



Connecting  
Couples

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

## Thought of the Month News and Notes

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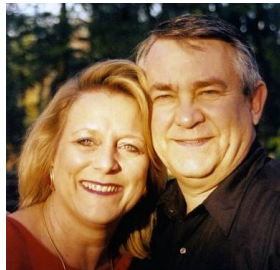
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Dear Friends,

We hope you have a spirit of thankfulness left over from the Thanksgiving holiday. Did you know that other countries began adopting this holiday? Granted, they did not celebrate for the same reason we celebrate in America, but definitely others appreciate the sentiment of gratitude and thankfulness. Some days it feels as though we are becoming more divided and have to struggle to find something to be thankful for, especially when dealing with that cranky partner, co-worker or child in our lives. Perhaps finding a bit of curiosity as to what is going on with this person and compassion in dealing with him or her would help. I have some suggestions.

Donna and David

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**NOVEMBER: Curiosity and  
Compassion: (The keys to relational  
maturity)**

**There is an old adage that goes like this: "If  
you can't say something positive, then don't**

say anything at all." As I think about couples (and, really, all relationships) there are so many levels in which the adage is very wise. At a brain science level, we know that no one is at their best when we are hearing or firing off negative stuff. The cathartic value of spewing negativity is very small compared to the energy required for the cleanup.

So why is it so difficult to keep any dialogue from devolving into negative trade offs? Again, it is brain science that also tells us that our receptors for hearing the negative far outweigh the receptor space for hearing the positive. Financial people say that the fear of losing money far exceeds the joy of making money. It seems so much easier to fuss about what we don't have and don't want than to create an abundant statement of what we would like. When couples are in dialogue, I notice that positive statements such as, "You're beautiful" go un-mirrored while the negative statements are mirrored exactly.

I saw this even before Imago. Back in my preaching days, when I would deliver a sermon with some prophetic (read guilt) content about, you know, how people aren't acting right and how the world is going astray (I never really said "hell",) I would get the most affirming comments. "You really let us have it today, Pastor." "I liked THAT sermon very much." But when I delivered a sermon appealing to the positive and the hope in all of us, it seemed to fall on deaf ears.

No question about it. Fear carries the day in the short term, whether in parenting, or sermons, or politics, or international relations. But does it build trust and relational maturity?

Let me tell you my path to visiting Donna (or anyone else) with curiosity and compassion rather than negative reactivity. (I am

successful some of the time; not all).  
Visiting is hardest when you hear something  
you don't like or agree with, of course.

Here's what I have decided:

1. I don't have to interrupt and tell her how much I hate what she is saying. She already knows it.
2. I don't have to tell her how wrong she is. If she's wrong she already knows that and if she feels right I am wasting my time and energy correcting her.
3. When I am visiting Donna or another person who is fired up about something, they really are not very interested in what I'm thinking anyway. (Does anyone really want to see pictures of your great trip out West?)
4. Most people, most of the time just want to be heard and understood. They are not really looking for solutions or advice.
5. My thoughts on the matter are worthwhile only if they are consciously invited. (This is rare.)

So what am I left with? AHHH. The beautiful gifts of curiosity and compassion. "Tell me more about that" has produced more intimacy than any other three words I can imagine. And, "You make sense to me," is a serious breath of fresh air that most people have craved since they were infants. I have experienced countless dramatic turn arounds in really tough situations with the artful use of these phrases of curiosity and compassion.

One finally adage of my creation: "When someone (like your partner) is railing at you; don't just do something.....stand there with C & C."

Let me know how it works. We'll help.

**Come see us for an intensive of three hours or more. We can change your life!**

**Sincerely,**

**D&D**

**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**

**January 6-8, 2017, Frederick. MD**

**February 10-12, Frederick, MD**

**March 17-19, Frederick, MD**

### **QUOTES OF THE MONTH**

**Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.  
William Arthur Ward**

**Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse. Henry Van Dyke**

**People who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do. Isaac Asimov**

**As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. John F. Kennedy**

**The essence of all beautiful art, all great art, is gratitude. Friedrich Nietzsche**

**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**

**A day without sunshine is like, you know,  
night. Steve Martin**

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

**Sincerely,**

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

Bowman & Associates, PA, 7823 Chestnut Grove Road, Frederick, MD 21701

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