

Weighty Matters

How many of you have ever been on the receiving end of an assumption that is just not true? Yup. It is not always fun. However, we all find ourselves making assumptions about our loved ones that may or may not be true. No matter the assumption, the possibility of the relationship flourishing or diminishing rests in our willingness to make room for the assumption to be redefined. When we refuse to examine the possible false assumption(s) we bring to the relationship, it is as though we tighten a noose around the relationship and begin to choke it off. Below is one that I find causes trouble often in close relationships. With God's truth (His Word) and our willingness to make the necessary shifts, the relationship can become enhanced, interesting, and enjoyable!

Tightening the Noose

If you need me, I begin to feel obligated, pressured, and burdened.

If you don't need me, then I don't believe you care.

Loosening the Noose

Your need does not obligate me. I know that as an adult you have your own strength, resources, and ability to solve problems.

If you do not need me, it doesn't mean you don't want or care for me. I can ask and not assume either way.

What God's Word has to Say

Relationships always involve managing a delicate balance of attachment and detachment. This balance is delicate because it involves the ongoing negotiation of independence and interdependence. We all know that the presence of personal needs is normal. However, knowing how to care for our needs while respecting the needs of another person requires knowing what we are or are not responsible for.

Many people read that we are to "bear one another's burdens" and feel that it is the opposite of our "False" statement. Romans 15:1 can further confuse things by stating, "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves" (NIV). So where is the balance between bearing another's burdens and allowing him to identify and utilize his own resources?

One of the necessary skills in developing a relationship where love flourishes is that of empathy.

Empathy means two people work at becoming equal in understanding an expressed need and receiving it calmly. One expresses need and another listens, responding with understanding. Empathy sustains and supports the uniqueness of an individual. Many take great pride in being able to come up with answers on their own. It is also true that what they desire is to have someone hear them. After that, there can be an exchange of ideas or strategies as to the solution of the need if that is what is requested.

As trust builds, each person learns what the abilities are that bless his partner best. It is here the sense of oneness develops. Working side by side rather than doing for another person suggests a team approach. The relationship becomes unbalanced when one rushes in to do things for another person repeatedly. That is where the relationship begins to feel like one is carrying the responsibility for the “weighty matters.” God desires for us to come to Him first with our needs. People cannot guarantee they will be ready to listen to your need. However, God can.

(Excerpt from “*Loosening the Noose*” by Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT, LPC; Bronze Bow Publishing, 2011)

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