

Getting the Love You Want



Call today about workshops and other help for
your relationship

Imago Center for Relationships
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Hello Friends

In this issue we return again to the topic of fun. If you've been reading our newsletter articles recently, you know how much we value the energy and connection from having a good time. Yesterday, for instance, we re-charged things with a morning skate at our local rink. That got the cobwebs out and rebalanced everything.

Our renewed interests in such activities as skating, cross country skiing, swimming, and learning to play backgammon keep our relationship batteries charged and remind us that again that fun is not a luxury. And we also keep remembering that they are not just rewards for having taken care of business first or having paid all the bills. It's a necessity and needs a prominent place in everyone's appointment calendar!

With best wishes as always for the relationship of your dreams!

We hope you'll find some meaning from our thoughts that will motivate and strengthen your relationship with yourself and your partner in the New Year! Maybe we will see you at one of our 2008 weekend workshops or, if you are a workshop graduate, in some appropriate follow-up coaching!

Yours as always for the relationship of your dreams,

Betsy + Bruce

Are We Having Fun Yet?

When in the past we've asked our grandchildren to name their "funnest" holiday, they've always said, "Halloween!!" The reasons? Yes, they said, it's the treats, but it's also the costumes. It's dressing and being someone (or something) else.

For many years, being on the other end of the trick-or-treat routine made us grow weary of Halloween. Helping to load up already full bags of candy and answering the doorbell every five minutes to greet mostly complete strangers definitely blunted our enthusiasm for the getups that presented themselves at our door.

But one Halloween a few years ago, **Bruce and I decided to contradict our jaded perspective.** We ourselves got dressed up as witch and warlock and went out and surprised some of our friends. Besides our black robes and conical hats, Bruce wore a rubber mask - an old, grey haired man with a bulbous nose, bushy eyebrows, and a big ugly wart on his cheek - a warlock more to be pitied than feared. This man immediately took on a full personality - a somewhat tragicomic figure dealing as best he could with the hopes and disappointments

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that came his way. He spoke Brooklynese but with a soft lisp. With a touch of faded charm, he asked only for respect and dignity.

Since that evening, Roscoe (that's what we learned his name was), has become a permanent member of our family. He cracks us up, with his visits to our house at the most unexpected times. Once we found him vacuuming the living room rug. Another time he was washing our dishes. He has also shown up at many workshops, rudely interrupting Betsy's talk on fun and surprises by making indiscreet advances to Betsy right then and there. A most curious friend, but a friend nonetheless, because despite the pathos, he is the source of fun, and creativity besides.

So why is Roscoe and the fun he brings so important to our relationship?

Your relationship with your partner is like a child. When you fall in love and make a commitment to another person, you are giving birth to something. We call this "something" a relationship. And like your children, if you happen to have children, your relationship lives in that space between the two of you. And as with children it needs to be nurtured and cared for. The space may appear empty to the human eye but that space is filled with energy, the energy you both bring to it, both positive and negative.

Having fun automatically creates positive energy. As with children, sometimes the energy in that space feels joyful, safe, connecting and sometimes it feels scary, empty, and very lonely. This positive energy we call fun feeds the relationship and the connection you feel towards each other.

If you have children, it also feeds their positive energy. When they are having fun with you or they hear or see you as having fun with each other, they also feel safe. When the energy in the relationship is negative, when they see parents shut down or in conflict, they feel scared or in danger.

Betsy remembers in growing up how it felt when she saw her parents having fun with each other: flirting, playful teasing, kissing, usually when they were getting dressed for an evening out. She recalls sitting on their bed and watching her father acting playful and funny. In looking back on some of those times, she remembers feeling so relaxed and safe.

Now when she and Bruce are having fun, she has those same relaxed and close feelings toward him. Though we're not neuroscientists, we've heard and read lots about the hormonal and chemical changes that occur in us when we experience or observe fun or pleasure. In such moments, the message sent to the body is: "Relax. All is well. You are safe."

So fun is one way in which you nurture your relationship the same way you might nurture your relationship with your children.

That said, what are some of the ways (besides wearing masks) to nurture your relationship with fun? In case you find yourself stuck to identify these ways, and can't get beyond TV, the internet, movies, and shopping, here is a list in two parts to get you started. Over time, we've been assembling items (with lots of help from Imago friends and colleagues). The list is at 40+ and keeps growing.

We divide the list into two categories: **High energy fun (gets your blood going, gets your heart rate up), and low energy fun (soothes the brain, creates connection, relaxation, and safety).** Some of these are strictly for the two of you, but many items on both lists work equally well for just the two or you or with a whole family.

Assignment: This is simple. We hope it's also easy! Read the lists with your partner and together select at least

one item from each list and do it within the next three days.

If you do find this not as easy as it is simple, you might ask yourselves why. If your answer is that you see to be missing the simple momentum and motivation to step out of a rut, it may be time to consider one of our upcoming Getting the Love You Want couples weekends where giving you strategies for getting fun and energy back into your lives is one of the main components. (Roscoe will no doubt be making at least a cameo appearance!)

Let us know how you make out, or tell us something to add to the list.

HIGH ENERGY FUN		LOW ENERGY FUN	
Dancing	Hide and seek	Doing puzzles	Creative dress-up
Wrestling	Tag	Playing cards	Toy store visit
Pillow fighting	Wearing masks!	Shooting baskets	Showering together
Swimming	Winter outdoor hot tub (get out in snow, then jump back in)	Balloon rides	Beach combing
Ice skating or roller skating	Driving golf balls	Shooting pool	Cloud watching
Wearing masks!	Shooting baskets	Book store browsing	Woodworking
Tennis	Wiffle ball	Taking a drive	Going to a spa
Tickling	Did we mention wearing masks?	Animal, vegetable, and mineral	Concerts
Hiking		Sitting in front of fireplace	Fishing
Kayaking		Wearing masks	Board games
		Sky diving	Finger painting
		Board games	Molding clay
		Puzzle	Rearranging the furniture
		Kissing	Taking a course together
		Massage	Tai Chi
		Picking fruit	Reading together (out loud)
		Comedy club	Planning a trip
		Star gazing	Taking snuggle naps
		Miniature golf	Making masks
Have Fun!			