

# Lasting Marriages

volume 1, #1, November, 2000.

## Why this newsletter?

The power of thought is inestimable. Philosophers and sages through the centuries have recognized that the process of thought, what goes on in the mind, is both the product of what we humans choose to put into it, but more importantly is the predecessor, even the creator, of our actions and thus our future state, whether fulfilled and joyous or miserable and bitter. What is in the well will come up in the bucket.

So what does this have to do with marriage, and especially with lasting marriages? We believe in some way that exploring the power of thought in the context of marriage will begin to unlock the mystery of why some couples grow closer and more fulfilled during their life journey together, and some simply exist in the same physical space while living in separate worlds, and yet others end the marriage bond in bitter disappointment.

For the last 17 years, we have grown in wonder at how lucky we are to have each other,

and we've asked ourselves the question many times, What has made our marriage such a success? Why are we enjoying each other now more than we did as newlyweds, and if there's a secret to that, how can we create more of that magic, both for ourselves and for other couples whom we know? As should be obvious, the answers to those questions must not be simple, or the problem of short or long unhappy marriages would have been solved long ago. Countless books have been written, seminars created, marriage workshops attended, yet our marriages in the year 2000 may be more stressed than ever. We do not propose to have more wisdom than all those who preceded us, but would instead like to build on the insights of others, share our own experiences on the journey, and provide a forum for those who are longing for a committed long-lasting relationship to *think* together about the work that must be done.

That is our intent. An ongoing discussion. In this electronic age, it should be more than just information, it should be communication... the interchange of ideas, not just data transmission. An electronic newsletter provides a good beginning, as you may reply to this e-mail and share your own thoughts. Who knows? They may wind up as part of the next newsletter (and we promise to be good about acknowledging the source of ideas). In the future, this newsletter should evolve into a web site, for a continual on-line presence, with access to past newsletters, links to other resources and announcements. But wouldn't it be tragic if we never put faces on all these electronically transmitted names, if we never were able to share a smile, a handshake or

a hug with other couples on the journey. So we dream in the long run of creating a seminar or workshop where we can gather and **think** together, work together, on these most important issues, in real time. So whether you are newlyweds, veterans of years of marriage, starting over in a new marriage or blended family, or even just considering marriage in your current relationship, we want to give this as a resource for you to succeed beyond your expectations.

Now, a few thoughts on thoughts before we close this first issue. How do you think about your spouse? Quick, word association... His/her name, then what adjectives come to mind immediately? If you're like most people, many of the adjectives will be positive (creative, caring, energetic, committed, hard-working, beautiful), and some will be negative (indecisive, over-reactive, demanding, messy, compulsive). These perceptions we have of our mate are like windows through which we see and interpret everything they do. For example, if I see my spouse as demanding, and she asks me in a true moment of need to do something that was not on my agenda that day, I may become resentful. Not resentful because of the task I was asked to do, but because it was my belief that she deliberately attempted to impose her agenda on mine, when she just as easily could have done it herself. In the same situation, if my **window** is seeing her as creative, I may react with admiration to the same request, thinking how lucky I am that she continually creates new activities, opportunities, and energy for me to participate in.

Old thought patterns are very difficult to break. If I have held a mental picture of my spouse as demanding for 20 years, my actions toward him or her would also have been long patterned by that picture. What do you suppose my spouse might feel like if I have reacted to her for 20 years out of the paradigm of she is demanding? Demeaned, belittled, defensive, misunderstood, isolated, lonely? How then

might she be likely to treat me? (Unless of course she is a saint or angel in disguise) It will be very difficult for her to continue to reach out to me for help, companionship, and initiate any shared task or mission together, and so isolation grows. How do we break this cycle?

It is simple, but not easy; perhaps the most difficult work in the world is to change the old programming, the old paradigms, the windows in our subconscious minds through which we view the world and those around us. If my old paradigms, my subconscious, instinctive, habitual ways of thinking about my spouse are negative, and are thus creating actions that harm our marriage relationship, I have to change the programming. Here's the good news, we humans have the ability to choose the thoughts and pictures which we feed to our subconscious minds. If a paradigm has been built by feeding the subconscious mind one kind of thought (e.g. She's demanding), a completely different paradigm can be built by feeding better thoughts to the subconscious (e.g. She's creative, energetic, and I am so lucky to have her in my life.) After daily repetition of those thoughts, purposely and frequently, the window through which we look will change, our actions and reactions change, and slowly but surely the trust and warmth returns to the relationship.

Wouldn't it be easier, though, to build good paradigms in the subconscious from the beginning, and not have to work so hard to replace old pictures? Let's make a commitment to start today, whether you've been married for 50 minutes or 50 years, to think well about your spouse. After all, our thoughts create our actions, and our actions dictate our results; and results in this case can mean a warmth, trust, closeness, and shared creativity which can last a lifetime. Isn't that what we all dreamed when we got married in the first place?

*Lasting Marriages, vol 1, #1*

??

Thinking (positively) of you,  
Robert & Gail