



WHEN A RELATIONSHIP ISN'T A RELATIONSHIP

I had spent over 40 years studying, researching and working with people experiencing relationship difficulties of all kinds. My involvement ranged from people in the early phases of relationships within a two to three month duration to people in their 80's who had been together for over 60 years. I remember arguing with a divorce attorney as to the basic cause of marital breakdown with his contending that money was the basic and only cause of the problems leading to divorce. My contention was that there could be a myriad of factors that might explain the very complex problem of relationship breakdown. My work with people and relationships was not limited to only heterosexual relationships but to homosexual relationships as well.

Probably the most outstanding factor that drew people together was that of physical and emotional attraction. This element seemed to be the "driving force" that tended to bring and keep people in a relationship whether for the sexual implications or because of emotional needs that were mutually important to both partners that "cemented" their being together over an extended period of time...whether for a long or short term period. Another factor was the rather blasé attitude that if a relationship didn't work out, there was nothing wrong with finding a way out of the dilemma and moving onto another relationship despite the emotional damage that it may have caused. Many of the young people who were finding difficulties in the early stages of their relationships embraced the philosophy that there was nothing wrong with "playing the field" and abandoning a relationship that wasn't working in favor of another that might suit their needs at any given time. This attitude tended to permeate relationships in very early stages as well as those that were approaching the matrimonial altar.

With respect to those partners contemplating marriage, it became clear that the attitudes that affected their perspectives and sense of purpose in pursuing a relationship was clearly based in issues or problems that their parents may have encountered and especially those problems that affected them personally as children. I was always amazed at the validity of the saying that "the apple never falls far from the tree" in terms of partners often...if not usually...replicating the problems that their parents presented in their marriages and the effects that the children suffered in their growing up. What was even more interesting

was that the offspring had no sense of associating what they were going through with what either they experienced as children or their parents experienced as a couple.

Whether in heterosexual or homosexual relationships, probably the most common issue that led to breakdown was the fact that the partners barely knew each other...or at best...knew the salient parts of who their partner was. The emotional influence that is part of every relationship tended to cloud the fact that partners seldom came to know who the other was...not just for the person...but for their backgrounds and personal experiences. We are all products of our early experiences, personalities and perceptions in the sense that all of these factors influence us and our choices as adults. Taking the time to really communicate at an emotional level in order to learn about many of these factors is clearly worth the time and effort involved.

Certainly, there is nothing wrong with physical or emotional attractions that tend to drive initial involvement in relationships. However, there is something wrong when couples don't take the time to examine what the important elements of WHO THE PERSON IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR NOSE! That isn't measured by how well they look or meet our needs...or how they tend to say the right things that may soothe past hurts. It is measured by coming to know WHO that person is, what they have experienced and whether their experiences and ours can provide a match that will allow us to go on as a couple in a successful, healthy manner.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980's he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a "mind game", he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How

to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.