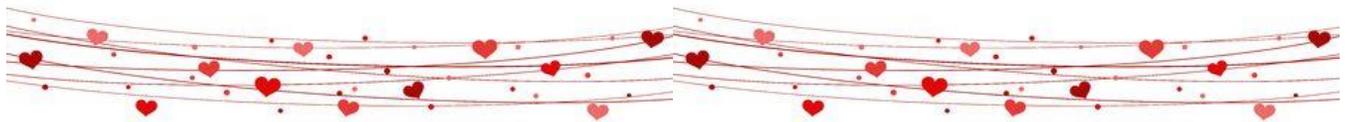




## *The Month of Love*

February 2023

**This month Vancouver Island Counselling is focusing on relationships as is highlighted on February 14<sup>th</sup>, St. Valentine's Day. And Loving YOURSELF with SELF ACCEPTANCE is most important.**



Relationships are the basis for everything. Whether with your spouse, children, parents, friends, coworkers, the success or failure of those relationships greatly influences wellness. The number one predictor of wellness is social support systems. Who is supporting you and how available to you are those supports. If we are not that good at our relationships, it can lead to loneliness, isolation, and more than likely some kind of attempt to compensate for lack of relationship. This is what ultimately brings people to counselling and therapy.



To assist in directing folks to improve relationship, specifically the committed relationship of a significant other, we look to John Gottman, Ph.D. The "marriage" is usually the nucleus of every family, and the dynamics of the core relationship that produces the children, brings the Grandparents together, as well as circles the kinds of friendships to the couple, flows with the dynamics of all. In his book "Why Marriages Succeed or Fail ... And How You Can Make Yours Last" John Gottman has easily digestible points to make.

Married couples often fail to identify the reason which trigger conflicts it is evident that negativity reduces sexual activities, and acts as the overall culprit for failed marriages.

The re-building mechanism works in an entirely unique way, in order to repair the marriage a couple must undergo a series of "love-processes". The learning procedure is crucial for preventing a total collapse because arguments can often escalate leading to painful divorce. It is not right to ask someone to love if you cannot love yourself. Who should read "Why Marriages Succeed or Fail? And why?"

We alongside Gottman recommend this book to any open-minded person ready to see the big picture. Surprisingly, we all need tips and hints on how to handle and maintain healthy relationships, and you are no different.

A recently conducted study of thousands of couples over the past 20 years identified several specific signs that underline the future of married couples. Without delay, a person should strive to see these patterns, before it's too late.

Such simple advice can change the course of your relationship by giving it something to hold on to. So, how to live your Disney story? – Compromise is the first ingredient needed to "cook" the best union. As you move further throughout the book, you'll discover new useful tools and technique for maintaining a healthy union.

For instance, you and your partner cannot agree on something, so the argument is supported by screams, anger and in worst case scenario domestic violence. As has been noted a shortage of compromise can lead to such an argument – a very unproductive one. To put it differently, you are not committed to each other. It is okay if you share divergent opinions, but moving from dialog to screaming is a personal choice.

According to Dr. John Gottman, a key to maintaining a healthy marriage is the approach you use to handle and resolve differences. Not one person can step up for you, and deal with your life. It may come as a shock, but your partner is not crossing the line more than you do. Couples create their own environment and living space, blaming someone else is just nonsense. Broken marriages follow a path full of loneliness, hatred, skepticism and, ultimately, divorce. Likewise, if you wish to enter a happy relationship, work on yourself, change your habits and transform your mindset.

Another marriage “killer” is keeping your feelings to yourself, and exploding in a dialog when things need to get more stable. To confront the negativity energy, calmness and open chat can do the trick. This book has no restrictions – referring to the readers, all are welcome to exploit the opportunities and reveal the dangers of marriage.

### Key Lessons from “Why Marriages Succeed or Fail”

1. The negative influence of destructive thinking
2. Look at the bright side of conflicts
3. Repair Mechanism functionality



#### The negative influence of destructive thinking

Avoid criticizing too much, even if you do not agree with your partner’s perspective. To summarize, your mindset creates the internal dialogue that floats in your head – change it!

#### Look at the bright side of conflicts

The theory that a solid marriage is a reflection of two people who never contradict one another is 100% wrong. The ability to resolve complex situations as a couple and dialogs put you in the front seat of life. Relationships grow parallel with the process of solving conflicts.

#### Repair Mechanism functionality

A point often overlooked is that repair mechanisms are usually just simple phrases which serve as a bridge that helps couples to cross dangerous waters.

*From Therapistaid.com we have: FAIR FIGHTING RULES*

#### Before you begin

ask yourself why you feel upset. Are you angry because your partner left the mustard on the counter? Or are you angry because you feel like you’re doing an uneven share of the housework, and this is just one more piece of evidence? Take time to think about your own feelings before starting an argument.

#### Discuss one topic at a time

Don’t let “You left dishes in the sink” turn into “You watch too much TV.” Discussions that get off-topic are more likely to get heated, and less likely to solve the original problem. Choose one topic and stick to it.

#### No degrading language

Discuss the issue, not the person. No put-downs, swearing, or name-calling. Degrading language is an attempt to express negative feelings while making sure your partner feels just as bad. Doing so leads to more character attacks while the original issue is forgotten.

#### Express your feelings with words

“I feel hurt when you ignore my phone calls.” “I feel scared when you yell.” Structure your sentences as “I” statements (“I feel emotion when event”) to express how you feel while taking responsibility for your emotions. However, starting with “I” does not give a license to ignore the other fair fighting rules.

#### Take turns speaking

Give your full attention while your partner speaks. Avoid making corrections or thinking about what you want to say. Your only job is to understand their point of view, even if you disagree. If you find it difficult to not interrupt, try setting a timer allowing 1-2 minutes for each person to speak without interruption.

#### No stonewalling

Sometimes, the easiest way to respond to an argument is to retreat into your shell and refuse to speak. This is called stonewalling. You might feel better temporarily, but the original issue will remain unresolved and your partner will feel more upset. If you absolutely cannot go on, tell your partner you need to take a time-out. Agree to resume the discussion later.

#### No yelling.

Yelling does not help anyone see your point of view. Instead, it sends the message that only your words matter. Even if yelling intimidates your partner into giving up, the underlying problem only grows worse.

#### Take a time-out if things get too heated

In a perfect world, we would all follow these rules 100% of the time... but it just doesn’t work like that. If an argument starts to become personal or heated, take a time-out. Agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after everyone has cooled down.

#### Attempt to come to a compromise or an understanding

There isn’t always a perfect answer to an argument. Life is too messy for that. Do your best to come to a compromise (this means some give and take from both sides). If you can’t come to a compromise, simply taking the time to understand your partner’s perspective can help soothe negative feelings.



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