

**REBOUND
FROM A BAD
VALENTINE'S DAY**

SOLUTIONS

A publication of Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 1

www.samaritancounselingcenter.org

Spring 2009

Valentine's Day: What You Should Have Done

David Olsen PhD
Executive Director

After Valentine's Day passes and a couple's relationship resumes day to day, many people are left feeling disappointed and empty. To fill this void, couples often concoct a "Plan B", attempting to change their spouse as part of their own special "marriage enrichment program."

Sheri thinks, "If only I can get him to be more romantic, talk more, spend less time watching TV." Mark muses, "If only I could get her to share more of my interests or stop those annoying habits, then this relationship would improve." Does any of this sound familiar?

Though most people have forgotten about the holiday itself at this point, it's not too late to correct whatever mistakes you might have made and delight your valentine in a whole new way. To do this, however, you must recognize the futility of Plan B. Instead give your partner what he or she really wants: change something about yourself.

First, picture your most predictable interaction or argument. Pretend that you are watching it on videotape in slow motion. Notice the following:

1. Where and when the argument starts: The bedroom? The kitchen? During the morning rush?
2. Your typical response
3. Your partner's response to your response
4. What causes it to escalate: Are you feeling unseen, rejected, dismissed?
5. How you each "push buttons"
6. How the argument ends: Do you resolve it or cool off and then avoid the topic later?

Now ponder whether anything was truly resolved. If you are like most other couples, it probably was not.

As your gift to your partner, change your response somewhere along the line. Look at your answers to this list and do something different. If you normally begin the fight, try to cool off first. Bring the issue up later when you've had time to think about

it. If you typically push your partner's buttons by saying hurtful things or acting dismissive when they bring something up, try to stay calm and remain open. If you usually get defensive, listen instead. Be an attentive investigator, asking for more information, trying to understand your partner's feelings. Hold back your opinion or usual response and instead let your partner know that you really want to understand them.

Next, ask periodically, "Do you feel like I'm really getting it?" If your partner says no, say that you really want to and ask for more clarification. Don't give up if the first time does not work. Changing your response at any point in the dance should change the outcome of the conflict.

Valentine's Day happens early in the year for a reason: we need a reminder to focus on loving each other well for the whole year. Taking a look at your typical relationship patterns. Make an effort to change your role. This will set the stage for a positive year with your valentine. 🌟

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SAMARITAN
COUNSELING CENTER OF THE CAPITAL REGION

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www.samaritancounselingcenter.org • office@samaritancounselingcenter.org

*Helping those most at risk
heal, function and live life
more fully*

When Cupid's Arrows Miss: Help for Singles

Jenness Clairmont, LCSW, LMFT
Training Director

Did another Valentine's Day come and go without meeting your hopes of love, romance and an end to loneliness? Are you wondering why it didn't work out this year again? Why your online profile isn't getting the kind of hits and matches you'd like to see? Are you looking for the kind of responses and dating opportunities, which might potentially hold something more deep and meaningful? Maybe you are dating, but don't really feel you are getting the kind of joy that others are experiencing in their love relationships. What are you doing wrong?

What if you could develop an understanding of yourself that could help you project something attractive and that will attract the type of person who would potentially be a good fit for you? That kind of combination could provide you with the kind of deep and meaningful relationship you've been longing for.

As therapists, we know what works. Harville Hendrix's best seller *Getting The Love You Want* recommends that developing insight into yourself is the best way to attract and keep a good relationship. Those who are aware of themselves and can see what they are bringing to the table in a relationship tend to have more successful relationships and higher degrees of satisfaction. In contrast, being confused about who you are or what you want typically leads to frustration, mixed messages and disappointed expectations.

Wouldn't it be a good idea to develop an awareness of yourself and include some of this information in your online profile? When your date asks you what you're looking for, wouldn't it be helpful to give a clear answer, or be able to spot a "red flag" long before it becomes a painful problem?

If this is something you're looking for, here are a couple of ideas:

First, identify your typical role in relationships. This can be a crucial piece of information. If you grew up in a family where you were the responsible one who overfunctioned for others, that is something you might want to take into account when writing a profile or when choosing a mate.

Is that a role you like or will you come to resent it? If so, it is probably a good idea to recognize this early on and be clear about what you are bringing to any new interaction.

Second, be careful about what you think you are looking for. We've all had the experience of walking into a room full of people and being attracted to someone who is the complete and exact opposite of all we are as an individual. That experience can be overwhelming, exciting and produce all sorts of feelings about romance, desire and intense attraction. Our unconscious mind has a wonderful way of drawing us to those who possess qualities that we feel we are lacking.

During the courtship phase of a relationship, these qualities draw us in. We are polar opposites, like two sides of a magnet. Typically, partners claim to love these qualities most in each other and often report that they decide to marry each other based on them. The person seems to "complete" us; they have something we are missing.

Unfortunately, that those traits often wind up being those they dislike most when the relationship ends. "I was initially attracted to his spontaneity, but this eventually drove me crazy because he was so irresponsible." Often a relationship will be long-lasting, meaningful and successful when partners have less polarized qualities and more similarities.

In your attempts to find love—be it online, speed-dating, or more traditional forms of dating—try to bring your unconscious motivations into consciousness. If you can identify what you are like in a relationship and what would be a good fit for you based on what makes you tick, your search is more likely to be a successful one.

Samaritan Counseling Center is now offering a **Relationship Coaching Package** for singles. This is a series of 3-5 sessions focused directly on your unconscious relationship styles. We can help you clarify what you are looking for and develop a plan to achieve it. 🍀

New Book

The Spiritual Work of Marriage
by David Olsen, PhD

Learn how to navigate and resolve the spiritual themes present in marriage

The Spiritual Work of Marriage comprehensively discusses an issue that is central to addressing committed relationships and intimacy—the difficult, and yet very common, spiritual work that exists within marriage. This insightful guide goes deeper into ways to improve marital intimacy by explaining its spiritual dimension and describing a variety of spiritual themes that every couple deals with and must resolve.

24.95, Routledge, ISBN 0789036339

New Delmar Office!

Samaritan Counseling Center is very excited to begin serving the Delmar Reformed Church and surrounding community. Samaritan has been providing psychotherapeutic services to individuals, families and couples in the Capital Region for more than 20 years. With eight other sites in the Capital Region, expanding our presence in the Delmar/Albany area has been a long-term goal, and we are thrilled that it is finally taking off!

Working closely with Rev. Dave Corlett, the pastor at Delmar Reformed Church, and the gracious board members of the church, we have been able to establish a covenant relationship with their congregation. This makes Delmar Reformed Church the nineteenth in area churches that has chosen to partner with us. They have also offered a beautiful office from which we will provide services.

The new site will be staffed by Oona Edmands, LMSW, EMDR II. Appointments at the Delmar location can be scheduled by calling the main office in Scotia at (518) 374-3514.

Mindfulness and Anger

Oona Edmands, LMSW, EMDR II
Staff Psychotherapist

Sandra and Charles have been in couple's therapy for one year now, and they've accomplished a lot. Close to divorce when they first started, they've achieved a level of stability and workability. Sandra attributes this to her decision to stop pestering Charles about connecting with her. About six months ago, she decided to stop begging and just focus on herself. Paradoxically, this had the effect of drawing Charles closer. Now that he has room to breathe, he notices that he finds her more attractive, more interesting.

But Sandra often takes it too far. Because she was deeply hurt at the times she was vulnerable with him, she now tries to keep most of her feelings to herself. As a result, Charles doesn't know what she needs. While he doesn't worry when things are calm between them, at times she pulls into herself in a negative mood and he begins to panic. "Why is she angry with me? What did I do? Is she going to stay this way all day?" His anxiety peaks and he attempts to cajole her into cheering up. She retreats further into herself. "I'm just upset about something. Leave me alone."

Charles anxiety then turns to anger and he begins to push back. "What is wrong with you? Why are you being this way?" They begin to fight, both retreat into silence, and then eventually resume normalcy without working anything out or understanding what happened.

The couple explained this pattern to their therapist, and talked about ways to use

the anger and anxiety mindfully. For example, they remembered the time this pattern erupted, while they were on an airplane together. There, they were in a public place where they both felt inhibited about expressing their emotions and were forced to spend a good deal of time this way. For this reason, their fight could not escalate into shouting. Charles had to sit with his anger; Sandra had to sit with her resentment and negativity. After about an hour of stewing, the feelings subsided. Charles was able to relate to Sandra with less anxiety. She in turn did not feel pressured by him to get out of her mood and also began to relax.

There are two important things that happened here:

1. Each person's negative feelings subsided when they relaxed, let the feelings be there and let them leave of their own accord. They stopped focusing on each other and pressuring each other to change.
2. Charles' anger was actually helpful this time. When he was anxiously prodding Sandra, he gave more power to her to determine his mood. He was focused on changing her in order to be happy himself. But now, in this unusual situation, his anger had the effect of creating a boundary. Saying "Fine, be that way" and then being forced to sit with himself on the plane, there was an energetic shift. He was left only with himself, to stew and because he sat with himself, he eventually relaxed.

When anger arises in relationship, it is important to acknowledge it. Then, it is important to sit with it and finally to express it properly. Don't push it away and try to be a nice person, always accommodating. But don't rage and try to hurt others.

Meditation on anger can be enormously helpful in teaching us to use it constructively. Allow it in to your awareness and connect with its fire. Drop the "story line" of what your anger is about for the time being. Connect with its raw energy. Breathe into it. Enjoy it. It is only energy. It will not destroy you. Rather, as Charles discovered, it can actually relax you. Relieved of the preoccupation of anxiously getting Sandra to cheer up, he connected with himself, his feelings, his frustration. He settled into himself. Then and only then was he able to let it go. Anger can be an energy that, in certain circumstances, can help to strengthen healthy boundaries between ourselves and others. Because Charles was not in a position to express the anger freely, he was forced to sit with it in a meditative manner. Thus, it helped him to stay focused on himself and therefore less dependent on Sandra's mood. Eventually, once the anger dissipated, he found himself to be more relaxed because he was more grounded in himself.

Anger is important, actually essential in healthy relationships. The muscles we use to push others away actually strengthen our bodies' core. (Conversely, the muscles we use to reach out to others open up this center. Both are needed in a healthy approach to life. Too much of one will unbalance mind and body.) 🧘

Events & Workshops

Practical Mindfulness for Clergy..... Wednesday, April 29

Explore how mindfulness can enhance your ministry!

Presented by the Clergy Institute at Samaritan Counseling Center

Read more about Mindfulness at <http://clergyinstitute.org>

Cost: \$35 (includes continental breakfast)

Register by calling (518) 374-3514 before April 22

Boundary Awareness Thursday, May 14

Presented by the Presbytery of Northern New York,

Held at the First Presbyterian Church of Canton, <http://www.churchonthepark.org>

Contact Rev. Laurie McKnight at (315) 344-2440 for more information

Consider bringing one of our workshops to your church or agency. We can help you tailor the workshop to the specific needs of your group. All available workshops are listed at

<http://samaritancounselingcenter.org>

Please contact the main office at (518) 374-3514 for information about scheduling a workshop.

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U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 983
ALBANY, N.Y.

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220 N. Ballston Ave., Scotia, NY 12302



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Solutions is published by Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region, 220 North Ballston Ave., Scotia, NY 12302, (518) 374-3514, fax: (518) 374-9193, online at www.samaritancounselingcenter.org.

Samaritan Services: Individual, Couples, and Family Therapy, Educational Workshops, Professional/Organizational Consultation and Supervision.

Office Locations: Schenectady/Scotia, Albany, Rensselaer, Clifton Park, Jonesville, Wilton. Please call the Scotia office at (518) 374-3514 to schedule an appointment. Financial statements for Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region are available upon request through the New York State Attorney General's office.