

Coming Up

Celebrate Love Seminars

A two day seminar for married couples exploring spirituality and sexuality in the Catholic context.

2007	
Masaka, Uganda	Nov 24 & 25
2008	
Sydney, NSW	Mar 8 & 9
London, GB	Mar 8 & 9
Brisbane, QLD	Mar 8 & 9
Christchurch, NZ	Mar TBD
Perth, WA	Mar TBD
Wodonga, NSW	Mar TBD
Warnervale, NSW	Apr 5 & 6
Melbourne, VIC	Apr/May TBD
Kent, GB	Jun 7 & 8
Sydney, NSW	Aug TBD
Brisbane, QLD	Sep TBD
Birmingham, GB	1 & 2 Nov
Sydney, NSW	Nov TBD

www.CelebrateLove.com.au

Embrace

Preparing to Live in Love

A six session programme for engaged couples preparing to marry in the Catholic Church.

Available Now!
in Brisbane, Sydney,
Central Coast,
Newcastle, Perth,
London

www.Embrace.org.au

Smart Loving Evening Talks 2007

Dates & Venues to be determined

www.CelebrateLove.com.au

Living Well Media Resources for Catholic Families

A selection of CDs & DVDs are available including Christopher West and Byron & Francine Pirola

www.LivingWellMedia.com.au

Smart Loving

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Criticism Cancer

Criticism kills not only the self-esteem of the one criticized, it also kills the spirit of optimism in the criticizer. In marriage it is a deadly cancer, eroding our trust and destroying confidence in our relationship.

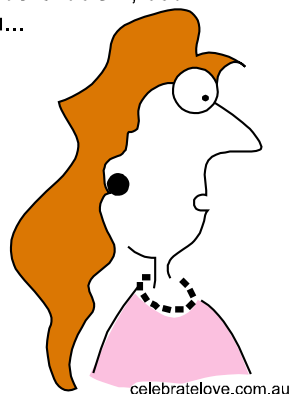
Criticism damages our sense of worthiness. When we are criticized, our doubts about ourselves are confirmed. The negative self talk ("I'm not good enough", "I'm not likable", "I'm a nuisance", etc) is reinforced and our belief in our acceptability is eroded. If the criticism is sustained, eventually, we begin to view everything in our life as confirmation of our negative self beliefs.

But criticism, not only damages the person criticized, it also infects the person making the criticism. When we criticize another, we fail to see and relate to them as a unique and precious person. We see only their faults and overlook their value and dignity as human persons. Our attention is drawn towards who they are not, rather than who they are. When criticism is habitual, our capacity to recognise goodness is undermined. We become embittered and cynical. We lose the gift of hope and instead, become entrenched in a pessimistic perspective. Good things are mistrusted and any kind gesture or good act is cynically suspected of having selfish motivations.

When criticism becomes a recurrent feature in a marriage, our trust is eroded as each of us puts in place defensive behaviors which protect us from further hurt: emotional withdrawal, submissive compliance, secret rebellion, lying, perfectionism, over-achieving, retaliation, verbal attacks, and investment in people and things outside the marriage (such as hobbies, career, children, friends). We may also become critical ourselves in a misguided 'strike first' defense strategy. While some marriages will survive in such a climate, many others will founder.

The antidote to criticism, is to refocus our attention on the good qualities of our spouse. When we make a habit of affirmation, we not only build up the self-esteem of our spouse, we also transform our attitude from cynical pessimism, to one of optimistic gratitude. We start noticing things that we previously overlooked – positive, wonderful things that we take for granted. We start to feel blessed rather than 'hard done by'. We begin to feel genuine delight rather than persistent disappointment. Such an attitude inspires us to spontaneously act with generosity and kindness – qualities which will endear us to our spouse and elicit praise and affection in return.

This is not a criticism, but when you...



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Tip for Smart Loving: You can change the character of your marriage (with or without your spouse's cooperation) by displacing criticism with affirmation. At least once a day tell your spouse: "One thing that I appreciated about you today is..."