

The SOLUTION source

Thunder Bay Counselling Newsletter
By Katherine Brooks, HBA (Comm), Thunder Bay Counselling

For You & Your Family

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FACING TRYING TIMES TOGETHER

NO RELATIONSHIP IS WITHOUT TENSIONS AND STRESS, ESPECIALLY DURING HARD TIMES. A RESILIENT RELATIONSHIP CAN BE BUILT, BUT IT TAKES WORK. FIND SOLUTIONS THAT WORK IN YOUR PARTNERSHIP TO HELP YOU RIDE THE UPS AND DOWNS TOGETHER.

When people are put under stress, their responses may bring out sides of them you have not seen before. Stress, change, and trauma drive reactions. Responses to a situation can be different, and most likely will be. Being respectful and open to understanding your partner's perspective will allow you to find a solution that meets your different needs. It will take work to find what works for you, but it is what will build your stronger relationship.

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DEALING WITH THE DIFFERENT

No matter how in sync you and your partner are, your individual experiences, perspectives, and values are what guide your actions and reactions. Take a moment to view the situation from their perspective. Your differences can help you grow together and learn from each others' strengths. Individual reactions may also mean contrasting needs. No one's needs should be set as superior. Although they may be different, they should hold equal importance as each person's experience is valid. New circumstances call for negotiations in your partnership of what you both require to be happy, healthy, and fulfilled. ■



SHARE THE GOOD IN THE BAD

There are always tools to help you communicate when issues arise, but it is just as important to communicate when something good happens. Only talking about the negative can make all your conversations turn negative. If your partner does something you appreciate or makes you happy, let them know.

Even in bad times there are moments of good - celebrate those moments. Remember that even in hardship it is important to take time for yourself and take time for your partnership outside of the difficulty if you can. Celebrate your friendship, your support of each other, and what you have accomplished together. Spend a relaxing night in together, spend time with mutual friends, or take yourselves on a night out. Being stuck in the darkness can make it hard to see the light. ■

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the foundation to any relationship whether it is with your partner, friends, or colleagues. Being able to understand other's needs and feelings is only possible with communication; no one is a mind reader. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can let your partner see your perspective, even if you do not fully understand it yet yourself.

Without sharing, your partner may not notice your changing feelings or needs. A simple tool to use when telling your partner what you need is to use 'I' statements. This means talking about your needs and feelings rather than what they are doing to make you feel this way.

For example, if you are needing some time with your partner as they have been busy or distant, try letting them know how you feel:

“

I have been feeling lonely lately. I need some time with you. Can you spend an hour with me tonight to have some tea?

”

Putting blame on your partner will usually cause them to get defensive rather than listen to your needs. Letting them know directly how you feel will likely increase your needs being met and decrease the miscommunication between you both.

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

The way you communicate is important. Most communication is not the words we say but how, when, and why they are said. All of this can determine how your partner interprets and reacts to what you are saying. A few things to remember when talking with your partner:

1. **Be present** without distractions.

Communication flows two ways. As much as someone could send their message if the person meant to receive it is not listening or open to receive it that communication stops. If an issue or situation is important to you or your partner, find time where you both can be focused on each other.

2. **Be mindful** with your language and tone.

When voices are raised or insults are thrown, productive communication typically stops. These come across as attacks, so the natural response is to start defending. If you find you or your partner are getting too heated to talk and listen to one another, take a step back and have a moment to yourselves. Go into another room for a minute or two to cool off and return to continue talking.

3. **Be open** with your mind and your feelings.

Your partner may have thoughts and feelings that are different than yours. Be open to hearing their perspective. Be open with your feelings as well. Nothing helps the two-way flow of communication more than being transparent. This allows your partner to better understand you, likely be vulnerable themselves, and will let your relationship grow deeper.

4. **Be on topic** about the current situation.

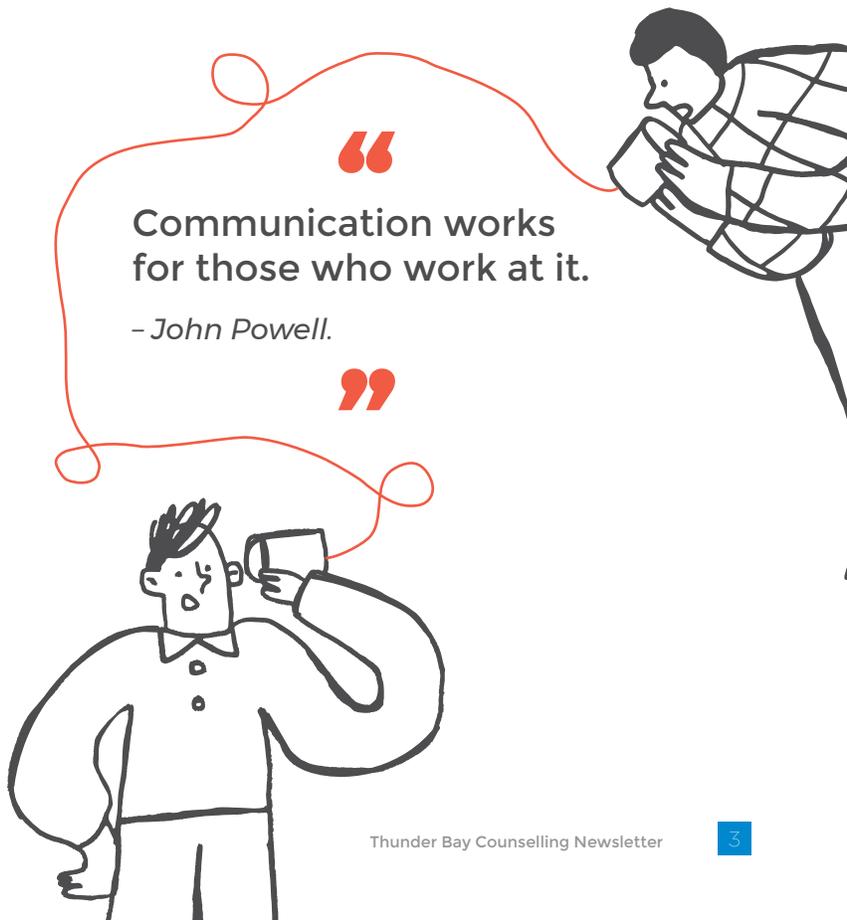
Bringing up the past with something that has already been resolved will not help resolve the current issue. Try not to bring up that one time 2 years ago they...Focus on what is happening right now and what you both can do to help each other through it. ■

“

Communication works for those who work at it.

- John Powell.

”



TAKE TIME FOR YOU

During difficult times it is important to care for yourself too. Self-care not only improves your own wellbeing but will improve your partnership. Your own health directly contributes to your relationships. It can feel demanding to ask for space for yourself. This space does not mean you want to leave your partner, but simply you need to take care of your wellbeing. Make it as easy as ABC:

A - Assure your partner that you care for them. Your need for space does not mean you do not want to be with them.

B - Be honest about where you are going. Let them know where you will be at to reassure their trust and for safety.

C - Check back in when you return. Let them know when you are back and that you appreciated the space.

Two healthy people make a healthy relationship. Being at your best will help to make your partnership grow to the best that it can be as well. ■



IS IT MORE THAN A DISAGREEMENT?

When actions and reactions are more than just disagreements or tension, it is important to acknowledge it. No stress or situation should cause you or your partner to be in a place where you are unsafe. You are not alone. Support is available:

THUNDER BAY COUNSELLING

Give us a call: (807) 684-1880

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call:

ASSAULTED WOMEN'S HELPLINE:

Toll free: 1-866-863-0511

Toll free TTY: 1-866-863-7868

TALK-4-HEALING:

1-855-544-HEAL (4325)

Or call **9-1-1**.



Violence Against Women Program

The Violence Against Women Program offers free and confidential counselling to support women in their choices and help them live free from violence.

This program is open to women and their children who are currently experiencing (or who have experienced in the past) emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, including past childhood sexual abuse, or sexual harassment.

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T: (807) 684-1880