

Breakthroughs^{Spring 2009} in healing

with DR. SIMON SHEH

Published by Dr. Simon Sheh, Ph. D
Simon Sheh & Associates
Registered Psychologists

154 Meadowlark Health Center 156 St. & 87 Ave., Edmonton, AB. T5R 5W9 Telephone: (780) 429-4761, Ext. 237 Fax: (780) 425-4274 Email: simon@drsimonsheh.com

HOW TO HAVE A HEALTHY DANCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP DANCE FLOOR

THE JOSHUA EFFECT: *the Attachment Principle* ON OUR RELATIONSHIP DANCE FLOOR

“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong (confident) and of good courage, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only you be strong and very courageous, that you may do according to all the law which Moses My Servant commanded you. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe and do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely and have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong, vigorous; and very courageous. Be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:5-9)

The above Old Testament story is about the tremendous **attachment bond** between God and his people when Joshua was preparing for battles. God told Joshua three times, be strong and courageous, and He told him not to be afraid and discouraged. These charges to Joshua are based on three assurances:

- The assurance of God’s promise (of the land, it’s yours to inherit, I am here for you)
- The assurance of God’s power (through his word, that God’s people have to talk about it, think about it, and act on it)
- The assurance of God’s presence (that I will not drop you or abandon you)

Basically God was telling Joshua and his people, **YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!** It was so crucial and important that Joshua experienced this strong attachment bond so that he would feel safe and secure to face the stress, the challenges, the ups and downs, the unexpected, and the enemies on the battle fronts.

If we treat our marital relationship like a dance on the dance floor, is this what we want from each other and to say to each other that **I can count on you and we can count on each other?**

I can count on you:

- Not to step on my foot and toes all the time on the dance floor.
- To have stronger muscles and thicker skin on your feet and legs so that if I accidentally step on your foot, you will not get so upset with me or you will leave the dance floor.
- To recover faster from our fights on the dance floor so that our evenings, our days, or our weeks will not be ruined with long silence and no shows.
- To have some fun on the dance floor and not to take things so seriously and personally.
- To lead the dance, so that I don’t have to do everything and feel so alone.
- To show up on the dance floor, so that we can learn together.
- To be there for me when I need you.
- Not to look at other women on the dance floor, please keep your eyes on me.
- To grow up, act like an adult, this is not child play; this is adult dancing for the grown-ups, take up the responsibility to learn the steps.
- Not to treat me like a kid. I want a dance partner, not a mother.
- To accept who I am, and not to judge me. I am not perfect, this is how I dance.
- To tell me and make me feel I am important to you on the dance floor. To tell me I am valuable to you, and you can’t wait to dance with me.
- To have some passionate dance (tango, bachatta) on the dance floor of our marriage bed and you show up with some energy.
- To talk to me more and help me out on housework and the kids before wanting some passion back on the dance floor of the marriage bed.
- To accept that you cannot flip me around so much on the dance floor of the marriage bed because I am not a young chick any more. We can talk more, we can cuddle more...

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More dancing on the other side →

Continued from front

- To have some regular dance on the marriage bed so that I don't have to guess and mind read when you want to show up.
- To have some dancing lessons together or by yourself from an experienced dance instructor.

There are **Checks and Balances** within the attachment bond between God and Joshua. God did not want to do all the work and let Joshua and the people off the hook and do nothing. God wanted Joshua to take up his responsibility to claim the living power of his word – to talk about it, think about it, and act on it. Yes, we want our partner's promises not to hurt us, yes we want our partner's presence and not to abandon us. On the same token, if we want a healthy dance on the relationship dance floor, we have to take up our own responsibility to strengthen our own leg muscles and to thicken our own skin, and do the necessary steps to become healthier and stronger partners on the dance floor. **A healthy marriage begins with a healthy partner.**

SURVEYING THE DANCE FLOOR

On the relationship dance floor, there is one particular group of dancers who are at risk doing damages to the music and the steps on the dance floor. I call these dancers the controlling dancers.

The controlling dancers are always afraid that they are not good enough dancer on the dance floor, and they are afraid that the dance partner and other people on the dance floor do not give them the approval. The controlling dancers want a perfect dance right away. They don't like making mistakes on the dance floor, and they don't like other people making mistakes either. They follow the dance manual to the tee. They don't like changes, they don't like surprises, and they don't like unexpected moves. The controlling dancers have not developed their own style of dance. They have no identity on the dance floor. At times they are lost, they feel losing control, and they dance harder and have no fun on the dance floor. They don't like their dance partner critique on their dance steps. Some of them can't handle too many people and noises on the dance floor. If they have a choice, they rather dance alone in a corner.

Controlling dancers are good and reliable people. They have no intention to hurt anyone on the dance floor. They take their responsibility seriously, sometimes

too seriously. They want to take care of everyone and they don't allow people on the dance floor to have their own style. They easily get upset on the dance floor. When their dance partner accidentally steps on their toes, they treat the accident like a serious fatal injury. They yell, they scream, they blame, the pout, they withdraw, they fight, they get angry, they do no shows.

Have anyone of you met this type of dancers? Have you seen them in action? I was once a controlling dancer. I don't want to be a controlling dancer anymore. Why? It is because I have seen the damages on the dance floor. I have learned on the much, much, much bigger dance floor of everyday living, there is a scale. Yes, a scale. When I was a controlling dancer, there was no scale. Everything was black and white, right and wrong, all or nothing. Every mistake was a fatal mistake; every error a fatal error. Every storm was a Katrina. Yes, I do know in life there are black and white, right and wrong. If I am a pilot, I know there is only one take-off; and there is only one touch down. But on the relationship dance floor, I have found that there is a scale.

Over the years in my private practice, I have developed a variety of dancing and scaling tools to help controlling dancers minimize damages on the relationship dance floor.

THE DANCING TOOLS

The Scaling Tool

I usually use a scale of 1 to 7. 7/7 is the end of the world. 1/7 is the opposite. 5 and 6 out of 7 means the end of the world is coming. A client told me in session that she does not like her husband get so upset and freaked out in front of her in-laws and relatives when she forgot to butter the toasts at a family breakfast. The husband wanted a perfect brunch to seek approval from his mom and dad. After applying the 1 to 7 scaling tool, the husband realized the "my wife forgot to butter the toast" incident is only a 0.5/7 rating, which means there is no need to freak out.

The scaling tool can also convert into qualitative or descriptive versions:

- **The Storm Category tool** – five categories, Katrina is category 5, totally destructive and disastrous. Category 1 is only rain and clouds, which means business as usual, no need to be stressed out.

- **The Self Question tool** – Is it illegal? Is it criminal? Is it life and death? Is it outright abusive? Is it outright disrespectful? If the answers are all negative, you can stand down and let things go. It is not about right and wrong, it is about different ways to do the same thing.
- **The 10,000 Soldiers tool** – 10,000 soldiers vs. 3 army reserves to fight the battle. Ask yourself the question, does this battle need to call up 10,000 soldiers to fight? 10,000 soldiers are designed to fight a huge battle with a lot of noise and damages. If the answer is negative, you can once again stand down and let things go.

The Elevator Tool

In my practice I often take my client on a ride to go down the elevator of emotions from the ground floor to the basement. The ground floor is all about harsh emotions: frustrations, control, anger, rage, and blame. In the basement there are fear and insecurity, much softer emotions.

The willingness to take an elevator ride and identify the softer emotions can drastically change the music on the relationship dance floor, from an unhealthy dysfunctional tune to a music that is more in synch with each other. Two important questions you can ask when entering the basement of emotions:

1. What am I most afraid of? (e.g., I am not important to you anymore.)
2. What do I need most from you? (e.g., don't freak out when I make a small mistake that is not the end of the world.)

The above mentioned dancing tools are designed for couples to do healthy music and dance steps on the relationship dance floor. Some controlling dancers do need extra lessons from a competent instructor. That is the time when a professional referral to an experienced psychologist or marriage counselor is warranted.

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