

Getting the Love You Want



Call today about workshops and other help for
your relationship

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

betsy@betsyandbruce.com
(908) 735-7650

Hello Friends

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2008! We hope your holidays were fun and meaningful. On Christmas Day, we got up early in the morning, ate a quick breakfast and drove 6 hours to Craftsbury, Vermont (near the Canadian border) to meet our son Sam and his wife Stina, and our two grandsons Ike and Finn (10 and 8), for Christmas dinner and then three days of magical cross country skiing in the woods and over the deeply snow covered fields of Vermont. What a wonderful way to spend our holiday!



We are back now feeling grateful for family, refreshed from being in the great out of doors, relaxed from lots of sleep (and learning how to play backgammon) and ready to move into 2008.

Driving home in the car last Friday, we took turns sharing our visions for 2008, both in our personal and business lives, and decided that would be a good topic for this week's article, which is written by Betsy!

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

Realizing Your Vision in 2008

What are your dreams and hopes for your committed relationship in 2008? Can you honestly say you have any? Do you hold a vision for how you would like your life/relationship to be in the year ahead and beyond? Are you optimistic or pessimistic? And, if you do have some dreams, do they rest mostly on hope? In short, where are you when it comes to creating the future of your choice?

If things feel a little shaky in your life or in your relationship right now and you're hoping or dreaming that something more positive will happen in 2008, then it's especially important to get focused and begin creating not only a vision, but a plan for what you want your life to be like.

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12B Leigh St. * Clinton, NJ 08809 * (908) 735-7650 * betsy@betsyandbruce.com

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Or maybe you already have a vision, of having more fun, for example, or of traveling more, or being able to communicate more effectively, or being able to be a better listener or living a healthier life style with more exercise and improved diet.

Whatever your circumstance or the state of your current visioning, please know that **nothing is more important than having both a vision and a plan for how to achieve your vision**, how are to get from here to there. Without a plan, dreams don't just come true. And without a vision, plans lack purpose or context. If nothing changes, then nothing changes, no?

Growing up, I heard the familiar statement that the start of each New Year was the time for making resolutions, which usually meant giving up something in the year ahead. It was common to ask and be asked, "So what are your new year's resolutions?" I remember one year I said I was going to give up fighting with my sisters (what was I thinking!?) In other years I remember intending to give up chocolate, or desserts, or snacks in the afternoon. Giving up certain foods always seemed to be on my list. Giving up swearing was a popular resolution one year.

But the resolutions always seemed to be solely about giving up something. After a week or so they were either forgotten or given up on. No wonder: they usually weren't associated with any positive vision or outcome, merely with painful or unpleasant sacrifice.

But in 1970 I made a New Year's resolution that was different, one that I have kept to this day: I gave up smoking. Here's the story and what made this resolution different.

Our children, who were 7, 11, and 13 at the time, were constantly after me to quit, but even though plagued with guilt, I just couldn't seem to bring myself to have that last cigarette. I can't tell you the number of "last" cigarettes I smoked.

One day as I was standing at the kitchen sink washing dishes, looking out the kitchen window above the sink, I was particularly aware of the blue sky, the bright sunlight and the beauty of my surroundings. It was idyllic. Sam was outside playing with his neighborhood buddies, and I was filled with gratitude. Taking all of this in, for what seemed the first time, I heard an inner voice saying **that if I wanted to have a future, to live to experience many more of these days and to know and have a long future relationship with Bruce or any of my kids or grandkids, I had better pay attention to my health, which translated into "Stop Smoking - NOW!"**

That brief but powerful moment changed my life. I was seized by the compelling vision of being a long-time part of Bruce's and my children's lives and my grandchildren's lives. I had the missing piece that could pull me positively toward the future, and free me from the limbo of mere dissatisfaction. And cigarettes simply could not be a part of the vision.

But in order to end my addiction, **I had to have a plan.** I knew that if I didn't have a plan I would probably start eating instead of smoking, and then start putting on weight, which would then send me back to smoking. Despite the vision, this was a huge resolution for me to carry through on. A powerful addiction was involved, so the plan needed to be as detailed as the vision was large.

What did I do? The first thing I did was to map out every day of the next two weeks. I noted the times when I tended to smoke the most: after meals and in the evening. So part of my plan was that after every meal, I would take our dog Luke out for a mile walk. In the afternoon of the first week, before the kids came home from school, I went to a local ski hill and skied for an hour or so. I substituted exercise for smoking. Later, instead of lighting up, I took a walk. In the evening when the craving got unbearable, I announced to the family

that I was going to bed. Walking, skiing, eating appropriately, going to bed early got me through the first two weeks.

Each day was a new victory. Life without cigarettes gradually got easier and all parts of my life began to improve. I not only felt in charge and optimistic about the future, I felt better, my taste improved, exercise became routine. It was a win-win situation. What I gave up was directly connected to my vision and I had a plan to get there.

So I urge you **take a look at your own possible new year resolutions** (I know it's January 4 but it's not too late) and if there is something you want to give up, and ask yourself how 'giving that up' fits into a larger vision you have for yourself or your relationship and then create a step by step plan for replacing what you're giving up with specific day by day (hour by hour?) actions that will impel you toward your vision, whether it be a vision of deeper connection, better health, financial security, or more satisfying work.

If better communication with the person who means the most to you is one of your visions for 2008, and if you're having trouble seizing the moment, so to speak, or identifying a plan to make it happen, consider a couples weekend workshop with us.

The upcoming workshop schedule is:

February 8-10, 2008 ~ Lebanon, New Jersey March 7-9, 2008 ~ Westborough, Massachusetts

April 11-13, 2008 ~ Lebanon, New Jersey

May 2-4, 2008 ~ Lebanon, New Jersey

June 20-22 ~ Seattle, Washington

There you will leave Sunday not just with a vision for how you want your relationship to look in five or ten years, but also with a guide for **making the specific action plan** that will get you there in many different areas, such as having fun together, relationships with family, resolving conflict, sexuality, just to name a few. After all, your vision is about the real business of making life, family, and relationships work, grow and prosper. Consider this: If a business enterprise has no vision or goals or a plan of how to get there, what are its prospects for long-term (or even short-term) success? Not very good, obviously. **Without such a vision, goals, or plans, can your prospects for your relationship really be any better?**

Betsy