

What is the Value in Sharing Dialogue with Another Couple?

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When we were first learning to dialogue, we were very private about it. We joined the sharing group in our area and met twice each month to have a presentation, dialogue and sharing. The sharing part was very non-threatening at first, because no one asked us specifically about our dialogue. We could still keep that private and argue at home about whether or not we were dialoging "right."

As we stayed involved with Marriage Encounter, we found that our sharing group meeting was more fruitful when we shared our feelings and shared about our dialogue. In the sharing group, one couple presents and gives the question, each couple dialogues privately, and then we gather together to share something we each learned about our relationship from our dialogue. So we learn about each other and we are challenged by the sharings of the other couples.

We have close friends who often asked about our relationship and about our dialogue. One evening when they were at our place for dinner, they asked if we wanted to dialogue together. (is that allowed?) We looked at each other for a quick response while they told us the question they would like to use. We had no idea of what we were getting into this time. We trusted our friends and took the plunge. We each wrote a love letter to our spouse as usual. When we were done writing, I looked up to see what was next. What happens when you dialogue together with another couple? To my surprise and panic, our friends said "We'll go first." Then they actually dialogued right in front of us!

The feelings I had as one asked the other about the strongest feeling and gently probed further, were along the lines of awed and inspired. When it was our turn to dialogue, I was so nervous and worried about what they would think of us. I was very self-conscious and concerned about saying the right thing at first. But soon I became absorbed in describing my feeling and listening to the feedback. What we were doing in our dialogue took on a new importance.

What a gift they gave us that night, and every time since then that they have asked us to dialogue with them. We learned so much about really trying to get at the heart of the feeling, and about the power of listening. Of course these were things we had heard somewhere else...I was reawakened to the feelings I had on our Weekend, and renewed in the hope that we could keep alive the attitude of striving to love each other better.

Since that time, we have asked other friends to dialogue with us. We try to assure them that we are not critiquing their dialogue. We just want to get to know each other better. It's a great way to get to know each other! Every time we have dialogued with another couple, we have received a gift of learning about them and seeing into their hearts for a moment. The other gift we receive is the gift of sharing our relationship. It's a challenge to be vulnerable and honest in that way. It's rewarding for us to be challenged.

Occasionally dialoging with another couple has really helped to infuse life into our dialogue. We help each other to refocus.

Our friends that first asked us to dialogue with them quickly became our best friends. We instinctively knew that we could tell them anything about ourselves and they would accept us. When they ask us how we are, there's no point in trying to hide anything because they hear in our voices that we've just had a fight. They ask us about our sexual relationship. (Nosy, aren't they?) They care about us and they know us. We have built a level of trust with each other that one rarely finds in a whole lifetime. And we have learned so much about openness, forgiveness, and even about our Christian values because we were willing to share our deepest feelings with our friends.

There is value in being vulnerable with others, being willing to listen and to learn.

The value in dialoging with another couple is summed up in an old Encounter saying: "No one dialogues alone."

10/10: How do I feel about sharing a dialogue with another couple?