



Connecting
Couples

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Thought of the Month News and Notes

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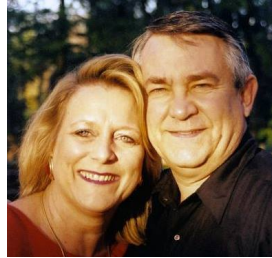
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Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! I hope you aren't tired of hearing this already. We are blessed to have the promise of brand new beginnings, hope for change and understanding, opportunities to connect anew with our partner, our children and family members and with friends.

I'm not big on resolutions but I admit to sometimes taking a piece of scrap paper and writing some pretty amazing goals. Most don't get translated into the "doable" file and after a short time, I abandon the project but hope is such a lovely word, I think, maybe this year.....

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Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

JANUARY: Locking Up Our Partner

Donna and I are on one of life's great adventures: Cleaning out the basement! Almost all of you reading this have been in our house. Potentially thousands of you. Up until yesterday we would have been

mortified for any of you to see in our basement. But that's not why I'm writing this.

You see, we had an "OPPORTUNITY" in our relationship right when we first started. Right when we faced the first primal decision involved in decluttering. Which is "Do we keep it, or pitch it, or give it away"? Not more than 30 seconds into the project my worst fears seemed to be coming true. I am married to a hoarder. Oh, not one of those pitiful souls on the TV show. But a hoarder of some magnitude nevertheless. Oh, and Donna's worst fear was also materializing as she experienced my bulldozer/scorched earth policy. "Everything goes." We were headed for trouble, needing direction. Didn't even consider dialogue. We had tried the "save only one of three items" method. I never even made a selection.

We had tried the "If it brings you joy" method. I could not believe how many things bring this woman joy. Then we did a smart thing: we told the truth! We explicitly shared what Terry Real calls our "Core Negative Image" with each other. Real explains in *The New Rules of Marriage* that the core negative image of your partner is "that image of him or her that you feel most hopeless and frightened about". Be aware, you have to muster up some courage and vulnerability to do this in good faith.

I told her I was afraid it would take us forever to go through every picture our three kids had ever drawn; That we would just be filling up another area of the house; That I would have to move the same item two or three times; and numerous other objections. Donna said that she was afraid I would throw out important things, like birth certificates; and sentimental items like original poems and keepsakes. My ruthless attitude really scared her.

Then we did a second smart thing. We

actually validated (more or less, we ain't perfect!) each other's point of view. That was hard- a real stretch. Then we did a really smart thing. I started by going back to my childhood. It didn't take long to get into the feelings of being embarrassed and depressed at growing up with junk. If something quit working it just rested in peace where it was. The house had severely cluttered areas, and the tool shed, and the barn. No time or energy for cleaning things up. I was just a kid and didn't know any different. I had no control. But now I do! Let's pitch everything. I don't care!

Donna understood and actually seemed to soften a bit. Then she related how as a child she was "talked out" of some things she would have liked. Like basketball or certain clothes or things in her room. Sometimes she was even talked out of feelings she was having. Of course I knew her story very well, but applying it to our clean up power struggle made it fresh and new. Oh, and she was also taught to save anything that could ever be useful.

We have managed pretty well after completing those conscious steps with each other. She even agreed with some of my "throw outs" that she initially wanted to keep. And I agreed to keep some neat things she uncovered. She even found some valuable craft tools that I liked and hadn't seen for years.

We all have a tendency to "lock our partner up" in a crystallized picture of who we've made them out to be in those most difficult, ugly, irrational, and hateful moments. I really recommend Terry Real's book, especially the second chapter. He calls it "Stepping out of your bad deal." For those of us who lock each other up, some generously applied steps can get us all out of jail.

Comments are always welcome about what I have written.

David

**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

February 21-23, 2020, Frederick, MD

March 27-29, 2020, Frederick, MD

Parenting Workshop

February 3-4, 2020, Frederick, MD

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**Change will not come if we wait for some
other person or some other time. We are the
ones we've been waiting for. We are the
change that we seek. Barack Obama**

**If you do not change direction, you may end
up where you are heading. Lao Tzu You**

**Change your opinions, keep to your principles;
change your leaves, keep intact your roots.
Victor Hugo**

**Change is the law of life. And those who look
only to the past or present are certain to miss
the future. John F. Kennedy**

**When we are no longer able to change a
situation - we are challenged to change
ourselves. Viktor E. Frankl**

**I'm not going to change the way I look or the
way I feel to conform to anything. I've always
been a freak. So I've been a freak all my life
and I have to live with that, you know. I'm
one of those people. John Lennon**

Change in all things is sweet. Aristotle

Progress is impossible without change, and

**those who cannot change their minds cannot
change anything. George Bernard Shaw**

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

Sincerely,

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