

Getting the Love You Want



Call today about workshops and other help for
your relationship

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Summer is finally yielding to some much needed rain in these parts, and we kept busy this past weekend grandparenting our two Boston grandsons (ages 7 and 10) while their parents (our son and daughter-in-law) took some time for themselves (yay - totally recommended for all parents!!) We had a great open house at our Clinton office on the 18th, and we were delighted to greet friends and neighbors and introduce them to the Imago Center for Relationships. We're impelled to open our large and welcoming common area to community activities which involve relationship building. Stand by for event announcements in a future newsletter!

We're looking forward to our couples workshop beginning November 9 in Seattle (information about workshops below or at www.betsyandbruce.com). As long time former Puget Sound residents (two of our children and three grandchildren still live there), we always have a special affinity for the participants there and greet each new event as a chance to grow and learn ourselves. We keep reminding ourselves that this work is a journey not a destination and are grateful for the chance to keep on sharing what we know and are passionate about!

To hear from us live about these couples workshop, consider joining a free teleclass such as the next one upcoming on November 6 as described below.

Our feature article this issue is **What Is This Thing Called Love?** As with many of our articles, this one carries a homework assignment (yes, as the article explains, **love is doing, not just feeling**) which should be fun and maybe challenging. If you're the one in your relationship who reads these articles, it might be interesting to show this one to your partner as well.

Until next time, best wishes for an exciting journey toward the relationship of your dreams.

Betsy + Bruce

What is this Thing Called Love

Are you old enough, (as we are) to remember Ella Fitzgerald singing the old Cole Porter tune "What Is This Thing Called Love?" Whether you're old enough or not, have you ever wondered what you actually mean when you say the word?

If so, here's a critical distinction between two dimensions of love: love as feeling, and love as action and attitude.

Love, as in "I love you", refers to a feeling, specifically a feeling of closeness or connection. Saying, "I love you" equals saying, "I feel connected to you". Similarly saying, "I'm not in love with you any more" ("I've lost

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that lovin' feeling!") amounts to saying, "I no longer feel connected to you".

In this sense love is not really a matter of action or attitude. You feel what you feel, period, It's out of your hands. It's in the hands of your unconscious, or your hormones, or your genes, your body odor, whatever. And it doesn't involve doing anything or even thinking about it! Love is a wonderful feeling, but that's not the love we're talking about.

The love we want to talking about, and the love we deal in through our work, is love as action or attitude. When you think of the word in this sense, love becomes a choice. It's a choice to do loving behaviors (actions) and to hold the attitude of gratitude toward another person or toward the world in general. It reflects the highest universal perspective - it comes from the core of who you are and what you came into the world with. It's the perspective from which our highest potential may be expressed and realized.

This is the love that invites you to have a conversation with yourself that might sound something like this:

"OK, I know that I came into this world with every potential to express myself in a completely loving ways. So I know I may have been acting like kind of a jerk in my relationship, probably out of some negative experiences I have learned along the path of growing up. And these negative experiences are helping to keep me stuck in this negative reactivity or

perspective about the world. Even my self esteem is clouded in negativity.

"But I don't have to continue to live this way. I can at any time change my perspective about the world and about my relationships regardless of how I feel. If I'm feeling a lot of negativity towards my partner, it does not mean I have to act on that feeling. I know that if I do I will only end up disliking myself more and feeding my already developed low sense of self.

"And the worst part is when I blame and act out my negative feelings on someone else, guess who loses the most!? Me! And the more I keep on handing out those negative blaming comments, the more I will have to deal with my own worst fear of abandonment as people and partner move further and further away from me, and then I will also I have to deal with disliking myself even more. That's when I become my own worst enemy!

"So all this said, how exactly do I move forward and into my loving, caring self?"

Now, if you've responded to the appeal of your own inner self and had this kind of talk with yourself, great! And here's our mandate in response to your final question: "How exactly do I move forward and into my loving, caring self?"

The Mandate: Change Your Perspective!

Now we're not saying this is easy to do. We know the realities of everyday life. When you turn on the news every night and have to listen to all the negativity that's presented about the world, or when your partner who said he would be home at six and it is now seven and he is still not home and hasn't called, or when she said she would stop at the store on the way home from work and pick up a loaf of bread but walks in the front door empty handed, or when your two kids who are fighting over the TV are now really acting out at each other and at you, too, for insisting they do their evening chores before dinner.

Finding what is good or what you can feel grateful for in these moments takes courage as well as skill and art. Appreciating and seeing the positive in situations where you feel only anger and negativity takes determination and commitment to not let yourself down again, to act on the core of who you are when, for instance:

Your partner walks in the door at 7:15, and you are able to put your arms around him,

- give him a hug and tell him how relieved you are that he is home and how scared you were becoming when he hadn't called. And to say, "I get scared because I love you and I'm afraid of losing you."
- Your partner comes home without the batteries and you are able to greet her and appreciate the fact that she is home regardless of no batteries.
- You appreciate the kids if you see even one of them trying to work out the problem, and say, "I can see how much you each want to watch your own program and how at one point, Sarah, you were trying to make that happen. It takes skill, doesn't it? Maybe we can help you to figure this out the next time this happens. You are such great kids and I know you are trying to help me."

Homework

Here's a **three-part assignment** for the coming week:

1. **Tomorrow morning** when you wake up and maybe are feeling a bit grumpy, anxious, or not looking forward to the day, in the moment find at least four things you can feel grateful for or you are looking forward to. Either write them down right then and there, or tell them to your partner before you even get out of bed.
2. **During at least one dinner time this week**, tell each family member three specific positive behaviors you have seen them do that day. To make sure you are on task and ready with this one, write them down when you notice them. Be deliberate. Don't trust yourself simply to remember them. (Your mind is probably better trained to remember the negative behaviors!).
3. **During the next five days**, write a note to each family member saying briefly what they do that makes you feel so connected to them and put them on their pillows at night or in their lunch boxes or on the steering wheel of the car.

One important final note: remember that you are doing all this with **no expectations of receiving anything in return**. You are doing this because you are a loving and caring human being.

Loving behaviors are what heal childhood wounds and build self-esteem and strong positive relationships!

If you find this homework interesting or perhaps challenging or even frustrating, please consider what we offer and can find described below. Besides the **Getting the Love You Want© weekends coming up November 9-11 and November 3-December 2**, we are offering on **Saturday November 3 a one-day workshop on the topic of Closing Your Relationship Exits**. It will be an introduction to some of the main processes we teach in the weekend workshop. This is an excellent chance to learn some basics of **restructuring your frustrations with one another** in a safe and reliable way.

This one day workshop would also be an **appropriate follow up for workshop grads looking for review** as well as newcomers to Imago.