



April News

SPRING TUNE-UP....

Spring *finally* appears to have arrived which means it's a good time to get out into the garden (or to the gym!) and tend to the damaging affects of winter. It's also a great time to take a moment and nurture our relationships. They may have been suffering too with the extended rains, dark days and cold temperatures. As a place to start, I invite you to contemplate the following "Top 4 Relationship Killers" to see if they are causing unnecessary damage to your relationships (and this includes those with friends, family and co-workers). Then apply the "Survival Tips" below and watch your relationships grow!



The Top 4 Relationship Killers:

#1 Upping the Ante: As human beings we are all prone to responding with shame, blame or criticism when we are not getting our needs met. If you find yourself on the receiving end of any of these negative responses, returning the interaction with more of the same only serves to escalate the situation.

Survival Tip #1: Avoid the natural (defensive) response to return like with like. Instead move to mirroring, validating and empathizing (also known as the "Imago Dialogue"). Here's how it might look: "So what I hear you saying is that I let you down when I didn't call last night." Then, "It makes sense that you are upset because you were obviously expecting to hear from me." (Remember the true meaning of validation does not require that I agree with you only that I acknowledge you have a different perspective than mine). Finally, "I can imagine you might have felt hurt and maybe even worried that I didn't call. Did I get that?" This interaction may seem a bit 'forced' or 'false' at first but if you use this technique often, over time it can begin to feel very natural; and your relationships will flourish.

#2 The Put Down: Invalidation has many faces and we can easily put down another without realizing it. The first (and worst) type of invalidation is usually partnered with contempt and therefore not hard to miss. If you are experiencing this type of invalidation in your relationship it is serious and you should consider seeking professional help. However, there is another form of invalidation that is much more subtle, but still damaging, particularly if done routinely. As an example: "Don't worry. The financial downturn is sure to correct itself soon." In this case, without malice, we have invalidated another's concern. This could be because we don't share their concern, but it could also be that we are unconsciously (or consciously) attempting to avoid or deny our own worry about the situation.



Survival Tip #2: Bring a level of awareness to your interactions with others. Ask yourself, "Am I really listening to this person and acknowledging their concerns?" Check in with yourself that you are also validating your own fears, concerns and experiences. Alternatively, use Imago Dialogue (1. Mirror 2. Validate 3. Empathize). It's a great go-to strategy that works in most situations.

#3 Negative Interpretation: This one is deadly, especially if you are on the receiving end. Negative interpretation occurs when one person consistently believes that the motives of the other are more negative than is really the case. It can be a slippery slope when trying to negotiate or communicate with someone who is deeply entrenched in a negative belief system; in fact, in severe situations, help from a professional may be needed. However, for mild cases of negative interpretation in relationships try Survival Tip #3.

Survival Tip #3: In the words of Stephen Covey, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." A whole lot of listening and a big dose of curiosity is a good first stage survival strategy here. Try asking open-ended questions that might assist them with moving toward a solution: "What do you think needs to happen to minimize your feeling this way?" Try validating them: "It makes sense that you might think this way given the experiences you have shared with me." Alternatively, agree to disagree. No matter what strategy you choose, avoid engaging in an argument or trying to convince them of your good intentions; these strategies don't work.

If you are the one who is interpreting situations in a negative light, remind yourself of the credo of the infamous Milton Erickson: "Behind every behaviour there is a positive intention." Then go looking for evidence of that (note: resist the natural urge to look for evidence that supports your story). Ask yourself, "How likely is it that this person is intentionally trying to ruin my life?" Finally, try trading places with the "perpetrator" and see if you can take their perspective for a moment; can you come up with 5 reasons why they may have acted the way they did?

#4 Shutout Behaviour: This can be as obvious as one party getting up and leaving the room when the other wishes to discuss something (avoiding) or as subtle as quietly shutting down during a discussion and only pretending to be listening (withdrawing). The amount of withdrawal or avoidance in relationships is an excellent predictor of their chances for success; even low levels of shutout behaviour can have a significantly negative impact on a relationship.

Survival Tip #4: Take responsibility to improve your role in all communications. For example, this may mean cutting back on your pursuit of an avoider *and* creating a safer environment for discussion (i.e., avoiding blaming, shaming and criticism and disallowing arguments). Or use the Imago Dialogue process. In more serious cases of shutout behaviour, you may need the assistance of a coach or therapist to work through the Dialogue successfully.



UPCOMING SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS



IMAGO CONNECTS, AN INTRODUCTORY SESSION BASED ON THE WORK OF DR. HARVILLE HENDRIX, AUTHOR OF #1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLER GETTING THE LOVE YOU WANT

- Find out what the experts say about why we choose the partners we do
- Gain further understanding of the predictable stages of relationships
- Learn what your personality *style* is for dealing with conflict
- Review a simple tool to help dissolve conflict and increase connection in all of your relationships (including your relationships with family, friends and co-workers)
- Have the opportunity to be coached or to watch a coaching session using this tool
- Receive a "roadmap" to help you navigate your current (or next) relationship more effectively

Date: Saturday, April 18, 2009 ~ 9:30 to 12:30 p.m.
Held @ Ravenswood Studio, North Vancouver

Cost: 45.00

NOTE: SOME SPACES STILL AVAILABLE

To Register call Katie at 778-772-9066 or register on-line @ www.hinacoaching.com

FREE IMAGO INFORMATION EVENING

HELD THE LAST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

Next Session: Wednesday April 29th 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.
@ Ravenswood Studio, North Vancouver

NOW ALSO OFFERED AS A TELECLASS

Please Register On-Line
www.hinacoaching.com

START RIGHT, STAY CONNECTED for Couples
Date: Saturday, May 2nd, 2009 ~ 9:30 to 5:30 p.m.

AND

START RIGHT, GET CONNECTED for Singles
Date: Saturday, May 9th, 2009 ~ 9:30 to 5:30 p.m.

See the website for more details

“Our minds alone are great, but our minds together are better.” - P.Boyчук

Please feel welcome to share *your* mind and contribute to the Butterfly Effect section for May News 😊

Happy Belated Easter!

Katie

