

## CONVERSATIONS IT'S NOT WORTH HAVING (PART TWO) By Marlene and Bob Neufeld

In last month's TONE magazine, we wrote about one of the conversations we recommend people not put energy into; i.e. "who said what". For a copy of that article go to [www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm](http://www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm).

Another conversation we recommend not putting energy into is "Why did you do that?" It is common for people to ask this of their partners, especially when their partner has done something that they don't like. Asking "why" is one way we try to make our partners predictable and safe. However, it doesn't work.

First of all, our partners may not be able to accurately explain "why" they did something. We often talk about the 80-20 rule, which says that maximum 20% of any issue is about the current content. The other 80% is about our past, about our history, our beliefs (many of which are unconscious), our perceptions, our imaginings, our schemas. When we answer "why" we are usually only aware of the current content, not about the rest, which may be unconscious.

As Solomon and Tatkin say in *Love and War in Intimate Relationships*, the book we mentioned in last month's article:

*The left hemisphere confabulates, or fills in blanks in order to provide coherency or a reason for why things are the way they are. (Ask a child why he or she broke the vase and, lacking a real understanding, the child will answer with an implausible explanation. This is not lying: rather, it is the left hemisphere's attempt to bridge the implicit realm with explicit reality in the service of interpersonal repair and pain relief.) page 146*

Secondly, when we answer "why" we are often answering how we justified what we did to ourselves, and our partners may take exception to this justification. We then can get caught in an argument about whether what we did is justified or not, which totally by-passes what needs to be talked about, which may be our partners feelings about what we did, and the meaning they attribute to it. Another more useful conversation would be "what can I learn from what happened" and/or "are there any new agreements that we can make?"

There are lots of great conversations that can assist you in feeling closer to each other. "Why did you do that" isn't one of them. Contact us if you want to know about the kinds of conversations we have found helpful.

*Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Psychotherapy. They are a couple who help couples learn life-changing skills and create closer, more loving relationships with one another. To learn more, see [www.marleneandbob.com](http://www.marleneandbob.com) or call 613-594-9248 to arrange a complimentary 1-hour introductory session.*