

What To Do When Your Relationship Has Stalled

BY VAL FARMER

"What is wrong? Our relationship that was so promising seems on the verge of coming apart!" "We've dated and dated but can't seem to get past the issue of commitment. What is going on?"

These are questions couples who are serious about finding a marriage partner ask themselves when their relationships seem stuck.

Too much conflict. One of the main tasks of courtship is to see whether you can negotiate and solve problems together. Conflict in casual dating and serious dating is good. A minimal level of conflict plays a key role in a progression toward mutuality and interdependence. Having and resolving conflict communicates important information about a couple's ability to negotiate differences and to work out mutual roles and norms. It tests their mutual compatibility.

Once a couple figures out they can work together, conflict usually levels off or subsides. Love isn't related to conflict as long as the relationship is progressing toward commitment.



VAL FARMER

If you, as a couple, have a history of fighting and arguing too much, beware.

Couples who fight a lot during courtship have even more tumultuous marriages. A lot of

breakups occur when one partner is dissatisfied with the amount of unresolved conflict between them.

Which comes first, a decrease in love that causes increased conflict or persistent high levels of conflict that cause a decrease in love? Whatever the cause, instead of conflict drawing couples closer together, it drives them further apart.

Ambivalence causes conflict. Another element in the mix of love and conflict is often about ambivalence about commitment itself.

What is ambivalence? It is the confusion a person experiences within him or herself about the future of the relationship. Ambivalence may signal legiti-

mate problems in the relationship or it may be an indication of that person's struggle with commitment itself.

Commitment is a green light for the relationship to go forward and progress to deeper levels of intimacy. The uncertainty or decreasing commitment is coupled with a sharp rise of conflict in the relationship. The more ambivalent a person is about the future of the relationship, the more likely it may be an underlying cause of conflict and a decrease in love.

Male ambivalence causes problems. Research has shown that when male commitment is high, both partners are more accurate in their predictions of how their partner thinks and feels. Men do not fully engage emotionally in a relationship until their commitment is high. If it is high, then they put forth more effort and initiative, share more personal information, and work constructively for agreements. They also act less destructively during conflict resolution.

On the other hand, regardless of whether their commitment is low or high, women work harder

and act constructively to resolve relationship problems. This may be due to their greater socialization and skill in dealing with relationships. They do not link their willingness to communicate effectively to their commitment level.

In long-term courtships, male ambivalence by itself can cause a downward turn in the relationship. The relationship is no longer progressing toward commitment and his dating partner senses it. Even if she diplomatically and tactfully raises the issue of commitment, it may even increase his ambivalence and begin a downward spiral of increased conflict and decreased love.

What should a woman do? My advice is to confront the issue and withdraw from the relationship until he can make up his mind to be fully committed. The lack of her presence in his life and the threat of losing her may be just enough to help him overcome his ambivalence.

A breakup can refocus an ambivalent partner on the real value of the relationship. It works better than a prolonged 'drip by drip' bleeding of the

relationship in the struggle over commitment. Such a struggle over a long period may spoil a relationship that otherwise might have a chance.

What if the female is ambivalent about commitment? Women have subtle ways of discouraging their suitors without directly damaging their egos – such things as not being available, not being as warm and responsive, and not reciprocating affection or attention. Men may more easily understand a direct answer than being let down slowly.

And men, pushing harder only makes you less attractive at this point. Back off and respectfully give her space. Your ability to do that may just overcome her ambivalence.

When should the issue of commitment be raised? Don't ask the question until you know the answer. Let the relationship progress until you are satisfied on a behavioral level that what you have between you is good. Then resolving the issue of commitment is necessary for the relationship to move to new levels of closeness.

Don't take the temperature of the relationship during a time of

weak commitment. Talking about your future as a couple while there are big problems or ambivalence only makes matters worse. Do all the good things you need to do to make the relationship work and then ask. The fact that your partner is trying is a sign of commitment. Don't be too quick to discuss commitment unless some effort is being made.

On the other hand, when the lack of commitment is the problem, then asking the question and creating a crisis around the issue may be the only solution. Individuals seeking long-term relationships don't need to be wasting their time in relationships that are headed nowhere. For more information on courtship, visit Val Farmer's website at www.valfarmer.com.

Val Farmer is a clinical psychologist with MeritCare in Fargo, North Dakota. He specializes in rural mental health and family business consultation.

This column is sponsored by Lewis & Clark Behavioral Health.

VISITING HOURS:

National Patient Safety Awareness Week Here

BY JEAN HUNHOFF

Corporate Compliance Quality Officer, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital

National Patient Safety Awareness Week is being celebrated March 7-13. This is a national education and awareness-building campaign for improving patient safety at the local level.

Patient Safety and Quality of Care are synonymous at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital.

As a Joint Commission Accredited Facility, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital has for the past 30-plus years strived to promote the highest level of care driven by patient safety in all aspects. Everyone has a role in making health care safe. This includes doctors, health care executives, nurses and the many health care technicians. ASHH recognizes that patients have an active role in making their care safer by being active, involved and an informed member of their health care team.

Patients need to speak up if they have questions or concerns. Asking questions for understanding and clarity helps the patient in their participation and decision-making process involving what happens to his/her body. Be attentive to the care you receive. Always make sure you are getting the right treatments and medicines by the right health care professionals. Educate yourself about your illness. Learn about the medical tests you get, and your treatment plan. Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate. Know what medicine you take and why you take them.

Medicine errors are the most common health care mistakes. You should use a hospital, clinic, surgery center or other type

of health care organization that has been carefully reviewed. For example, the Joint Commission Web site

(www.JointCommission.org) provides a review of the visits they conduct at hospitals and the outcomes of their evaluation.

CMS has become an active player in quality and patient safety in that a hospital's performance on selected clinical outcomes determines the reimbursement to the facility. Comparisons of hospitals' clinical outcomes can be used as a tool to assess the quality of care provided (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov).

Joint Commission has, over the course of the years, identified certain negative clinical outcomes that – if they occur – require extensive review and improvement strategies to prevent from ever reoccurring. CMS has moved into the same direction that certain events should never occur at a hospital and as a result, will not be reimbursed by Medicare. The events are labeled "never events." Hospitals stand to lose accreditation and reimbursement for events of this nature.

ASHH continues to excel in the field of the CMS quality initiatives with results in positive patient safety efforts. The teamwork of patient and health care providers has resulted in successful patient outcomes that have been recognized nationally, infection control rates among the lowest in the nation, fall rates below the national norms, medication error rate at the lowest national levels and employee daily performance of patient safety practices. Together, the patient and health care team will ensure the most positive outcome for our patients.

This weekly column is produced by the public relations office at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital to promote healthy lifestyles and provide useful medical information to our community.



Hunhoff

REBATE

From Page 1

According to Mueller, Iowa and Minnesota required consumers to go online and register in order to receive a rebate. That forced people to apply immediately, causing the quick run on the funds.

In South Dakota, because a customer must purchase their appliance and arrange for proper removal of old appliances to receive the rebate, the program is creating a longer window of time in South Dakota for consumers to take advantage of the rebates.

South Dakota received \$772,000 from the federal government for the rebate program. Of that, \$738,000 was available to consumers, with \$34,000 going toward operational expenses.

"Our operational expenses are significantly lower than other states because we are running our program the way we are – after the fact rather than prior to purchase," Mueller said.

The office handling the appliance rebate program is updating the remaining funds daily. As soon as the mail comes in, personnel are processing the applications and removing those dollars used from the running total.

"One way to look at it is, we have used 27 percent of the funds available so far," Mueller said. "Across the state of South Dakota 1,824 appliances have been purchased that have qualified for rebates. Those items were purchased by 1,652 consumers."

For Fickbohm and Woehl, those customers are coming at a great time.

"We know that right now, money is tight out there," Woehl said. "But, people have been waiting for these rebates. It is also coming at a great time where there is some disposable income because of people getting their income tax returns. I know that it has been constant here at Sears. People are excited about the savings, not only

from the rebates but also from the savings they will see by having more efficient appliances."

Woehl said that, depending on the appliance being replaced, there are significant energy savings that customers will see.

"There are people replacing washers that had a 45-gallon tank with a slower spin cycle," she said. "They are now using a washer that only uses 15-17 gallons and has a much higher rate of spin, forcing more water out of the clothes, reducing drying times. They are going to see savings in both water usage and electricity usage."

For customers that are still considering applying for the rebate, Mueller did have one warning.

"The funds are first-come, first-served. When they are gone, they are gone," he said. "So if you are debating (and) this is something you want to take advantage of, the time to do it is right now. If you wait, you may be to late."

DAM

From Page 1

a gate repair pit in the dam's power plant. Once the gate is sandblasted down, five coats of vinyl paint will be applied to it.

Since rehabilitation of the intake gates doesn't occur often, Becker said it impresses on his staff and Alltech the need to do the process right.

"What we don't do right now will be somebody else's problem way too soon," he said. "It's too difficult to get the money to do these types of things. We want to do them right the first time."

The intake gate rehabilitation is one of many maintenance projects at Gavins Point that has been submitted in budgets for years but has never gotten funded in the past, Becker explained. The \$5.2 million in stimulus funds the dam has been allotted will address only a small portion of the backlogged maintenance needs at the dam.

Among the other 18 projects

that have or will be completed as a result of the funding are:

- maintenance work on the road below the dam that travels along the south edge of Lake Yankton to the Chief White Crane Campground;
- building a bike trail along the south shore of Lake Yankton that will take people to Chief White Crane;
- rehabilitating a 52-year-old elevator in the power plant;
- installing a new fire protection system in the power plant;
- maintaining a large crane in the power plant; and
- constructing new educational displays for the visitors lobby of the power plant.

YOUR NEWS! The Press & Dakotan

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a dream come true.

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