

EmployeeCare News



Larry Welin

For Better or Worse . . . ?

By Larry Welin, Counselor

In most relationships, people are looking for the “better.” They certainly have little desire or intention of making it worse. Whether it is an old or new relationship, a marriage, a partnership or a work-related environment, people want to improve, enhance or just get along with each other in a more satisfying manner.

Researchers tell us men and women in relationships live longer and feel better. Then why do many relationships and marriages today have less than a 50-50 chance of survival?

There are no magic answers and no sure-fire cures. But when two people want and are willing to improve their relationship, changes can be made. If only one person is willing to work on the improvement, the benefits are limited. If two people are rowing a boat, but only one puts effort into the oar, not much headway is made. When the future feels like an extension of the past, relationships are broken and hopelessness pervades.



Michele Weiner-Davis, therapist, author of *Divorce Busting*: and lecturer on *Love the One You're With*, offers suggestions to break out of relationship ruts. First, she exposes some common myths about marriage and relationships.

Myths of Marriage

The first myth is that good relationships are conflict free. Any combination of two people will see things

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differently at one time or another. Their perspectives, values and goals may differ and result in tension and conflict. But that contention does not have to be destructive or degrading. It can broaden one's perspective, stretch horizons and result in something far better and stronger than would have happened without the conflict.

A relationship that is alive will have conflict. But it will also have a higher ratio of good things happening than bad. The positives will outweigh the negatives.

A second myth is that a good relationship consists of two people who are very similar. In reality, there sometimes may be few similarities and many differences between a couple. However, the critical factor is that each individual is committed to making the relationship work. Both partners are willing to show one another they do not have to regard their differences as negative but as opportunities to get to know one another in greater depth. Some of the greatest learning for children can be to see how their parents address differences in a spirit of curiosity and wanting to understand their partner more fully.

Resolving Conflict

"We don't spend enough time together," is a common complaint of couples. Both blame the other for not communicating. Ms. Weiner-Davis suggests one reason couples have difficulty communicating with each other is they expect the other person to communicate in the same style or manner as they do. Women who feel connected by verbal interaction and sharing feelings will look for the same in return. Their spouse may offer few words with little clear connection to their feelings.

Some men communicate more through their actions than through words. Also, they may try to problem solve when their partner only wants a listening ear and not a quick fix to the issue. However, couples can learn the different communication styles of their partner. Reading John Gray's book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* can help couples better understand why they communicate differently.

"My spouse constantly nags" is another complaint. While the reaction to nagging can escalate into a

major argument, nagging does indicate there is an investment in the relationship. There is still interest although it has become distorted through the choice of words. Often spouses pursue with hurtful words because they feel the other partner is not listening. If the nagging is to be transformed, the other partner has to be willing to at least pay attention and not completely tune out the other person.

The complaint, "We've grown apart," is also common and does not happen by accident. Either adult can become involved in hobbies, children or work and lose focus on the relationship. It becomes a stalemate waiting for the other person to change, to make the first move. By stepping back to see the larger picture, we can note how we might be contributing to the distance. Conducting experiments on our own behavior can be more fruitful than trying to get the other person to change.

Many couples can identify every move at the start of an argument. However, the important steps are those taken to resolve the dispute. Ms. Weiner-Davis calls them "truce triggers." By noting what those truce triggers are, and moving those steps closer to the beginning, arguments can be shortened by hours and sometimes even days.

Valuable time is lost waiting for feelings to change before taking action. It is important to take action, first by stopping the name-calling and blaming, and stay focused on the issue. Our feelings can then change automatically by virtue of the fact that we have changed our behavior. Some partners will argue, "Well, I shouldn't have to do that." Perhaps in an ideal world, that is true, but our world and relationships are not ideal. The sooner positive actions are taken the sooner strong feelings will lessen.

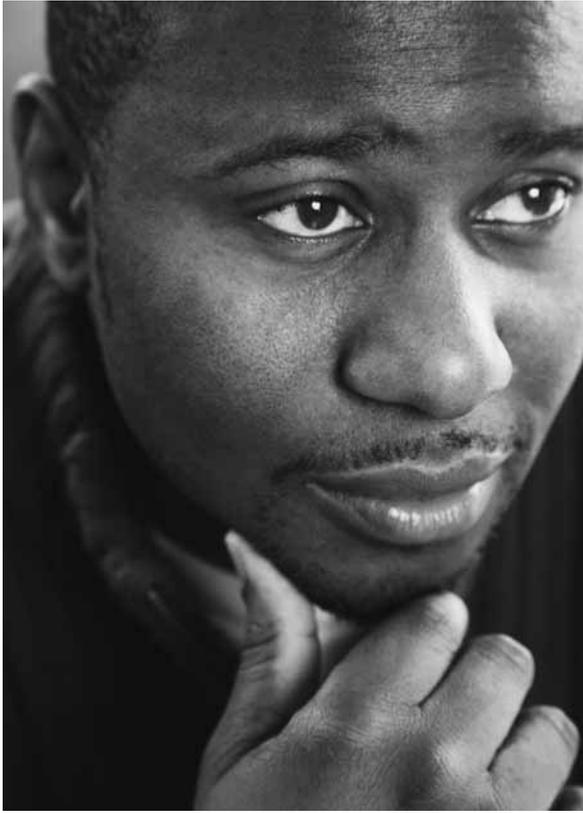
If what has been tried in the past has not worked, then doing more of it will not get us where we want to be. It is time to try something different. Next time you try to resolve a conflict, approach it with a spirit of experimentation. It took Thomas Edison many tries to perfect the light bulb. Like him, we can learn something from each of our missteps and apply it to the next experiment. Better, rather than worse, results are likely to follow.



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Do you want more information about each counselor?

Go to www.mvh.org/EmployeeCare



effective or not effective? This is what counselors try to determine. Life events can produce overwhelming feelings at times. These extreme feelings are to be expected considering what all of us sometimes have to deal with. If a spouse or teen-ager is abusing alcohol and our attempts to address this only lead to increased alcohol abuse, any one can quickly feel overwhelmed and desperate, wondering if we are going crazy ourselves. If our partner is having an affair, it is normal to feel depressed, hurt, angry and betrayed and a combination of these feelings can cause us to feel we are going crazy. Counselors will not judge anyone 'crazy' who comes in feeling they can not take one more thing.



Joseph Hammann

Will the Counselor Judge Me?

Sometimes a person visits EmployeeCare because they have broken the law or exhibited poor judgment. It is natural for a person to wonder whether the counselor will judge him for his actions.

Counselors at EmployeeCare are trained to be curious, not judgmental. Counselors realize most everyone wishes to make healthy choices, not unhealthy ones. So, if a person has been overspending, it is a signal to the EmployeeCare counselor that something in a person's life is out of balance. Trying to understand what the person is thinking and feeling before making unnecessary purchases is what the counselor will address. What the client and counselor can sometimes discover is that a person may be carrying around anger and has not found a way to let it out directly. The overspending can be an indirect way the anger is being expressed.

Will the Counselor Take Sides in Couple's Therapy?

Counselors are trained to look at relationships objectively and from a perspective that it takes "two to tango." A therapist may spot one person's approach to their partner as being self-defeating. Later in therapy the other partner could be made aware that if they changed in some way, they might receive a more desired response from their partner. Counselors at EmployeeCare work hard not to gang up and produce a two-against-one situation.

Will the Counselor Try to Hospitalize Me?

To be admitted to the hospital against one's will, a person must be intending to commit immediate violence. This only happens at any counseling

What Happens In Counseling?

By Joseph Hammann, Counselor

Sometimes people are nervous and/or anxious to make that first call to EmployeeCare for counseling. Call it fear of the unknown but they just aren't sure what to expect. Thoughts crossing their mind include:

- Will the counselor think I am crazy?
- Will the counselor judge me?
- Will the counselor take my partner's side if I bring in my significant other?
- Will the counselor try to hospitalize me?
- Will the counselor tell me I am wrong?
- Will the counselor put me on drugs?

All of the above questions and others can prevent a person from reaching out for counseling. The result can be prolonged stress. Further, the answer to all the above questions is "No." Let's address each question and see why the answer is no.

Will the Counselor Think That I Am Crazy?

Counselors are trained to observe how people respond to stress. Are the person's coping responses

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agency if a person says they are ready to harm themselves or someone else. State laws instruct a counselor to contact law enforcement officials rather than not respond to a person threatening suicidal or homicidal behavior. It takes a physician to admit any person to a hospital. Counselors do not have the authority to do this.

Will the Counselor Tell Clients They Are Wrong?

A therapist is trained to point out the possible consequences of individual behavior. The counselor believes in self determination. This means that every person is free to pursue their own choices. Only if a client says they intend to engage in violence will the counselor remind the person that they could face jail time if they choose to try and act on their impulses. But telling a person they are wrong is close to judging a person which counselors make every effort to avoid. After all, therapists realize they are engaging in an unhealthy behavior if they think they always know what is right.

Will the Counselor Say I Need Drugs?

Only medical doctors can prescribe medication. EmployeeCare does not have a physician on staff. There are times (based on some behavioral symptoms) when a counselor will suggest it might be helpful to seek an outside medical opinion. That choice always rests with the person seeking counseling. As in all areas of medicine, it is the patient's right to not receive treatment for anything.

Hopefully the answers to at least one of the above questions will lead a person to consider counseling if they are under stress that will not go away. Please consider calling EmployeeCare at **208-6626** or **800-628-9343** if your day-to-day living is difficult. If the first session seems to not adequately address a person's stress, there will be no pressure to set up a second session.

EmployeeCare

Keeping you informed from EmployeeCare, your employee assistance program, a benefit extended by your organization to all employees and their household members. Some exceptions related to the terms of each individual company contract may apply.

Located: 409 E. Monument St.
Suite 201
Dayton, Ohio 45402

We have satellite offices in Eaton, Springboro, Troy, Greenville and on the Good Samaritan Hospital campus

Hours: 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday – Thursday
8 a.m. – 6 p.m. Friday

All counselors provide evening appointment times

Phone: (937) 208-6626 or (800) 628-9343
(24-hour, toll free)

Services Include:

- Voluntary, confidential assessments. Short-term counseling and referral services for employees and household members covering a wide range of issues. Services are free and number of accesses unlimited.
- Substance Abuse and Wellness Education Groups
- In-service for sexual harassment, diversity, violence in the workplace
- Workplace wellness
- 24-Hour Crisis phone service
- Substance Abuse trainings that meet state and Bureau of Worker Compensation requirements for drug free workplaces

