make me be nice.
You can't make me be good.
You can't make me believe.
But your example, your kindness, your patience and love will affect me perhaps enough that eventually I may choose to do those things."
Richelle E. Goodrich**

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touch!

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**David and Donna Bowman
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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

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magazine](#)

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Issue: #75
July 2015

Dear Friends,

Please excuse our Elves! They goofed and re-sent last month's Thought. Did you notice? This one is even better!

It's summertime and we hope the "livin' is easy!" If not exactly easy, maybe at least this is a pleasant time for you and your partner to enjoy time away or a little different routine. You know, something to shake you out of the workaday doldrums and into the joys of a slower time of year.

Donna and I admit to taking more walks, sitting in the sun and listening to the birds enjoy our corner of paradise and spending less time with structure and more time just letting life happen! Why not try to insert a little less "things you have to do" with a few more that you "want/like to do?" Let us know how it worked out. Hopefully you will experience more joy and less stress--we can all use that, right?

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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JULY 2015: A Constructive View of an Affair

First, the bad news...an affair is a pretty common occurrence in relationships in our culture. It comes under the category of an

Exit of energy. While we all deal with Exits of one kind or another, the experience of knowing your Partner has shared their physical and/or emotional goodies with another person can be crushing. Life stops for many people and the foundations of trust and goodwill seem to be destroyed for good. An affair is often a devastating crisis in people's lives, and there is much bleeding in the relationship and the family.

Now, the good news...an affair can be dealt with and healed in most relationships. It requires a commitment to consciousness, understanding, honesty, and forgiveness. A seasoned coach can be critical to the navigation of such a delicate process of growth and healing.

And...the better news...most affairs are not an effort to end a marriage or a relationship. Most often an affair is a phenomenon of opportunity. What do I mean? Nobody I've talked to reports deciding one morning to find someone to have an affair with that day. It happens unconsciously over time as a person finds themselves in the presence of another who seems unusually understanding and appealing. Maybe they are flirty. Maybe they laugh at your jokes. Maybe they get you at a deep level you have not experienced for a while. You begin to feel the exhilaration that you once felt with your committed Partner. It feels like you are "in love." What a dilemma! No wonder people will say "I still love my husband/wife but I'm not IN love with them."

Ironically...there's even better news...the Affair provides a critical moment, an important Opportunity for the committed couple to look at what has happened in their relationship. What led to the distance, the disconnection, the "not 'in love'" feeling? What caused the rupture? (Again, it is not what either person expected or wanted when they fell in love and committed to each other.)

And now for the best news...an affair can be a wake-up call. It can be a real summons to re-create a truly loving and vintage relationship. With a serious commitment to:

- * honesty,**
- * ownership,**
- * empathy,**
- * compassion,**
- * courage,**
- * humility,**
- * understanding,**
- * vulnerability,**
- * growth,**
- * change,**
- * unconditional love,**
- * forgiveness, and**
- * willingness to make all things new,**

an affair can be the catalyst for a spectacular transformation in a relationship. People can experience life in a whole new way, with true relational maturity. The relationship can be power-packed and bulletproof.

It is a most joyous experience for Donna and me to help a couple through the ugliest of situations toward a new life of really seeing each other and being truly, consciously connected, perhaps for the first time.

(I know my readers may cite many situations of affairs which do not fall into the constructive thoughts I have shared. Most of us have been touched by an affair that was sad and even tragic, whether it be our own life, or our caretakers, or just our friends.)

If you know a couple who are trying to make sense of an affair, have them contact us. There is no better approach than Imago for true recovery.

As always, I love your feedback.

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**A perfect summer day is when the sun is
shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are
singing, and the lawn mower is broken. James
Dent**

**If a June night could talk, it would probably
boast it invented romance. Bern Williams**

**There shall be eternal summer in the grateful
heart. Celia Thaxter**

**The summer night is like a perfection of
thought. Wallace Stevens**

**In summer, the song sings itself. William
Carlos Williams**

**Deep summer is when laziness finds
respectability. Sam Keen**

**Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on
the grass under the trees on a summer's day,
listening to the murmur of water, or watching
the clouds float across the blue sky, is by no
means waste of time. John Lubbock,
"Recreation," The Use of Life, 1894**

Each fairy breath of summer, as it blows with loveliness, inspires the blushing rose. Author Unknown

Summer is the time when one sheds one's tensions with one's clothes, and the right kind of day is jeweled balm for the battered spirit. A few of those days and you can become drunk with the belief that all's right with the world. Ada Louise Huxtable

Summer-induced stupidity. That was the diagnosis, I decided as I made my way up the dirt path in the pouring rain. Aimee Friedman, Sea Change

What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness. John Steinbeck

Being a child at home alone in the summer is a high-risk occupation. If you call your mother at work thirteen times an hour, she can hurt you. Erma Bombeck

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

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

[LaSplash online
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Issue: #76
August 2015

Dear Friends,

I love the dog days of August! It starts getting dark a little earlier and everyone starts thinking about the "new" year: school starting with the advent of new teachers, classes and friends; business goals wrapping up for the calendar year (can we really achieve these??) and realizing that we still have time to address issues left on hold over the summer.

Donna and I have been enjoying family so much this summer and have felt a sense of renewal that these relationships can bring to our busy lives. Just holding a child's hand while taking a walk, sitting next to one of our sons sharing a quiet moment before dinner--renewal of the spirit and heart! We are ready to help you and your partner in this relationship business...we are here to help!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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AUGUST 2015: "How to Save Your Relationship"

I was recently asked a familiar question, "David, what would you say is the key to having a successful relationship?" This question often comes up at social gatherings when people find out what life work I do.

Of course anyone can google all sorts of answers and angles to this question. You'll get things like, "Never go to bed angry" and "Learn to really listen" and "Have a date night once a month." All good stuff.

Well, I'll take a stab at answering the question with what I have learned from my career in Imago Coaching (and my 32 year relationship with Donna.)

1. REPLACE CRITICISM WITH APPRECIATION.

The single most life changing positive thing you can do is to make a commitment to take all negativity out of your relationship. Negativity is defined as criticism, harsh comments, cursing, discounting, stonewalling and physical acting out. (Please note that anger and protest, when shared in a responsible way is not considered negativity.)

This is very difficult because our lizard brain, the part that wants to defend us and keep us safe, is most likely to inflict negativity on our environment. It's why war happens.

You'll have to be very intentional and just "Stop It" when you feel like being ugly or negative. And then you'll have to do something really crazy....find and share an appreciation to infuse positive energy where the negativity was about to destroy things.

2. DROP YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

I wrote a controversial article on this a while back. While expectations are very human, you have to be careful. Expectations expressed, or even unexpressed, are loaded for trouble. If the expectation is unmet the result is anxiety. And anxiety has a way of steering the lizard toward anger and negativity.

I suggest that you learn to replace expectations with gratitude for what is wonderful about your partner. I am not channeling Pollyanna here. I am being doggedly strategic. It will help you live longer.

3. GET A GOOD PICTURE OF YOUR PARTNER AS A CHILD AND HOLD IT IN YOUR HEART.

Memorize your partner's story and the accompanying adaptations. Become able to describe any of your partner's behavior in terms of their pursuit of safety, no matter how misguided you think they are. While you're at it, develop some compassion for your own story and your own adaptations.

4. LEARN WHAT MAKES YOUR PARTNER FEEL CHERISHED.

Let them know that they are at the top of your priorities. Show them that you have them in your mind wherever you are and whatever you are doing.

5. LEARN WHAT MAKES YOUR PARTNER FEEL RESPECTED.

Tell them that you are proud of who they are. Show them that you are happy with them and let them know how they make you feel secure. Find a way every day to let them know how lucky you are to have them in your life.

6. MAKE THE POWER OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP THE NUMBER ONE MISSION IN YOUR LIVES.

Put your relationship above your children, your careers, your hobbies, and your wealth. If you are spiritual or religious, incorporate your relationship squarely in your spirituality or your faith. Enjoy the adventure of intimate collaboration as the greatest therapy experience you could ever have. Be thankful for your conflicts as

**opportunities to see something in a new way
and to become whole.**

**(As always, I love your feedback and
responses to what I have come up with.)**

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**"Renewal requires opening yourself up to new ways of
thinking and feeling" Deborah Day, BE HAPPY NOW!**

**"And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves
growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had
that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again
with the summer." F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby**

**"Things are always better in the morning." Harper Lee, To
Kill a Mockingbird**

**Love that does not renew itself every day becomes a habit
and in turn a slavery. Khalil Gibran**

**"If there is nothing new under the sun, at least the sun itself
is always new, always re-creating itself out of its own
inexhaustible fire." Michael Sims, Apollo's Fire: A Day on
Earth in Nature and Imagination**

"Let your soul be washed by the waves of love to feel the joy

of life." Debasish Mridha

If you want the world to beat a path to your door, just try to take a nap on a Saturday afternoon. George Burns

"You have to renew your mind with positive thoughts daily." Lailah Gifty Akita, Pearls of Wisdom: Great mind

"Why couldn't two unhappy people refresh each other on their way through this dusty business of life by a little talk-real, natural talk, about what they felt, what they would have liked, what they still tried to hope?" Elizabeth von Arnim "If you want a new tomorrow, then make new choices today." Tim Fargo

"Life is like a flowing stream; once the flow stops, our life becomes stagnant. When we remove the dams and debris we have accumulated and encourage it to flow freely, it becomes a source of sustenance and renewal and growth for us and for all with whom we share it." Tom Hackett

Paper is always strongest at the perforations. Carolyn Corry

A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity. The Buddha

Take a course in good water and air; and in the eternal youth of Nature you may renew your own. Go quietly, alone; no harm will befall you. John Muir

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

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

[LaSplash online
magazine](#)

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Issue: #77
September 2015

Dear Friends,

We hope you are enjoying the changing seasons and have a sense of fun for what's ahead: new friends, new experiences, familiar holidays and all that they entail. We are enjoying seeing the world from the eyes of a child. If you have a chance to just "be" for a little while in a child's world, I promise you will be entranced. If you don't have a child in your life, borrow one for a short time (maybe a very short time) but long enough to let go of stresses and "be" in the moment.

What about just being in the moment with your partner? I'm amazed at how busy we make our lives and how often we neglect those closest to us. Try being quiet, being still and just in the moment with your partner. Let us know if you made a discovery! We are ready to help you and your partner in this relationship business...we are here to help!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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SEPTEMBER 2015: Trial Separation: Good Idea?

Many of us have been confronted with the possibility of a trial separation; either for ourselves or for friends or family members.

Donna and I have, of course, been asked about the value of this tactic for improving a marriage or for deciding whether to continue a marriage.

There seems to be two prevailing reasons that therapists and divorce consultants and attorneys give for employing a trial separation in a highly conflictual marriage.

1. It takes each person and perhaps the children away from the highly stressful or even violent atmosphere of continual conflict.

2. It gives each party a chance to work on themselves, to make a decision apart from the stress of conflict, and perhaps even to develop a genuine missing or yearning to be back with the partner.

I have heard testimonials and read some sophisticated rationale for the option of a trial separation.

I remain unconvinced.

I imagine there are cases of trial separations which have brought both parties back into bliss with each other. It's also true that once in a while a "terminal" cancer will just spontaneously remit without treatment and leave the patient totally healthy. Unusual examples do not, in my mind, indicate a path to be followed.

I think of a trial separation with an analogy. Suppose my car is giving me trouble day after day until finally it is just too troublesome to even drive. Do I leave it sitting in the parking lot and walk to work for a while in hopes that the situation will clear up?

Donna says energy follows attention. She is right. We need to act in the direction of the change we want to see. Gandhi said "BE the change you want to see."

If my golf game needs improvement it won't help to go play tennis for a while or just to

go to the course to use the sauna.

The reasoning against a trial separation is that it defies several important Imago concepts.

One is that it represents a massive exit on the part of both partners. It is the opposite of Showing Up. It is Peace that is bought cheaply. There is no guarantee of growth from anyone. There is a high risk of an affair if one is not already operative. (I don't think Donna is going to feel a lack of excitement in our relationship and then suggest that I go have a weekend with Michelle Pfeiffer to get my excitement back.)

The other concept that is defied is the truth that our relationships are about growth and healing. I need my partner for that growth and healing, no matter how painful it is or how long it takes. To separate is to deprive each of us of that "opportunity."

While I understand the urge to escape the horrible stress of fighting, there are better and more long lasting ways to end the conflicts. We have devoted our lives to these ways in the form of coaching and workshops.

Several other thoughts of caution before trying a "trial".....

-----It is very confusing for kids. Are they together? Not together? Getting back together? Not getting back together? What's going on, anyway?

-----Also, couples usually are not equally committed to the concept. This brings up even more "stuff" to work through.

-----And, finally, after the trial, if the reconnection does not last it can create even more resentment and rejection and permanent hurt than there was before.

As always, please give your feedback on these thoughts.

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it." William Arthur Ward

"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder." G.K. Chesterton

"'Enough' is a feast. Buddhist proverb

"If you count all your assets, you always show a profit." Robert Quillen

"At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." Albert Schweitzer

"The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated." William James

"Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough." Oprah Winfrey

"Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a

little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful." Buddha

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

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Issue: #78
October 2015

Dear Friends,

The holiday season is upon us! It seems that it was just summer and now we are thinking about spooks and goblins (or is this passe and now it is zombies?) Thanksgiving travel, holiday gifts and holiday stress. Whatever your proclivity, even if it is just about all of the excuses to eat: candy, warm breads and cookies, pies, cupcakes that look like clowns, hay stacks---watch out! You are bites away from not being able to fit in your favorite pair of pants and moments away from a stress overload!

The holiday season, which starts earlier and earlier each year with more and more STUFF, sets many of us off into a stressful mode. Even scarier than zombies is the sense that we are so busy and overwhelmed with the "shoulds" that will make things "perfect" we lose sight of the here-and-now and risk losing touch with those closest to us. Our children don't need another party, they need time with us! Our partner doesn't need a new to-do list for holiday tasks, he or she needs you! I hope this Thought on intimacy will help you in the next "scary" few months!

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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OCTOBER 2015: The Terror of

Intimacy

Here's what happens! We fall head over heels for this person who is the answer to all of our relational needs.

She laughs at my humor. She actually respects me at a deep level. She is so sexy and also sexual. It's almost too good to be true...someone who finishes my sentences, wants to play golf, earns her own way, and is ready for sex constantly.

He loves his family. He's tender with me. He wants to please me always. I am number one in his heart. I have never been in a relationship with a more loving man.

Sounds great. It is a warm and gushing feeling to fall in love. It meets a primal need for warm connection. (So does buying a rabbit for a pet. And we all know how that turns out!)

Falling in love is a phenomenon that leads us to permanence and intimacy. Here is where the terror comes in. Perhaps this is why, for the first time, more adults are unmarried in our country than are married.

I am completely serious when I say we have to step into the "terror of intimacy" to have a really powerful relationship. Remember, Intimacy is "Into Me See", which our mentor, Hedy Schleifer, taught us.

There are great risks in being intimate; in being willing for another to see into me completely. I sure as heck didn't risk that in my growing up. Did any of you? Not many, I bet.

Let's consider the risks of being in an intimate relationship:

1. There's the risk of commitment. What if it's like Heidi Klum says on Project Runway (yes, Donna makes me watch it) about the

world of fashion, " One day you're in, and the next day you're out!" What if one day my partner decides "You're out?"

2. There's the risk that life will be unfair; that my partner will have it better than me; that their needs will somehow carry the day and not mine.

3. There's the risk that one or both of us will fulfill the great Righteous Brothers song "You've lost that loving feeling." What then?

4. There's the risk of unforeseen change: our partner could get sick or die, or want to change career or location, or get fat, or have an affair.

5. The risk of separateness. In romantic love we are symbiotic: I like pizza and he likes pizza. Isn't life wonderful! I now see more ways Donna and I are different than ever before. It takes courage to be separate and intimately connected.

6. There's the risk of discipline. We cannot be in a relationship and just act any old way we wish. We have to reign in some selfish behaviors for the sake of our partner's well-being and healing. (e.g. slurping coffee, being a slob, etc.)

There are probably many more risks inherent in intimacy. What this suggests is that our relationship takes great faith and the courage to live in that faith. It may be the hardest thing we will ever do.

Please let me know what you think and share any other "risks" you think of.

David (and Donna)

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April 23-24, 2016

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

Appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder and even ecstasy, however stale these experiences may have become to others. Abraham Maslow

Life isn't measured by the number of breaths you take, but by the number of moments that take your breath away. Anonymous

Develop an attitude of gratitude, and give thanks for everything that happens to you, knowing that every step forward is a step toward achieving something bigger and better than your current situation. Brian Tracy

Life doesn't have any hands, but it can sure give you a slap sometimes. Anonymous

What we think, we become. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world. The Buddha

A careless word may kindle strife; A cruel word may wreck a life; A timely word may level stress; A loving word may heal and bless. Unknown

Life in abundance comes only through great love. Elbert Hubbard

**The struggle ends when the gratitude begins.
Neale Donald Walsch**

**Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up
having more.If you concentrate on what you
don't have, you will never, ever have enough.
Oprah Winfrey**

**The thankful receiver bears a plentiful
harvest. William Blake**

**Learn to: Have fun without drinking, Talk
without a cellphone, Dream without drugs,
Smile without selfies, and Love without
conditions. Unknown**

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

Sincerely,

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

Thought of the Month News and Notes

In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

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magazine](#)

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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)

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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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[Thought of the Month](#)
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

Quick Links

[Register for
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

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Issue: #80
December 2015

Dear Friends,

**Happy Holidays! Merry Christmas!
Happy Hanukkah! Happy Kwanzaa! We keep sharp by recognizing that this busy, busy commercial season is also one that has spiritual significance to everyone in one way or another. We don't worry so much about the proper greeting, we just want those we encounter to feel a bit happier, cheerier and have a bigger smile as a result of meeting us. We wish you joy!**

This Thought addresses the issues we all face as we are bombarded with messages, reminders, challenges, memories...everyone is dealing with things that cause stress. We are hopeful that this Thought may help you through.

As always, if you need us, just call.

Donna and David

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DECEMBER 2015: Beware of Holiday Exits

One of the things I like most about the world of Imago understandings is the fact that the concepts that dare to be most helpful are not always the most popular. Take the 90/10 rule for instance. It is not a popular thought that 90 % of my response to anything that happens in my relationship is about me and my childhood story. I'd rather

that not be true!

The concept of "exits" may also be one of those truths that is not easy to accept. In many ways life presents challenges to a couple's intimacy that can tend to pull us away from each other. It just happens. And we often just accept that life is that way.

I've been thinking that the Holidays present extra challenges in the form of exits that can put a lot of extra stress on a relationship. I think of Ellen Griswold in the movie Christmas Vacation. When her daughter is complaining about all the intrusions of the relatives into her life, Ellen says "I don't know what to say except that it's Christmas and we are all in misery".

As a fierce advocate of the couple relationship I have thought of several exits for us to be mindful of around the holidays.

1. The sheer preparation and all the energy it entails. "Are you ready for Christmas" is a popular phrase that certainly implies some kind of extra effort is needed at this time to be "appropriate." Just be mindful that your relationship does not get lost or abused in all the preparation. It should be a joyous source of fun and connection.

2. Extended Family. Yes it has become a time of year to be together with relatives and others that we love. I imagine I don't have to list all the ways this can become a stressor and a threat to the positive connection between a couple. Donna and I have found it helpful to prepare by making a game plan that honors our relationship first. That way we welcome relatives and face any challenges with a united front.

3. Money. Many families spend huge amounts of money to make sure the holidays are happy. This can be a creeping stressor for many. "Conscious" giving can be joyous and meaningful, and can avoid residual

stress.

4. Alcohol. It may not be popular to bring it up but the holidays seem to give some sort of license to even non-problem drinkers to exit relationships through alcohol. We really need to ask why we need to be in a state of inebriation to celebrate the holidays and all that is meaningful.

I hope these thoughts are helpful as you all have a mindful, meaningful and connected Holiday season.

David (and Donna)

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of love and of generosity and of goodness. It illuminates the picture window of the soul, and we look out upon the world's busy life and become more interested in people than in things.
Thomas S. Monson**

**Christmas is a time when everybody wants his past forgotten and his present remembered. What I don't like about office Christmas parties is looking for a job the next day.
Phyllis Diller**

**Why is Christmas just like a day at the office?
You do all the work and the fat guy with the
suit gets all the credit. Anonymous**

**"The holiest of holidays are those kept by
ourselves in silence and apart; The secret
anniversaries of the heart." - Henry
Wadsworth Longfellow**

**Anyone who believes that men are the equal
of women has never seen a man trying to
wrap a Christmas present. Anonymous**

**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**

**The moment we break faith with one another,
the sea engulfs us and the light goes out. -
James Baldwin**

**So powerful is the light of unity that it can
illuminate the whole earth. - Bahá'u'lláh**

**I wish you immense warmth and happiness at
hanukkah. May the light of the Menorah glow
in everlasting blessings for you and your
family. Unknown quotes**

**The true meaning of hanukkah is that of
courage, peace and everlasting freedom. I
pray that this season is rich in traditions and
renewed faith for you and your family.
Shalom. Unknown quotes**

**Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a
state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill,
to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real
spirit of Christmas. Calvin Coolidge**

**Christmas is a season not only of rejoicing but
of reflection. Winston Churchill**

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

Sincerely,

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

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