

# The **SOLUTION** *source*

Thunder Bay Counselling Centre Newsletter  
By Colleen Ginter, Clinical Counsellor at Thunder Bay Counselling Centre

*For You & Your Family*

Spring 2014

Getting married! Living together! Exciting! Romantic! The thoughts of taking that next step can be heart-stopping and exhilarating. And maybe a bit scary?

But wait. Have you asked each other: Are we ready for this? What do we know about each other? What else do we need to know? What are the most important things we need to know about each other before we start living together? In this our Spring 2014 Newsletter, we are going to focus on couple relationships.

## Love and Relationships Getting married?



counselling centre of east algoma / centre de counselling d'algoma est

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"There are a few rules I know to be true about love and marriage: If you don't respect the other person, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. If you don't know how to compromise, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. If you can't talk openly about what goes on between you, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. And if you don't have a common set of values in life, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. Your values must be alike."

- Morrie Schwartz

(Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie*)



## Important Questions

It is surprising how many couples that do not ask the really important questions. Questions that will shape their own lives and the life of their future marriage. The following questions are not meant to scare you away from getting married but instead to move you towards getting to know each other more. By being open with each other and discussing these issues before they come up, you will have a better understanding when problems arise and a solid foundation to fall back on through the years.

1. What life goals for career, family, or other personal success do my partner and I share?
2. What goals are different?
3. How will we work through these differences?
4. How will we help each other reach our goals?
5. How will my partner and I manage our finances?
6. Who will be the provider?
7. What will we do in the event of loss of income?
8. Is a pre-nuptial agreement necessary?
9. How will we pay our bills, manage accounts, set aside savings and handle large purchases?
10. How will we settle disagreements and differences of opinions?
11. What is our fighting style? How do we resolve problems?
12. How will we handle each other's families and friends?
13. What holiday customs will we need to honour?
14. What boundaries will be set?
15. What will we do to keep our marriage thriving?
16. What will we do in the case that one of us feels the relationship is stale or strained?
17. Will we agree to go to counselling if we ever decide one day to not be married to each other?
18. What are the three most important things to us in marriage?
19. What are our expectations of marriage to be like?

### Do you know and trust your partner's personal history?

The best predictor of future behaviour is relevant past behaviour. Learn from it. How has your partner behaved in past relationships? How have they behaved with you? What has your partner learned about marriage from his/her parents? Look closely at your partner's parents "children learn what they live."

### Have you planned a marriage or just a wedding?

Cake, flowers and fine china are all exciting, but there's more at stake than one day. Your wedding is a day; a marriage is a lifetime. You don't just want to be married, you want to be happily married. Think about the next 50 years. Put at least the same amount of time and effort that you are using to plan your wedding into planning your marriage. Develop an emotional prenuptial agreement with your partner, outlining how you'll handle children, discipline, sex, money, division of labour, religion, careers, retirement, in-laws, geography, etc. If you don't plan for and discuss these topics, you won't be able to successfully merge two lives together.

### Are you investing more than you can afford to lose?

Look at the cost of your relationship. If you have to give up your friends, career, or family, for example, the cost is too high. If it all falls apart, are you going to be emotionally bankrupt? It is better to be healthy alone, than sick with someone else.

### Have you identified and communicated your needs and expectations?

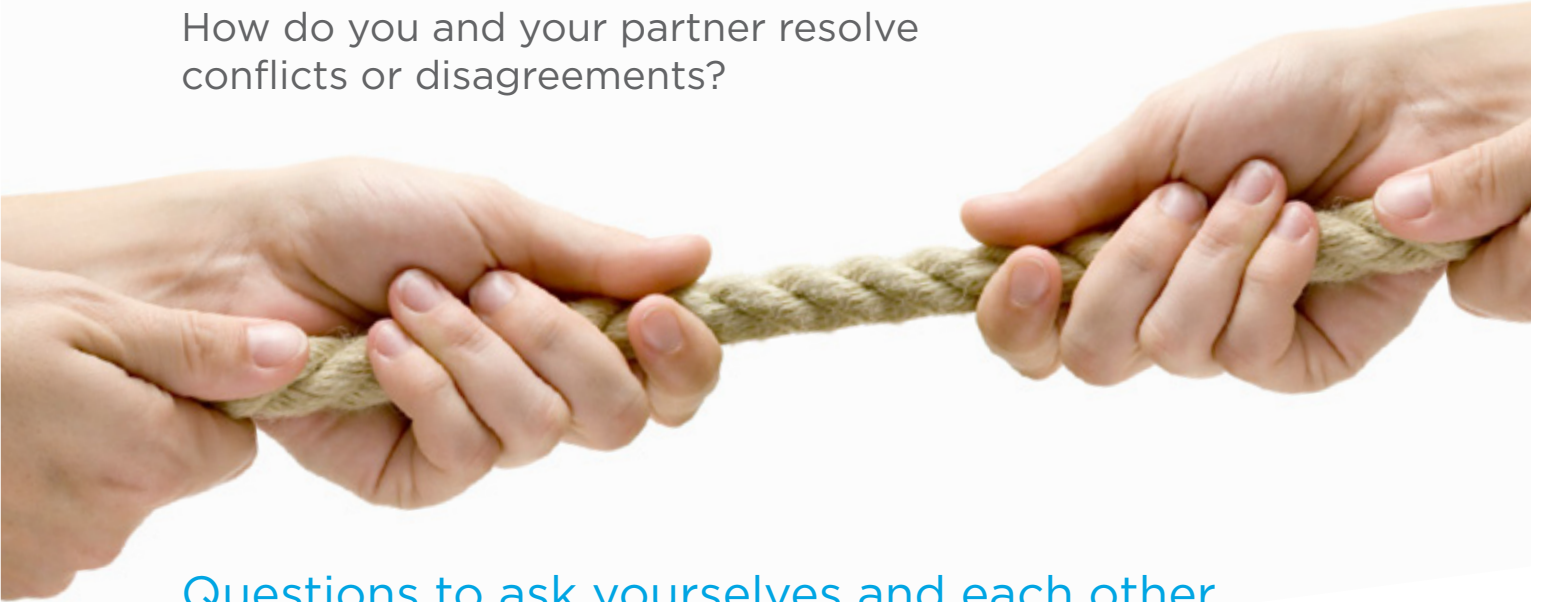
Know yourself. You can't determine if somebody is good for you if you don't know your own needs. It's not selfish to have goals within a relationship. Express your needs and expectations now, not when you're already in the marriage. What are your absolute deal breakers? Do you know your partner's?

(from Dr. Phil.com)



# Communication and Resolving Conflict

How do you and your partner resolve conflicts or disagreements?



## Questions to ask yourselves and each other.

1. **Do you easily talk about your feelings?**
  - If so, are there any exceptions?
  - If not, why not?
2. **Does your partner easily talk about his/her feelings?**
  - If so, are there any exceptions?
  - If not, how do you deal with it?
3. **Have you noticed that there are times when it is difficult to communicate with your partner?**
  - If so, when are those times?
4. **How do you and your partner resolve conflicts or disagreements?**
5. **Have you had any major fights so far?**
  - If so, what were they about?
6. **Would you be in favour of seeking professional counselling as a help to your communication skills?**
  - If so, when would you do this?
  - If not, why not?
7. **Who would you talk to if you were having a major conflict with your spouse?**
8. **Are there currently any unresolved issues in your relationship?**
9. **Given the high divorce rate, do you think you have more of a chance than others to remain married for the rest of your lives? Why or why not?**
10. **Do you feel safe expressing your feelings to your partner?**
11. **Are you comfortable with the way your partner expresses anger?**

*(Rev. Terry Aaron, Pastoral Counsellor)*

## Marriage Is Not About You

Having been married only a year and a half, I've recently come to the conclusion that marriage isn't for me.

Now before you start making assumptions, keep reading.

I met my wife in high school when we were 15 years old. We were friends for ten years until....until we decided we no longer wanted to be just friends. I strongly recommend that best friends fall in love. Good times will be had by all.

Nevertheless, falling in love with my best friend did not prevent me from having certain fears and anxieties about getting married. The nearer Kim and I approached the decision to marry, the more I was filled with a paralyzing fear. Was I ready? Was I making the right choice? Was Kim the right person to marry? Would she make me happy?

Then, one fateful night, I share these thoughts and concerns with my dad.

Perhaps each of us have moments in our lives when it feels like time slows down or the air becomes still and everything around us seems to draw in, marking that moment as one we will never forget.

My dad giving his response to my concerns was such a moment for me. With a knowing smile he said, "Seth, you're being totally selfish. So I'm going to make this really simple: marriage isn't for you. You don't marry to make yourself happy, you marry to make someone else happy. More than that, your marriage isn't for yourself, you're marrying for a family. Not just for the in-laws and all of that nonsense, but for your future children. Who do you want to help you raise them? Who do you want to influence them? Marriage isn't for you. It's not about you. Marriage is about the person you married."

It was in that very moment that I knew that Kim was the right person to marry. I realized that I wanted to make her happy; to see her smile every day, to make her laugh every day. I wanted to be a part of her family and my family wanted her to be a part of ours. And thinking back on all the times I had seen her play with my nieces, I knew that she was the one with whom I wanted to build our own family.

My father's advice was both shocking and revelatory. It went against the grain of today's "Walmart philosophy", which is if it doesn't make you happy, you can take it back and get a new one.

No, a true marriage (and true love) is never about you. It's about the person you love - their wants, their needs, their hopes and their dreams. Selfishness demands, "What's in it for me?", while Love asks, "What can I give?"

Some time ago, my wife showed me what it means to love selflessly. For many months, my heart had been hardening with a mixture of fear and resentment. Then, after the pressure had built up to where neither of us could stand it, emotions erupted. I was callous. I was selfish.

But instead of matching my selfishness, Kim did something beyond wonderful - she showed an outpouring of love. Laying aside all of the pain and anguish I had caused her, she lovingly took me in her arms and soothed my soul.

I realized that I had forgotten my dad's advice. While Kim's side of the marriage had been to love me, my side of the marriage had become all about me. This awful realization brought me to tears and I promised my wife that I would try to be better.

To all who are reading this article - married, almost married, single, or even the sworn bachelor or bachelorette - I want you to know that marriage isn't for you. No true relationship of love is for you. Love is about the person you love.

And, paradoxically, the more you truly love that person, the more love you receive. And not just from your significant other, but from their friends and their family and thousands of others you never would have met had your love remained self-centered.

Truly, love and marriage isn't for you. It's for others.

*(This post originally appeared on [www.forwardwalking.com](http://www.forwardwalking.com), a website dedicated to helping people move forward in life)*



The Caregiver Support Group is offered in partnership with the Family Health Team and meets on the first Friday of each month at the Counselling Centre office in the Oaks Centre. This group is for anyone in a caregiving role, who could benefit from education and support.

For more information call Lesley at (705) 848-2585.

Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse/Assault - approximately 1 in 6 men will experience sexual abuse in their lifetime. Our program seeks to support men in regaining a sense of control over their lives by developing positive coping skills.

Individual, couple, family and group counselling are also available in the following programs: addictions, problem gambling, female sexual assault, violence against women, general counselling, partner assault response program, and crisis response.

For information call (705) 848-2585.

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