



Connecting  
Couples

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

## Thought of the Month News and Notes

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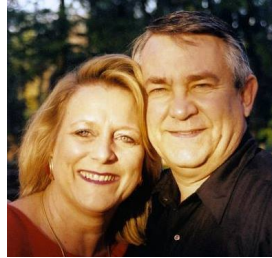
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**Issue: #128**  
**January 2020**



**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**

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

**Sincerely,**

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



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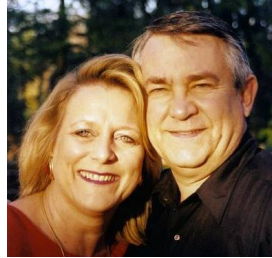
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**Issue: #129**  
**February 2020**



**Dear Friends,**

**Is it only February? Is it only me or does the world seem to be on "fast forward?" For a short month we have any number of national and local distractions and if that isn't enough, we have partnership and family distractions. On a high note, we have a new puppy that is keeping us busy and grounded. I hope you can find a fun and loving distraction close to home to moderate the big distractions of the world around us!**

**Be sure and read to the end of the Thought as I have a "special offer" for readers of this email!**

**[Be Sure to "Like" Us on Facebook!](#)**

**Keep in touch!**

**David (and Donna)**

**FEBRUARY: Can You Take a  
Compliment? (The Origins of Self  
Rejection)**

**There are some people who always seem to think more highly of themselves than they should. This essay is not for them. This**

**Thought is for the vast number of people who have difficulty receiving praise or compliments. Allow me to give a brief explanation of this phenomenon.**

**It starts when we come into the world. Unless the circumstances are really irregular, most of us come into the world like our new puppy, Lily. She is wholly alive, full of connectional energy, eager to engage with curiosity with her surroundings. ("Oh, wow...there's another stick to play with!") In the beginning we are all perfectly receptive to love and attention. No amount of mirroring or affection is too much. We learn from this positive attention that the world is an ok place...a safe place. And we are whole.**

**As we grow up we experience inevitable disruptions to all this positive attention. If our caretakers are sufficiently attuned to our developmental needs then we are guided through natural disruptions and disappointments. If, however, our caretakers are distracted from this nurturing task for whatever reason, we are left with frustration that is experienced as pain.**

**Now remember we are just little people. We do not calculate that it's our parents who are deficient. We assume the problem is us and our stupid needs. After a while we begin to look at our unmet needs as futile, or worse yet...dangerous. Now we are developing an allergy to having these needs. Getting close to them only brings more pain. ("I hate myself for always wanting to be noticed or praised or .....") Now we see how self-hatred or self-rejection gets started.**

**Then someone like our partner comes along and somehow indicates "You're wonderful". Or "You're so good at this". And we have an immediate reaction. It's like these words are toxic. We may deny it. We may cry. We may have an anxiety attack. We may get afraid or become angry. Whatever the response, it is difficult to receive or give love.**

**It all goes back to the self-rejection pattern that was unconsciously set up early on. My invitation is to work at letting yourself be loved by understanding this phenomenon and discussing it with your partner.**

**We can help as well.**

**I would love your responses to this thought.**

### **KEEP READING, PLEASE!!!**

**Donna and I would also like to give you an early bird discount for our "Overcoming Reactivity" workshop coming up April 25-26. Readers of this newsletter can take \$100 off the fee for a registration made by March 15. This two day second level event is a valuable review of all things Imago with many powerful new tools added. The goal is to "get over the hump" of having on and off connection.**

**PJ said "The workshop was a safe place to share our largest and most vexing relationship problems"**

**AK said "The first workshop helps you understand your relationship with your partner. This workshop allows you to challenge yourself to be better for yourself and your partner, resulting in a surprising level of Real love."**

**Don't miss this opportunity! To register, call me at 301-404-7711. [You Can Find Out More Here](#)**

**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**

**March 27-29, 2020, Frederick, MD**



## Next Step Workshop

April 25-26, 2020, Frederick, MD

### QUOTES OF THE MONTH

**You know you're old when someone compliments you on your alligator shoes, and you're barefoot. Phyllis Diller**

**We are prepared for insults, but compliments leave us baffled. Mason Cooley**

**I don't take compliments very easily. I think most musicians suffer from low self-esteem to some extent. James Taylor**

**Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see. Mark Twain**

**It's always the compliments from people you love that mean so much. Maria Bamford**

**Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough. Franklin D. Roosevelt**

**Our brand of democracy is hard. But I can promise that a year from now, when I no longer hold this office, I'll be right there with you as a citizen - inspired by those voices of fairness and vision, of grit and good humor and kindness that have helped America travel so far. Barack Obama**

**This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness. Dalai Lama**

**It's important to work hard, stay humble, and not let the criticism or the compliments go to your head. Jessica Sanchez**

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

**touch!**

**Sincerely,**

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



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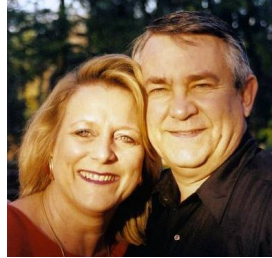
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**Issue: #130**  
**March 2020**



**Dear Friends,**

**We are living in extraordinary times. That feels like such a trite statement, and at the same time, wholly inadequate to describe our planet today. No one would have believed how quickly we could have gone from Valentine's Day, March Madness excitement, spring break plans to....shelter in place. Social distancing.**

**We have cancelled our workshops and encourage you to connect with us. We are using Zoom to reach out to those who want and need this connection.**

**Hold your loved ones close, and be kind!**

**[Be Sure to "Like" Us on Facebook!](#)**

**Keep in touch!**

**David (and Donna)**

### **MARCH: Exposure**

**Looks like the virus is not the only exposure we are dealing with in this time of confusion and uncertainty.**

**Also exposed are our deepest fears about life and livelihood. Even though the worst case mortality numbers are less than many other phenomena we live with, it is the uncertainty and the inability to control things that makes us anxious. It's like waiting for a cancer diagnosis: "Do I have it? And how bad is it going to be?"**

**Also exposed are our prejudices, our penchant for conspiracy theories, our vulnerability to misinformation, our tendency to hoard, and all sort of other fear-based behaviors.**

**But the exposure that is interesting me the most right now is one that has some very positive and promising aspects. It is the exposure that we all (all creatures) are, indeed, Connected. We live on a small and very vulnerable planet. We can say that what happens on the other side of the world does not affect me. Now we know how wrong we are. We can say that what I do with my life is my business as long as I am not hurting anyone. Now we know how misguided that is. We can say that we are financially fixed so that we'll get through just fine. What about our child care people, our grocery clerk, our nurse and Doctor, our Uber driver, our house cleaners, our truck drivers and delivery people, our school teachers, cooks and janitors?**

**What a great time to take a new view of life. We really do need each other.**

**Donna just had a total knee replacement. She is recovering famously. I'll bet there were 50-100 people directly or indirectly involved in helping her have a new knee. The point is that anything we have or enjoy is the result of a network of related persons working together (mostly without even knowing it) in good faith and with good intentions.**

**We are seeing the generosity of people in this "crisis". And what is generosity? It is an act of gratitude for Connection. Our**

awareness of Connection or our fear of DisConnection is at the bottom of every ounce of energy around this event in history. Connection leads to generosity.

DisConnection leads to anxiety and isolation. I want to encourage you to live your gratitude for your Partner and your family during this time. A time to ritualize your appreciations. Or to ritualize other Connecting behaviors like cooking together, eating together, playing games. Seems to me that we have a real opportunity to take leave of our many exits and to risk going back to honoring and celebrating our pure Connection with each other.

Donna and I are offering Zoom sessions for any couple that would be interested. Just call, 301-404-7711.

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**

**Next Step Workshop**

**To be determined at a later date**

**QUOTES OF THE MONTH**

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

We learned about gratitude and humility - that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to

**the janitors who kept our school clean... and we were taught to value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect. Michelle Obama**

**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**

**For me, every hour is grace. And I feel gratitude in my heart each time I can meet someone and look at his or her smile. Elie Wiesel**

**Sometimes we should express our gratitude for the small and simple things like the scent of the rain, the taste of your favorite food, or the sound of a loved one's voice. Joseph B. Wirthlin**

**Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude. Denis Waitley**

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

**Sincerely,**

**David and Donna Bowman  
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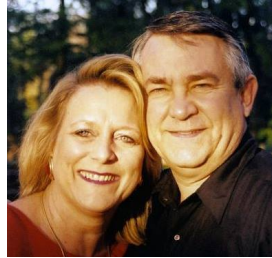
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**Issue: #131**  
**April 2020**



**Dear Friends,**

**We think of you and yours every day! These difficult times remind us of how precious relationships are to our well-being and challenge us at the same time. For many of us, having such close proximity to loved ones and such distant proximity to others is taking a mental and physical toll. We may be eating more and perhaps drinking more. We have the joy of time with our children and the challenge of lots (and lots) of time with our children. This Thought will give you a little insight into these blessings.**

**Stay well. Be loving.**

[Be Sure to "Like" Us on Facebook!](#)

**Keep in touch!**

**David (and Donna)**

**APRIL: The Blessings Within A Crisis**

**"Whenever there is a big change in your life; a move, a new job, a marriage, a divorce, a new birth, an illness, a death, etc., pay attention to what you are losing and also what you are gaining in that same change"**

**This was a powerful thought passed down to me by a wise mentor years ago. So, I have decided to find at least ten things I have gained in the last month of sequestered life. Some are deeper than others. No judging. (And in no particular order!)**

- 1. We are having fun with the creation of new meals and the time to make them.**
- 2. We have learned the names of some of our neighbors we did not know.**
- 3. People actually answer the phone again. Hallelujah!**
- 4. We have been more "physical" with each other.**
- 5. We finished "Homeland" and are almost caught up on "Ozark".**
- 6. We are doing regular Zoom sessions with our family.**
- 7. I am walking our dog "Lily" everyday.**
- 8. The battery is dead on the old Nissan and it doesn't matter.**
- 9. The azaleas look particularly beautiful even without their usual fertilizer.**
- 10. We have expressed more appreciations for each other.**

**Ok, since I started I have a few points of awareness that are a bit deeper.**

- 1. People are generally quite kind and generous with others in need.**
- 2. Every day, every minute is a precious gift to be alive and to be human.**
- 3. Safe relationships are by far the most important thing,**
- 4. Politics, and even science are proving to be vulnerable to the awesome power of the natural world. Life as we know it is not a given.**
- 5. We have the opportunity to remedy the inequalities that are being made visible.**

**I challenge you all to list ten blessings that you experience in this crisis.**

**If your relationship is needing help, Donna or I can Zoom into your home to help. We will adjust fee to match any hardship you have.**



Call me at 301-404-7711 or Donna at 301-898-0527.

If you want to rejuvenate and strengthen your Space, join us for Zoom Connection Nights - May 2, 7:00 - 9:00 EST OR May 16, 7:00 - 9:00 EST. You can register here:

**Imago Zoom Night Registration**

Again, we will adjust the fee.

We feel sadness for the isolated illness and death this virus has dealt so many people.

Stay safe and blessed,

David

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS...LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES  
COMING UP!**

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**IMAGO ZOOM NIGHTS: 2020**

***MAY 2, 7:00 pm-9:00 pm EST***

**OR**

***MAY 16, 7:00 pm-9:00 pm EST***

***To be determined at a later date:***

**Getting the Love You Want Workshops**

**Next Step Workshop**

**QUOTES OF THE MONTH**

**"Focus on your strengths, not your weaknesses.**

**Focus on your character, not your reputation.**

**Focus on your blessings, not your**

**misfortunes." Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart**

**"When we lose one blessing, another is often most unexpectedly given in its place." C.S. Lewis**

**"A kind gesture can reach a wound that only compassion can heal."**

**"When you wish someone joy, you wish them peace, love, prosperity, happiness... all the good things." Maya Angelou**

**"... it's a blessed thing to love and feel loved in return." E.A. Bucchianeri, Brushstrokes of a Gadfly,**

**"The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings." Eric Hoffer**

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

**Sincerely,**

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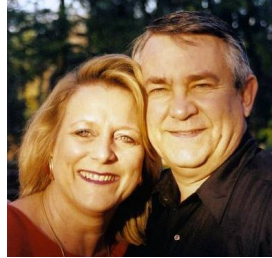
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### Join Our List

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**Issue: #132**  
**May 2020**



**Dear Friends,**

**During these "challenging" times...Wait! How many times have you heard that statement? Well, many times I am sure. Whether or not we are tired of this...pandemic, challenge, whatever you call it, we have a long way to go. Please know that Donna and I are keeping you all in our hearts and minds and praying for those of you touched by this virus in the most heartbreaking ways. Many have lost loved ones or friends and others are touched by financial and emotional distress. We are aware that some lives will be changed forever.**

**We feel that there is a very concrete way we can help. Using our many years of training and experience, the month of June will be unique to us. We will hold Zoom sessions every Saturday with different themes, all of which we know are impacting lives right now. Please consider joining us for any and all of the sessions.**

**Stay well. Be loving.**

[Be Sure to "Like" Us on Facebook!](#)

**Keep in touch!**

**David (and Donna)**

**MAY: June Is "Enhance Your Relationship" Month**

**Donna and I are disappointed at the real possibility of not having our wonderful couples in our home for the foreseeable future. So....we are creating alternative ways to connect with and support couples during this time. We are in the process of designing an online mini parenting workshop which we hope to offer this summer. Also, we are looking at other online opportunities to introduce folks to Imago in lieu of our workshops.**

**In the meantime, we are offering more Saturday night Zoom sessions for Imago couples through the month of June. We recognize that the pandemic has a limiting effect on all of us. There are so many things we cannot do. But one thing you can do is give extra attention and energy to your relationship. And we can help you by inviting you to one or more of our Saturday night sessions through June. We have found our first two nights to be very successful. The group experience will provide the opportunity to both gain from the group as well as to privately focus on your Space. And not to worry if children or pets appear. That is the real world... and you have a mute button.**

**June 6 or June 27, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.-  
"Connection and Celebration"**

**The theme will be nurturing and replenishing your Space. We will provide a brief review of important concepts like "the bridge" and "your connection". We will guide you through some processes and help you create an action plan to sustain your experience.**

**June 13, 7:00 to 9:00 pm.---"Emotional and Physical Intimacy (i.e. Romance and Sex)"  
The theme will be looking at ways to**

promote more safety in order to regain or enhance romance and physical intimacy. We will share our thoughts on what makes it more difficult just now and also what paves the way for relationships to feel safe enough to step into intimacy. We will provide you with simple dialogue structures to understand each others' emotions and needs.

**June 20, 7:00 to 9:00 pm---"Living with Others... of All Ages"**

The structure of many families has changed during this "crisis." Many have found that their households have grown with adult children returning and/or extended family coming to live under one roof. The addition of family members brings both blessings and challenges. The theme of this evening will be developing strategies for best navigating the sudden addition of folks all living together. We will share some tips and guide you through safe conversations in order to find strategic and fulfilling ways to thrive in this new environment.

We are quite excited to gather with you in this way. When you register, please let us know of specific questions or concerns you would like us to address.

The fee is \$100 per couple for each session. If you register for two or more sessions the fee is \$75 per session. However, if you have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, you are welcome to pay what you can or nothing at all. (For payments other than \$100 please call us.)

**You May Register Here on Our Website**

Or you can call us at 301-404-7711- David or 301-898-0527- Donna. The number of couples will be limited in order to provide the best experience.

We hope you will take this conscious and positive step in the middle of this time which has such potential for disconnection and anxiety

**David**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS...LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES  
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***Be sure to watch this space or check our web  
site for future opportunities.***

## **IMAGO ZOOM NIGHTS: JUNE 2020**

***June 6 or June 27: Connection and Celebration  
7:00 pm-9:00 pm***

***June 13: Emotional and Physical Intimacy (ie.  
Romance and Sex)  
7:00 pm-9:00 pm***

***June 20: Living with Others...of all Ages.  
7:00-9:00 pm***

**To be determined at a later date:**

**Parenting Workshop**

**Getting the Love You Want Workshops**

**Next Step Workshop**

## **QUOTES OF THE MONTH**

**Kindness in words creates confidence.  
Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.  
Kindness in giving creates love. Lao Tzu**

**We are never so defenseless against suffering  
as when we love. Sigmund Freud**

**Love and compassion are necessities, not  
luxuries. Without them humanity cannot  
survive. Dalai Lama**

**Life without love is like a tree without  
blossoms or fruit. Khalil Gibran**

**Love is like a beautiful flower which I may not  
touch, but whose fragrance makes the garden**

**a place of delight just the same. Helen Keller**

**Passion is momentary; love is enduring. John  
Wooden**

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

**Sincerely,**

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



# Thought of the Month

## News and Notes



July 2020; Issue #134

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### Quotes of the Month

**"The words 'I Love You' kill, and resurrect millions, in less than a second."  
Aberjhani,  
Elemental**

**"Don't blow off another's candle for it won't make**

**Dear Friends,**

How are you doing? I'll bet you hear that alot. We do...from neighbors we pass on our walk and from family and friends checking in with us. Then we all sigh, and say that we're good, hope they are too and, will this ever be over? Yes, eventually it will be over but we are all in the same reality and it doesn't seem to have an end game. I've been really thinking about our shared reality and have some insights. I hope you find them helpful.

**IMPORTANT:** Our Zoom Intimacy Workshop for this Saturday, August 8 will be postponed until August 29 to better accomodate those interested. Registration is on our [website](#)

**Keep in touch!**

**David (and Donna)**

## July: A Relationship Lesson from Covid-19

**Among the many lessons we have the opportunity to learn during this unprecedented time, there is one that seems to me to be relevant to our relationships.**

**Why is it so difficult to convince some people that the only way to get out of this viral mess is for EVERYONE to follow a few simple rules? We could say that it is political; that they are showing their allegiance to their party. Yet many of my Republican friends {and relatives} are very careful about masks and distancing, etc. And who said all Democrats are following the rules?**

**Guess where I found the real lesson I am about to describe. Yes.....inside myself. I notice that I, too,**



**yours shine brighter."Jaachyn ma N.E. Agu**

**"there's nothing more intimate in life than simply being understood. And understanding someone else."**  
**Brad Meltzer**

**"The opposite of Loneliness is not Togetherness , It's Intimacy"** Richard Bach

**The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.**

**"Intimacy is not who you let touch you. Intimacy is who you text at 3 A.M. about your dreams and fears. Intimacy is giving someone your attention when ten other people are asking for it. Intimacy is the person always in the back on your mind, no matter how distracted you are."**  
**Unknown**

**"It's funny; in this era of e-mail and voice mail and all those things that even I did not grow up with, a plain old paper letter takes on amazing intimacy."**  
**Elizabeth Kostova,**

**do not want to wear a mask. I, too, do not wish to stay 6 feet away from our grandchildren. I am getting grumpy about having no Lake Tahoe trip this summer. I want to go somewhere exciting. I'm bored. I want to resume our workshops in our home. I want my Italian restaurant to open up. On and on..... In other words I am feeling entitled. It is the age we are living in.**

**We are outraged when they have no lettuce at Wegman's. We are paralyzed at the thought of our kids not being in school and out of our hair. We are severely disappointed when our beach is closed or our church or synagogue or temple is only online. Groceries are 6% higher. Oh no! Do you see what is happening? We have become so entitled to everything and this disruption is just exposing our collective narcissism that we are special and deserve everything at all times.**

**Now, to relationships. It occurs to me that most of us feel entitled in our intimate relationships as well. We tend to expect that our Partner will be able to and want to provide our every need. Relationships have become very complex. In the past, in traditional relationships, things were very codified and regulated. We knew what each person was supposed to do. Commitment was forever and not dependent on feelings. The community (e.g. religious community, barbershop, family traditions) informed our lives and we knew exactly what to do and what to expect.**

**My Mother would have never uttered the words, "My husband is not emotionally available to me." The thought never entered her head. My Father never imagined my Mother having a career, being self-expressive or even being happy. My Mother had security and my Father had routine and children. It was enough.**

**Now we expect all our needs be fulfilled from one person. We are entitled to this. Our Partner must have a career and do their share of the housework and be an excellent parent and look sexy and fit for us and provide meaning for us and of course be emotionally available to us at all times. And if they are not, maybe we are with the wrong person.**

**Esther Perel says that now we expect one person to do for us what, in the past, it took a whole village to provide.**

**Steven Stosny says that we no doubt get into our relationship because of our feelings. And if we continue to rely on our feelings we will likely want out of that relationship.**

**In other words, we have become super-entitled. "Am I getting my needs met?" has**

**“Dancing, at its best, is independence and intimacy in balance.” Donna Goddard**

**“Intimacy is not purely physical. It’s the act of connecting with someone so deeply, you feel like you can see into their soul.” Unknown**

**become the measure of a successful marriage. It can become very selfish. More importantly it removes the meaning of intimate partnership which is giving and being given to. Understanding and being understood. Being delightfully generous and receiving generosity with joy. Co-creating a dynamic of healing and growth. Discovering with another.**

**During this crazy time where our stresses are amplified, it is a good time to fall back on the values that reveal our essential goodness:**

- \* Generosity**
- \* Humility**
- \* Vulnerability**
- \* Compassion**
- \* Cooperation**
- \* Goodwill**
- \* Contentment**
- \* Bliss**

**Your comments are greatly appreciated.**

**David**



**Be sure to watch this space or check our web site for future opportunities.**

**To be determined at a later date:**

**Getting the Love You Want Workshops**

**Next Step Workshops**

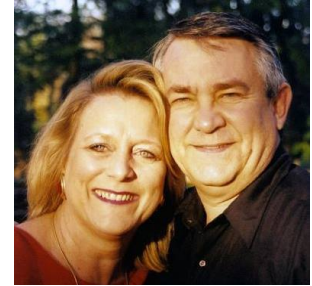
**Zoom sessions and workshops**





# Thought of the Month

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### Quotes of the Month

“Compassion is a seed, empathy is the root, kindness is the stem, charity is the tree, and love is the fruit.” Matshona Dhliwayo

“There comes a time when everyone should seriously empathise. There's no room for hate and

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that summer is almost over. It has been such an upside down world since mid-March and we keep thinking something is going to change soon and everything will be back to normal. I'm not sure that our normal will be our old normal. Everyone says there will be a new normal, that we are already experiencing it!

We are thinking of you all: those who are ill and those who have lost friends or loved ones, those affected by upheaval, job loss, trauma and anxiety. Take care of yourselves and your loved ones. Be kind. Be safe.

Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

## August: On the Topic of Sex

*It's not too late to join our workshop on Emotional and Physical Intimacy this Saturday, August 29. It will be done on Zoom with three segments of two hours each.*

Here are a few thoughts about sex that may get you interested:

- The most vital organ in the service of good sexual experience is... The Brain.
- Women most often need to feel emotionally connected to want sex.
- Men most often want to have sex to feel emotionally connected.
- Women tend to get aroused after sex begins.

violence in this world.  
Germany Kent

“When someone shares their distress or their inadequacies, the natural inclination is to comfort them. To mollify. When we do this we brush over their emotions, often because they make us uncomfortable. Most times, people don’t want a blanket. They want someone who is willing to stand outside and shiver with them in the cold.”

Jacqueline Simon  
Gunn

“Empathy healed the moment. Words were not necessary when compassion created understanding in grief.”Mala Naidoo

“Empathy is the gateway; compassion is the way.” Scott Perry

“A child is not born with affection, adoration, and kindheartedness. A person accrues empathy and sympathy from experiencing our own pain.” Kilroy J. Oldster

“In place of fellow feeling, seeing each other alone, is enough to raise the empathy of human beings.”Nurudeen Ushawu

• Men tend to get aroused and then want sex to begin.

• A vast number of couples live in marriages where sex has disappeared.

• The longer a couple has been together, the harder it is for them to talk about sex.

• “Foreplay begins ten minutes after the last orgasm.” Esther Perel

• Estimates are that 26-75% of people cheat on their partner. (Not very useful info)

• There are infinitely more ways to cheat these days.

• There are equally more ways to get caught.

• Affairs occur even in happy marriages.

• Affairs have three possible outcomes: 1) End the relationship 2) Heal and transform the relationship 3) Relationship continues with hurt, confusion, and disconnection

• Safety is necessary but not sufficient for erotic energy.

• “We used to get married in order to have sex. Now we get married and limit sex to just one person.” Esther Perel

• Sex can be more about feeling alive than feeling turned on.

• Vulnerability from a man can be a huge turn on.

• Respect from a woman can be a huge turn on.

• Anger from a man is a huge turn off.

• Criticism from a woman is a huge turn off.

• Most infidelity is to fill some personal empty place and not a desire for a new person.

• “A good way to create arousal is to plan a time for it.” Tammy Nelson

• Sexual generosity is an important skill to develop for lasting satisfaction.

***You can register for the virtual Intimacy Workshop we are doing this Saturday, August 29 by going on our website here: [www.ConnectingCouples.net](http://www.ConnectingCouples.net)***

See you then.



Be sure to watch this space or check our web site for future opportunities.

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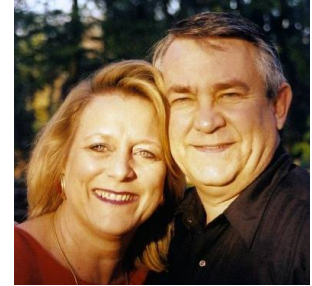
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### Quotes of the Month

"Children are educated by what the grown-up is and not by his talk." Carl Jung

"If you have never been hated by your child, you have never been a parent." Bette Davis

Dear Friends,

I hope you are doing well. Staying Safe. Staying Calm. Thriving? I know many are doing more creative activities than ever, keeping busy, making sure to exercise, eat well and take good care of loved ones. I must admit that overall I am doing well though perhaps I find a few more excuses to avoid those things I don't like to do. You know, those "shoulds" we all have, some of which are just easy for others.

I force myself to avoid the extra snacking and add a simple walk down our lane with Donna in lieu of working out, which, now that I think about it, is a perfect exercise session!

I have spoken to a lot of parents lately and I thought it was about time to address the unique stresses encountered by families today. I hope this Thought is helpful to you!

Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

## September: Overloaded Parents

I am aware that parenting fatigue may be setting in with this extended alternate social and family universe we are in. Our children should be going off to school about now. So maybe it's time to reinforce your skills and spirit around this unavoidable time of parenting overload.

### PRINCIPLES OF CONSCIOUS PARENTING

1. Honor the Space between you and your children. The goal is safe connection. Decide to nurture and cleanse the Space. Admit to your part of the pollution when you become aware of it.



**"One thing I had learned from watching chimpanzees with their infants is that having a child should be fun."  
Jane Goodall**

**"Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them." Lady Bird Johnson**

**"It is time for parents to teach young people that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."  
Maya Angelou**

**"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."  
James Baldwin**

**"To be in your children's memories tomorrow, You have to be in their lives today."  
Barbara Johnson**

**2. Work on making sense of your own childhood story. This is crucial to providing healthy development for your children. Grow your compassion for your own and your partner's story.**

**3. Honor your children's need to be validated above all else. Many conflicts with children are dissolved once the child feels validated for their thoughts and feelings.**

**4. Welcome discipline as part of your job. Your children need guidance and protection. They expect and even count on discipline to keep them safe. The discipline you provide needs to be what they need rather than what you need.**

**5. Celebrate your relationship and growth in plain view of your children. This is the strongest model they will ever have for their own successful adult relationship.**

**6. Develop a network for your children. Help your children develop a network of adults they can count on/call when you are not available OR when they don't want to call you.**

**7. Own and share your vulnerability as parents with your children, including your mistakes. Admitting your imperfections and asking for a "do-over" is an awesome example and opportunity for repair and connection with your children.**

**Note: We are available for Zoom coaching if you find yourselves in a stuck place. It has been surprising to me just how effective the sessions are.**

**Be safe and well.**

**David**

**Be sure to watch this space or check our web site for future opportunities.**

**To be determined at a later date:**

**MORE Zoom sessions and workshops**







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### Quotes of the Month

Find joy in everything you choose to do. Every job, relationship, home... it's your responsibility to love it, or change it. Chuck Palahniuk

I was born when

Dear Friends,

I hope this Thought finds you and your family well. So many have shared that though these times are stressful, they are enjoying the "little" things. It's almost like going back to Little House on the Prairie but with the internet. Baking cookies with your children, trying new recipes (or actually cooking for a change!) and just going with the flow. Slowing down a bit, taking extra time to just breathe! When I confessed to taking a nap recently, instead of feeling guilty, I loved it when someone just said, "that's perfect self-care!"

So, I encourage you to perfect self-care and not put additional stresses on yourself or your partner. You are in our thoughts as we know so many are dealing with health, financial and employment difficulties and some with the loss of loved ones. Stay well and safe. We are with you in spirit and thought.

Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

## October: The "Work" of Relationships

**"It takes work to have a good relationship!" I hear that expression over and over again. And it always makes me hesitate. Is work the right word? I have used it myself to describe what it will take to improve a relationship. But the word doesn't taste quite right. Let's look at this.**

**The word "work" sounds like something hard, something negative, something distasteful, something we have to do but don't really want to do. It sounds like having a root canal at the dentist or cleaning the toilet. But "work" was the last word we would have used back in the**

**you kissed me. I died when you left me. I lived a few weeks while you loved me.  
Humphrey Bogart**

**We've got this gift of love, but love is like a precious plant. You can't just accept it and leave it in the cupboard or just think it's going to get on by itself. You've got to keep watering it. You've got to really look after it and nurture it. John Lennon**

**But let there be spaces in your togetherness and let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another but make not a bond of love: let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Khalil Gibran**

**Once a woman has forgiven her man, she must not rehearse his sins for breakfast. Marlene Dietrich**

**Falling in love and having a relationship are two different things. Keanu Reeves**

**romantic phase of the relationship. So what's up with this?**

**Time for some Imago theory....which says that the "spell" of romantic love is to get us together and committed to each other. Then the real "adventure" (notice I didn't say work) of the relationship emerges. Our mutual frustrations of the relationship emerges. Our mutual frustrations surface in order to give each other the true blueprint for growth and wholeness. And when our Partner moves toward their own growth potential, we feel happy and healed.**

**It's in this state of power struggle that a man will say, "I love her, but I just can't stand to be around her." Or a woman might say, "He's a good man but I hate the things he does that hurt me." Does it take "work" to pull out of this power struggle?**

**I guess if "work" means becoming conscious of what is going on. The same "work" it takes to lose weight or learn to ski. Maybe it's all in how you look at it. Some of the things around which Donna has been frustrated have felt like "work" in the beginning. Becoming more organized with dates and times and such was not what I wanted to do. It was not me. It threatened my carefree approach to life. It would take....."work." But it's been good for me, for her, and for our relationship. Same for her...learning to play, kick back, get physically active was not her first inclination. It takes conscious effort. And, she reports that it has been good for her. And it has certainly been good for me!**

**So the real adventure (or "work") of the relationship is born out of the power struggle. And every conflict we have, even daily fusses, are really opportunities for new growth and healing to happen if we are willing to "work" to become conscious. (And who doesn't feel better when they lose that weight or learn that new skill?) It is in this adventure of struggle, conflict, and behavior change that the real "therapy" occurs and couples feel happier with each other and with themselves.**

**As always, your comments are always welcome.**

**David**

**Be sure to watch this space or check our web site for future opportunities.**



**To be determined at a later date:**

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### Quotes of the Month

"Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." Marcel Proust

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial

Dear Friends,

We were thinking back to this week last year when everything was so different! All the plans for shopping for the big Thanksgiving Dinner, counting chairs and making room for the joy of family and friends. For some of us, there will be loved ones missing this year, losses that have come over the years but somehow, seem so difficult this year. Not being able to safely gather in a warm cozy room with those we haven't seen for a while, not being able to play with a child, hold a new baby, Many of us who are a bit older have weathered more storms, had more loss, more challenges and sadness. But, we have also experienced more joy, had more successes and we know that things change and do get better.

We wish you all the love of a partner, a friend, a loved one. The joy of life and the happiness that comes from the little things. We are grateful for you and wish you a Happy Thanksgiving ♥♥

Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

## November: The Joy of Being Silent

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. Harville Hendrix has said that talking is the most dangerous thing a person can do.

into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend." Melody Beattie

"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

"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

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

"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

Vegetables are a must on a diet. I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread, and pumpkin pie. Jim Davis

I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual. Henry David Thoreau

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

Here's how it works to 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 pretty 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? 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 have 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

**Arthur Ward**

**yourself and in those around you.**

**As always, your comments are welcome.**

**David**



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**To be determined at a later date:**

**MORE Zoom sessions and workshops**



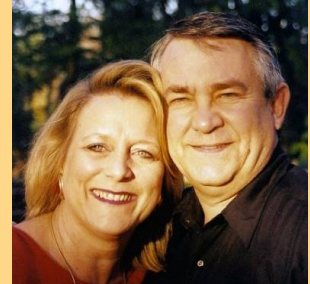




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# Thought of the Month News and Notes



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## Quotes of the Month

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Helen Keller.

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships." Michael Jordan.

"Teamwork begins by building trust. And the

Dear Friends,

Everyone we spoke to over this past month has echoed the obvious: this holiday season was different than any other they had experienced. Some said it was better, many felt it was not so good. Those isolated from family, friends and loved ones ached with sadness. Those who were blessed to have a partner, spouse, family--struggled with new challenges and frustrations in spite of the joy of having loved ones close. Most we talked with agreed that the experience helped them to grow as individuals and it strengthened the bonds of the love that brought them together and keeps them together. I guess we learn from each experience and keep building on it.

Keep up the love, the caring. Take care of yourself and those you love. Love can and will sustain us! Wishing you a great new year ahead....onward and upward!

Keep in touch!

David (and Donna)

## December: Revised Knots

[How to Unravel Your Knot](#)

[Hedy Schleifer, a spirit known to everyone in the Imago community, has described the inevitable couple's power struggle as a "Survival Knot"](#)

[I have mused over this image for the many years I have known her. But it was only this last summer that the real impact of this knot image came clear.](#)

only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability." Patrick Lencioni.

"It is literally true that you can succeed best and quickest by helping others to succeed." Napoleon Hill.

"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else." Booker T. Washington.

"None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful." Mother Teresa

"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it." H.E. Luccock

"Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean." Ryunosuke Satoro

"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." Harry Truman

"It takes two flints to make a fire." Louisa May Alcott

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." African Proverb

It was during my kite flying stage. (You may have heard Donna reflect on my many stages: the woodworking stage, the exotic plants stage, the tropical fish stage, the electric train stage and many more.)

It was meant to be for the grand kids, but I soon learned that their interest level in a boring kite was way discrepant from my own. Meanwhile I managed to get the string in a huge knot.

After an hour of sitting with this ball of mess I began to realize how brilliant the "Survival Knot" fits with marriage conflict.

1. I had no idea how it happened. It just got there! I think relationships get into knots the same way. Through unconscious defenses and benign inattention.

2. I needed Donna's help. I wasn't getting anywhere myself. Not enough hands to loosen the correct strands for undoing the tightest places.

3. We had to handle the knot gently!  
Pulling too hard on the wrong strand at the wrong place only made things worse.

4. We had to work together.  
Agreeing on a method: which part to free up, who pulls on which strand and when.

5. It was tempting to just cut the string on either end of the knot and give up!  
But that's the end of kite flying.

6. We had to be patient.  
We made a few wrong moves and the knot got tighter until we opened it up again.

7. When the knot disappeared, it was a joyous moment. We did it!  
It can be a new beginning for couples to unravel their knot.

8. I am careful now to watch for future knots in the making.  
Just a bit more attentive when flying the kite to watch for trouble spots or wind gusts.

I hope you all have a great new year with lots of unraveling going on.

All comments are welcome.

David





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