

LIFE INSURANCE -WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? By Susie Itzstein.

I wonder whether you realize this simple but powerful fact - that your survival literally depends on the healing power of love, intimacy and relationships. As individuals, as communities, as a country, as a culture. Love and survival - what do they have to do with each other?

Says noted expert on heart disease, Dr Dean Ornish M.D. in his book "Love And Survival -The Scientific Basis For The Healing Power Of Intimacy",
"Love and intimacy are a root of what makes us sick and what makes us well, what causes sadness and what brings happiness, what makes us suffer and what leads to healing.... If a new drug had the same impact, **virtually every doctor in the country would be recommending it for their patients!!** (my highlighting and exclamation marks) It would be malpractice not to prescribe it.

Dr Ornish offers many examples of rigorous scientific studies from his own research and from studies of others around the world that demonstrate that comprehensive lifestyle changes may begin to reverse even severe coronary heart disease without drugs or surgery. He states most emphatically:

"I am not aware of any other factor in medicine - not diet, not smoking, not exercise, not stress, not genetics, not drugs, not surgery - that has a greater impact on our quality of life, incidence of illness, and premature death from all causes."

People who feel lonely and isolated, he reveals, "have a 300 to 500% greater risk of premature death from physical illness." Ornish goes on to say "the real epidemic in our culture is what he calls emotional and spiritual heart disease, the profound sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation and depression that are so prevalent today as the social structures that used to provide us with a sense of community and connection break down.

But love and intimacy, you say? Opening my heart emotionally? And feeling...and relating? I've cited the research before of the appalling crisis in our society with a 50% rate of breakdown for first marriages and 76% for the second. That's a lot of unhappiness and loneliness.

It's so heartening for me to find scientific research that supports my belief in the importance of relationships and love. Many people just delegate love and relationship to the realm of the "touchy-feely" and don't take them seriously.

So here we are at the beginning of this wonderful New Year of 2007 with lots of new resolutions in the air and Valentine's Day is just around the corner. What are you doing about insuring your life and survival? What are you doing to bring more LOVE into your life? I'm curious about what matters most to you? What was at the top of your New Year's resolution List? Did you include doing what ever it takes to make your wife, husband, children, friends, family, the people that matter to you, feel more loved and cared for? What gets in the way of you doing this?

Remember the feeling of your eyes lighting up or your heart skipping a beat when one of your loved ones enters the room or even just thinking about them..... It feels soooooo good to love that much.

Do you know that you have the power to change your partner's day into a nightmare or into a day of joy and pleasure? Did you know that within all your criticisms, frustrations, arguments and conflicts are the seeds and potential for deep change, growth and healing for both of you?

So, I challenge you to commit yourself this Valentine's Day, in fact, all this year, to learning to love deeper. A good place to start is to END ALL CRITICISM. Why? Because criticism hurts the other and yourself and **it usually doesn't get us what we want anyway!**

Criticism never works to get us love and connection. Criticism is a cryptic expression of our needs. Underneath all criticism is **a need or a desire**. A good strategy is to become curious about what you criticize and judge in others as well as what others judge in you. Re-write your criticisms and complaints into what you need. Say specifically what you want instead of what they are doing wrong and tell them what doing it right would look like and request they do it.

Criticism is negation of the other. When we criticize another we are actually saying that their difference is not OK. What ever it is they are doing is wrong, or bad, or is not up to standard. Our challenge is to honour the reality/perspective of the other whilst still holding onto our own, to see that we are two separate people. An exercise that helps with this is take the time to really understand another's point of view when you disagree with them – try it with your partner, or your child screaming for something you don't want them to have, or someone at work doing something opposite to the way you think it should be done. Really enter their world and seek to understand and validate their way and let yourself be influenced by their reality. Validation means that you understand their logic, how they got from point A to point B. Practice “walking a mile in their moccasins” not forgetting that you have to take yours off to put theirs on! Explore their way of doing things and observe what comes up for you.

Usually we criticize others because they are doing something or being some way that we don't like. The other person is **separate** and **different**. The person you are relating to is NOT YOU and our goal is to validate their difference – otherwise we are into **symbiosis = “You and I are one and I'm the one”**.

As well the other person is usually unable to hear us when we criticize as criticism triggers defensiveness physiologically. Our brain is scanning the environment 24/7 and when it picks up signals of **danger** it will move into **defence** mode automatically. The prime directive is survival. You are perceived as the enemy and dangerous. For example, a time when you've said something to someone which you did not think was particularly attacking and all hell breaks loose. The relationship shifted from a place of respect and caring to total negativity in the space of seconds. The part of their brain that is scanning for danger kicked in. And once that happens it's a long way back to being close and connected.

For any relationship to succeed there **must be a rich climate of positivity – in fact there needs to be a commitment to zero negativity and criticism!** Replace criticism with what you find right about the other rather than what's wrong with them. Be

clean and clear in asking what you want from others. Choosing this way of behaving is guaranteed to bring more love into your life and happiness and well-being for all.

Happy New Year, Happy Valentine's Day, Happy Loving.