

News Release

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Happy Valentine's Day

Tampa, Florida (February, 2015). Valentine's Day is coming and with it is the inundation of all types of media ads proposing the various ways to celebrate this special day. Much emphasis is placed on the type of gifts one should get for those they love. Flowers? Perfume? Candy? Dinner? A movie? A new shirt? For a period of time prior to the day some TV channels show new and old movies that focus on finding and keeping your one true love. Poetry, novels, movies, music etc. each send a variety of messages regarding love and relationships. How many times has a person compared their own real life selection of a mate, maintenance of a relationship and growth of a relationship to a romantic movie they have viewed or a book written to serve as guidance along the journey of life with another? So often, one winds up interpreting and defining their own love based on a romantic or idealistic perspective. The primary question we need to ask ourselves is whether we really know what it takes to have a loving relationship that will last? Another question that we need to ask ourselves is whether we know the hierarchy of foundation factors that support a long term relationship. Most individuals would say that love or friendship is the basis of a healthy relationship. In actuality, we need to reframe that a bit and put respect as the foundation. Once respect is present, trust will be built and then both of those lead to love. Another idea many have is that love is based on romance. Think about what happens six months into a relationship when the infatuation with the other has diminished a bit and the humdrum of everyday life begins to take place. Think about the difference in terms of defining love and relationships that two people have. Think about how two people define respect or freedom? Think about their individual expectations of another, their set of "rules," how they

define “roles” in a relationship or how they define themselves within the context of a relationship.

Taking time to get to know the other, communicate clearly and be willing to settle conflict with a “mutual gains” approach (known as “win-win”) are just a few of the critical points to be considered. A critical step that is important is to always treat the other with respect. That means no “put downs,” no name calling, and no “over talking” the other. It means taking a hard look at what is meaningful and important to the other. So often we impose on the other what we think they should think, how they should behave and what they should consider important. It may take some time but eventually we might get hit “out of the blue” with a high level of dissatisfaction when they finally “let loose” and “put us in our place.” Sometimes when that happens, we don’t “have a clue” as to what went wrong! The other, however, feels as if they have tried over and over to communicate their dissatisfaction and frustration.

Another part of a relation that can sabotage its health is known as “filtering.” This is when a set of behaviors occurs over and over so that eventually one begins to say things like: “You always...” or “You never...” In fact the frequency may not be all that significant but the particular impact of the words of behaviors has grown in the person’s mind so it seems like “always” and “never.” For some reason, we often tend to repeat the same statements, problems and behaviors over and over.

So what are some critical factors that constitute a healthy relationship?

- Communication that is respectful and mutual and that considers both individual’s desires and needs.**
- Listening first and talking second. It is often said that is why we have two ears and one mouth.**
- Learning how to utilize conflict in a positive manner by learning to give and take in an attempt to reach mutual gains.**
- Being supportive and encouraging.**
- Not going to bed angry or with unresolved issues.**

- **Accepting and honoring that individual's often have unique interests that they want to do alone and that they sometimes need their own private space often referred to as a "secret garden."**
- **And most important of all, you chose this individual out of all the others on this planet because there was something special. Try to focus on that rather than what limitations of negative behaviors they manifest. In short, don't try to or expect them to change.**

A solid book that can help any couple to reach greater individual and couple's insight is Marriages that Succeed or Fail by John Gottman. Take a look – it might help put things into perspective for any couple – married or not.

If you need help in learning a better way to get your relationships back on track, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit available to all employees, dependents and significant others. Remember that you or a dependent or significant other may contact the EAP regarding any concern that you might have – you don't have to wait until a problem becomes big to seek help. Above all, keep in mind that concerns develop over time but the way you address them can be changed. We often do not understand the impact that our thinking and behaviors have on our relationships. The EAP is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. We will help you cope, find assistance, and guide you down the path to effectively deal with painful life experiences whether personal or professional. Keep in mind that while we have all have struggled with relationships, we can reframe them and grow in a positive manner. All you need to do is call the EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of counselors. You can explore in a confidential setting the concerns that you have and receive assistance to determine what is meaningful to you and those you love. The EAP can help you find a new path so that change is managed, relationships are healed, support systems are developed, and expectations are kept realistic.

What can you do if you if you recognize yourself or a loved one in the above information? Call the EAP. Sometimes dealing with letting go of old patterns can feel overwhelming because we've been responding in the same old way over and over. So if you are

struggling with the question of what you need to change or want to change and need some help in accomplishing your goal, help is a phone call away

You can explore in a confidential setting the concerns that you have and receive assistance to determine what is meaningful to you and those you love. The EAP representative will help you find the best solution for your particular situation. Also the EAP is a tool for personal and professional growth.

Call your EAP:

Also your EAP is a tool for personal and professional growth. You can call your EAP at (813) 870-0392 or (800) 342-4670.

About Wood & Associates

Wood & Associates is an Employee Assistance Program and behavioral health consulting firm that helps employers maintain productivity, safety and behavioral health in the workplace. Wood & Associates is a pioneer in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) industry and has served employers and employees in the greater Tampa Bay area and nationwide since 1982. The firm's diverse group of clients includes a number of major employers who also contract for its mental health and substance abuse services.

Gary L. Wood, Psy.D., founder of the Wood & Associates consulting practice, is a pioneer in the field of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since 1979, his practice has centered on providing solutions to employee and organizational problems. Wood is a licensed clinical psychologist, a member of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and a graduate of Rutgers University, West Georgia College and Mercer University.

Patricia N. Alexander earned a Ph.D. in mental health counseling at the University of Florida. Trained in critical incident stress management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, she is a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor and nationally certified counselor. Through her work experience she has addressed all types of critical incident situations, including explosions, multiple homicides, suicides, line-of-duty deaths, serious

accidents and robberies. Alexander conducts training on stress management for law enforcement and businesses, and has developed peer support programs for law enforcement and industry. Alexander is an educator and consultant on a wide variety of behavioral health concerns.

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