



The Thread That Holds People Together

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Frequently couples come to see me about their relationship problems. They recite what appears to be an endless list of the sins that the other person has committed which has negatively affected the partnering. Sometimes I am told about differences in values, financial indiscretions or disappointments from unfulfilled promises. In one form or another, however, I hear individuals talk about the need for the other person to improve his or her attitude.

Many of the complaints are not the problem but are actually a consequence or result of the underlying problem. Couples who began the relationship with starry-eyed wonder can be overcome quickly by the reality of unpaid bills, household chores, childcare responsibilities and different personality traits. Author Florence Littauer aptly describes this by saying "after the wedding comes the marriage".

It is interesting to hear stories from couples who have been together fifty or sixty years. None of them claim that their situation was problem-free. In fact, usually they credit trouble for drawing them closer together.

There are at least three times in my life that there has been a significant event in the news that impacted me profoundly. One was when John F. Kennedy was shot. As a young student, I remember that day because of several things. We didn't know much about American politics as we listened in class to the radio and heard the unfolding of a historical event, the memories were burned into our minds. How tragic that someone would use a gun worth \$12.78 to shoot a leader!

The world was also greatly impacted by the death of Princess Diana. Like millions around the world I watched the funeral on television wondering if and how the Queen would recover from the disgust of her British subjects who felt she hadn't responded appropriately or quickly enough. England was silent the day of the funeral despite the crowds in the streets. They claim that even the birds didn't sing.

Queen Elizabeth, a woman who had never waited for anything in her life, stood on the street in front of Buckingham Palace, waiting for the casket of the daughter-in-law who had upstaged the royals so many times. The Queen, with folded hands, bowed in honour of the Princess. At that moment, I decided that I wanted to have that kind of dignity in my life. I want to be able to bow to my enemies as well as my friends.

The third time that a world event touched my soul was on September 11th. Everything that we knew was shaken in a matter of moments.

I share these stories with couples and suggest that we pretend we are in the towers just before they collapse. Then I ask the couple to tell the other person what they would be saying to the other person. It's never "Well, you should have kept a cleaner house" or "I wish you hadn't spent so much money" or "It's your fault that the children don't listen". Instead, individuals cry as they state, "Thanks for the good times" or "I really love you".

If this was the last day of your life and you had an opportunity to utter a few words to your partner would they be about the daily living difficulties or about the global commitment that you have to each other?

You see, commitment is a thread that holds people together despite the difficulties. What do you think would happen to your relationship if you spoke the commitment rather than the problems every day?

I think if you begin today before long you will be celebrating your fiftieth anniversary.