

Guess What?

By Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT

There is a kind of guessing game that exists in many relationships. The guessing game is based on dishonesty and fear. It looks like this:

"If I tell you how I feel, you seem to respond with anger, attack me, or withhold from me. I am afraid of your anger, so I can't tell you my feelings. I live a lie.

If I tell you how I feel, you seem to respond by feeling hurt. I can't stand how I feel when you are hurt, so I can't tell you. I live a lie."

If one has to prepare for an attack for being honest about their feelings, they will distance rather than draw close. Read Ephesians 4:25-32. This passage touches on the need for putting away this destructive quality of both positions. These positions keep people guessing as to what is the truth in you. Paul defines this relating style as "lying, corrupt, and grieving the Holy Spirit."

We need to get comfortable with the risk of confiding our true thoughts and feelings AND listen with understanding and empathy. It is destructive to the relationships to withhold, attack, or distance from the person opposite you.

Here is what may help:

- Stop lying to the person.
- Hold off defensiveness, assuming there is something legitimate the other is going after.
- If unresolved, call a truce at the end of the day for the sake of getting rest.
- Do not under-mind the person by running to talk to everyone else about things first.
- Identify and practice saying what you want to say with respect for the other person and for your own struggle.
- Do not nurture or hang onto resentment.

The focus of our attention is given to honoring the presence of the Holy Spirit by not causing grief to Him. Allow His presence to influence your thinking and responses. Your cooperation with the leading of God's Word and Spirit will guarantee distancing between bitterness and you...not your loved one.

Adapted from "Guess What?", Spina, M.S., LMFT, Brenda, *Loosening the Noose*, 2011

Compliments of Practical Family Living, Inc.

P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute our articles in any format provided that you credit the author, no modifications are made, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you include Practical Family Living's web-site address (<http://www.pfl.org>) on the copied resource. Quotations from any article are also permitted with credit to the author and citing the web-site. Any use of other materials on this web-site, including reproduction, modification, distribution or republication, without the prior written consent of Practical Family Living, Inc., is strictly prohibited.