
The Beacon

Guiding You Through the Process of Change

Published by Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC

40 Dale Road, Suite 201 Avon, CT 06001

Volume 4, Issue 2

© 2004, Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC

Spring, 2004

The Power of the Positive

Our previous article described the damage which ensues when marital partners try to get their needs met through arguing, belittling, withholding, and other negative tactics. We went on to suggest that better results can be obtained with **positive change strategies**. This article describes some of these strategies.

Appreciation and Praise: People like to be appreciated. However, when men and women are unhappy with one another in a relationship, they often focus intently on their problems. Much of their communication to one another revolves around various complaints and criticisms. This only increases the level of tension and unhappiness in the relationship. Tense, unhappy people rarely do a good job of fixing relationship problems - they just perpetuate them. An alternative approach is to make a purposeful effort to notice the positive aspects of your spouse's behavior, and openly express your appreciation to them. You can do this even though there are other things about which you remain unhappy. For example, you might tell your partner that you appreciate their hard work and financial contribution to the household, or their efforts at parenting. You can thank them for helping with a chore or errand, or notice if they wear an attractive article of clothing. When you're more appreciative of your partner, they will tend to appreciate you more as well. This helps to create a more positive atmosphere in the relationship, encouraging compromise and a desire to please one another.

Listening: Just as people like to be appreciated, they also like to feel that they have been listened to and are understood. Usually we listen just long enough to know what we want to say next - often a criticism or rebuttal of our partner's statement. One way to change this is to really try to understand your partner's thoughts and feelings *from their point of view*. You don't

necessarily need to agree with them. You just need to listen well enough and long enough for them to know you truly listened. Instead of saying, "Stop nagging me about my going fishing," you could say, "Do you feel that I'm being inconsiderate of you because I made plans to go fishing all day Saturday without talking to you first?"

Having Fun Together: In the initial stages of a relationship, when people are developing positive feelings for one another, their time together often consists of a series of "dates" during which they enjoy their time together. After years of marriage, fun activities often drop out of their lives as they focus on household responsibilities, paying bills and raising children. There's a good chance the spark of positive feeling between you can still be found in those activities you used to enjoy together but have stopped doing. Plan to reintroduce "fun" into your lives.

Transforming Complaints into Positive and Specific Requests: It is entirely normal and expected in relationships for people to be dissatisfied at times, and to want things to change. However, no one likes to be the target of complaints and criticism. Thus, in order to help our partners cooperate with our desire for change, we need to transform our complaints into *positive and specific requests*. For example, instead of saying, "You're so wrapped up in your work, that we never have any time together," you would say, "I would really enjoy spending more time with you" or "I would like a hug when you come home from work"

In short, catch each other doing something right, truly listen, have fun together, and ask for what you need in a positive and clear manner. It's not the absence of negatives in our lives, but instead the presence of positives, that can help us feel happier and more connected.

By T. Scott Sewitch, Ph.D., Beacon Behavioral Services
860-676-9350 (ext. 48)

Beacon Behavioral Services
Guiding You Through the Process of Change

Clinical Services

- Evaluations
- Individual, Couples and Family Therapies
- Support Groups
- Psychiatric Services

Divorce Services

- P.E.A.C.E. Program for parents with high conflict
- Custody Evaluations
- Support Groups
- Parent Education and Consultation

Organizational Consultation and Training

- Executive Coaching
- Conflict Resolution
- Violence Prevention
- Stress Management Training
- Customer Service Training

Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC
1-888-422-8801

Avon

40 Dale Road
Avon, CT 06001
860-676-9350

Bloomfield

34 Jerome Avenue
Bloomfield, CT 06002
860-243-5024

Glastonbury

200 Oak Street
Glastonbury, CT 06033
860-659-4370

Visit us on the Internet at:

www.beaconbehavioral.com
email@beaconbehavioral.com

Beacon Behavioral Services,
LLC
40 Dale Road, Suite 201
Avon, CT 06001