

I'm a Fixer

Gary Clarke

I'm a fixer. I think most men are. The wife says, "Sometimes I get so tired of washing and drying clothes. Wash! Dry! Wash! Dry!" So, we fix it -- we go out and buy her a brand new washer and dryer.

Or she might say, "If my boss tells me one more time how to do my job I'm going to hit him with my computer!" And even before she's finished we have the solution, which we tell her: "Here's what *you need to do...*" And we fix it! We do what we were born to do.

Then there's this: A few weeks ago, my wife of 27 years came into my office and she looked horrible! Drawn. Haggard. Angry. She looked 20 years beyond her age. I asked what the matter was, and she proceeded to tell me.

Some of what she said sounded minor to me, some seemed traumatic. I, for whatever reason, did not jump into my fix-it mode. Instead, I listened. From time to time I'd repeat something she had just said so that I was clear about and understood exactly what she was saying. Other than that I said nothing. I actually felt the pain she was feeling, almost as if it was happening to me. I watched her. I listened without judgment or evaluation. Once or twice her story elicited from me an observation ("That must have been horrible for you. I'm so sorry.") But that was all I said throughout the 45-minute pouring out of her dilemma. I heard everything she had to say. I "got it", if you will.

When she finished what she had to say, I saw something extraordinary. All of the haggardness was gone! Her face was smooth, and her eyes were shining. She was back. And all I did was listen. I mean truly listen. No thoughts about how to fix it. All the pain she was experiencing was gone. By just "getting" what she had to say, I had literally taken the pain from her. I had just done what she wanted (yet hadn't stated). She had been heard. She didn't want a "fix". She just wanted someone to know what she was going through.

I remember a time when I was 8 or 9, in a living room with my old man, my mom, my mom's best friend, Armeda, and a few others. At one point there was a nickel and seven pennies on the coffee table. My old man said to me, "You can have either the nickel or the pennies. What do you want?" I took the nickel and the old man took off on a tirade about how in the hell I could be so dumb that I didn't know the difference between 5 cents and 7 cents. My mother and the others joined in. All except Armeda. She was just watching.

Finally, she said to me, "You know that seven pennies is worth more than a nickel, don't you, honey?"

"Sure," I said.

"I'll bet you have a real good reason for taking the nickel, don't you?" she asked me.

"Sure," I repeated.

"Can you tell me?" she asked.

"Yeah," I said. "I didn't want all those pennies in my pocket."

The look she gave my old man and the others was priceless. I believe that was the first time I got what it was like to be gotten.

Fairly simple stuff. The "conversation" with my father was totally Unconscious. With Armeda it was classic conscious. It was also conscious during the interaction with my wife.

Conscious Conversation works in every aspect of life. A prime example of what happens when it's absent is our Congress, but that's another spear to chuck.

Conscious Conversation: It works. It's valuable, nurturing, healing, enlightening, renewing, heart-starting, depression-stopping, smile-making, etc., etc., etc. But..., you can't fake it. Don't even try.

You want the full joy of Conscious Conversation? Just open your heart and soul and be over there with him or her. Be them for just a little while. Nothing like it.

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