



Connecting
Couples

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

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Dear Friends,

Fall is upon us! What a lovely season to anticipate cooler weather, back to school events, and sports. Who can deny the allure of a little football? Even if you aren't a fan, you can get some alone-time when your partner is glued to a big screen by taking a walk, getting that pumpkin spiced latte or raking leaves. Whatever your call, take a few moments to enjoy this Thought. It might even leave you speechless (for a bit!)

Questions? Just call me!

Donna and David

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SEPTEMBER: "The Art of Keeping Your Mouth Shut"

Mark Twain once said "Better to keep your mouth shut and appear stupid, than to open it and remove all doubt." I truly believe that much of the conflict in an intimate relationship could be eliminated by practicing the art of keeping one's mouth shut. Or more accurately, learning when to talk and how to say things.

Here's how it works to our detriment. Something happens (or somebody says something) that threatens us....threatens our self-image...our sense of worth....our sense of well-being. Our lower brain, both the reptilian part which serves our survival and the mammalian part which reacts to feeling hurt, kicks into action. The general message is "Do something, dummy!"

The message travels up to the neo-cortex which translates a primitive message of "Defend yourself; kill the son of a...." to "Say something in retaliation; get them back." After all the neo-cortex is just smart enough to know that killing someone lands you in prison, while words are protected under "free speech." Unfortunately, the most wonderful part of our brain, the frontal lobe, does not get utilized because by now we are mired down in defending ourselves and planning our next assault in the proliferation of the conflict.

(Disclaimer: I'm not sure I have all the brain stuff exactly right, but I am damned sure I have the basic progression right.)

Think back. How many of your conflicts could have been lessened or avoided altogether by someone just keeping their mouth shut? Or to put it another way, how many of your conflicts are resolved or diminished by using a lot of words? Words are way overrated in relationships. A hug or a tender touch says thousands of words. An act of service tops all the words that make up a promise. A smile speaks volumes to the recipient.

I am most successful with couples when they are practicing a stewardship of words. Abundant words, carefully chosen, and spoken only in the structure of dialogue. All else is neutral at best and destructive at worst. Silent connecting is a pure thing of joy. Try it!

Sadly, the world advises us to "speak up and defend ourselves" but to what end? The debate is judged on who can get in the most clever "word" damage. No wonder we are feeling disappointed and sort of empty. Where are the real leaders of human relations when we need them? We can name the Prophets of nonviolence in word and deed...Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

(I just had a weird thought. What if, in the next debate, the candidates are instructed to hug each other and use the first 4

minutes each appreciating things about the other. Can you imagine the resulting commentary? It could be transforming.)

Okay, I've not lost my mind, but you could try this with your partner for real. At the very least, try practicing the art of keeping your mouth shut and see how much positive energy you produce in yourself and in those around you.

As always, we welcome your thoughts. And please register for the parenting workshop December 3-4.

David (and Donna)

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

October 7-9, 2016, Frederick, MD

November 18-20, 2016, Frederick, MD

Parenting Workshop

December 3-4, 2016, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

A single conversation across the table with a wise man is better than ten years mere study of books. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Silence is one of the great arts of conversation. Marcus Tullius Cicero

Forget all the bars and schmoozing and everybody checking out everybody else. My ideal date would be to park in a dark place, check out the stars, and have a great conversation. When all else fails, you can just make out. Brooke Burke

The most influential of all educational factors is the conversation in a child's home. William Temple

She had lost the art of conversation but not, unfortunately, the power of speech. George Bernard Shaw

To have God speak to the heart is a majestic experience, an experience that people may miss if they monopolize the conversation and never pause to hear God's responses. Charles Stanley

A happy marriage is a long conversation which always seems too short. Andre Maurois

It was impossible to get a conversation going, everybody was talking too much. Yogi Berra

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

Sincerely,

**David and Donna Bowman
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