

# Dear Wendi: Beyond the Basics

by Steve Watson MSW, LCSW

What do you tell a 20-year-old woman about to set sail on the waters of matrimony? What kind of navigational aids could she use? Will she know how to deal with the sudden squalls and high seas? What does she know about righting a nearly swamped schooner. Can she learn how to recognize when to tack into the wind when to run before it...?

As father to six kids and a foster child, I've already launched four out onto the depths. Number five (Wendi) broke the news recently and plans for the ceremonial beginnings are set. It occurred to me that the first four got some pretty good advice, but all married before I had acquired the set of tools and processes known as NeuroLinguistic Programming. What can I tell/show/demonstrate to her as father to daughter that could be really useful?

## Rapport

Pacing and leading, pacing and leading, pacing... How many times have I utilized behaviors to set the stage for changes in therapy and supervision? How many times have I done that with my daughter? And have I explicitly pointed out how she can use the idea of pacing with words, with gestures, with posture, with tone of voice, with criteria words to maintain the beautiful rapport she now has with her beloved? Or to use matching and mirroring behaviors to help discover how her mate is thinking and feeling? Or how to create the moment when communication can begin even when a conflict arises by pacing the other's concerns before stating you own? Yep, better put that down on the lists.

## Dissociation/Association

Reflecting upon the early years of my own marriage, I can't help noticing how much I dissociated from any strong emotion and how much my loving wife stayed fully associated with all her feelings. How did we do it? How did we stay together and communicate?

Does my daughter Wendi realize she can have a choice about how to meet her own situations? And that it can be very useful to mentally step back from one's self - from one's feelings - to take a wholly different perspective and learn from it? Will she be willing and able to fully embrace the joy of a moment when it's in memory as well as when it happens? Will she have the courage and intelligence to do either or both (associate or dissociate) with the pains and the pleasures of married life to continually update, learn and grown in her relationship?

Well, better to have her know how to do it so she can make a choice. What else?

## Altered States

This was something that my wife could have used at least six times giving birth. (I've since noticed that by the time the youngest ones reached adolescence, she had learned to radically alter consciousness to promote survival.)

When my Oldest daughter had a natural home birth, it turned into a serious problem necessitating an emergency hospitalization. She experienced a great deal of pain difficulty. At about the same tin was involved in some training in hypnosis. When her number two c was on his way, I approached about how she was going manage birthing. "This time," she said, was going toa birthing room in a hospital but still wanted to have baby without anesthesia."

"How would you like to have the t with virtually no pain?" I asked.

"I'd like that fine!" she said.

After a few sessions of practicing trance behavior and reframing L pain to "working hard and fee good about the result" she was re.

Baby boy born, no problem, no pain, no episiotomies. She was, "like rubber," according to the doctor and yet was fully alert and cooperating beautifully with the process. After receiving her new son immediately after the birth, she was just tired from "working hard."

Definitely got to teach Wendi one. How many times she may thank herself for learning how she can do this for herself, I can't say.

What else? There's so much. I wish I had more time to teach her:  
Submodality changes; first, second third positions, criticism strategies creating well formed outcomes..

## Creating Your Own Future

Thirty-four years ago, I had specific scenarios that would run my mind and take up a fair amount of my free time. One was a richly detailed movie with myself as the main figure performing as a professional baseball player. The other was a further away (and up to my right) somewhat fuzzy but still bright and attractive. It was labeled "psychiatrist."

I played 4 years of minor league baseball with a modicum of success. The label "psychiatrist" changed several times and settled into "therapist" but that too was achieved several years ago. There are new movies running in my mind featuring a rather spry older guy.

How can I show my daughter Wendi how she can begin to take charge of her future and to involve her husband in it, and later her children? Can I tell her precisely how her representation of future expectations can be formulated and updated so that she is continually drawn toward making it a reality? How shall I alert her to the possibility of inadvertently creating futures from which she can only reap sorrow? And can she get the feel for adapting her futures as she gets more information so that she avoids unnecessary disappointment?

Whew? That's a big one that will probably require more ongoing conversations that we will have time for prior to the wedding. In fact, I can just see visiting her and her husband next year in California. Having already achieved a comfortable relationship with my son-in-law, we are on their patio having this very interesting conversation and... is that my grandchild crawling toward it's mother...?

## About the Author

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