

LCL

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, Inc. is a private, non-profit corporation. As the State's sole lawyer assistance program, LCL assists lawyers, judges and law students who are experiencing any level of impairment in their ability to function as a result of addiction, mental health, personal or medical problems.

briefings

LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS, INC.

WINTER 2004

From the director...

EXAMINING OUR RELATIONSHIPS

A new year typically brings a resolve to change our diet, job, behavior, or, in some cases, how we are in our relationships. These promises are made with good intentions, but all too frequently our resolve weakens with time and we fall back into the comfort of old patterns, whether healthy or not. Although this issue of *briefings* is not about New Year's resolutions, it is about exploring and maintaining our relationships with ourselves and others.

In contemplating this topic, I looked back on my own relationship history. As a child, and perhaps even more so as an adult, I always strove to become a better person, however I defined that goal. This quest for self-improvement, which intensified after I got sober and sought to take responsibility for my actions, led me at one point to consult an astrologer, who informed me that my life's curriculum was to maintain my own identity in the context of relationships. Codependent as I was, my identity and self-esteem were so tied up in concern for others' perceptions and expectations that I had lost sight of who I was. I held myself responsible for my friend's or partner's anger, and for any rough spots that we encountered. My unspoken internal theory was that if I could just figure out how

to be precisely what the other person wanted, everything would be fine.

Luckily, I eventually discovered that I was not the cause of all the world's ills, and that I was entitled to my opinion and my needs. I came to believe that there was one God, and it wasn't me. These revelations were very liberating and allowed me the space and time to be true to myself, and in the process become more honest with others – a solid formula for healthier connections.

I hope that this issue of *briefings* will provoke your own re-evaluation of how you operate within relationships. There are ways in which it is so important to attend to your own needs and wishes, while, at the same time, listening and responding constructively to the feelings of others. We hear so often that question, "If you can't take care of yourself, how can you take care of others?" I would also question how you can expect to truly enjoy your connections with others if you haven't attained a satisfactory relationship with yourself. In recognition of Valentine's Day, we hope that contemplating the issues presented herein will contribute to your finding your relationships more balanced and mutually fulfilling.

inside...

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UPCOMING EVENTS

May 13th
Annual Fellowship Dinner
Sheraton Needham

Sept. 16th
Annual Meeting
Boston

LOVE IN CONFLICT

In recognition of Valentine's Day, this issue focuses on the importance of relationships, their cycles and challenges, and what they can teach us.

Do you know the legend? Valentine was a priest in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius II (Claudius the Cruel). When the ranks of his army were diminishing due to young men's preference for the comfort and safety of hearth, home and wife, Claudius outlawed marriage. Valentine earned himself a brutal execution by defying this law and continuing to marry young couples. But before his death on 2/14/269 AD, he penned an affectionate farewell note to the jailer's daughter who had befriended and visited him, signing it "Your Valentine." Much later, Valentine was canonized, and in 496 AD Pope Gelasius set aside February 14th to honor St. Valentine, the patron saint of lovers.

Love vs. Romance. Although this story of one who sacrificed himself in support of matrimonial love might be yet another reminder that "No good deed goes unpunished," most would agree, at least in theory, that it really *is* love (the ability to give and receive it), that makes the world go 'round. On Valentine's Day, we generally think of romantic love - that intoxicatingly pathological state of merging with another person, that blissful feeling of being utterly loved, special and indispensable. Alas, sooner or later, the illusions dissolve. Each lover gradually perceives that the other is mortal. His

or her formerly lovable idiosyncrasies are now sources of irritation, and disappointment looms behind unmet expectations. The reality of their mutual limitations now presents the couple with a significant developmental task, the successful outcome of which is the capacity for a stronger and deeper love. Much more than a mere feeling, it becomes a state of being - characterized by honesty and commitment.

Love and Conflict. Because we are each imperfect, because we each have many blind spots and idiosyncrasies, all relationships, especially intimate ones, present significant challenges. But without them, since we cannot as fully know ourselves *outside* of relationship, our innate drive to grow and develop is hindered. It is only in the collisions of interpersonal relationships that we are best able to discover, acknowledge and accept aspects of ourselves previously unknown, unrecognized, and maybe unwelcomed.

These collisions represent a normal and essential part of any growing relationship: conflict. The more intimate the relationship, the greater the probability for conflict. Marriage is therefore, potentially, one of the richest sources for personal growth, if (and this is a big "if") conflicts that occur are "mined" for what they have to tell us about ourselves: our beliefs, motives, reactions, perceptions, interpretations, etc. Such insights can not only clear a path to greater closeness, but also enhance other areas of life, permitting us to

"All relationships, especially intimate ones, present significant challenges."

informed choices and to act more consistently with our values. The valuable opportunity provided by clashes within an intimate relationship is wasted when one succumbs to the useless and destructive effort of attempting to prove oneself right or the other wrong.

Conflict, when it arises, is therefore not something to be avoided, but to be recognized and examined. Common deterrents to dealing constructively with conflict include: fear (of rejection, abandonment, hostility, denigration, divorce), pride (having to acknowledge fault, offer apology, ask forgiveness), busyness (the most American form of avoidance), and defensive stubbornness (this is the way I am, love me or leave me). These obstacles can appear in ever-changing guises, fooling even the keenest mind.

Self-acceptance as Foundation for Love. The best weapons against our defensive self-delusions and self-deceptions are humility and honesty, qualities earned not on some glorious battlefield but in the internal struggle to know and accept the truth of one's self. What may initially feel like surrender and defeat, in reality, ultimately heals and strengthens; a letting go of the self-serving ego permits an emergence of new life and a new sense of freedom.

Willingness to discover and accept ourselves as we are (at the moment) amounts to a loving intimacy with ourselves, inseparable from achieving a loving, intimate relationship with another. Moving toward health and wholeness is a process of bringing more and more of ourselves out of the

shadows, liberating our creativity, and converting our denied and negative energies into conscious and constructive power. Its manifold manifestations include: generosity, kindness, compassion, tolerance, strength, patience, humility, wisdom, honesty (to name just a few), to which all but the most wounded among us aspire.

Intimacy and connectedness, a sense of belonging and community are basic human needs. (A distortion or denial of this need can manifest in alienation and a range of destructive behaviors.) The assurance that we will be loved and accepted despite our faults and failings is the medium in which the capacity for intimacy grows. The family (however that may be defined), at its best, is our greatest resource for self-understanding, and learning about how to relate to others. The intimate environment of an adequately loving family allows its members, even in the midst of great adversity, to function with dignity and purpose, achieve strength of character, and experience peace and joy.

If we are lucky, we learn that the key to love and happiness has little to do with being right, being in control, being best and brightest, or possessing the symbols of success. Rather, it is our constructive connectedness with ourselves and others that truly satisfies.

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STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

So many of the problems that we create for ourselves in relationships, especially intimate ones, involve miscommunication. There may be discrepancies between what I said and what I meant to say, between what I said and what you heard, between what you meant and what I assumed you really meant, etc. In addition, there may be key differences in communication style – both between men and women (with many exceptions, of course) and between what works on the job and what works at home. Some of these, for your consideration and contemplation, are presented below.

<u>STEREOTYPIC LAWYER COMMUNICATION STANCE</u>	<u>INTIMACY-PROMOTING COMMUNICATION STANCE</u>
Win the argument, prove you're right.	Negotiate/compromise, win-win.
Presume/assume the other's motives.	Ask for clarification.
Outwit.	Clear up distortions in either transmitting or receiving information
Strategize.	Speak from the heart.
Accuse/label/dissect the other.	Clearly state your own feelings & wishes.
Emphasize facts and logic.	Seek to understand what the facts mean to each partner.
Trump the other person's different perspective; my way or the highway.	Seek to comprehend the other person's different perspective; if different, agree to disagree.
Show no signs of weakness.	Trust the other with your vulnerability.
Prioritize accomplishments.	Prioritize maintaining relationships.
<u>STEREOTYPIC MALE COMMUNICATION</u>	<u>STEREOTYPIC FEMALE COMMUNICATION</u>
(some examples, based on work of Deborah Tannen)	
Seeks to achieve independence, status.	Seeks connection with others, being liked.
Sees conflict as contest, stands up for self.	Sees conflict as threat to connection.
Hears "Let's" as "telling me what to do."	Says "Let's" to seek mutuality on goal.
Listens passively or offers solution to problem.	Listens actively, to communicate sharing perspective/ experience.
Seeks fervently to avoid failure.	Seeks fervently to avoid loss of connection.
Converses in order to convey information.	Converses in order to maintain involvement.

" There may be key differences in communications style both between men and women and what works at home and what works on the job. "

FOR MORE on COMMUNICATION and INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS:You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation

by Deborah Tannen, Ph.D.

Georgetown University Professor of linguistics uses both science and humor to illustrate how gender influences communication style and offers useful tips.

Till We Have Faces by C.S. Lewis.

An epic novel retelling the story of Cupid and Psyche from a new perspective that helps the reader discover unrecognized motives affecting their intimate relationships.

We: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love

He: Understanding Masculine Psychology and

She: Understanding Feminine Psychology, all by Robert A. Johnson.

Three little books that each provide understandable and valuable explanations of the complementarities of the male and female psyches, explore the origins and meaning of romantic love, and help revitalize our most important relationships.

PAUL A. WEBER

1945 - 2004

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers has lost a dear friend and active member. An enthusiastic participant in Alcoholics Anonymous, Paul devoted his life to helping other addicts by sharing his experience, strength and hope in meetings, articles and national presentations. No distance was ever too far for him to travel to spread the message, and no drunk was ever too sick to be helped. On numerous occasions Paul would travel from Maine to our office to help one of our lawyers in trouble, and toward the end of his life, he did so frequently, despite his pain. Even after his cancer diagnosis, he expressed gratitude for his sobriety, which he considered an unwarranted gift.

In addition to helping those who were suffering from addiction, he was a devoted father who worked equally hard at reconnecting with his three daughters – Gretchen, Megan and Amanda. Next to his sobriety, his relationship with his three girls was the most important thing in his life. He often talked about how grateful he was to be given a second chance at life and the opportunity to be the father that his disease had for a time taken from him. As one LCL member wrote, "I know Paul always regretted that he never got that doll house up for his daughters, but he certainly provided me with a foundation for my own "house of recovery."

Paul was a gentle man with a great sense of humor and a dedication to his friends that was something to behold. It wasn't his alcoholism that took him from us, but his hard fought battle with cancer that finally silenced this truly brave and gallant man. He will be sorely missed.

"Many problems we create for ourselves involve miscommunication."