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HOW OUR REALTIONSHPIS INFLUENCE OUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

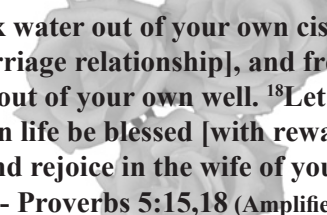
Dysfunctional and unhealthy relationships create stress in our physical and mental health. Depression, sleep problems, anxiety, excessive tension, anger, and decreased self-esteem are common complaints of my clients and patients who experience the pain of unhealthy relationships at home, in their marriage, or at the workplace. Good physical and mental health is a function of being the right person in the relationship. Phil Callaway, popular Christian author, has discovered that finding the right person in a marriage is less important than being the right person. In the world of business, Jim Collins and his management research team in Boulder, Colorado have found that people are not the most important asset in a company, the right people are. Being the right person means we want to create space for others and ourselves to grow and mature in the relationship. We realize not all relationships are healthy. We recognize that there are

relationships that people will not change but we can change. And there are relationships that we should avoid, leave, or we must take care of ourselves. Being the right person in the relationship help protect us from many stress related health problems.

In February 2003 I spoke at the University of Alberta's Lunch and Learn Series on the 7 characteristics of being the right person in a relationship. I want to reprint these 7 characteristics for this edition of the newsletter. I have also created a new column called **Real Lives, Real Stories**. This column features testimonies of people who have weathered and recovered from the storms of unhealthy relationships. You are welcome to reprint copies of this newsletter to your patients who are going through tough times in relationships.

7 characteristics of Being the Right Person in a Relationship

1. You are internally secure
 - You can let go instead of control excessively
 - You give instead of take from the relationship
 - Your happiness does not depend on a person
2. You provide a sense of safety and security for the relationship
 - You connect instead of avoid each other
 - You desire intimacy instead of display poor self control, such as, excessive anger
3. You set reasonable expectations
 - You realize not all things are right vs. wrong, black vs. white, they are just different
 - You motivate instead of discourage
 - You bless instead of curse with guilt trip
4. You travel light with small amount of baggage
 - You have time and energy writing your present chapter of life instead of busy flipping back to your old chapters
 - You invest on things you have control instead of things you have no control
5. You set healthy boundaries
 - You know the difference between "backpack" and a "big boulder", "responsible for" vs. "responsible to." Everyone carries his/her own "backpack" of responsibility. When you carry other's "backpack," you are caring too much
 - You recognize yellow flags and red flags instead of being vulnerable
 - You realize it is OK to speak out or speak up for yourself
6. You take care of yourself
 - Self care is not equal to selfishness
 - Women: You're a woman first before you become a wife and a mom. Take care the woman side of you
 - Men: Make sure your woman take care of herself
7. You know yourself well
 - You exercise your strengths and recognize your weaknesses
 - You accept and exercise responsibility instead of lay blame
 - You do not despise instruction, criticism, or warning



**¹⁵Drink water out of your own cisten [of a pure magrriage relationship], and fresh running waters out of your own well. ¹⁸Let your fountain of human life be blessed [with rewards of fidelity], and rejoice in the wife of your youth.
- Proverbs 5:15,18 (Amplified Bible)**

REAL LIVES, REAL STORIES

Voices of Blessings

In July 2000, I found myself unexpectedly thrown into the most difficult and emotional crisis of my life. My husband of 14 years announced that he wanted to leave our children and myself. I had no forewarning of his intentions. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, and I didn't want to see friends or family. I was completely and utterly numb. My husband volunteered to see a counselor through his work: after one session, the counselor felt that my husband knew what he wanted to do, and recommended that he "goes for it"! During that summer, my refuge was my children. I was forced to carry on some sense of normalcy for their sakes. As the summer drew to a close, I needed to return to my teaching position. I became more and more distraught at the thought of handling the pressures of a demanding profession, my children and my crumbling personal life. I made an appointment to see my family physician. My doctor quickly recognized that I was in full crisis. She recommended two immediate measures: medication for depression, and family counseling with a psychologist. I began the medication and made an appointment with the psychologist. Over the next few months, the psychologist worked with my husband and I trying to get at the root of our problems. The psychologist was able to see through my tearful episodes and my husband's lack of involvement, and eventually recommended that he see me alone. During the following few months, my psychologist gave me many "voices of blessings": helping me recognize my own strengths, assisting me in understanding and accepting my own feelings, encouraging me to give myself credit for my successes, supporting me in rediscovering who I am, and empowering me to deal with both expected and unexpected situations. In addition to the medication and counseling, I looked after my inner needs during this stressful time in my life using a couple of different methods: many, many confidential, teary and intimate talks with very close girlfriends; and numerous long distance runs on the trails through the river valley. I even went away with the "girls" on a "Get Fit" weekend in Jasper! At one time, I felt totally dependent on my psychologist to make sense of the devastation of my life. Now, my psychologist's lifelong gift of the "voices of blessings" has enabled me to recognize my successes and strengths, and to therefore become a strong, independent and confident woman! I will forever be grateful to have been given the "voices of blessings".

Heavy Shoulders

We all have heavy shoulders in one way or another, which are the emotional weight we carry upon ourselves during our day-to-day activities. My story begins some time ago but most recently where the weight on shoulders became a burden and very over bearing. I have been married now for 19 years and we have two sons aged 20 and 16. My wife and I started our family at a young age and leaving us to the responsibility of parenthood. As time past both of us working and raising our children and perhaps not allowing ourselves the time to grow and bond as young couples should.

Twelve years into our marriage I had a marital affair. The affair happened at my place of employment with another colleague,

and made me another statistic. During this time I carried burden of guilt and shame, which affected my family life, which almost ended my marriage. For the past two months I have seek counselling with a psychologist, which allowed me the opportunity to lighten my burden. During the years of my affair it had increased the weight of the shoulders of my wife and sons, which I have come to realize today. After confessing to my infidelity the weight of my shoulders has been lifted immensely. Today I have now realized the colour of my wife's eyes and the beautiful personalities of our sons. I feel very fortunate to have a loving wife and patient sons and giving a second chance to lighten my burden. And with time I hope to be able to lighten the weight on the shoulders of my wife and sons.

UPCOMING ISSUES:

In my counselling and therapy practice, I have found that there is no dysfunction in a relationship that has more destructive power on a person's mental and physical health than the following three common referral problems in my practice: (1) **extra-marital affair**, (2) **unbridled and excessive anger**, and (3) **sexual addiction to pornography**. I will discuss the above issues in my upcoming newsletters. In this issue, I want to briefly address the process behind extra-marital affairs.

Extra-Marital Affairs

There are three types of affairs: (1) the one-night stand, (2) the sexual addiction to affairs, and (3) the entangled affair. There is no relationship and commitment in one-night stand. The man and woman met in a business trip, consumed alcohol and shared personal problems, ended up in bed in the hotel room, and parted separate ways the next day. In regard to sexual addiction to affairs, the late U.S. president, John F. Kennedy, was a classic example. A friend of JFK commented that the late president needed sexual release on a daily basis, and his obsession with breezy sex was connected to his feelings of empowerment. Entangled affair involves a relationship on an emotional level. According to Dave Carder, author of Torn Asunder, the entangled affair is the most problematic and common form of extra-marital affair, and one of the most stubborn to rehabilitate due to extensive emotional involvement. The man and woman have a relationship – often akin to the marriage relationship. The similarity to the marriage bond is part of the reason it is so dangerous: the man or woman is finding needs met that he or she has been seeking to have met in the marriage for years, usually unsuccessfully. The road to entangled affair involves a predictable 4-step process: (1) being vulnerable, (2) emotional, non-physical involvement, (3) physical involvement, and (4) rationalization for continuing the affair. Affairs happen to men and women and respect no social and economic boundary. In my practice, I have witnessed the destructive power of affair on marriages as well as the mental and emotional toll it inflicts on the persons involved. In general, people do eventually recover from the damages caused by extra-marital affair and move on with their lives. However, the best medicine is to seduce proof your marriage and relationship.

SIMON SHEH & ASSOCIATES

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