**Domestic Violence** (pub. 9/25/12)

Domestic violence. How can these words go together? Wouldn’t it be better to say ‘domestic bliss’ or ‘domestic tranquility?’ And then we can comment on damnable violence or destructive violence.

Unfortunately, we live in a violent society and our family relationships become infested with terrible ideas of power and control. Folks seem to struggle with creatively solving problems or differences and instead turn to the most primitive and bruising of solutions; violence.

The Georgia Domestic Violence Conference is being held here in Macon, yesterday and today. Hundreds of interested people will gather to problem solve, network and be inspired.

**MYTH**:  Domestic violence is not a serious problem in the U.S. or in Georgia. **FACT**:  Battering is the single largest cause of injury to women in the United States – over mugging, automobile accidents and rape, combined. (NCADV 2003).  In 2009, Georgia was rated the 10th highest in the nation for the rate at which men kill women.  In 2010, Georgia mourned at least 130 domestic violence related deaths.

Domestic violence is an insidious problem that knows no boundaries. Safe house workers, Judges, ER Doctors, Police, Intervention Facilitators and Victim Advocates will present seminars and keynote speeches, all in the service of addressing a secret and silent monster hidden behind the closed doors of domestic privacy.

Relationships rarely begin in violence. We begin with romance and hope. We dream of better lives with our new found partner. But external experiences seep into our coupling; the examples of our parents, friends advice, a culture of idol worship and greed. Our dreams of bonding turn to fears of being controlled or abandoned. “I’m not going to be disrespected!” we say.

Soon, instead of living in bliss we’re yelling in anger. Suspicions and paranoia drive behaviors we only now remember from our childhood. The checkbook or the car, what you did last night or didn’t do, all are fodder for arguments and further isolation. Aggravation and frustrations become more than we can take and the pot boils over.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

My theory is that relationships get bad as folks become more desperate to hold on in what they perceive as growing distance. Fearing loss or pain they exert more power, more control.

What do we need to do? I guess it goes back to basic virtues. We need to practice trust, understanding, empathy, compassion. Simply we need to love more and fear less.

The simplest thing to do is to listen. Stop trying to be right and listen to your partner. You had some respect and even appreciation for them at some point prior to this difficulty. Try trust, or empathy, you might even believe in them and their point of view.

Being right can be wrong in a relationship. If I’m right then you have to be wrong and that naturally sets up separation and distance. Coupling is about togetherness and closeness. A couple cannot be a hierarchy where one is the boss and the other is the subordinate. Equality and a shared relationship require both to listen. Empathy means understanding the others feelings, even the others point of view.

Take a deep breath and try listening and appreciation. You may rekindle that love and passion along the way.