

Success in domestic quarrels?

Practice guide inspired by the experience of workshops for couples set up by the Family Support Project in Manila: "*Husband & Wife workshop*"
Inter Aide/EnFaNCE partnership

A few words about the context

The EnFaNCE team (Encourage Families in Need and Care for Education¹, a small Philippine NGO created with the support of Inter Aide) implemented workshops for couples in 2008, in the area of the "*Dumpsite*" in Tondo, Manila, after having seen through the launch of the "PPI" project for the promotion of micro-savings that conflicts in couples were one of the main obstacles to saving. After an evaluation carried out by the team in early 2009, and work to improve content with Violeta Bautista, PhD, Philippine psychologist and supervisor of the team, EnFaNCE decided to resume this activity in 2009.

The first series of 2009 workshops began in April and had to be interrupted because of the demolition of part of the housing adjacent to the landfill site.

A new series of *Husband & Wife workshops* was launched in August, still on the *Dumpsite*, with the first of three sessions on 26 August.

Each session has a specific theme:

- 1st session = encounters
- 2nd session = conflicts
- 3rd session = the marital/familial project.

Here are some ideas for the content of the 2nd session.

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To illustrate the conflict, social workers can present a small skit. To ensure that this sequence does not end on an overly negative note, and to give the participants some ideas, it would be interesting to play out a negative "domestic quarrel" (but with a little humour...) and then to replay the scene using the same issue of disagreement but without it degenerating into a "domestic quarrel". Take as an example, a fairly typical scene found, with minor variations, throughout the ages and across the world... (and alcohol abuse is quite common among the male population of the Philippine slums).

For example: **1st skit, domestic quarrel version:**

"You've been off getting drink with your mates again, (judgement) you're really good for nothing (contempt + unfounded insult), you've spent all the housekeeping money and we're going to starve because His Lordship prefers to drink with his mates rather than take care of his family (reproach + criticism + sarcasm)"...

To this explosive cocktail (judgement + insult + reproach, criticism and irony - the perfect recipe for a domestic quarrel, and in large doses an excellent route to separation...) the other person can only respond by counter-attacking... ("you're always shouting and complaining, you shrew. It's because of you that I have to go out and drink with my mates"...) or by fleeing the scene (*fight or flight*)...

Then the team can **replay the scene in a "non-violent communication" style**, for example:

¹ EnFanCE Foundation <http://enfancefoundation.webs.com/>

"I understand that you need to distract yourself after your working day (she shows that she understands her husband's needs), but when you go out at night with your friends (objective observation, she is not judging), I feel lonely and neglected and I worry (she is talking about her own feelings and not at her husband) that I haven't enough money to buy food for the children. I need you to come home first and to give me money to buy food (she makes a clear demand), before going out with your friends".

It can also be interesting to **start from the viewpoint of the man** (as the programme most often works with women, because when social workers visit the families in their homes, it is generally the women who are at home to look after pre-school age children – there are no childcare facilities that can look after children under 3 in these slums):

"When I get home, you're always yelling at me, like some kind of hag! (insult/contempt) I've worked like a madman to make money for Mrs-complains-all-the-time (sarcasm), and you just sit there all day doing nothing (reproach + unfounded criticism + contempt). It's me that earned this money, I can spend it as I want and go out with my friends. At least they understand me. You're always feeling sorry for yourself, that's all you know how to do (judgement). I'm the boss here, it's me who decides. So shut it, otherwise I'll shut it for you (threat). And if you're not happy, all you've got to do is go back and live with your mother and the kids! "

To replay in a non-violent manner, for example:

When I get home after a long day at work and you shout at me, I feel despised and mistreated (he is talking about his own feelings, not at his wife) and I only want one thing; to go out with my friends and spend all the money I've earned. When I get back to the house after a tough day, I would like you to greet me nicely (he makes a clear demand). If you want me to give you money for you and the kids (he shows that he is thinking of his family), that's OK, but I need some consideration.



...and remember that men and women really do come from the same planet...



Anne Carpentier - 28/12/09

For more information:

GOTTMAN John-M & Nan Silver *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, Three Rivers Press 2000 <http://www.gottman.com/>

In French: *Les couples heureux ont leurs secrets - les sept lois de la réussite*, Pocket 2001.

A summary of this book can be found at

<http://tecfa.unige.ch/tecfa/teaching/UVLibre/9900/bin71/conflict.htm>

See also:

ROSENBERG Marshall B. *Non Violent Communication, a Language of Life*, Puddledancer Press 2003 (provided to the EnFaNCE Manila team in July 2012)

French translation: *Les mots sont des fenêtres (ou bien ce sont des murs) Introduction à la communication non-violente (CNV)* Editions de la Découverte, 2004

And what about love?

ALBERONI Francesco *Le choc amoureux*, Pocket 1993 (the English version can be found at <http://www.alberoni.it/pdf/Falling-in-love-and-loving.pdf>) *Je t'aime*, Pocket 1998: love viewed by a sociologist

FROMM Erich *L'art d'aimer*, Edition Desclée de Brouwer 2007: love from a more philosophical point of view (extracts can be found at <http://www.erichfromm-blog.com/>)

VINCENT Lucy *Comment devient-on amoureux*, Edition Odile Jacob 2007: love seen by the neurosciences

