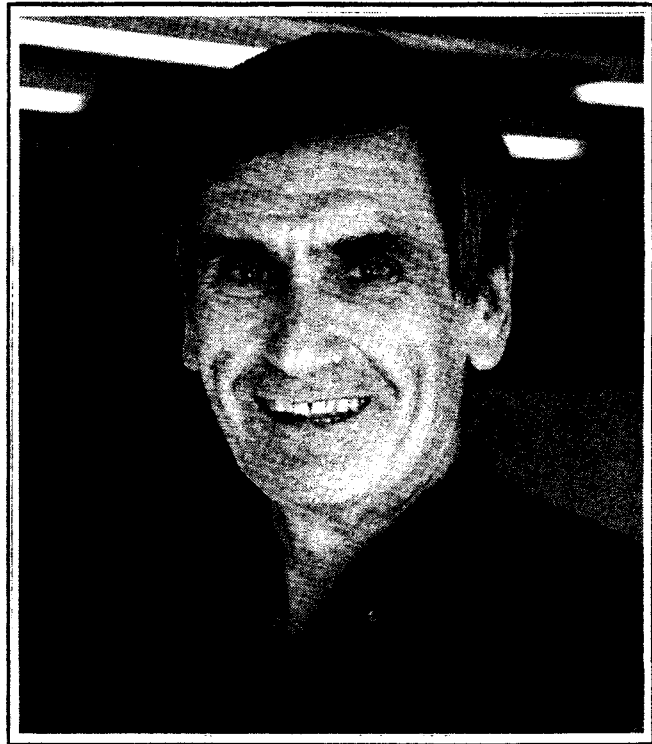


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Conversation With: MARSHALL ROSENBERG



by Guy Spiro

Marshall Rosenberg, who has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, is Director of educational services for the Center for Nonviolent Communication, an international organization providing training in communication skills in 13 different countries. Marshall has been developing and teaching these skills for the past 30 years.

TMA: Marshall, will you explain for our readers the process that you teach?

MR: It's a process of communication that has many applications. Some of the people who take this training are interested in its application in resolving internal conflict, so we show them how it can help them clarify what their desires are -- and how to find these desires when they're hidden behind a lot of very confusing thoughts and language that we've been taught. Some of the people who study with us are interested in applying the process in their close interpersonal relationships, and they find it very helpful in resolving the many kinds of

sticky conflicts that can occur. Others find it very helpful in their work relationships, and many that we work with apply it politically to resolve conflicts between different groups.

The central intention behind the process is to get to a place where people can respond to one another out of compassion; where they clearly understand what each other's needs are and are able to communicate about them in a way that makes it comfortable for others to respond to those needs.

TMA: How does the way that you teach people to communicate differ from the way people normally talk to one another?

MR: Most of the people in the various cultures in which I work have been taught a way of analyzing and classifying one another. When their needs aren't getting met, they tend to think in terms of what's wrong with the other person, and they have a very splendid vocabulary for clarifying the

various ways that other people might be wrong. They have a moralistic classification system, using words like "lazy" or "bad". They have a scientific jargon for classifying other people, so they label them "sick" and "neurotic". And they have a social vocabulary; they say that people have "bad manners", "good manners", are "behaving inappropriately" or "appropriately". These are rather typical ways that we have been taught to communicate. Notice that this is from the head; it's a way of analyzing others mentally, and classifying them into varying shades of good and bad, right and wrong.

The language that I teach, the process of communication that I teach, requires that we learn a language of the heart. A language that communicates from within oneself, honestly saying what is going on within us without at the same time criticizing, judging, analyzing the other person. In that sense, it's a radical departure from how most people are habitually

trained to think and communicate.

TMA: What would be the benefits of making this change?

MR: This process is far more likely to motivate people to willingly cooperate with our needs, as opposed to provoking defensiveness, resistance, counterattack.

TMA: Could you give us some examples?

MR: Well, yes. I was working on the West Bank with a group of Israelis and Palestinians who were needing and hoping to be able to work together as a group to dialogue and learn from each other, to cooperate and work toward peace in that area. They were not used to working together, and they asked me to help them to form a kind of "task force" that *could* work together. I asked both groups to answer this question for me: "Tell me what it is that you want from each other that would make it easier for you to work together." The Palestinian mukhtar (a mukhtar is like a mayor for a village) responded to my question but he didn't have a language that helped him to clearly say what he wanted; he only knew how to analyze the behavior of the Israelis in a critical way. So what he said was, "You people are acting like a bunch of Nazis." Well, to make a statement like that to a group of Israelis is not the way to get their cooperation.

TMA: That's about the worst thing they could have said.

MR: Well, almost immediately upon his saying that, a woman Israeli jumps up and she does the same thing back to him that he did to her. Instead of her saying clearly what she would like, which would have been, "Mukhtar, I would really like you to use other lan-

guage in expressing yourself", she jumped up and used the same form of analysis. She says, "Mukhtar, that was a totally insensitive thing for you to say." Now here you had groups who had met for the purpose of working in harmony, but two interchanges got them seeing each other as enemies.

Similarly, I was in southern California not long ago, and I was asked to mediate between a group of landowners and a group of migrant farm workers. I asked them the same question that I asked the Israelis and the Palestinians. I said, "What is it that you would like from one another to resolve the differences that exist and are creating violence between you?" And a farm worker says, "The problem is that these people are racist." The landowners jumped up and one of their representatives said, "The problem is that these people don't respect law and order." So here again, I had asked the question of what do you want from one another, but they didn't know how to answer that. All they knew how to do was to analyze, and after two interchanges, they were at each other's throats.

Now, with my help, both groups were able to translate their judgments of one another into what it was that they were wanting from one another. At the moment that you can get people talking about what they want rather than what's wrong with the other person, you see immediately that there's a possibility for the resolution to begin.

Those two examples are political, between groups, but I can show you many such examples in the family or between couples. As an example, I was in Toronto showing managers how to use our process in the work setting. At the end of the

day, one of the managers followed me out into the hall. He looked over his shoulder to make sure no one was listening and he says, "Do you ever work with families?" and I said, "If I'm invited." And he starts to cry and tells me that he and his wife have been beating each other up. I could see how desperate he was, so I made plans to go to his house that evening after my schedule was over. There I sat in the room with the husband and wife, and they both looked like they'd been through a battle, they'd been through so much tension in recent days. I asked them the same question that I asked these other groups that I told you about. I said, "What is it that you're wanting from one another that you're not getting?" And the husband looks at his wife and says, "You're totally insensitive to my needs." And she responds with the speed of light, "That's unfair." So you see, in all of these situations, the people had the opportunity to say what they needed. I was giving them a chance; I was trying to focus their attention on what they needed from each other, and in all of these cases, the people had not been taught to think in terms of what they want. They were excellent at analyzing and judging what's wrong with the other person, that they were not acting in harmony with their needs, but they were not very skilled at saying clearly what they need.

Likewise, I was working with a father and son because they weren't getting along, and I asked the father what he wanted from his son. He says, "I want him to..." and then he starts to analyze, and starts to tell me how irresponsible his son is. I said, "Excuse me, excuse me. That's not my question. What are you wanting?" And the father realized, when he got clear, that what he wanted, hiding behind this word "responsibility", basically

was for his son to jump every time he said jump and smile because he felt like jumping. So a lot of times when people do start to get in touch with what they want, they realize that what they want is very vague. And when they get clear about it, it sometimes isn't possible to get.

TMA: And not what they really want anyway.

MR: And not what they really want. Certainly. Because he didn't want his son to be a puppet. But you know, when you think in vague language like "responsibility", you don't know how to translate that into clear action and tell people exactly what you want them to do. And as you've guessed, when you realize what it is that you want, you often find that you're looking for something that you don't really want.

TMA: So you're leading people to see past the labels that they put on people.

MR: Not to see past them, but to see that labels are tragic expressions of our needs. All the labels mean, all it really means when we judge another person, is that that person is not acting in harmony with our values, with our needs. *If* we could learn to just keep our attention on what our values and needs are and say simply that, we'd have a far greater chance of enlisting the other person's cooperation. But if we give the other person an analysis of what's wrong with them, we're not acting in harmony with our needs. So in our training, we teach people to be aware that all judging of others, all analysis of others is a tragic expression of our own unmet needs.

TMA: Well, what does one do then when they express their needs as you suggest, and the needs are still

not met?

MR: Part of our training is to learn to express yourself in a way that makes you clear to the other person. What you're bringing up involves the reality that the other person or persons may not be trained to communicate in the way that we're talking about. So we prepare people for staying with the training regardless of how the other person communicates. If you do open up and make yourself vulnerable and the other person comes at you with an analysis or judgment or criticism, our training teaches you to translate that judgment in somewhat the same way that a translator at the United Nations is simultaneously translating from one language into the other. We teach people how to *hear* the feelings behind the message that that person is expressing, and their unmet needs, and their request. In other words, what is that person requesting of you?

TMA: So you're training people to figure out what people are really asking for, what they really want.

MR: Exactly. It's learning to hear the request behind the message, regardless of how the message is expressed.

For example, about a year ago, I was over in the West Bank in a mosque in a refugee camp. I was with about 170 Muslims. When the word got out that I was an American, one of them jumps to his feet and he screams at me at the top of his lungs, "Murderer!" Well now, whenever a person comes at you like that, most of the people we work with are trained to either take it personally and feel hurt, take it as a personal rejection, or start to believe it and apologize and defend themselves, or to judge the person in return by saying, "That's not fair, you have no right to call me a

name like that." In this case, [in line with] what our training suggests, I turned my attention to what he was feeling, what he was needing behind that message. Now in the context, it wasn't that hard to do. He was living under rather horrible conditions in this refugee camp. Daily, from his point of view, he sees himself oppressed by the Israeli government, which is getting money from the American government. And so he hears I'm an American and he calls me a murderer. And what I hear is that he's angry and would like my country to use its resources differently. So that's what I drew my attention to. Now -- that may not be right.

TMA: Also, that may not be something that you have any power to change.

MR: It may not be, but the first thing our training does is not to get into evaluating whether I can do anything about it or whether I agree. The main thing is to connect with the person and show that you've accurately understood what's going on in him before you worry about whether you can do anything about it or not. So what I did was to say out loud, "Are you feeling angry and wanting my government to use its resources in a different way?" Now the man seemed rather stunned because when people speak in the way he did, they're not used to people trying sincerely to understand what it is that they're feeling and needing. So after a moment or two, he said, "Yes." And then he opened up and started to tell me what horrible conditions existed there and how painful it was for them and how infuriated the people were at the American government. And so I listened. I neither agreed nor disagreed. Nor did I say that I was going to do anything about it. But

what I did, before I decided how to react to it, was to make sure that I had fully understood what this person was trying to communicate. Not getting caught up in the rightness or wrongness of his assumption, but understanding it in terms of his feelings and needs.

He had a lot of pain that he was expressing, and it must have taken twenty minutes of his screaming at me before he felt fully understood. And twenty minutes later, he was inviting me to a Ramadan dinner at his house that evening. In Islam, Ramadan dinner is not just any other dinner; it's a dinner that you invite people to when you have a connection with them. So he had a lot of pain that he was expressing, and it was good that I could hear the pain and the needs, even though they were originally expressed in a very critical way. That's what our training teaches us to do: to hear the human being behind the message, regardless of how the message is framed.

TMA: How were you able to actually help this person?

MR: Well, my job in being there was not necessarily to help that person. I was there that day to indicate to the Palestinians in this particular camp that our network was willing to offer training to people who would want to use it on behalf of the peace effort. So I was just there to expose the training. By my being able to hear him despite his initial distance to me, he and others in that camp have since become allies and they're really helping us to get our training to people on the West Bank.

Had it been my job to help him, then after I had heard his needs, I would have told him clearly what my feelings and needs were in response to what he said. If I was

in conflict with giving him whatever he wanted, I would have told him what my needs were that kept me from agreeing to do what he said. In this case, it turned out that when I really heard his feelings and his needs, I had not much problem with what he said. He would have liked my government to be more supportive of the Palestinians. After I heard that to his satisfaction, I could express to him that having worked also with the Israelis, I could well appreciate their fears and why they felt they needed to be protected. So in this case, even though I didn't agree with his analysis, after the fact that I heard his feelings to his satisfaction, he could better respect the fact that I may have a different position than he did.

TMA: I saw a short videotape of you speaking and I was thinking of asking you about the jackal and the giraffes. You use those as teaching tools.

MR: Yes, sometimes. In some countries it works better than in others. In English it works pretty well, but in the Soviet Union, in what was the Soviet Union, giraffes have an association as a dumb animal, so sometimes I use it there, sometimes I don't. And in German speaking countries, they have an expression "hochnaösig", which means "high nosed", and it makes the giraffe look kind of conceited. So it all depends on the group I'm dealing with and how playful a group they are. It's very helpful most of the time.

TMA: I recognize that in a way, our labeling of people's behavior as jackal behavior or giraffe behavior is one of differences, and what does that teach?

MR: It's very astute to recognize that that's really the danger of it.

Whenever I do use it as a teaching device, I make people aware that calling people jackals and giraffes is just as dangerous as calling people lazy or selfish or all of the other labels that we identify as separating people. So when I have a group that can understand that and understands I'm using this as a teaching device, a playful device to indicate . . . you know, it gets very awkward to keep saying, "The process of communication that I'm advocating is..." -- that's a lot of words. It's much simpler to say, "'Giraffe' required!" But there is the danger that you've anticipated.

TMA: So, having gotten past that, what are the differences between the jackal and the giraffe? Why did you pick those metaphors?

MR: Well, "giraffe" is everything that I've been outlining for you so far. Giraffe is a language of the heart. The giraffe has the largest heart of any land animal. So when I use the giraffe metaphor to introduce our training, I point out how our training requires coming from the heart, saying what's going on inside of ourself instead of analyzing other people. "Giraffe" is picked because the giraffe, being taller than other animals, can look into the future better. And our training is based on the awareness that how we get our needs met, what energies are behind other people when they do meet our needs, is very important. If people do what we want but are motivated by fear, guilt or shame, we get what we want . . . but at a high expense. When people are motivated by fear, guilt or shame, they have less good will toward us in the future. We get our present needs met, but at the cost of a longer term, good relationship.

TMA: And this is jackal behavior?

MR: That's jackal behavior. You see, the jackal is closer to the ground. They get so preoccupied with just getting their needs met that they can't see into the future like the giraffe. The jackal can't see what happens in the future when you get your needs met but the motivation has been fear, guilt or shame.

The word "jackal", I picked that up one day, just popped into my head when a woman was talking about her husband, how difficult it was to communicate with him. I said to her, "So it's not easy living with that jackal?" She thought that was very funny. That day, the group I was with, we played with using our communication process for taming jackals. The group really liked it and so that's why since then, with some groups, I'll talk about communication that gets in the way of compassion as jackal language.

TMA: I thought the hand puppets that you use are cute.

MR: I can't tell you how many ways they've helped, especially since a good number of my working days I'm going through a translator. They help people follow visually who's using the process of communication and who isn't. Many of the groups I'm teaching are dealing with subjects that are very oppressive and very heavy, and they want communication [methods] that can help them change these oppressive conditions. Sometimes if you make things seem so dark and so heavy, it becomes even harder to do something about it. But if you can use a kind of playful metaphor, it's amazing how much more accessible it makes the training for people.

TMA: Do you work with children as well?

MR: Yes, we sometimes work with families where the whole family is invited to come. In San Diego, for example, a couple of years ago a young man aged nine came with his mother to a family session. At the end of the session he said, "Boy, this is really good stuff. You should get this to every teacher in the world." And I said, "Well, Ryan, I'm very grateful for your support, but that's a big order. I'll need your help." And he says, "From me? What can I do? I'm just a kid." So I explained something he could do. I told him he could at least let his teachers know about how valuable he felt the process would be for teachers. The very next night, I was doing an introductory workshop in San Diego for the public, and who shows up, not only his teacher, but the principal from his school. He had told them both about it, interested them in it. That was two years ago, and now everybody in that school, parents, teachers, and students have all studied our process of communication and that school considers itself a giraffe school.

Just two weeks ago today I was in Israel, where I did a workshop with families and children together. The father of one nine-year-old there called me the next day to tell me his son was very much moved by the session.

And, we teach teachers how to teach these skills. We have a little book out called *The Giraffe Classroom* from which teachers can teach the process to their students. Children usually learn it much more rapidly than adults.

TMA: I'd like to get a copy of that when you're in town. I may give it to the principal of the school my own kids go to.

MR: Well, the principal would probably like that book and one that I wrote 19 or 20 years ago called *Mutual Education* that shows how to set up a whole school in this direction. There is such a school now, in Cleveland, Ohio, that declares itself a giraffe school. The whole school is organized in harmony with the principles in this book. At the moment, the book is out of print in English, but we can xerox up some copies.

TMA: Yeah, I'd very much like to get a copy of that.

In the videotape that I saw, you talked about the joy of a child feeding a duck and the possibility that adults can feel that way and perhaps live that way.

MR: That's the whole purpose behind the process of communication -- to enable people to give to each other with the joy of children feeding a duck.

TMA: How did you happen to come up with that phrase?

MR: Well, I told you about how I came up with "jackal"; it just popped into my head one day in a workshop out in California and the group liked it. And that same day, a woman who had been in the session saw in a store that hand puppet that you saw in the videotape, this jackal puppet, and she bought it for me as a souvenir of this day. At the time, I never thought I would use that metaphor another day, and I certainly never thought I'd use puppets in my work. I thought, The next child I see will get a nice present. But the next group that I came to, I remembered how much fun the group had thinking of their adversaries as jackals, and how much more accessible it made the training. So I thought I would use that metaphor again, and started the day by saying

to people, "Do you know somebody whose behavior gives them a jackal-like appearance?" And everybody immediately responded to the metaphor. Then I remembered that puppet in my suitcase and I brought it out and I saw a miracle: that puppet could teach people things in a more pleasant way than I knew how to teach them. So for the next week or so, I used that puppet. I just saw the miracle of how these adults seemed to like talking to this puppet and how much it seemed to help. Then I thought, Could I get another animal to go with it to represent the other side of things? And then I began to think, What animal would go well with it? And that's when I thought of how my children used to look when I would take them down to the pond to feed ducks. And I said to myself, Now there's a good metaphor for a communication process: communication that helps people to give to one another with the joy of little children feeding ducks. So I got a duck puppet, and for a couple of years, I would talk about jackals and ducks, not jackals and giraffes.

Then, in Sweden, they wanted to do a documentary of my work and the director of this documentary said to me, "You know, Marshall, we'd really like it if you could get another animal besides a duck, because your duck looks like it's about to get eaten at any moment by that jackal! We don't want people to think of non-violence or compassion as weakness or passivity." And that hadn't occurred to many people before, that the duck looked pretty weak compared to that jackal. So that's when I started to look around for another animal. Then I read in the newspapers about the Giraffe Project that got started in the United States. Each month, this group took somebody in the world who sticks his or her neck

out in the service of compassion, and they publicize the efforts of these honorary giraffes in the media to give people the awareness that there's another side of the news; there's not just all the people creating violence, there are people throughout the world who are working for compassion. So they really are the ones who came up with the giraffe idea. I just borrowed it from them.

TMA: Is this a group connected to you, or something separate?

MR: No, they're not at all connected to me. I just read about them in the newspaper, and I liked why they picked the giraffe. They picked it for the couple of the reasons that I told you, that it has the largest heart of any land animal, and its long neck gives it this vision, and then the third reason that they used it is that it lives its life with gentility and strength. So I bought a giraffe puppet for the documentary in Sweden and ever since then it's been giraffes and jackals, except in some countries where the jackal turns into a wolf.

TMA: Well, I think that was a good change. It needs to be demonstrated that the head would tell you that to come from the heart would leave you vulnerable and would be dangerous. The head would tell you to be more like a jackal.

MR: Well, it *is* dangerous to come from the heart, unless you have both parts that I've outlined for you. If you just open up and reveal yourself, and then the other person comes back at you in a jackal manner and you take it personally, you're not going to come from the heart very often. But if you learn what we teach people in our workshops, that jackals are simply illiterate giraffes, if you learn to

hear the heart behind any message, then you see that there's nothing ever to fear in whatever anybody says. Once you hear the feelings and the needs behind the message, you only see giraffes in front of you, never jackals. Then it isn't such a risk to open up.

TMA: And this is what you speak of as the language of the heart?

MR: Exactly. If you speak the language of the heart, the language of the giraffe, it's basically four things: You tell people what you're reacting to, concretely. You don't make judgments. You just say, "When you didn't come to my party when you said you were going to...", or you say to the child, "When you leave your clothes on the living room couch instead of putting them away...". You don't say, "When you're sloppy..." or "When you are disrespectful...", you just stick to what the person does, what you've observed. That's part of the language of the heart.

And then you tell a person how you feel, what your emotions are. Are you hurt? Scared? Angry? You learn this language of expressing feelings without mixing in words that sound like a judgment; words like "I feel misunderstood" or "I feel manipulated" or "I feel ignored". On the surface, those sound like a language of the heart. But if you look at those words more closely, they really tell what you think the other person's doing to you. So, we learn just a pure language of feeling: hurt, scared, lonely, whatever. We have a language about unmet needs to explain our feelings so that we don't sound like we're expressing our feelings in a guilt-tripping way. With a language of the heart, you don't say, "You make me feel...", or "When you do that I feel...". No, you always relate your feelings

to your own unmet needs. You say, "I was disappointed because I would have liked for you to have been there." "I'm frustrated with your clothes on the couch because I would like the room to look in order." So that's the third thing about a language of the heart: the language of unmet needs. And then in a language of the heart, the last thing [to state] is always what you want. What you would like the person to do that would enrich your life. So, those four ingredients are the basic parts of this model of communication or language of giraffe, whichever we choose to call it. We show people not only to send this out clearly to others, but how to be prepared for the fact that if the other person speaks jackal, they may not be able to hear the language of the heart even when it's expressed. They may still hear it in other ways.

I was in Virginia one time, working with some students at a school for socially and emotionally maladjusted students. The school district wanted me to teach the group of students this process of communication. As I walked into the class, most everybody was hanging out the windows screaming obscenities at their friends down below. I made a request, which is a key ingredient from the heart: to let people know what you would like. I said, "I'd like you all to come on over and I'd like to tell you who I am and what I'd like to do today." But the students, apparently not being used to a language of the heart, heard the request as a demand. How did I know that? Well, some of the students didn't come over. I asked a couple of them that weren't over, "Could you tell me what you heard me say?" And one of them said, "Yeah, you said we had to come over there and sit down." And I had simply made a request. But he wasn't used to such a language. He

still heard it as a coercive language, my telling him what he had to do. So I said, "Sir," -- and I've learned to always use "sir" with people who have biceps like he did -- I said, "Sir, could you tell me how I could have let you know what I was wanting so it wouldn't sound like I was bossing you around?" And he said, "What?" It was a very strange concept to him, somebody who's used to a coercive language. And I had to repeat it again. I said, "How could I let you know what I would like so it doesn't sound like I'm telling you what you have to do?" He says, "I don't know." And I said, "That's very much what I wanted to work on today with you. Because the language that I'm interested in is the language where people can just let each other know what they would like but that it isn't a demand. It's not that I'm saying that if you don't do it, I'm going to make you wish you had." That seemed to interest him, and I was very pleased. He came over and we had a very productive day.

But we must be prepared for the fact that the people we're speaking with may be operating under a whole different language system than the one we use. So we learn how to stay with our system regardless of how the other person communicates.

TMA: I was also struck by a phrase, "Love is action." Would you expand on that?

MR: In many respects, what I've pulled together in my career has been my exploration into what this word "love" is all about. It's the central concept to the Jewish religion, Christian tradition, Islam, Buddhism. A word like that, I don't take lightly. If wise people for centuries seem to agree on the power of that, then what is it? So I

have been trying to define this is so that I can learn how to do it, live in harmony with it, and teach others what I have learned about it. What I've come to is that it's helpful to think of the word love not as a feeling, but as action. And what action? The two that are central to the process of communication that I teach! So, I would say that love is openly revealing what is going on in your heart, with no criticism of the other, no demand, just openly revealing what it is that you're feeling, what it is that you're needing. That, to me, is an act of love; an act of love because it gives the other person an opportunity to contribute to your well being . . . and that opportunity to exercise generosity is probably the most fulfilling human action. So when I openly reveal myself, it's a real gift to the other person. I'm giving them an opportunity -- it's not a demand, it's an opportunity -- to exercise human generosity. That's why I say one action of love is to openly reveal what's going on in your heart. The other act of love is to empathically receive what is going on in others. By empathically, I mean to just receive what's going on in the other person without putting any judgment on them; to see what the other person is feeling, to see what they're needing. Neither to agree nor disagree, but just to receive it that way is, I think, an act of love. So! Defining love in that way is action; you don't use it as a feeling. It's important to express feelings that we refer to as feelings of love, but in our training, we show people that that's probably a hundred different feelings. Sometimes we really mean, I'm feeling joy in relationship to you. And sometimes it's great warmth and affection. So if it's feelings that people are feeling, we suggest that other words beside love are valuable.

To show you the kind of confusion that happens when people use "love" without being too clear what they mean by it, when I used to be in private practice before I set out to do the kind of work I'm doing now, I would see a lot of very depressed people in my office. I'd have a dialogue with them that would rather typically go like this: After I had understood and empathized with the depth of their depression, I would ask them a very important question in our training, which is the obvious one: What do you want? I'd say, "I hear how depressed you are. Now I would like to know what I could do or say that would be of help to you. What would you like?"

And then rather typically, they would say something like, "I don't know what I want." And I would say, "When you told me how depressed you are I guessed that, because I have a theory of depression: that we get depressed because we're not getting what we want.

And we're not getting what we want because we've never been trained to get what we want.

We've been trained to be good little girls and boys. If you're going to be a good little girl or boy, get used to being depressed. It goes with the territory. But if you want to get beyond depression and feel alive, it requires that we be clear about what we want. What would you like?"

And now we come back to this word, "love". Very often, they would say, "I just want to be loved. Is that asking for too much?" And I'd say, "It depends on what you mean by love. What do you want people to do when you say you want to be loved?" Now they'd look very confused and say to me something like, "Well, you know." And I'd say, "No, I don't know. I don't know how you use it, and I doubt that other people know how you use it. So let's get clear, what

do you want? Like what would you like from me right now to show you that I love you?" And then they'd get kind of annoyed and say things like, "Well, it's hard to say in so many words." And I'd say, "If it's hard for you to say, can you see how hard it is for me and others to do?" Then when they'd start to get clear what they meant by the word love, they'd get an embarrassed look on their face. And that embarrassed look would tell me that they were starting to get it clear. So I'd say, "Okay, what is it that you want when you say you want to be loved?" And then they'd often say things like, "Marshall, when I say I want you and others to love me, I want you to guess what I want before I even know what it is, and then I want you always to do it." Well you see, that's very often the kind of definition that people carry around within themselves without even being aware of it when they use this word, love.

TMA: I've seen this in my own life. I'm curious how you resolve it.

MR: You mean that definition?

TMA: Yes.

MR: Well, I would suggest to people that first of all you be aware that most of us have been taught a definition of love that makes it impossible to get it. Then, I would suggest the importance of the word is such that we need to be really clear about a definition that we can get. Now here's where, in our training, I would offer to people, I would suggest that you're going to have far more fulfilling relationships if you and your partner define love in the way that I suggested; which is, love is openly revealing ourselves. But that means no demand in what we ask for. We openly say what we feel and what

we need, but the need is not a demand of what we would like. And then the other half of love is when the other person opens up and reveals their need. It doesn't mean you must do it. It means that you accurately receive it. And I would suggest that people who can communicate that way have a much better chance of a fulfilling love relationship.

See, the most typical definition of love is that if you love somebody, you deny your own needs and do for *them*. And that creates enormous pain in personal relationships because it means that love is sacrifice, sacrificing yourself for the other person. And then that makes the other person obligated to do the same to you, and in a short time, people who have a close relationship find that the person that they're closest with has become the biggest drag. And that's because they carry around such a definition of love.

The definition of love that I'm suggesting seems to me to have the advantage that it reveals what's going on between people, but with no demand and no criticism. It gives each person access to one another, total access, total openness, but no demands, no criticism, and it doesn't mean that you ever have to do what the other person asks you to do to prove your love for them. It only requires that you accurately understand it. You're not judging them for it. Just that you be honest and respond.

TMA: I may not have heard the answer in what you said. When you have a person whose definition of love is for you or the people in their lives to understand what they want before they even know what they want, and do it, how do you deal with that person?

MR: The first thing, of course, I would try to empathize with them. If I want to change that definition on their part or show them how I think it's destructive, our training shows that people can far better learn something new that you want to offer them if you first fully empathize with what they're presently believing. So I would first suggest, I might first say this to them: "It sounds like you're feeling very hurt and you would have liked for me to have been more sensitive to what you were wanting." And then the other person says, "Yes. I mean, I shouldn't even have to say it. If you love people, you just understand these things." And again, I can see they're still in pain, so I would stay with empathy. I would say, "It's very hurting then, when you don't see me doing that, and you would really hope that I could anticipate these needs with you." Then when the other person feels that I really understand, yes, that is how they define love . . . Notice I haven't jumped in and disagreed with them or tried to change them. I started by just trying to show a real understanding for whatever they're feeling and why they're feeling that way. Then I might say, "I'm very frightened by your definition of love. I don't see where it leaves me the freedom to have different needs than yours, and still show you that I love you. And I'm also frightened that it requires of me a kind of ability to intuit and sense, that I'm not sure I always have or that I think anybody has. And would you be willing to tell me back what you've just heard me say? So I can see that I've made clear to you the pain that I feel when I hear your definition of love?" And I would hope that they could empathize with me and see why I'm afraid of their definition.

And then the next step, if I could

then, after showing them why I'm concerned about *their* step, my next step would be then to do what I've done with you: to offer them another definition of love; one that defines love as empathy and honesty, not as guessing what other people need, and then denying your own needs and doing it for them.

Well, you can take about two days of training trying to get that one clear because people have been so culturally trained to see love as sacrifice and sensing what other people need before they even know what it is.

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