Who is Your Valentine?

SPECIAL MOMENTS AND SPECIAL PEOPLE

The Trap of Counterfeit Forgiveness
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**Who We Are...**

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a nonprofit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God’s children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

**Support Kinship**

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

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or visit Kinship’s website at: www.sdakinship.org.
Kinship Board Meeting  
– April 4-7, 2013

This year we will be meeting at the beach house, in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, used each year for Region 2’s wonderful mini-kampmeeting. Our board meetings are open. If you would like to join us, please feel welcome. We also invite you to let us know if there are issues or programs or projects you would like to have us address. To add an agenda item to our schedule, please feel most welcome to contact Kinship’s President, Yolanda Elliott, at president@sdakinship.org.

Rehoboth Beach Mini-Kampmeeting  
– April 25-28, 2013

April at the ocean! East-coast board walks! Mitch Tyner for a weekend speaker. Our wonderful beach house, filled with friendly people, comfortable places to sit or sleep, and delicious food! This event is always one of the highlights of the Kinship calendar. If you would like to attend, please feel most welcome to register at SDAkinship.org. Click on the “Events” link. We look forward to seeing you there!
There needs to be a thermometer to measure love. Is that somersault your stomach does when she says your name love? Or is it something else? And does it matter?

I think I’m realizing there are really very few things in life that can be measured. Like the marks on a doorpost where a child’s height has been measured over the years indicate growth, we all grow and change. And most of us come to the realization that love cannot be measured.

How much does having a beautiful candle on the dinner table weigh? How warm is a ski pole left standing in the snow by the driveway for you to use to get across the icy snow on the deck? How can the length and width of your favorite food for dinner be measured?

The small, even overlooked, things we do for each other in life are immeasurable evidences of love.

I opened my heart and stopped measuring and found wonderful things that quietly and gently said, I love you.

Irena Sendler

Irena Sendler (maiden name Krzyżanowska, also referred to as Irena Sendlerowa in Poland, Nom de guerre Jolanta; February 15, 1910-May 12, 2008) was a Polish Catholic nurse/social worker who served in the Polish Underground during World War II, and as head of children's section of Żegota, an underground resistance organization in German-occupied Warsaw. Disguised as a plumber, she designed a false, cushioned bottom for her tool box and smuggled babies to safety in that box. She brought her dog with her where ever she went. When coming to a Nazi guard house, Irena’s dog would bark at the guards and cover any sound the babies might be making. Assisted by some two dozen other Żegota members, Sendler smuggled 2,500 Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto and then provided them with false identity documents and with housing outside the Ghetto, thereby saving those children from being killed in the Holocaust.

The Nazis eventually discovered her activities, tortured her by breaking both legs and arms and beating her severely, and sentenced her to death; but she managed to evade execution and survive the war. Irena kept a record of the names of all the children she smuggled out and kept the names in a glass jar, buried under a tree in her back yard. After the war, she tried to locate any parents that survived it and reunited the family. Most had been gassed. Those children she helped were placed into foster family homes or adopted.

In 1965, Sendler was recognized by the State of Israel as Righteous among the Nations. Late in life she was awarded Poland’s highest honor for her wartime humanitarian efforts and also was nominated for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with support from President Lech Kaczyński, but did not win. She appears on a silver 2009 Polish commemorative coin honoring some of the Holocaust resisters of Poland.
Yesterday I completely reorganized and alphabetized the contents of our pantry, detailed my partner’s car, washed, dried, ironed, and put away all of our laundry, and then cleaned the house, including all of the windows, changed the furnace filter, and loaded the salt in the water softener. Oh, and then I made dinner.

I should clarify, I didn’t really do these things; this is what I did in a dream my partner had last night. I loved listening to Teresa tell me all about this dream. You see, it all makes sense. Of course she would dream about me doing all of these chores around the house, and I would love listening to her share her dream with me, because these are our love languages. I feel loved and appreciated when we have quality time together; she feels loved and appreciated when I get things done around the house.

What is interesting about communicating love is that many couples simply do not speak the same language. There is a great book that helps you learn not only your own love language, but also your partner’s: Just Ask! 1,000 Questions to Grow Your Relationship, by Michele O’Mara. Oops, that was just a shameless plug for my new book. The love language book is by Gary Chapman, and it is called The 5 Love Languages.

Have you ever said to your partner, “If you loved me, you would _________.” If so, you are not alone. Couples often speak different love languages. In fact, I have come to view relationships as international affairs because of the significant cultural (as in the culture of our family of origin) differences that each partner brings to the relationship. It can be very frustrating to feel like you are constantly doing things or behaving in ways that would make you feel loved only to receive negative feedback from your partner who is not able to decode your love language.

Love languages are styles of communicating our feelings of love. Love languages help illustrate how love is actually a verb. Love is something that we do. Our love languages represent the vehicle we use to show our love.

Chapman separates the language of love into five categories:

1. **Hearing** words that affirm
2. **Quality time** spent together
3. **Receiving** gifts and tokens of caring
4. **Having** things done for you
5. **Physical touch** and connection

Your primary love language becomes evident in two ways: you speak it more often than the other languages, and you feel most loved when it is spoken to you. The love languages you speak are the same whether you’re a romantic partner, friend, or parent. When you want to communicate caring to someone in your life, are you more inclined to (1) call them and tell them you miss them, (2) call and ask to go get coffee or hang out, (3) send them a card, (4) invite them over to cook dinner for them, or (5) extend a big hug? How you are most comfortable expressing care and concern provides insight about your love language.

If your partner doesn’t speak to you in your “primary love language,” you may feel as if something is missing, or feel unloved, even if they are speaking in their own “primary language.” This can become problematic if your partner goes to great lengths to communicate her love for you, only to be met with your disapproval.

For example, if I fell in love with someone who spoke fluently in German but not a bit of English, we would have to rely on something other than words to connect, while we each worked to learn one another’s language. The more fluent we are in all of the languages of love, the better. What’s most important, though, in our primary relationships is one, that we know the love language of our partner, and two, that we are able and willing to learn it and speak it.
Four Valentines
Tom Durst, USA

I had a mother who modeled unconditional love to me all the days of her life. She accepted me just as I was. She never said she wished I could be more like someone else. When I was a small child, I asked her if there was something wrong with me playing with dolls. “Nothing at all, dear. Let’s just keep this as our secret. Nothing is wrong except that your father and your friends might not understand.”

When I was going to make a stupid decision she would throw out some words of caution and let me make the choice. When it turned out to be a bad choice she never said, “I told you so.” We were best friends. I grieved her death for many years. Sometimes I still feel her love in my dreams.

My childhood dog, Sandy, was my soul mate. He was always at my side and seemed to understand my every thought and emotion. This photo of the two of us was taken in 1948. I was 11.

I met one couple during my early years in the church who were truly God’s people. I never heard her say a negative word about anyone. Shortly before her husband died he said, “Love is what makes life worth living.”

A Valentine for my Grandmother
Bob Londis, Costa Rica

She would have celebrated her 124th birthday this year. I am grateful for the 95 years she did grace this earth. I was born into a family of sex, alcohol, and cigarette addicts; emotional, physical, and sexual abusers; mental illness of the quality that led my mother to stab my brother in front of me when I was seven; and a father who abandoned us when I was two. I cannot imagine how I could have survived without this maternal grandmother.

She cleaned houses to supplement our welfare check. She washed our laundry by hand. She made sure I got to church. My first memories are of our Sunday morning walks to her little Greek Assembly of God mission. When I was seven she became a Seventh-day Adventist. Off to Sabbath School we went, where I learned to love the stories and the songs.

My grandmother’s first husband was abusive. While married to him she became pregnant by another man, whom she never married. She lived with a third man and raised the child his wife abandoned when she was committed to an asylum. Changed from sinner to saint as she joined the Adventists, my grandmother used her house cleaning money to pay for my piano lessons at age 12 and my singing lessons at age 16. She gave me money to go to the opera and concerts in New York City.

Anxiety over our abusive family system and religious conflicts over
my orientation led me to fail my senior year in high school twice. During a horrible depression when I was eighteen, I entered her apartment to find her in tears saying, “Aren’t you ever going to make anything of yourself?” I had only seen her cry twice before. I knew this was serious. As the hymn says, “Love Lifted Me.” I vowed not to disappoint the only person who loved me. She paid for the high school home correspondence courses I needed. She hired a tutor for geometry.

I finished college in four years. When she was 91, I came out to her. In a letter she said to me, “I trust you to know what you are doing. You know the Biblical texts.” I think her own complicated life taught her to see the grey areas. Her love sustained and sustains me.

Happy Valentine’s Day to all those blessed grandmothers who save and raise and love.

Love, Inner Healing, and Peace
Andrea Roth, Germany

I wasn’t happy when I found out my little sister was pregnant. Though we didn’t communicate for a long while, our relationship healed and she moved to live near me. I first met my niece moments after she was delivered via C-section. Suddenly, I was no longer a nurse, but a first-time aunt. Even as I held her I began to weep complicated tears that reminded me of the abandonment I had felt as a child. I determined to use this understanding and this new life to impel a journey of healing between my past and my present—between my body, mind, and heart.

Four-month-old Laura cuddles in my arms, talks to me in the cutest baby voice, smiles her adorable smile, and sleeps peacefully. She reminds me to love myself. I feel awakened. I experience pain, fear, excitement, pleasure, anger, power, sadness, clarity, and love in ways that are all new to me. I have felt young, fragile, wounded, wise, brave, and strong. Old familial confusion is shifting to clarity. My love for this baby is bringing healing to old wounds.

My Valentine goes to my precious four-month-old Laura.

Fabulous Valentine
Elvys Pereira@aol.com - Brazil

The Catholic saint, Valentine, was a married priest who performed clandestine weddings in a period when weddings were forbidden by Roman Emperor Claudius. Discovered by imperial spies, Valentine was sent to prison. There he received letters and flowers from young people who told him they still believed in love. Rumor has it he healed the warden’s blind daughter. Immediately before his execution, he wrote her a letter and signed it “your Valentine.”

Sounds like a great movie. I think there are lots of parallels for LGBTIQ people in our century. Laws forbid our marriage. Valentine believed in celebrating and committing to love. He risked his life. Many people in our community have risked theirs. We know about the situations in Africa. Like Valentine we believe in the importance of marrying whom we choose. Like him, we want to build healthy lives, even in forbidden territory. We don’t give up on love.

This February, no matter what day, stand up and show someone you believe in love. Do you know someone special? Write a letter to them. Do you have that neighbor who is in a crisis? Do you know a widow? Knock on that person’s door and show them love. Inspire them! Share a smile. Give a stranger flowers (if they don’t have allergies). Be someone’s “Valentine.” Be fabulous.

If you want to contact me, add me on Facebook [,com/imelvys] or reach me via email: elvyspereira@aol.com. I’d love to hear your opinions and suggestions. Have a nice time!
Love is an interesting word. I don’t use it loosely. To me, love, be it of friend, family, or spouse, is unconditional. If I tell someone I love them, I am saying I fully accept them for who they are, good and bad.

Over the years, I have been blessed by the love of my family and friends. I love God and know that God loves me. I accepted God into my life and accepted Jesus’ gift of dying on the cross for me when I was 13 years old. I have seen Him work in my life, guiding me through the years and leading me to where I am today.

When I started coming out to myself four years ago, my biggest struggle was reconciling who I was with my relationship with God. Was being gay a sin? Was loving a woman displeasing to God as I was taught in church? Should I continue to suppress my feelings and stay single? Or did God still love me even though I was gay? Did God want me to accept myself, be happy, and find a spouse? Through much prayer and study, God, like He has in the past, guided my life to the place where I know that He loves me for who I am and doesn’t care if I am straight or gay. He loves me unconditionally and wants me to be happy.

It seems to me that God gives me signs to help me along my path. One of them came four years ago as I was driving home from my North Carolina church. Two days earlier I had been told my job was ending, an event I also considered as a sign from God to move to Massachusetts. (That’s another story for another article.) I was feeling simultaneously sad, afraid, and excited when I had a double-take sighting of a bird flying over a local field. I thought to myself, “No, it can’t be.” I turned the car around and pulled over onto the side of the road and grabbed my binoculars from the back seat. It was a Swallow-tailed Kite. While common to the Deep South, they are very rare in North Carolina. Somehow seeing this particular bird on this particular day was the sign for me that that God was in charge, my move to Massachusetts would go well, and that I would be all right. As if that was not enough, I saw a second Kite! Jokingly, I told myself God was saying He would provide me a spouse as part of this journey! This event happened two months before I began coming out to myself. It makes more sense to me now!

Eighteen months later I had come to a place where I fully accepted that my orientation is okay with God. I was ready to move on with my journey and find my life partner. However, I find it a challenge that the process of making friends in New England is slower than in North Carolina. I am building a friendship circle, but I find it difficult to meet lesbians with whom I share values.

This summer and fall I was feeling lonely and depressed. I began to think I would never find anyone who would love me as much as I love them. In this state of mind I headed north to Kinship’s Vermont Mini-kampmeeting. During each day’s early morning worship, Catherine has us draw a card from “The Loaf of Bread” deck that has a Bible verse on each side. We share why we think God has given us that verse for that day. My first morning’s verse was, “Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:15). I thought, “I know this and believe it. Why did I get it?” It dawned on me that because I am generally an optimistic person who can see the light at the end of the tunnel, when I am going through a tough time I can tell myself that, compared to eternity, what I am going through is short-term. I generally know that God will give me the strength to make it through. I had forgotten this quality of mine and I believe God used John 3:15 to bring peace and hope back to my heart.

However, He wasn’t done with the “reminders.” The next morning my verse was “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life” (John 6:47). The third morning’s verse also had to do with eternal life! I think God was really reinforcing me. Even more, the verse on the flip side of my card was, “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7:17). I had to laugh out loud when I read it. Just that morning I had been crying while sharing with Catherine and Marsha my feelings of isolation. But God still wasn’t done! Thursday evening Catherine had us reach into a bag and blindly choose a stone with a word painted on it. She asked us to share why we thought we got that stone and that message. My word was love. I said, “I want someone to love and to love me.” By the end of the weekend I decided to claim this stone as a promise from God that I will find my love this year. I haven’t met her yet, but I know she is out there. Perhaps she is even looking for me! If you know who she is send her my way. 😊
**Love for the Journey**

*Jerry McKay - Canada*

I can confidently say that I have been shown more about love than I can ever give. The most meaningful demonstrations are from those people in my life who have faithfully “traveled” with me, supporting me in all the circumstances in which I have found myself. Being willing to journey with someone even if I don’t like or understand their situation is a foundational aspect of how I understand love. Over the years I have been on the receiving end of that kind of love often enough now, I am willing to make my best effort to “do it unto others.”

**Language Lesson**

*Cheri L. Lacey – U.S.A.*

I got a wonderful lesson on love during Valentine’s Day last year. I don’t have a partner, sweetheart, or spouse, but I do have parents, in their seventies, who still love and treasure each other. In 2012, Valentine’s Day began for them in January. Together, they read the book *The Five Love Languages, For Couples*. I enjoyed listening to Mom tell all the wonderful things they were discovering about each other.

One of Mom’s minor “languages” is giving gifts or receiving them. Starting on February 1 my Dad gave my Mom a red gift until Valentine’s Day. Those gifts included red cherry tomatoes, a red apple, a cherry pie, a red-handled garden fork, a red heart-shaped box of candy, two personally made wooden red hearts (one with a frog on it and the other said “I love you”), and a hummingbird chime that had a crystal and ruby red ball on the end. Because my mother is allergic to real flowers, on Valentine’s Day Daddy gave Mom a synthetic rose that opens up! What a great idea it would be for all of us to learn the love languages of our significant others and shower them with fourteen days of surprises, beginning February 1.

**I Love the Feeling of Love**

*Rena Chogo - Kenya*

I have learned that, no matter the source, love grows and love gives birth to more love. Nothing is sweeter than love you give and love you receive. When we love and care for nature—plants, rivers, or mountains—they return to us in beauty and nourishment more love than we give. I believe love is the source of the happiness we find in the colors of the flowers.

I believe love (and the beauty from it) grows. We have to work at love: constantly communicate, work to let people know in their heart that they are loved. Love changes us, sometimes so drastically it is difficult to believe we are the same person.

I am grateful for the *Agape* love of God. There is nothing we can do to make God stop loving us. That is His nature.

I am grateful for romantic love. A few months ago I realized I have met a woman with whom I can grow love in the ways I just described. Each day grows better. Nothing is better than seeing the joy I bring to her and the joy she gives to me. I am choosing to focus on the things I like, not qualities I find frustrating. I think I probably have to deal with my own prejudices. I always start and end my day with this loved woman on my mind.

I just got a text from her that is the best description I can find to end this little piece:

*Today you took my breath away. You touched my core. I wasn’t able to work for the first two hours after nine because my heart was so jittery. Thank you. I really do love you. The day you worked late I waited for you (well, your ring tone) for the longest time. I had almost given up searching for love. I had almost given up on the qualities for which I was looking. I am so glad we have each other. Everything I wanted I found in YOU! I thought innocence and happiness were lost. I forgot how nice romance feels. I will take my chances with you. I will love you.*
The Trap of Counterfeit Forgiveness

©Arlene R Taylor PhD

When forgiveness is offered too quickly, it may not be forgiveness at all. It may just be avoidance.
—Dick Tibbits

Candace wheeled herself into my office and announced, “My body is falling apart, it is, and the doctors can’t seem to explain what’s happening or find a treatment that works.”

I looked carefully at the woman. Pain lines were etched into her middle-aged face. Worry lines, too. “Tell me about it.”

Candace launched into a fifteen-minute recital of physical symptoms. Well, more like a thirty-minute litany. Eventually she wound down. Knowing that “the body never lies,” (to quote Alice Miller), I asked Candace whether she thought her ill health might be related in any way to hurtful experiences from her past.

“Oh, it couldn’t be,” she said, quickly. “I forgave everyone long ago.”

“Forgive everyone for what?” I asked.

“For doing the best they could,” she replied.

“Forgive them for what?” I repeated. There was a very long silence while I waited.

Finally she said, “I forgave my father for molesting me and my mother for not believing me.”

“At what age were you molested?” I inquired.

“It started when I was three,” Candace said, “and continued until I was nearly eleven. It stopped because my mother’s sister visited us and caught my father touching me inappropriately. She made a huge fuss about it and threatened to report my dad to law enforcement.” Candace smiled ruefully. “My dad was so angry he told my aunt to leave his house and never come back. He also forbade me from ever seeing her again. I loved my aunt…. But at least my dad stopped molesting me.”

“Ouch,” I said. “You must have been very angry at having had your boundaries invaded like that and then also losing contact with your aunt.”

“Oh, yes,” Candace replied calmly. “I’m still angry, but not at my parents. I forgive them. I’m just angry at myself for not preventing it. And I didn’t stand up for my aunt.”

“What part of ‘A child is no match for an adult male’ don’t you get?” I asked.

Candace shrugged. “There must have been something else I could have done.”

“Something else besides what?” I asked.

“Well, I told my mother, and she said I must be mistaken because my father would never do anything like that. So I decided that it must have been my fault, something I said or did. I’ve taken responsibility for that.”

Same story, same chapter, same verse, I thought.

Aloud I said, slowly, “Let me get this straight: You are not angry at your father for molesting you—even though anger is the appropriate emotion when your boundaries have been invaded—nor at your mother for not believing you, nor at being told you could never contact your aunt. But you are angry at yourself for not having prevented the abuse, and you have taken complete responsibility for being molested.”

Candace nodded, somewhat reluctantly, I thought.

“At some level your brain knows that a child cannot protect itself from an adult,” I continued. “Therefore, you cannot be responsible for what your father did. I’ll bet your body is hurting partly because your brain can’t believe that you are angry at yourself.”

Silence.

“Have you ever contacted your aunt?” I asked, breaking the silence.

Candace shook her head. “I’ve thought about it, but I’ve never called her because I felt like I must obey my father.”

“And how old are you?” I asked.

Candace actually laughed. “I know, I know,” she said sheepishly. “It’s not like I’m still a little girl at home and must obey my parents, but sometimes I feel like that.”

“It appears to me that emotionally you still act like a little girl who must obey her parents, not like a confident grown-up woman who knows how to take care of...
herself and does so."

“Oh, my!” said Candace. “I’ve never looked at it like that. I think there is some truth to what you say, but I couldn’t dishonor my parents by being angry at them.”

I clearly needed a different approach. “While driving recently, I saw an orange highway flag ahead. What did I know for certain? I asked.

Candace laughed and said, “That there was an orange highway flag ahead.”

“Exactly,” I replied. “Based on life experience, what did my brain guess?”

“That there was road work ahead,” said Candace.

“Right again,” I said. “The flag was a signal to get my attention. There was a large hole in the asphalt. I slowed and drove around the hole. I did not stop the car, grab the highway flag and wave it as I continued on my way.”

I paused, so her brain could catch up. “Think of anger as a highway flag, a signal to let you know your boundaries have been invaded. You can recognize the emotion, get the information it is trying to give you, and take appropriate action, without picking up the flag of anger and carrying it around with you.”

“Oh, I get it,” said Candace. “I picked up the flag of anger and have been waving it madly, but directed the anger at myself.”

“Do you still visit your parents?” I asked.

“Oh, yes,” she replied. “My father even built a ramp at their house for my wheelchair. I visit regularly, but it’s not pleasant. Even before I turn into their driveway my stomach heaves, and I feel sick. Once inside, my father stares at me in a way that makes my skin crawl. But they are my parents, and I need to honor them.”

I raised an eyebrow, hoping Candace would continue. She did.

“I was advised to forgive and forget, so that’s what I’ve tried to do,” Candace said, a slight edge to her voice. “Whenever the memories start gnawing at me, I just try to put them out of my mind.”

Ouch, I thought to myself. Even when an individual tries to put memories of abuse out of his or her mind, the body remembers. Without taking the path of genuine forgiveness, those unfortunate memories will likely be acted out in some type of illness that can result in a shortened lifespan.

In her book, The Body Never Lies (2005), author Alice Miller talks about how some adults misapply admonition to honor their parents and how some parents misuse this admonition to either sweep their bad behaviors under the proverbial carpet or to control their grown children. Miller’s position is that individuals who were seriously abused in childhood, thinking they must honor their parents, try to do so through repression and emotional detachment, since they cannot build up a relaxed and trusting relationship with parents whom they still fear consciously or unconsciously.

“Have you ever heard of counterfeit forgiveness?” I asked. Candace shook her head.

I explained to her carefully how, as is often the case, some type of counterfeit exists for the genuine article. Forgiveness is no exception. Counterfeit forgiveness involves pretending, minimizing, denying, or repressing. For some grown children it means allowing their brains and bodies to remain emotionally battered in any number of unhealthy ways, continuing to accept abuse from dysfunctional family members.

Genuine forgiveness, on the other hand, involves giving careful thought to identifying what happened, the life-long consequences, and what needs to be done for personal recovery and healing. It involves choosing and systematically following through with these choices and behaviors:

- Identify and label the abuse honestly, specifically, and completely.
- Assume responsibility only for your contribution (if any) to the event or situation.
- Discover, accept, and connect the negative consequences of the abuse to your adult life.
- Give up rehearsing all the gory details to yourself and to others.
- Develop and implement appropriate personal boundaries to prevent subjecting your brain and body to the abusive behaviors of others—deliberately crafting an abuse-free lifestyle.

Current studies indicate that forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself for prolonged health and well-being.

Counterfeit forgiveness, on the other hand, can actually be deleterious to one’s health and longevity. I defined counterfeit forgiveness for Candace as saying to her parents, “I forgive you,” without moving through the process of genuine forgiveness and recovery.

To say that these concepts were new to Candace would be putting it mildly. She actually stuttered when she said, “B-b-b-but I never heard anything like this before, and I wouldn’t know where to begin!”

I encouraged her to find an experienced counselor who could help her move through the recovery process and then recommended three that she might wish to interview.

Six months later I answered a knock on my office door to find Candace standing outside. Standing, mind
you. With a cane, but standing. Of course I was interested in her story.

“I’m putting it together,” she announced, “and I feel better than I have in years. Do you know that I’ve been married three times to abusive men? In effect, each time I married my father!” And she was off and running. Candace had been working diligently with her counselor and she was connecting the events of her childhood with some of the choices she had made in adulthood.

“You were right,” she said. “There is a connection between my past and my current health. When I told my parents I was taking a break from visiting them, my father said that I was no longer his daughter and that he never wanted to see me again.”

“How are you handling that?” I asked.

“I was shocked at first, but it has turned out to be a very good thing. It is an immense relief not to talk to my mother every day on the phone, not to have to see them and be stared at in that scary way. Oh! And I’ve reconnected with my aunt. It’s great!” Candace smiled widely.

In a perfect world, healthy, functional parents would take great pains to protect their children and avoid abusing them in any manner whatsoever.

Ours is not a perfect world.

To “honor” abusive parents may simply involve acknowledging the position they hold in your generational inheritance and refraining from exhibiting ugly or abusive behaviors toward them. At the same time, moments of contact may need to be limited—or stopped altogether, if abusive behaviors continue.

Counterfeit forgiveness is a form of crazy-making. At one level you think, “I’ve forgiven the person,” but at a subconscious level your body not only remembers the abuse but acts out the pain daily.

Candace had not only been abused most of her life, but also had become stuck in the lethal trap of counterfeit forgiveness. She had turned the anger, designed to help her recognize how badly her boundaries were being invaded, against herself. Fortunately, Candace recognized this and took immediately corrective steps to improve her life. In another six months she may totally be able to discard her literal cane—as well as her metaphorical crutch of well-meaning but unenlightened excuses.

In the familiar fairy tale “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” a false perception existed, to the humor of all. However, like the foolish crowd who cheered for the naked Emperor, a person who practices counterfeit forgiveness pretends that the Emperor actually is wearing clothes. Unfortunately, those assumptions (whether rooted in imagination or denial) could result in serious physical symptoms. And there’s nothing funny about that!

Are you ensnared in the lethal bondage of counterfeit forgiveness? That which is counterfeit is not real. Forgiveness, above all else, should be real. Practice genuine forgiveness—or pay dearly.
Anniversaries

By David Coltheart - Australia

I am sure you are familiar with the scenario. After years of looking for that special person, you finally fall madly in love with someone with whom you can spend the rest of your life. Do you remember the day? Some of us remember both the day and the date—and celebrate the anniversary every year. While some ignore anniversaries, for others they are important milestones in life’s journey. In the straight world, it is easy—it is always the wedding anniversary. But in the LGBTIQ world, it isn’t quite that easy.

Although marriage equality has been achieved in a few countries, and some U.S. states, that privilege is still denied to most of us. And while marriage equality is denied, we are largely deprived of a tangible anniversary of the most significant day in a couple’s life.

So with what are we left? I did a quick ask-around of couples that I know and asked them what date they celebrate as their anniversary. The answers were as varied as the couples—some said the date they contacted each other (online) or, more commonly, the date they met in person for the first time, or maybe the day that they moved in together. Other friends could not remember the date and did not celebrate any anniversary, other than birthdays. None of my gay and lesbian friends have celebrated anything like a commitment ceremony alone a wedding.

I am a person who revels in anniversaries. They are a glorious celebration of my journey of self-discovery and mark the progress of my unfolding life. Every year I celebrate the day I saw the movie Brokeback Mountain, February 22, because that day made me examine my identity and drove me to change direction. I celebrate October 24 because that was the day when I first came out, and May 28, the day I found a new job, a necessity after losing my previous employment during the coming-out process. I celebrate the day I moved into a temporary apartment, then into my new house, which signified a new start in life, and the list of anniversaries goes on.

Then there are the romantic anniversaries that I still count each year—the day I met John online, the day we met in person, and the day we decided that we would date only each other. That last one was easy—07/07/07! For years, that was our official anniversary and is still an intrinsic part of our relationship. Most years, we eat at a favorite restaurant. One year we went to an old-fashioned movie theatre to watch Rudolf Valentino in the 1926 silent classic The Son of the Sheik, complete with live organ accompaniment.

Early in 2011, we decided to take our relationship to a higher level, and declare before God, family, and friends our commitment to each other for life. John suggested the date, and the outdoor ceremony on 11/11/11 was a celebration of our united lives, both past and future. Soon afterwards, we registered our civil union under new state laws—and that is another date to remember each year.

Recently we celebrated our first anniversary (or was that our fifth?) on Moreton Island, a remote sandy island just off the coast of Brisbane, Queensland. The roads are four-wheel drive tracks in deep sand and there is only one tiny store. Accommodation is limited to a few holiday houses and the small Ecolodge where we stayed in a holiday apartment. Most people camp among the trees that cover the island.

We had the island almost to ourselves and spent the weekend walking through the bush or along deserted sandy beaches. The warm days provided an ideal time to reflect on what the year had brought us. We recognized that we had grown closer to each other as a result of our public commitment and thanked God for His blessings. The anniversary was much more than a day of celebration—it was a day to remember how far we had come along the journey, a day to grow our relationship, and a day of renewal for the year ahead.

Anniversaries are like that: a day to look back and forward; a special day to remember and plan for the future. And above all, celebrate a special love that grows richer by the year.

David and John live on the Sunshine Coast, just north of Brisbane, Australia.
Health Tips for the Month

Being a good friend helps you stay young

Would you like to double your chances of staying as active, independent, and hot in Cleveland (or wherever!) as Betty White when you’re her age (89)? Want to remember the title of that great book you just downloaded onto your e-reader, or simply where you left your glasses? Would you?

Docs have just the Rx for you, and we don’t need to pull out our prescription pads: Spend more time hanging out with friends.

Yep, socializing and laughing it up with best buds can cut your odds for memory loss in half, as well as make you twice as likely to avoid disabilities that could seriously cramp your late-life style (like not being able to dress or bathe yourself). In fact, getting together with friends boosts your chances of staying mobile and being able to manage everything from meals to meds by a whopping 150%. Not too shabby!

Researchers can’t pinpoint exactly what makes friends such a mini fountain of youth. But it’s clear that staying mentally, physically, and socially active helps keep both your brain and your body pumped up and tuned in.

Start putting this into action if you want to stay young. Make walking with friends and downloading a joke a daily pleasure. Set dates with one another: Go to a game, take an overnight trip, join theater or faith groups, volunteer. Refill this Rx as often as possible and maybe you’ll wind up starring in your own hot show at 89.

Vitamin D

Now that the days are shorter than a teenager’s attention span, you may be missing something big (other than the opportunity to look cool in sunglasses while driving). Namely, vitamin D3, which your body makes when sunlight hits your skin.

Without D3, you’re vulnerable to aging because the sunshine vitamin not only protects your bones, but also defends you against cancer, keeps your heart young, and improves more processes than a high-priced business consultant: tuning up your immune system, insulin secretion, blood pressure, balance and muscle strength, and brain development. In fact, 36 different organ tissues contain cells that respond to vitamin D3.

So how do you get enough of this ultimate anti-ager? Tune in to these truths:

• You can ski all day and still not get enough. In winter, the sun north of a cross-country line that runs through Los Angeles and Atlanta doesn’t have the energy to transform the inactive D in your body to the active form you need.

• You can’t eat your way there. You can get D3 from tuna and salmon and D-fortified foods, but you’d have to consume a lot—like 10 glasses of fortified OJ—to get what you need.

• Your multi probably won’t help that much. Most contain far less D3 than you need.

But you can supplement your way healthy. Check the D3 in your multi and/or calcium tablet, then add a supplement that gets you to a total of 1,000 international units (IU) of D3 a day. Make that 1,200 IU if you’re 60 or older. And take it with a little healthy fat—D3 isn’t well absorbed without it. ▼