



## LIVING THE SERENITY PRAYER – by Marney W. DeFoore, LCSW-S

There is a process for changing your life so as to live in today - for the here and now - for this moment - I call it "Living in the Serenity of Prayer". Anyone in a relationship will tell you that one of the most difficult aspects is communicating with their significant other about sensitive topics (like sex, money, the children, his or her parents, alcohol use, etc). I believe the best way to approach this issue is head-on. Consider practicing this and then when you are ready, ask the person who you are dealing with to sit and listen to a concern that you have.

Once the other person shows they are willing, consider saying something like this. "I would like to deal with this for the sake of both of us. I think our best bet is to deal with this in therapy until we really know what we are doing in trying to resolve this sort of thing on our own." See if you can get him or her to join you in a decision to table or postpone the issue until the two of you are in my office. Notice that I suggested "I would like..." vs. "Can we...?" In this way you are announcing your preference rather than asking his or hers. This does not mean you are closed to the preference of the other person, but rather that you are specifically interested in letting him or her know your preference. If the other person persists, listen... then listen some more. Then listen until they are completely finished talking - listen until they have said everything they need to say. Look straight at him or her and stay with it as long as they keep talking. As you listen, seek first to understand what the other person is saying (Covey's 7 Habits).

When you think you understand STOP and check to MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND. If the other party says that you don't understand, STOP – and do not respond further. Ask them to tell you again using different words. See if you can identify what words, tone, or inflection, or body language you are misinterpreting. (Notice I said "you are misinterpreting".)

Finally, when he or she has confirmed that you in fact do understand, you really do have an understanding. Now, these next steps are very important. Say, "I want to think about what you've said now that I understand. I want to respond to you but I want to make sure I'm clear on where I'm coming from first." Then, ask yourself if there is anything you can change relative to the issue that has been raised. If there is something you can change - ask God for the courage to change it - then change it! If there is nothing you can change, tell the other person there is nothing you can do to change this - ask God for the serenity to accept this - then accept it! If you're unclear if there's something you can do, ask God for the wisdom to know the difference - then know! This is Living the Serenity Prayer....

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