

Hand in Hand

Spring 1999 - VOLUME 8, NO. 1

A Publication of Recovering Couples Anonymous World Service Organization

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What's Happening At W.S.O.

WSO Board of Trustees

The Recovering Couples Anonymous World Service Organization Board of Trustees meeting was held in Washington, DC on January 30th and 31st. Muhammad, Siti, Marcial, Santa, Nancy Lee, Scott, Kim and Mary Monica were present. Ron's attendance was by speaker phone.

WSO Office Report

At the time of the Board meeting, there was approximately \$300.00 in the cash account. The publishing account balance was \$1,806.58 with \$1,000.00 earmarked for the Twelve and Twelve. Big book sales have brought in \$5,000.00.

The Holiday Appeal grossed \$2,349.00. Holiday Appeal expenses were \$645.66, so the net was \$1,703.34. It was reported that tape premiums were well received.

The WSO has received one submission for a Reflections book and one sample contract.

Treasurer's Report

Seventh Tradition donations are up slightly and flow in steadily throughout the year. However, the Holiday Appeal failed to meet its projected income. Merchandise orders are also up with the big book accounting for 20% of total sales.

Consulting fees, which are those charged by WSO office staff, are almost 70% of budget.

Because of a financially successful convention, Seventh Tradition increases, and brisk literature sales, 1998 was basically a good year.

Vice Chair's Report

The 1999 CoupleWorld RCA Convention Committee will, based on the group conscience response at the 1998 RCA Annual Meeting, have several speakers/breakout facilitators who are non-RCA members, but are members of other 12 Step programs. The vast majority of programs will be facilitated or lead by members of the RCA .

A fund raising session may be planned either as a main part of the conference or as a program during breakfast one morning. Communication vehicles for Regional Liaison couples to communicate with the and the Board probably require improvements. One possibility is to have past Board members adopt a group. This and other ideas will be looked into and ideas solicited from the RCA . One such possibility was to have past Board members adopt a group. This and other ideas will be looked into and ideas solicited from the RCA .

Efforts are underway to find a method of copying the CoupleWorld jingles, that had their debut at the 1998 convention, on the web site... see this issue for the words to one jingle.

Siti will research discount air travel and report to the 1999 CoupleWorld Convention Committee so they may integrate this benefit in the CoupleWorld literature.

Committee Reports

Fund Raising Committee

The Holiday Appeal did not meet its goal of a 10% increase from the previous year. Several suggestions were made to help increase the 1999 Holiday Appeal return including,

- Increasing the donation for a tape premium to \$200,
- Mail out earlier,
- Include the return address on the return envelope.

The pros and cons of merchant credit cards were discussed. A motion to enhance the RCA web site so orders for literature may be made via the internet was unanimously approved. A motion to

authorize the expenditure of \$300 to purchase or lease a credit card machine and enter into a credit card processing agreement with a local credit card processing institution was approved by the majority. There was some concern about spending RCA funds when there is a negative cash flow. An RCA screen saver will soon be added to regular merchandise.

Diversity Committee

As a result of Hand in Hand diversity article, a Spanish RCA group forming in LA called WSO. They will be sent a "How It Works" in Spanish. Scott will format the "Diversity" pamphlet and distribute to the Board for review. Santa will discuss pamphlet with Catherine and Kathleen, who developed it, and the rest of the literature committee.

Communications Committee

The content, length and type of articles published in the Hand in Hand were discussed as well as the desirability of increasing the number of pages from six to eight. Increasing the pages would not considerably increase the expense, but would take longer to edit and layout. The upcoming issue will have an expanded number of pages.

There will be a request, in this issue of Hand in Hand, for professionals who would volunteer to write pamphlets about RCA for other professionals.

The committee is working on developing a content list for the RCA web site and determining those sections which will be translated into other languages.

A motion was, made and unanimously passed, to include RCA meeting directions on web site with map links that will be updated periodically. The Hand in Hand newsletter is the best tool for communication with the since so many members receive it. There was discussion about how to encourage two-way communication such as letters to the editor, and response to written requests in articles. There was also discussion about how to increase the readership of Hand in Hand.

The Board ultimately controls the content and layout of the Hand in Hand. It is the role of the Communications Committee chairman to interface with the Hand in Hand editor, but the secretary needs to approve the article, based on the Board minutes, as it will appear in Hand in Hand.

There was a suggestion that the most recent copy of the Hand in Hand become a part of starter packet.

A motion to change the Hand in Hand headline on the chair's article from "The Chairman's Letter" to "In My Opinion" was approved.

Literature Committee

The two main priorities of the literature committee are:

- collecting and editing reflections to develop a 365 day reflection booklet for couples,
- collecting and editing contracts and develop one generic contract to be placed in the Hand in Hand.

The committee has currently received nine reflections and one contract.

Meeting Directory

The WSO will make an RCA Meeting Directory format change and work on creating an access data base for the meeting list. Research will be conducted before the next meeting on meeting codes, closed vs. open meetings and how other 12 Step programs handle their meeting data base.

Vision 2000 and Growth

The Board reviewed the “Our View of RCA: An Every-Member Survey” questionnaire and its results. There was discussion about responding to the wishes of as expressed in Vision 2000 survey. The small size of the current Board limits the amount of time they can spend on projects that would enhance RCA’s growth. Alternative methods of addressing the desires of the RCA were forthcoming and an Ad Hoc Growth Resource Committee was appointed by the chair to explore attraction as a tool for the RCA ’s growth. Several ideas were:

- Talk to American Association of Family Counselors and let them know we exist.
- Create task list for publication of articles in Hand In Hand.
- Facilitate Regional Days in RCA.

Board Meeting Schedule

- April 24, 3:00 PM EDT/12:00 PM PDT : teleconference call scheduled.
- July 31-August 1: meeting in Santa Monica, CA.
- October 8 & 10: meetings in St. Petersburg, FL

In My Opinion

by Muhammad Abdul-Qadir C., chairperson

WSO Board of Trustees

As a coupleship, Siti and I, Muhammad, wrote a Fair Fighting Contract and chose to call it an Enrichment Contract. In it we exposed many of our coupleship issues and defined the boundaries we have struggled to formulate. These boundaries are essential for us to function in our everyday relationship since we both experience past feelings and events in our present. For our common good, we sometimes have to remind each other we are not in the present moment, but arguing with the ghosts of our past.

Many of us have unresolved issues from our pasts being argued out in our present relationships. It is important to remember we are each trying to get well and any dysfunctional behavior is the result of our disease. We need to show compassion to our partner and ourselves as we attempt to get better using our new tools of recovery.

I propose we create an Enrichment Contract/Fair Fighting Contract for the relationships between the WSO Board, WSO staff, and the RCA general membership. I believe this will enhance RCA unity and encourage the growth of our young recovery, while we endeavor to develop RCA's own traditions. Such a contract, in my opinion, will foster a safe, functional environment and a healthy organization. RCA will be able to flourish and grow. We will be able to heal past hurts and avoid future problems much like an Enrichment Contract has supported Siti and I in maintaining a committed, intimate, and loving relationship.

An Enrichment Contract developed by RCA's general membership will support everyone's participation by overcoming fear and apathy and encouraging a real zest for living the RCA life. To accomplish this I ask for your help by communicating with me, the WSO Board and WSO staff in a manner in keeping with the principles in RCA safety guidelines. In this way we will build a rich and rewarding of which we may all be proud members. Please remember that our recovery goes beyond one's own RCA home group... or it should. We need to share our experience, strength, and hope with other RCA groups, the WSO Board and WSO staff. At present our main forum for sharing vital information is at our yearly RCA convention. I strongly believe we need to know:

1. "What works" and doesn't work in your home group.
2. In spite of group isolation, what avenues for sharing with other groups have worked for you?
3. What is happening with your group's common welfare? Are couples coming and staying or are they leaving in discouragement? If your group's program does not seem to be working, what is missing in your program? If you can't put your finger on it and actually talk about it, then hopefully the situation can be discussed with others.

Together we may find resolutions to our desire for unity and other challenges. Ultimately, I know we must hand issues over to OUR Higher Power for guidance.

We must come together in some forum to address these issues without being counter productive. RCA, as a , reflects the appreciation of its members by what and how we gratefully give back to the program for all we've received and the love we've experienced.

In my opinion, RCA's overall strength and ability to help those still suffering, will be gauged by how well we communicate, organize and serve others. I will continue to strive for better communication for each of us, our coupleships, groups, and the .

Please, use RCA's Hand in Hand to express your needs and the needs of your group, what has worked and what hasn't worked. Commit yourselves to the good two-way communication system available through the Hand in Hand. United we will lead RCA forward with continuous and healthy growth.

Letter to the Fellowship

Dear Fellow Members of RCA,

This letter, regrettably, is our letter of resignation from the RCA Board of Trustees. Unexpected financial hardships due to a change in our present earning capacity forced us to review our options and subsequently submit this resignation to you.

As we reflected on our circumstances, we discovered that the lack of support from a local RCA group has created a void in our coupleship. Board membership has encouraged our growth in many ways, but it is no substitute for a good RCA home group. We need to concentrate our time together working to address and resolve our coupleship issues and needs.

The only established RCA group within 160 miles of our home restricts membership to couples in which one partner is working a specified 12 Step recovery program. Because neither of us are, we are unable to attend the local RCA meeting. At present an open RCA meeting within a reasonable distance of our home has not established.

We shall stay in recovery with you all, but due to economic considerations and time factors we feel we must focus on developing a grass roots RCA base for ourselves.

Thank you.

Muhammad C.
Chairman, Board of Trustees

Siti Muisha C.
Cochair, Fund Raising

Help Wanted

The Board is looking for a mental health/counseling professional who can help write literature about RCA that is specifically targeted to the professional community. If you are interested, please contact Ron P. through the WSO office.

Fellowship Asked To Help Board

by the RCA Board of Trustees

A common dilemma for growing 12-Step recovery groups such as ours is how do those elected to serve best support the members and groups on a local level? RCA's growth has necessitated our examining this issue. We, the RCA Board of Trustees, are very interested in improving our communication and relationships with new and established groups.

Currently, Hand in Hand, the annual conference and the Regional Liaison couples are the only link between local groups and the Board. With the growth this has experienced, we don't feel we have enough ongoing communication with the to fully understand what the current needs are and how we can best support member couples and groups.

We do feel we have a general understanding of the issues you are facing locally and regionally and are working to address those issues. However, we also know we can be and want to be more supportive. We are striving for progress and are currently discussing how we can accomplish that. We need your help as well. Please give this some thought, discuss it within your groups and most importantly send us your ideas. Mail to:

RCA Board of Trustees
PO Box 11872
St. Louis, MO 63105
or e-mail to: RCAWSO@iname.com

Thank you for helping us to better help you.

A Hearty Welcome To New RCA Meetings

- Manhattan, NY
- San Diego, CA
- Eugene, OR
- Dallas, TX
- Decatur, GA
- Hollywood, CA
- Champaign-Urbana, IL
- Farmington Hills, MI
- Grand Rapids, MI
- Eden Prairie, MN
- Eagan, MN
- Portland, OR
- Warwick, NY
- White Plains, NY
- Bedford, MA

Several of these may be repeats. If so, the editor apologizes, but would prefer to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion.

RCA Accessibility Enhancement

by Siti C.,

WSO Board of Trustees

In an effort to make RCA's convention more accessible to all members, we are endeavoring to make arrangements for reduced ticket costs with several airlines that service the St. Petersburg, Florida area.

The Convention Committee does a wonderful job in selecting beautiful cost efficient accommodations that make everyone's convention experience memorable. It is hoped that efforts to lower air travel costs for participants wishing to attend the RCA convention will be acknowledged as being beneficial to our common recovery goals. In the event that ticket sales create benefits back to RCA these benefits will be put towards the good of RCA.

Additionally, to make access to RCA literature purchasing easier and more widely accessible, RCA's ability to accept credit cards for purchases is in the works. Once the credit card system is operational people who have found RCA's web site will be able to institute proceedings to acquire books, literature and merchandise more quickly and efficiently than ever before. Your credit cards will be accepted for telephone orders also.

For details and progress reports about these two initiatives it is recommended that you read the Hand in Hand for information, as it becomes available. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and you may send them to the Hand in Hand or to the WSO.

Letters To the Editor

I've never seen or heard it discussed, so I thought I'd raise the issue in the Hand in Hand. How do couples handle one partner's resistance to going to meetings? "Letting go" feels like giving up, but "holding on" feels like a power struggle. I would appreciate input on this topic based on other couple's experience, strength and hope.

Sincerely Pat W.

Please send responses and other letters to the editor to:
Hand in Hand Editor
166 17th Avenue S.E.
St. Petersburg, FL 33701-5908
or
E-Mail: wlfsg914@aol.com

How RCA Groups Work

by Pat W., reporting on an RCA Convention break-out session

This is an article discussing some of the points made in Minneapolis during the 1998 RCA Convention panel presentation titled "How Your Home Group Works." The intention of this panel was to offer new ideas as well as affirm all the different ways to have an RCA meeting. The common denominator is the traditions. So take what you like and leave the rest.

First, I'll give some background information on the four couples who participated on the panel. Next, I'll present more of the content and check-in styles of the various groups. Thirdly, I'll discuss size of the groups, diversity and feedback styles. Lastly, I'll mention some of the special activities that different groups have tried.

Background

The four couples came from different parts of the country, and had recovery anywhere from one year to several years. Some of their groups met bimonthly or even monthly. Most of the groups were open, although one was a closed group. Length of the group's meetings were from one and one-half hours to two hours, going overtime if necessary.

The groups met in recovery centers, at churches, and some rotated at people's homes. Lastly, some held business meetings form once a month to "as needed," to the 5th meeting night of the month.

Content and Check-In Styles

What the groups talked about depended on their focus... steps, meditation, reflection, or the Accountability, Responsibility, Commitment, Simplicity (ARCS) method from Sex Addicts Anonymous. Generally, people talked to the group as a whole, but at times, just to their partner and sometimes face to face. Some couples discussed what they would check-in about before the meeting, but some did not.

All the couples agreed about the importance of the safety guidelines within the group. One couple mentioned that people in their group raised their hand if they began to feel uncomfortable and then the process was slowed down. Some groups split up to make the discussion groups smaller if a certain predetermined number of couples attended, but others did not. The monthly meeting group said they socialized for the first half-hour to reconnect with each other before the formal meeting begins. Sharing time was anywhere from three minutes to one-half hour per couple.

One couple discussed a model of regret and appreciation taken from the 10th Step literature. In this model, while holding hands, first one of the partners, shares one thing he regrets doing that harmed the partnership and then expresses three things his partner has done that he appreciates. Then the other partner shares his or her regrets and appreciation. Another group does a step the first meeting of each month, talked about "caring" the 2nd week, "communication" the third week and commitment the fourth week. Months with a fifth meeting would be used for a group inventory. Some of the groups allowed the reading of nonapproved literature.

Size, Diversity, Feedback

The panel couples represented groups from as few as four couples to as many as 35. Most of the couples felt their meetings were pretty diverse in terms of age, race, education, economic status, religion, sexual preference and more.

The discussion of feedback raised some interesting issues both from the panel and from the audience. The point was made that it's a controversial subject because we all come from a broad background of 12 Step groups who handle feedback very differently. There was some confusion about the difference between feedback and cross talk. As it was defined by this discussion, feedback is sharing with a spirit of empathy, your experience, strength and hope or reflecting back what a couple has said. Some of the panel couples felt that this kind of feedback was a meeting highlight for them.

Special Activities

Several groups had special activities beyond their regular meetings including:

- Pot luck dinners (some with meditation before),
- Retreats,
- Celebrations (group's or a couple's birthday, couple anniversaries),
- Special speakers,
- "We Came to Believe" weekends,
- Fund-raisers/auctions,
- Step study meetings (some with workbooks).

Child care was mentioned a few times. A sitter would be available at the meeting and the parents paid.

It seems the goal of the panel was met by providing an informative discussion about many different ways of leading and participating in RCA groups.

Seventh Tradition Donations

by Marcia D., Treasurer, WSO Board of Trustees

While we all know that our Higher Power will provide, I humbly remind you that Seventh Tradition contributions are the lifeblood of the WSO. All literature, the Hand in Hand, web site, new group registration, group directory compilation, starter packets and much, more are responsibilities of the WSO. Without this central office, none of these things would be available.

At the Minneapolis Convention, it was reaffirmed that about one third of the Seventh Tradition collections at local RCA meetings should be earmarked for the WSO. Please help the WSO help you and other couples in need of RCA!!!

Seventh Tradition Donations

10/16/98 to 1/15/99

Caring Couples of Des Moines, IA \$250.00
Crossroads Phoenix Thurs. RCA \$47.00

Eagan, Minnesota Fri. Night RCA \$50.00
Excelsior Minnesota Mon. Night RCA \$192.00
First Connecticut RCA Group \$17.00
First Florida Group of RCA \$158.00
Hand In Hand - Winnipeg \$20.00
Houston Wed. Night RCA \$68.35
LaMorinda Sun. Night Step Meeting \$317.00
Los Angeles, Ca Sun. Home Meeting \$129.00
Los Angeles, California 6 PM Share Meeting \$87.99
Madison, Wisconsin RCA \$7.50
Massachusetts / Rhode Island Sun. RCA \$80.00
Mon. Night Buffet Bunch - Indianapolis \$100.00
New Orleans RCA \$60.00
Oakland CA Sun. Night Meeting \$212.36
Oakland, CA Sat. Morning \$25.00
Philadelphia, PA Fri. Night RCA \$127.50
Rapid City, South Dakota RCA \$15.00
Recovering Hearts Grand Rapids MI \$35.00
Riverhead, New York Wed. Night RCA \$80.00
Sacramento, California RCA \$40.00
San Diego Sat. RCA \$44.30
Seattle, Washington Sun. 5 PM RCA Meet \$102.15
Stepping Together RCA of Gaithersburg \$189.31
Tri-County Michigan RCA \$71.00

Additional donations:

13 donations from 10 Individuals totaling \$517.88;
15 donations in response to the Holiday Appeal totaling \$2214.00;
1 Special Event donation from the Oakland Sunday Night Meeting of \$ 140.00.

Did You Know...

by Pat W.

The following information came from a panel discussion at the 1998 RCA Convention.

Since most RCA groups don't have local intergroups, the suggested Seventh Tradition donation split is 60% stays with the local group and 40% goes to WSO on a quarterly or more frequent basis.

By the way, if you do belong to an RCA intergroup we'd like to hear how yours works. Send feedback to the WSO office.

1998 Holiday Appeal Thank You

The results are in from this years Holiday appeal and once again our responded with great generosity. We received \$1,703.34 .

As you may know this year's Board is made up of mostly newly elected couples. Ron and Jennifer, who are now in their second year of service, are the only exception. There have been so many things we needed to familiarize ourselves with and new things to learn during the early months that glaring imperfections were inevitable... progress not perfection.

One of the things we learned straight away is to provide return mailing information, for your convenience. Please forgive this oversight in our Holiday Appeal literature. We now know that this caused additional work for some at an already very busy time of year. We really appreciate your extra efforts to get your contributions into WSO. We look forward to next year and the opportunity it provides for making improvements.

Thank you very much.

Way To Go Minneapolis

by Pat W.

The 1998 RCA Convention, Celebrating Partnership, was held in Minneapolis to commemorate the 10 year Anniversary of RCA which began there (and also in California) in 1988. The convention was a huge success bringing an estimated profit of \$5,700 which was donated directly to WSO. The convention contribution is the largest single block of income that WSO receives each year. Without it, the WSO would not be able to provide the wide array of services we have all come to expect.

The convention committee wants to thank the 136 people who came to the convention and those who donated goods and services to the silent auction which, alone, raised nearly \$2,200.

Forget Disney World, Sea World and Busch Gardens!

Come to get your relationship together, have FUN!

Come to CoupleWorld This Fall
(sing to the tune of "It's a Small World")

It's a place for learning, a place for fun.
It's a place with palm trees, the land of sun.
I am right here to share
'Cause it's time your aware
That it's CoupleWorld this fall.

Come to CoupleWorld this fall.
We are going to have a ball

And we'd like to see you all
At CoupleWorld this fall.

You can swim in the Gulf of Mexico,
Grab your spouse and have some sex and OH!
We will laugh and we'll play
So sign up right away
For CoupleWorld this fall.

Come to CoupleWorld this fall.
We are going to have a ball
And we'd like to see you all
At CoupleWorld this fall.

Convention Hotel Information
Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort
6800 Skyway Lane,
St. Petersburg, FL 33711
1•800•227-8045

To insure availability, room reservations should be made by September 1, 1999. If you make reservations by phone, please specify RCA CoupleWorld. Room rates are per room night and applicable sales taxes will be added to rates.

Courtyard Rooms : \$84.00/night single-double occupancy Bayside Rooms: \$116.00/night single-double occupancy

Questions about the 1999 RCA Convention may be directed to Diane or Glenn A. at:
CoupleWorld
166 17th Avenue S.E.
St. Petersburg, FL 33701-5908
or at:
Phone & FAX: (727) 898-9653
or
E-Mail: wlfsg914@aol.com

Silent Auction!

Got a goodie you don't need? Donate it to the 1999 RCA Convention Silent Auction. Can't think of anything?

Well here are some IDEAS...

- A Vacation Home for a Week

- Crafts or Handmade Items
 - Toys
 - Ceramics
 - Quilts
 - Jewelry
- Accessories
 - Silk Scarf
 - Purse
 - Hat
- Books
 - Recovery
 - Collector's Dream
 - Signed by Author
- Open Airline Tickets
- Holiday Decorations
- CDs or Videos
- Boom Box
- Cameras or Photo Supplies
- Art Objects
 - Paintings
 - Prints
 - Sculpture
- Household Items
 - Lamps
 - Vases
 - Crystal
 - Kitchen Gadgets
 - Candles
 - Picture Frames
- Business Items
 - Computer or Programs
 - Desk Sets/Pens
 - Office Supplies
- Specialty Edibles
- Gift Certificates
- Binoculars/Telescopes
- Got the Idea?

Call (727) 898-9653 for more information or to make a donation.

Send or deliver donations to: RCA CoupleWorld, 166 17th Avenue S.E., St. Petersburg, FL 33701-5908 Please include your name, address and phone number.

Thank you!

An Autobiography in Five Chapters

-- Anonymous

Chapter 1

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost....I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in, again.
I can't believe I am in this same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I fall in... it's a habit...
but my eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter 4

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter 5

I walk down a different street.

Monthly Themes

In the Vision 2000 survey, the expressed a desire to receive information that would make meetings more interesting and inspiring as well as help in developing a perceived connection

between local groups around the world. Out of these desires grew the idea for monthly themes. Local groups may decide to use these themes for meeting topics, meeting development aids and for fund raising. By doing so, they will become one of many groups worldwide focusing thought and energy on a single topic of value for recovering couples.

Here are the themes for the rest of the year:

April - Codependency

May - Shame and Intimacy

June - Family of Origin Issues

July - Abusive Parents

August - Addicted Coupleships

September - Relationship Relapse

October - Supporting Change

November - Play It Again, Sam

December - Couple Shame

Codependency

This factor may be an aspect of our co-addiction to each other. Partner codependency is really based on profound fear of abandonment, deep shame and a strong need for approval. Enmeshed partner attachments may result and we may seek to control our partner and prevent him/her from leaving. There are two basic styles of this codependent control. In one codependent style, we seek to manipulate our partner by always doing what we think he/she needs or wants. As this kind of codependent, we set our partner up as our Higher Power and would almost literally die for him or her. This style may also include a victim stance which projects an image of being such a poor, wretched, mistreated person that no one would ever leave us to face the world alone.

The other style is a more directly manipulative one. In this style, we use anger, orders, arguing, and/or the suggestion (in a variety of subtle and not-so-subtle ways) that we are superior and should control the behavior of our partner. This is still codependency in that it is based on the deep fear of our partner leaving.

Addictive relationships are codependent ones. Each of us fears the other leaving, and we both use our own personal codependent style to prevent this from happening.

Shame and Intimacy

Intimacy disorder is based on the individual feeling of shame that says, "If you really knew me, you would hate me." Intimacy disorder produces a fear of intimacy and an inability to be honest and vulnerable with our partner. One of the maxims of intimacy disorder is that we will be least honest with the person we are most afraid of losing. Many of us experience great resentment because our partner seems to be able to be totally honest with relative strangers but not with us. We need to realize that we may frequently be "the last one to know," not because our partner is willingly trying to deceive us or because he/she doesn't care, but because he/she is deathly afraid of losing us.

Ultimately, intimacy is a matter of practice. We must learn to take great risks and tell the truth about ourselves... the truth about old behaviors, feelings, attitudes, preferences, and needs. As we take these risks we will find that our partners usually don't leave, but that they are grateful for our honesty. Practicing honesty will build trust and intimacy.

Family of Origin Issues

The limited research that has been conducted with dysfunctional couples suggests each of us is a victim of abuse. Dysfunctional couples learn unhealthy relationship styles in families of origin where healthy modeling of intimacy and nurturing are lacking. We may be victims of invasive abuse in which personal boundaries have been violated emotionally, physically, sexually, or spiritually. This creates suppressed anger and rage, and profound fear and anxiety. Addictions may develop as ways of coping with these feelings.

We may also be the victims of abandonment abuse in which our needs for nurturing were not met by one or both of our parents (or primary caretakers). This form of abuse leaves deep psychological holes. Abuse victims may suppress memories of and feelings about invasive abuse. The feelings, however, can be provoked without the memories becoming conscious. Our partner may say or do something that reminds us of our abuse which produces the old, but buried, feelings. The reactions, such as anger, that occur may seem out of proportion to the current event. Many couples, for example, fight over trivial matters. Unsolved arguments and "mysterious" emotional reactions can often be traced to family of origin issues. We can learn to be patient with each other and help each other trace feelings back to their roots.

Abandonment abuse creates co-dependency that is based on fear of current abandonment. We may think that our partner will be the nurturing parent we never had. We may hear our partner or ourselves saying, "I'm not your mother (or father)." No partner can ever take the place of a parent. When we realize this, pressure is taken off our partner to be someone he/she can never be. True partner intimacy can then proceed.

Share Your Experience, Strength & Hope

Send your thoughts, experiences and solutions about coupleship issues, in 300 words or less, to be published in the Hand in Hand. Need some ideas?

1. Money
2. Roles
3. Higher Power
4. Denial
5. Sex
6. Children
7. Boundaries
8. Conflict
9. Letting Go
10. Group Activities

Send to WSO or E-Mail to: wlfsg914@aol.com