



Relating

The Newsletter of the Institute for 21st Century Relationships

Volume 2, Issue 3

May/June 2002

Author Judith Levine to Keynote Second Building Bridges Conference

Judith Levine, author of the powerful new book *Harmful To Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex*, has agreed to deliver the keynote address at the 2002 ITCR Conference. Ms. Levine, a longtime outspoken believer in responsible sexuality, has endured a firestorm of attacks from sex-negative critics, many of whom admitted not having even read the book. Her remarks will focus on her experiences and the lessons we all must learn from them.

Levine joins Dr. Susan Campbell, best-selling author of six books and consultant to Fortune 500 firms on change, conflict management, and communications in a stellar lineup of presenters. The Conference will be held October 11-13 in Arlington, Virginia.

The Conference program is being finalized; among the presentations already slated to be offered are Dr. Campbell's *Truth In Dating; Sexually Transmitted Infections and Sexual Health: Are You At Risk?* – Karen Engebretsen-Larash, Psy.D.; *Opening Up A Marriage: A Personal Journey from Mono- to Polyamory* – Elizabeth Lipman-Stern, M.S.W., LCSW; *Children in Alternative Families: Making It Work and Avoiding Problems* – Carol Morotti-Meeker, M.S., M.L.S.P., ACSW; *Sex, Love and Intimacy: Clarifying Meanings, Enriching Relationships* – The Rev. Harold Minor, D.D.; *Overview of the SM-Leather-Fetish Community* – Jonathan Krall, Ph.D.; and *Women's*
continued on page 6

Activism In The Swing Community

By Kevin and Janelle

Most of us in the “swinging” lifestyle have heard of the police paying an unwelcome visit to a swingers’ club, private party or social. Some of us have actually been there when owners were either cited by the authorities, often for trivial “violations,” or when the police have just “poked their heads in.” Some of us have seen our friends carried off to the paddy wagon, charged with public lewdness, and some of us have ourselves been the victims of questionable police activity.

Most jurisdictions’ public lewdness laws are not being enforced in the spirit that they were intended. These laws were designed to protect us from offensive behavior in actual public places, such as a park or bus. Unfortunately, these laws are being used more often today to harass consenting adults behind closed doors at clubs, socials and private parties.

A typical “lifestyle” establishment can count on “attention” from the authorities every couple of years. What usually ensues is that word spreads like wildfire in the local swinging community and people stop going there. I find it disappointing that we are so quick to run and hide, thereby accomplishing the very thing the authorities set out to do (but usually can’t do legally) - to shut us down by scaring everyone away.

I believe that the people in our lifestyle – who are for the most part responsible, family-oriented, hard working and socially adept – have the power to make a difference. We know how politicians like to brag about “cleaning up the city.” It’s all politics, folks. We need to recognize that and take responsibility for making it clear that harassing us nets them no political gain, and possibly much political grief.

Here are some things that we can do:

Don't run and hide! Sure, it's easy to just start going

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 3-5 Sex & Spirit Theme Articles
- 5 Founders Club Members
- 7 The View from the Front Lines
- 8 Calendar of Upcoming Events

Time for Activism In "The Lifestyle"

(Continued from page 1)

somewhere else, but don't think that the new location won't also see some "unwelcome visitors" before long. Instead, support the club/home that was just "visited" by the police. Keep going back, and ask if there's anything you can do to be of assistance. Instead of spreading scare stories, encourage other people also to show their support.

Write your elected officials, expressing dismay that the police are wasting resources on such frivolous activities. You don't have to identify yourself as a participant or even a sympathizer. Copy your local news media. You can ask to be anonymous if you feel you must, but most media ignore unsigned letters.

Offer to work with those who were raided and assist them with contacting anyone who might have been cited. Encourage those who were cited to fight the charges. Clubs and private

party hosts - don't leave your guests who were cited or carried off to jail to fend for themselves. Assist in raising funds for the legal defense of those who were unfairly singled out. Show support by being present in numbers during their trials. Send a message to the intolerant that there are many pro-privacy citizens who are angry, concerned, and available to mobilize if need be.

Launch a protest. By being silent and encouraging silence, for fear of "word getting around" that you were raided, you only give the authorities encouragement to do it all over again. The gay community proved how people can mobilize in the face of discrimination based on "moral" condemnation. They experienced the same harassment that we do now, and they decided they weren't going to take it any more. Thus began their political involvement, marches, protests and letter writing campaigns. Now gay gathering places generally enjoy the same freedoms as other "mainstream" establishments. The police and their political masters know the gay community is ready to mobilize instantly if they are singled out for harassment.

Fight back. Encourage your local club, social or party house and its guests to file suit against the authorities for invasion of privacy and infringement of their civil rights if their place has been raided and those charges were dropped or thrown out. The police have no right to enter the same premises again and again to file the same charges if they have failed before.

You're not alone. Keep national organizations, such as the International Lifestyle Association, ACLU, North American Swing Clubs Association and the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, abreast of any persecution or discrimination in your community. If you have a website, set up links to these organizations, as well as others such as the Institute for 21st Century Relationships. Join, and encourage everyone you know to do likewise. The more supporters these groups acquire, the more powerful they become – on our behalf.

I speak from personal experience. My wife and I have already lived through everything I've described. Our private party was raided in August 2000. Since then, we have been deeply involved with the legal defense of all those who are fighting

continued on page 6



Relating

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ITCR Mission Statement

Attaining a satisfactory level of love and companionship through intimate relations is an unalterable, fundamental need of all human beings. The Institute for 21st Century Relationships exists to facilitate the fulfillment of the human potential for relating, and to support the freedom of consenting adults to discover and to practice the intimate relationship structure that best meets their emotional and human needs. We champion the basic human right to do so free of governmental, societal or institutional coercion or favoritism.

We seek, through education, research, and support, to create a climate in which all forms of ethical, consensual and fulfilling relationship styles are broadly understood and are equally respected and honored as legitimate choices.

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Special *Relating* Section on Relationships, Sexuality and Spirituality

Values and World Views – An Affirmative Judeo-Christian Framework for Sexuality and Relationships **By Robert T. Francoeur, Ph.D.**

Around 1957, my seminary scripture professor explained that Jewish biblical tradition did not split humans into bodies and souls as Greek and later Christian philosophy did. Nor did they have a word for “sex.” When Abraham “knew” his wife and she became pregnant, *yadah*, the Hebrew word for “knowing”, was not a Victorian euphemism. Rather it was an expression of the deepest, most intimate relationship two persons could experience.

Not realizing I was setting the stage for half a century of trying to understand the evolution of Western sexual values, I innocently asked: “Fr. Demetrius, when they say that the man who knows only one book is an ignorant man, does that apply to sex and marriage?”

“An interesting question. I’ll have to think about that.”

I spent my free afternoons in the biology lab, listening to the monks discuss the theological implications of evolution. I learned that in classic philosophy, dating at least to ancient Greece and even earlier, there have been two very different, opposing ways of looking at our world, at how humans fit into this world and, consequently, two very different sexual value systems.

Until recently, most Christian moral thinking (which unfortunately borrowed wholesale from Greek asceticism) – and the Western cultures derived from it – has focused on divining and prescriptively documenting the nature and purpose of sexuality as forever and immutably determined by God when He created Adam and Eve and thereby supposedly (since, it is argued, there were originally created only one man and one woman) established the heterosexual monogamous pattern of marriage.

This thinking concluded that sex was and is natural only when two persons, one with a penis, the other with a vagina, unite and are open to procreation. Their union is illicit and prohibited unless they are married and sexually exclusive. Inclusive, poly-friendly? Certainly not.

In this Fixed Worldview, sexual morality focuses on specific actions involving the genitals, and on whether a specific use conforms to literal interpretations of laws and commandments found in a sacred text or official doctrine. The personal context, the quality of the relationship, is really not that critical.

Since the 1960s, a sexual ethics based on the Evolving Worldview (the second school of thought

about humanity’s role in the world), with its constantly changing horizon, has been gaining strength within mainstream Protestant and Catholic circles.

A 1987 Episcopalian document offers a solid summary of this morality:

The Judaeo-Christian tradition is a tradition precisely because, in every historical and social circumstance, the thinking faithful have brought to bear the best interpretation of the current realities in correlation with their interpretation of tradition as they have inherited it. Thus, truth in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is a dynamic process to be discerned and formulated rather than a static structure to be received. The Bible is misunderstood and misused when approached as a book of moral prescriptions directly applicable to all moral dilemmas. Rather, the Bible is the record of the response to the word of God addressed to Israel and to the Church throughout centuries of changing social, historical, and cultural conditions. The Faithful responded within the realities of their particular situation, guided by the direction of previous revelation, but not captive to it.

A spirituality and sexual morality based on an evolving worldview focuses on the quality and consequences of the relationship between two or more persons. In this poly-friendly spirituality and worldview, the morality of any relationship, sexual or not, depends on the extent to which each unique relationship expresses certain perennial moral values. This is not a permissive, promiscuous, “anything goes” value system. It is in fact a very demanding, mature morality that includes eight broad-based moral values that can be applied to every aspect of human life, not just sexual relationships.

Though these are couched in couple-centric terminology because of their mainstream Christian sources, the principles apply equally to any number of participants in relationships – just envision the plural form where required.

Self-Liberating - a means of personal growth toward maturity, not a way of giving oneself totally to another person without allowing for self-growth and expression.

Other-Enriching - more than non-exploitive; looking to the future and actively concerned with the needs of the other person; a compassionate and consistent concern for the well-being of the other.

continued on page 8

The Union of Sex and Spirit – A Conversation Between Deborah Taj Anapol and Taber Shadburne

Deborah: I've noticed that when people talk about the union of sex and spirit what they usually mean is taking sex and putting some ritual around it. All well and good but there's more to it than this. When I think about connecting with spirit, I think of a direct connection to Source. It's finding someplace inside of me that resonates with this larger whole and doesn't feel limited by my personal identity, not limited by my personality or my mind or my body. There's a place in me that recognizes that I don't really have a separate existence apart from the whole, and to me that's what spirituality is about, coming from that place. This experience of oneness is the spiritual intent behind all ritual. As we know, rituals can become empty and meaningless. So putting ritual and sex together means nothing in and of itself.

Taber: A lot of very different things get talked about as spirituality. What I call an awareness-oriented spiritual practice is very different from ritually-oriented spirituality. It doesn't necessarily exclude rituals, but the context is different.

Deborah: What do you mean by awareness-oriented spiritual practice?

Taber: My background is in Zen Buddhism. In that context, the emphasis is not on forms of any kind, but rather on the *awareness* in which the forms arise and pass. Not on the *contents* of experience, but on the *process* of moment-to-moment experiencing. There is a dis-identification with forms, shifting one's sense of identity from the contents of consciousness to the consciousness itself, dissolving of one's sense of identity, transforming the sense of self. On this path, the primary spiritual practice is bringing compassionate awareness to the contents of experience – thoughts, sensations, emotions – and noticing them as contents of experience, without being identified with them.

Deborah: I resonate more with the non-dual traditions of Advaita and Kashmiri Tantra. But all of these awareness-oriented practices as you call them, lead to a direct experience of what I was calling Source, a larger beingness, a space with the capacity to know.

Taber: As one dis-identifies with the flow of thought and emotion, it tends to slow down and become more transparent. And as compulsive thought and emotion drops away, there is a

radical shift in your sense of self.

Deborah: One of the attractions that sex holds for people is that sometimes it propels us out of the mind into direct experience. But not necessarily. You could engage in sex and be in your head the whole time, or be very focused on the goal of having an orgasm, or a bigger and better orgasm, and not have a spiritual experience at all.

Taber: Sex has the potential to either help liberate us from the ego, or to be a very ego-driven activity – probably the primary activity, in fact, that preoccupies (at least male) egos!

Deborah: So surrounding sex with ritual can be a reminder to approach it from a more conscious place, but it doesn't always work.

Taber: Right, because ego can get very attached to rituals.

Deborah: The same thing can happen with multi-partner sex. As I discuss in *Polyamory: The New Love Without Limits*, the potential is there for a very liberating experience but it can also bring up all kinds of unresolved sexual and relationship issues. If you get identified with the emotions and fail to recognize the opportunity for personal work, it can turn into a nightmare.

Taber: One falls prey to what Chogyam Trungpa aptly called "spiritual materialism." In other words, the elements of ritual or polyamory become new shiny toys for ego to become breathlessly infatuated with: "this is so cool!" One becomes attached to the contents of experience, lost in the land of the mind.

Deborah: People get very caught up in Tantric technique – to last longer, to move the energy, to...

Taber: ...have the ultimate mind-blowing orgasm.

Deborah: Even just to have a deeper connection with your partner, to give and receive more pleasure. There's nothing wrong with these things. In fact, they're great. But it's not the full Tantric experience.

Taber: Having an agenda is somewhat antithetical to the awareness-oriented spirituality we've been talking about. Having a goal, trying to get somewhere, is usually an egoistic preoccupation.

continued on page 6

Where Two or More* Are Gathered... By Jeffery P. Adams


When using the word marriage it is vital to keep in mind its two unrelated aspects. One is purely legal, a contract controlled by society; the other, a spiritual union of two or more people, committed to intimacy and mutual support. The latter aspect is the only one with meaning. Such a contract without spiritual union is doomed, where as a true bonding needs no legalities.

Marriage is inherently spiritual, whether between two people or a dozen. It is the coming together of many into one, an opportunity to know others and be known in a way rarely possible otherwise. Yet, there were 1.1 million divorces in the US in 1998. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that the median length for **all** marriages is less than 8 years. Scarcely the "happily ever after" scenario we all learned as children. There are many reasons for marital failure, to be sure, but we can say with confidence that a big piece is the simple failure of the participants to bond spiritually with one another, to commit to a continuing exploration of each other, to be constantly "crawling inside one another's souls" with courage, patience, love and complete acceptance.

Someone once defined evil as separation from God. I like to go further and say that evil is separation, period. One from another as much as from God. Love works against separation, encourages closeness and a merging of awareness. By bonding as mature human beings we can reverse, even if only slightly, the evil in the world and move that much closer to God, for certainly God and love have much in common. All religions, in their teachings if not in their practice, praise love above all else.

In group marriage many factors are accelerated, or made more intense than in a "regular" marriage**. For example, when my "original" wife and I entered into our now expanded marriage, a most astonishing thing happened. This woman whom I thought I knew quite well was gradually revealed to me all over again, as a person even more rich and complex than I had previously discovered. Delightful, though it left me asking myself -- sometimes -- "Wow! How come I failed to discover all this before?" That was, of course, just my process asking the question. Clearly it was the expanded marriage itself that made this renewed exploration possible -- that allowed us to grow even closer than before. What does "close"

mean? It means little things like knowing what we'll all like for dinner, remembering everyone's birthday, and taking turns in the kitchen. Or bigger things like working a common business together or all of us having the same thought at the same time. It means sharing our fears and our tears and our realizations about life with each other. It means paying bills, grooming cats, repainting walls and visiting (biological) family, together. It means total love, unwavering commitment and complete respect, at all times. I now have three chosen life-time marriage partners, and I get to be closer with each of them than I was previously with my one mate. In moving from two to four, absolutely nothing has been lost, far from it. In the course of growing together in our marriage, we each of us feel a greater union, a greater spiritual joining than in our original monogamous pairings.

God gave me my life, a tremendous gift. What I do with it may be the best gift I can offer back to God. Marriage is tough, and group marriage is certainly complicated. To succeed at such a venture, to honestly come together in a rich and vital way, to know one another and to fearlessly reveal oneself to your chosen partners: what better gift back to God could there be? 

*Yes, it's a misquote. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20. I like "two or more" better.

Jeffery Adams (jeffrey_p_adams@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in Idaho. He and his family are mutually owned by four very sophisticated cats who firmly believe in everyone's right to a free lifestyle.

Founders Club Members

This is an elite group of Institute supporters who gave \$500 before September 1, 2001. We thank them for their generosity and vision.

- **Anakosha Corporation – Naples, FL**
- **Paul S. Christensen – Champaign, IL**
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A Conversation About Sex and Spirit

(Continued from page 4)

Deborah: This is why certain segments of the spiritual community feel that celibacy is the best path. It also has something to do with the mistrust of sexuality by the spiritual community, recognizing that it can lead you away from, rather than toward, a more spiritual life.

Taber: The spiritual goal, often times, has been a taming of ego-based desire – being motivated by a compassionate or loving impulse, rather than by greed or fear. Sex is looked upon as the ultimate manifestation of greed and selfish desire, and so it gets quarantined. But then the problems really start – because that which we try to exclude from our spirituality inevitably comes back to bite us in the ass. It comes back in a more destructive form (witness all the scandal lately in the Catholic Church with their supposedly celibate clergy). The problem, however, is not with celibacy itself, any more than it is with sex. Celibacy, consciously undertaken for a period of time, can be a helpful practice. But religion usually gets moralistic about sex, makes it "bad," and encourages repression.

Deborah: Osho said, "Sex is the beginning, and if you miss the beginning you will also miss the ending." You need to be open to fully exploring sexual love if this is where your attention is drawn, but if you stop there, thinking, "OK, now I've embraced my sexuality; this is it!" you miss a whole other level.

Taber: The original Tantra movement arose in response to the moralistic and puritanical trends that had developed within Buddhism. The word tantra comes from the root "to weave," and the movement was about weaving back into your life all of the aspects that had been moralistically excluded from spiritual practice. Sex in that context was approached as a meditation. ☐

Deborah Anapol, Ph.D. is the author of *Polyamory: The New Love Without Limits*, a regular contributor to *Relating*, and leads seminars internationally on conscious relating and sacred sexuality. You can contact her at 415/507-1739, info@lovewithoutlimits.com or www.lovewithoutlimits.com.

Taber Shadburne, M.A. is a psychotherapist, seminar leader, musician and awareness guide who has practiced Buddhism for almost 20 years. Contact him at 510/336-3391 or taber@nbts.org.

Next in *Relating*: GLBT Relationships and Issues

(Article deadline July 16)

Building Bridges Set for 2002 (Continued from page 1)

Experiences in Open Lifestyles – Marlene Martin.

More great programming is being evaluated and negotiated, including an exciting pre-Conference workshop, and another optional evening workshop similar to last year's *Sacred Union of Opposites* program with Dr. Deborah Anapol. Registration fees, including Conference materials, Friday Welcoming Reception, two breakfasts, Saturday lunch, and refreshment breaks, are:

	ITCR Associate	Non-Associate
Early (Till 8/1/02)	\$115	\$135
Regular	\$140	\$150

Full Conference information and forms can be found at www.lovethatworks.org/conference.html Limited donor-supported diversity scholarships and work-exchange opportunities are also available. Added fun events this year include an optional Saturday night "Pajama Party" dinner-dance.

The headquarters hotel for *Building Bridges 2002* is the recently renovated Holiday Inn National Airport in Arlington, Virginia. For reservations at the special ITCR Conference rate of \$89.00/night plus tax, call 1-800-465-4329. ☐

Activism

(Continued from page 2)

the charges. In February 2001, we raised \$5000 in one evening for the legal defense of those facing trial. We are involved in what may be a precedent-setting case, examining the legal definition of a private vs. public place. We have consulted attorneys to create new guidelines and policies to protect our guests and keep the police out for good, rather than just going back to "business as usual," keeping our fingers crossed that we wouldn't have our rights violated again.

Now is the time for us to stop having to be afraid and resentful of those whose real job is protecting our public safety. The only reason harassment has been an ongoing problem is because we roll over and take it. There are many things that we all can do to send a message to those who misunderstand and oppress us – we have rights, too, and we won't stand to have them compromised any longer. I encourage everyone who lives an alternative lifestyle to take a stand for what you believe in. ☐

Kevin and Janelle are husband and wife and own The Velvet Curtain, a private lifestyle club in Dallas, TX.

The View from the Front Lines

By Jim Fleckenstein, ITCR President and CEO

Truth In Advocacy - Or, Denying Denial

This advocacy and education business can be a challenge. It's not that our opponents make my life difficult; I expect that. It's when you're viewed as being "too far out in front" of *allies* that you start wondering if a used car sales career is all *that* bad.

I have, on occasion, been subjected to some pretty disheartening, if well-meaning, criticism from within the alternative relationship community – especially my "home" community of polyamory – for seeming to be "too hard on" monogamy as it is currently practiced. My initial reaction is vague amusement that anyone seriously believes monogamy *needs* additional defenders from within *our* ranks. It's not like there isn't a significant block of powerful, well-funded and fanatical defenders out there already.

But setting that aside, I am forced to look at this criticism and consider what emotions motivate it, and what the implications of it are for any effort to reform the current world into one that respects unconditionally the freedom to choose *any* ethical relationship style. I hope (perhaps vainly) that we can agree that the current social construct is basically "winner take all," with traditional het monogamy viewed by the mainstream as the sole "winner" in the relationship sweepstakes.

I have identified three "schools" among those within our ranks who react negatively to any forthright discussion of the inherent shortcomings of traditional monogamy for today's society. (Heaven forbid we should actually disparage the manifestly pernicious effects our anachronistic monogamist culture has on millions of responsible, ethical and well-intended adults and innocent children!)

The first group is the Fearful Faithful. They have (perhaps only recently) chosen a nontraditional relationship, but in their hearts, perhaps even unconsciously, they fear it won't work and want to be sure the "old way" is still out there. Their inner reservations inspire them to cling to the knowledge that traditional monogamy is alive and well, and even to defend it. These empathetic, "foot in both camps" folks also often defend most vigorously the recalcitrant positions of the traditionally-oriented partners of those who seek growth and fulfillment through nontraditional choices. Their mantra seems to be, "There but for the grace of God..."

The second group I call the Cautious Pragmatists. They don't want anyone to rock the boat by openly challenging the dominant paradigm, hoping that by adopting a "live and let live" strategy, they will be free to live "under the radar" of the mainstream. They blind themselves to the extremism of the monolithic (het) monogamists, who have so far shown absolutely no willingness to meet diversity half way. Just ask gay and lesbian monogamists.

The third (and to me most corrosive) group is the Principled Collaborators. Out of a genuine respect for diversity and a high-minded moral relativism that refuses to make judgments, Principled Collaborators go beyond "live and let live" to actively *defend* the dominant paradigm. They discount criticism of the painfully obvious negatives of monogamy by steadfastly refusing to consider alternatives as "better" – to them, almost nothing is objectively "better" than anything else. They carry choice to an *illogical* extreme, refusing to address objectively the relative merits of various choices.

The critical error the Principled Collaborators make is believing we compete with the monogamist culture on a level playing field. The unintended result is their unwitting collaboration in continuing oppression. While courageously enjoying freedom of choice themselves, they blandly assert that millions *choose* oppression – a dangerous rationalization in a world where truly free choice does not yet exist. By attacking as "playing God" those who dare to point out the Emperor's nakedness – "Maybe he *chose* to be naked; and anyway, who are *you* to say that wearing a parka in a snowstorm is *better* than being naked?" – they divert attention and intellectual resources from the struggle to create a truly open and genuinely pro-choice world. We cannot reform a repressive culture by politely avoiding exposing its defects, even if discussing them makes us uncomfortable.

A common root of all these views is fear. We remain creatures of our culture. Daring to defy cultural prescriptions in the fundamental matter of intimate relationships inspires deeply seated and often unconscious fears. Our courage in choosing alternatives conveys no immunity from these fears. We must root out and conquer them, thereby freeing ourselves from their paralyzing effects.

In 1880, Susan B. Anthony warned her less-enthusiastic followers, "Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform." We, too, are in the reform business. Let's set our fears aside, unite, and get on with it. ☒

Calendar of Events

July

- 4-7 – “Living In Leather” Conference of the National Leather Association-International – Dallas, TX (Info: www.livinginleather.org)
- 5-8 – 11th International Conference on Personal Relationships – Halifax, NS, Canada (Info: www.medicine.dal.ca/ahprc/ISSPRconference.html)
- 13-20 – Thornfield 30th Annual Workshop on Sexuality – Cazenovia, NY (Info: www.sexualityworkshop.com)
- 31- August 4 – The Lifestyles Convention – Reno, NV (Info: lifestyles-convention.com/)

August

- 2-4 – Loving More East Conference – Havre de Grace, MD (Info: www.lovemore.com/eastdetails.html)
- 15-19 – BiCamp 2002 – Northampton, MA (Info: www.bisexual.org)
- 22-25 – American Psychological Association Annual Meeting – Chicago, IL (Info: www.apa.org/convention/)

October

- 4-6 – 6th Annual Conference of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) – Los Angeles, CA (Info: www.glsen.org/templates/events/article.html?section=50&record=617)
- 5 – 2nd Annual Poly Pride Day – New York, NY (Info: www.poly-NYC.com)
- 11-13 – 2nd Annual **Building Bridges** Conference of the ITCR – Washington, DC (Info: www.lovethatworks.org)
- 18-20 – Men’s Awareness Institute/American Institute for Bisexuality Conference – San Diego, CA (Info: www.bisexual.org)
- 24-27 – 60th Annual Conference of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy – Cincinnati, OH (Info: www.aamft.org)

November

- 6-10 – National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s 15th Annual *Creating Change* Conference – Portland, OR (Info: www.nglft.org/cc/index.cfm)
- 7-10 – 44th Annual Conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS) – Montreal, Quebec, Canada (Info: www.ssc.wisc.edu/ssss/meetings.htm)

- 11-14 – 64th Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations – Houston, TX (Info: www.ncfr.org/conference_info/index.asp)
- 14-18 – 4th Annual Nawlins in November lifestyle convention – New Orleans, LA (Info: www.neworleansinnovember.com)

Send us information on major conferences/events that might be of interest to Relating’s readers, and we’ll consider them for inclusion. Send to Relating Calendar, ITCR, 2419 Little Current Drive, Suite 1933, Herndon, VA 20171, or email us at calendar@lovethatworks.org.

Framework

(Continued from page 3)

Honest - Deception and pretense damage a relationship, but brutal candor is not always the wisest choice. By honest, we mean a climate of openness and loving truthfulness.


Faithful - Faithful to the commitment a couple makes with each other and continually renegotiates to adjust to changing circumstances and keep their relationship dynamic. “Fidelity” should not isolate a partner from all other social relationships, an effort that can lead to distrust, jealousy, and destructive possessiveness.

Responsible - Serving the best interests of the couple, family, and society.

Life-Serving - A sexual relationship can serve life by being procreative, by building the human community, and encouraging the couple to serve the needs of other persons; ministering in a healing way to the fears, hurts, and anxieties of the other.

Joyful - Sexual expression should be playful, nurturing, creative, and celebrate the delights of erotic pleasures. And finally,

Transcendent - Sexual unions should also be spiritual, leading individuals beyond their own physical limits to join in communion with others, with the earth that is our nurturing womb, and God.

At the very heart of our human existence is the challenge of knowing another person, of participating in our own on-going creation as a human in an ever-changing world and at the same time taking on the responsibility of sharing in the co-creation of another person. The poly-world highlights and delights in this challenge. The fixed worldview denies and fears it. Which view is more consistent with a loving and transcendent higher power that seeks perfection in creation? 

Robert T. Francoeur, Ph.D. (rtfrancoeu@aol.com) is the editor of *Sex, Love and Marriage in the 21st Century: The Next Sexual Revolution* (iUniverse Publishers), and Chair of the Institute’s Advisory Council.