

Getting the Love You Want



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your relationship

Imago Center for Relationships
Betsy & Bruce Bergquist
(Married 52 years)

betsy@betsyandbruce.com
(908) 735-7650

Hello. It's Betsy writing again this time.

Last issue it was fun; this time it's surprises: both really nurture a relationship!



How incredibly good it felt when Bruce surprised me last week. We had gone to the movies and as we were leaving, I noticed a poster advertising a showing of the opera *Romeo et Juliette*. Not paying close attention to the details, I happened to mention something about loving to see that opera.

Well, someone was listening: my own private Santa. Last Saturday Bruce announced to me that he had bought tickets. I was totally surprised. It turned out to be a live HD broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera from New York. Saturday Met matinees are now periodically shown live in theaters worldwide. What an amazing up close and personal experience, with all the immediacy of being right there and then some! (Opera goers don't usually get the chance we had to go backstage and to see an interview with Placido Domingo!)

I felt so grateful to Bruce. What made it so special was that he had followed the advice we give to others; take the guesswork out of surprises by listening and noticing what your partners would like and then make it a point to give it to them (no, don't just think about giving it to them!). He was paying attention to me and really listening to what I wanted.

I've been calling him Romeo since.

And speaking of *Romeo et Juliette*, our article this week is on the true and often misunderstood meaning of forgiveness. When we lack a true understanding of the meaning and power of forgiveness, we all embody the feuding families in the opera, the Capulets and Montagues. The truth is that the anger and resentment held onto so stoutly inside can actually kill us. In this classic love story two precious young lives totally enmeshed in the feuding of their two families are lost because of the inability to even begin to forgive. In this holiday season where renewal and rebirth are the central themes, I can't think of a more important subject and gift we can give to ourselves and to others.

Forgiveness: Healing for You and Your Relationship

At this holiday time of rebirth, renewal and giving, one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and others is the gift of forgiveness.

Have you ever found it difficult to forgive? And are there some behaviors that your partner has done in the past that you are just not willing to forgive? Do you wonder why you hold on so tightly?

Maybe you're holding on because of a false belief about what it means to forgive. For many years I (Betsy) thought that forgiveness meant saying "That's okay" to the behavior of the other. But eventually I came to realize that forgiveness is not about forgiving the behavior of another. It is about letting go of all the anger we hold inside ourselves that slowly eats away at our mind, body and spirit. Such anger actually kills the holder - albeit slowly.

Real forgiving means taking back your power. Through it, you accept the fact that someone else's behavior affected you in hurtful ways. It also means seeing that only through forgiveness of that behavior can you heal. Forgiveness does not require that you seek out that person who hurt you and tell them anything and everything. It is not about them anymore. It is about you connecting to your higher self, whatever term you use for that, and releasing the anger.

I had a client not too long ago who was working on her outbursts of anger expressed by yelling at her partner. She was recalling the many times her mother had yelled at her when she was growing up and that she had seen her mother's yelling as having a lot of power. It scared her so much that it did have power over her. It controlled her in many ways. She grew up thinking that the expression of her anger through yelling equaled power so that in later life she imitated her mother's yelling whenever she felt angry. It felt powerful, so she said.

She was shocked to realize that her yelling didn't get her what she wanted. It offered only the illusion of power and in fact was keeping her trapped in the victim role as she had actually been as a child. Yelling had nothing to do with giving her power.

If you have been feeling angry at someone for a long time, try asking yourself "Is this anger getting me what I want?" and "How long do I plan on hold onto it?"

If you want to rid yourself of some of the anger you are holding, may I suggest this: Make a list of persons you are holding anger against, whether they be family or ex-family members, friends, neighbors, or business associates. Then try one of these two methods for releasing your anger with each person.

1. Pick one person on the list and write a letter to him/her. (Note: you're not going to send it, so you can write everything you need to say in full detail and with full force!) You might state how much you had hoped or expected he or she could have behaved differently. After having stated it all, then write down what your expectations were and what you really needed and hoped would have happened. At the end of the letter, tell yourself that in releasing your anger you now turn the matter over to your higher self and to the higher self of the other, and that it no longer has control over you.
2. If writing isn't for you, sit quietly for awhile with your eyes closed. Focus on your breathing. As you move into a relaxed place, picture yourself in a favorite place where you feel safe and happy. This could be a place you went to as a child or a place you go to now. Imagine a chair in front of you. Invite the person you are angry with to sit in the chair. See that person as peaceful, calm and safe and ready to hear everything you have to say. See yourself willing to tell them everything you have to say from your anger towards their behavior to what you had hoped for and expected to what you needed. Everything you have been holding against them or against yourself for involving them. Don't stop until you have said everything you want to say. Then see them receiving your communication fully without resistance. End by releasing any thoughts or feelings that remain over to your higher self and to the higher

self of the other. Thank them for coming, open your eyes and feel free to move on.

If you find these two methods more challenging than expected, especially if the person you are seeking to forgive is your partner, and also especially if you do not currently have other resources for addressing your anger or resentment, please consider contacting us. This goes equally for workshop graduates finding themselves off track using the couples dialogue, and couples or individuals who have never attended a Getting the Love You Want workshop and lack tools for achieving the relationship they long for.

Meanwhile, please know that this comes with our very best wishes for the holiday season and the year ahead- both for your closest relationships and also with all those you touch.