

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

In previous issues of TONE magazine, we wrote about conversations we recommend people not put energy into; i.e. “Who said what.” “Why did you do that?” “Who is right?” and conversations that point out inaccuracies and exaggerations. For a copy of those articles go to [www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm](http://www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm).

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

1. **Tossing:** We see conversations like a game of toss. In our office we will frequently invite couples to play a game of toss with a foam ball. We use this as a metaphor. We explore with them how they habitually stop the game and how they can keep the game of toss going. Helpful tosses that keep the conversations going are: tell me more, what interests you about that, and then what happened, and then what did you think.
2. **Revealing:** We believe that withholding can cause distance in a relationship. Revealing what we might ordinarily withhold can break down distance. We recommend people reveal facts (i.e. things they did or didn't do), feelings (focusing on core emotions of anger, fear, sadness or joy), and fantasies (one's dreams or daydreams). We especially recommend revealing anything that you think you can't tell your partner or someone you are close to. In fact, we see that as an important clue that this is a conversation that needs to happen; if you think to yourself, “I can't tell my partner ...” then you actually need to tell your partner, especially if you want to be closer to them.
3. **Appreciating:** Research has shown that relationships thrive if there is a ratio of 5 positives to one negative. One of the most valuable conversations you can have is one in which you specifically appreciate your partner. Appreciation includes thanking them for something they did, whether it is something unusual or even if it is something ordinary. Bob appreciates Marlene almost every time she does laundry. Appreciation also needs to include qualities your partner has, physical attributes, and aspects of their essence (i.e. those things you wouldn't recognize your partner without).
4. **Making clear agreements:** Other conversations that are extremely useful are ones where you and your partner make clear agreements, deal with any agreements that aren't working or need to change, or deal with broken agreements. First of all, it is helpful if you see clear agreements as contributing to your own aliveness and vitality. We see them as one of the pillars of healthy relationships. Then it is extremely useful if you can make agreements which are clear and not fuzzy, and which are actually about something you can control rather than something you can't control.

*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.*