

CONVERSATIONS IT IS WORTH HAVING (Part Two) By Marlene and Bob Neufeld

Today, we would like to continue to explore conversations it is worth having.

5. **Reflecting, Validating:** Often people around us just want to be heard accurately. They don't want our advice or opinion. For more about this important topic check out the article on our website about listening. Frequently reflecting back what you are hearing can help clarify what is being said and can reduce anxiety and defensiveness. It is especially helpful to reflect back emotions that are being shared (without taking them personally) and to reflect back what you hear the other person wants. You don't have to agree, you do need to hear what is being said. Once you have truly heard the other person, it is helpful to validate as much as you can. The most useful phrase in validation that we have found is "it makes sense to me that you would think, feel, want..."
6. **Unarguable truth:** We often say to our clients that if you are getting an argument back from someone, then you are being "arguable". For example, saying "you never do your share of the dishes" will likely provoke an argument, while saying "I notice that the dishes didn't get done tonight" will be less likely to do so. Of course, the other person can be finishing your sentence inside their head, especially if you have been used to blaming them. The most useful phrase in telling the unarguable truth is "I'm making up a story that..." This helps remind both you and the person you are talking to that what you are saying is really just your perception. For more about this topic see the articles on "Honesty" on our website.
7. **Genuine regret, followed by what I plan to do differently:** While we don't recommend apologies (see article on our website of that name) letting the other person know that you do feel regret and taking responsibility; i.e. what response you are planning on taking, can be extremely helpful.

In next month's Tone magazine, we will be continuing this exploration as well as delve into why people insist on having the conversations that it is not worth having.

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 or call 613-594-9248 to arrange a complimentary 1-hour introductory session. For articles mentioned in this article see www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm.