

Relationship Rehab Show

FREE DOWNLOAD Show #2

Free Gifts to Improve Your Relationships: Recognition and Appreciation

This excerpt is taken from "How to Stay Married & Love It EVEN MORE!" by Nancy Landrum, with Jim Landrum

Chapter 5 A World-Wide Famine



**“. . . abundance and lack are parallel realities;
every day I make the choice of which
one to inhabit.”**

Sarah Ban Breathnach¹

We don't like to think about the reality of famine. It's one of those unspeakable disasters that happen to other people, not us or those we love; yet we've all seen the photos. It is inconceivable that we could share a world that we know as so abundant with so many who are starving. While watching the appeals for donations on television programs, we feel appalled and helpless. Some give nothing because the little that can be given appears ludicrous in the face of so much need. Others give what they can even though they may never have the satisfaction of seeing with their own eyes the difference they've made.

Famine on the physical level is caused by inadequate nourishment to sustain health or life. There are other ways to starve, however. There is famine on the mental level—a lack of education. Some never have the opportunity to explore the world of knowledge,

¹ Ban Breathnach, Sarah, (1995). Simple Abundance, a Daybook of Comfort and Joy, forward. New York: Warner Books.

ideas, and theories. Others have the opportunity, but consume mental “food” at only a subsistence level, barely enough to survive in an increasingly complex world.

Spiritual famine also exists—the hunger for meaning and purpose in life, the desire to deeply *know* that there is order and intelligence beyond our own.

The famine addressed in this chapter is a condition that every one of us has the power to alleviate. The craving I’m writing about cannot be satisfied with a Big Mac, a textbook or faith. It is the hunger to know that someone is *grateful* we are alive and the hunger of character that can only be filled by having a *grateful heart*. It is often buried, but we all hunger to have our accomplishments or our being *recognized*, to be *appreciated* for our efforts or character, and to be *encouraged* to own the magnificence of who we are or can be.

RECOGNITION

Some time ago I had the flu. I was miserable. I climbed into bed and turned on the television even though it usually bores me. I thought it would help me go to sleep quickly. Instead, I happened on the televising of Disney’s Teacher of the Year awards. Hundreds of teachers had been considered and 30 of them were present in Boston for the finals. Film clips were shown of each teacher in action with quotes from his or her colleagues and students. It was incredibly inspiring! In spite of having to fight to keep my eyelids open, I couldn’t turn it off!

There was one sad aspect of the ceremony, however. Of the ten who were called forward to receive this honor, almost every one of them, in tears, said something like, “This (recognition) never happens to us! We don’t teach to get recognition, but this is just too wonderful!” How sad that people who wield so much influence over our children are starving for recognition!

It’s sad when those who serve us are ignored, but it’s tragic when those we *love* are starving for our recognition! If I’m not careful, my daily routine can blur my awareness that Jim comes home faithfully to me every night or that our grandchildren have loving, involved parents. It’s not that I need to make a meaningless mantra of recognizing every little thing—recognition might even lose its meaning if it were constant—but everyone deserves heart-felt recognition for the contributions that bless my life or bless those I love.

For my parents 50th wedding anniversary celebration, my sisters and I sent invitations to all the friends, former employees, family members, and church associates whom we could locate. We asked them, whether or not they could attend, to write letters describing a favorite memory of my folks or recognition for a kindness given, etc. They were mailed to me one week ahead of the party so I had time to fill a huge photo album with them. My mother had taken thousands of photos through the years, so we also prepared a slide show of the highlights of their lives, recognizing many of the qualities for which they were esteemed. My parents ate it up! Who wouldn’t! The next day I found out that my dad was so jazzed that he sat up all night reading and rereading the letters from his children, grandchildren, friends and associates.

Why do we wait to give a gift that is so precious? It shouldn’t require a 50th anniversary, retirement party, or even worse, a memorial service to recognize the gift of someone’s life.

APPRECIATION

Recently we drove to San Diego to see Joey play in a baseball travel league. He is 16 years old, six-foot-four, and a terrific pitcher. He usually plays on weekends when we're unable to attend, so we were thrilled to get to see him play this Friday. His team had already won the first three elimination games and was expected to win this semi-final and go on to play the championship in the San Diego College Stadium.

One of Joey's teammates, however, had trouble controlling his mouth. Early in the game the umpire warned him to refrain from using certain words. In about the fifth inning, when they were ahead 10-9, the boy didn't like a call and let loose with the forbidden words. The umpire simply pointed his finger in the direction of the parking lot and said, loudly and clearly, "Out!" The boy was a star player and a team sparkplug at bat. According to the rules, being kicked out of one game meant he couldn't play in the next game, as well. He took it badly. It required several minutes and a lot of help for him to leave the premises. Joey's entire team was rattled, lost their lead, and then lost the game.

Afterwards, as he gathered his gear and was walking off the field, Jim approached the umpire and said, "I want to tell you how much I appreciate the good job of umpiring you did, and I especially appreciate your stand against profanity with these boys." The umpire's face broke into a gigantic grin as he replied, "Sir, you've made my day!" Jim went on to explain that the kid he booted was on *our* team. The ump said, "Now you've *really* made my day!"

Of the hundred or so adults there, Jim was the only one who expressed any appreciation to this underpaid, unassuming hero who had demonstrated his love for the boys during the game by frequent gentle pats and words of praise. I suppose he umpires many games in between the occasional words of appreciation from a coach, parent or kid.

One of my clients had complained several times about her husband's lack of appreciation for her. I suggested that she ask for it. She was shocked. Would it be right to ask for appreciation for things that are just her assigned jobs in the family? Yes! And it is also appropriate to frequently express appreciation to him for bringing home his paycheck, and any other of his tasks or traits that contribute to the successful running of the family and her quality of life!

Most of us are starving for appreciation. Just because I do the laundry every Monday doesn't mean I shouldn't be appreciated for it! I used to fold and hang and put away all of Jim's clean clothes. He assumed clean clothes would always be in the drawer or closet. Then I began leaving the folded items on the bed and the shirts hanging on the door jam. He put them away without comment the first week. The second week he asked why I was leaving them out. I answered, "Because I want to be appreciated for doing a job that I don't particularly enjoy." Now, as he's putting away his clean clothes, he rarely fails to tell me how much he appreciates them and me! His appreciation for me, and mine for him, feeds our desire to do more for each other—it keeps our respective bank accounts brimming over!

I've heard many people say that the only time they were noticed was when they had done something "bad." Why do we think it's O.K. to take for granted desirable behavior as though it's our right to get it from someone we love, and yet gripe or punish when that loved one does something that inconveniences us or of which we don't approve? It's long been reported by psychologists, who have examined the matter, that we get more of whatever we reinforce with our attention. Negative attention for negative

behavior generates more of the same. Positive attention for positive behavior generates more of the same. We choose what we want more of!

ENCOURAGEMENT

The last nourishing gift I'm going to discuss is encouragement. As he was growing up, Jim's mother repeatedly told him that he could do anything he wanted to do in life. He so thoroughly believed her that, even though he was socially awkward and insecure, it never occurred to him that he couldn't do whatever he chose as a profession. He consistently got top grades. From the age of eight he mowed lawns and by 14 years old was working the equivalent of three paper routes. As soon as he was old enough, he worked in a grocery store. He saved most of the money from all of these jobs for college. In spite of marrying after his first year of college, he supported his wife and first daughter while finishing college and graduate school. His beautiful baritone voice and youth choirs have been heard in hundreds of churches throughout the Southwest. At one time, in one church, he had more than 600 persons from toddlers to seniors involved in choirs. He's sold thousands of gospel music albums. He's sung the national anthem for the Los Angeles Lakers and Dodgers and dozens of Anaheim Angels ball games. He's done exactly what he wanted with his life, because his mother was willing to give him the encouragement he needed in order to thrive.

Florence Littauer, a highly respected speaker and author of numerous books, has delivered her "Silver Boxes" speech² to hundreds of audiences. In it, she likens giving precious words of encouragement to handing out little silver boxes with ribbons on them.

In that speech she tells about her father who ran a struggling corner grocery store during the years Florence and her brothers were growing up. Florence excelled in English and Composition, earning a scholarship to college. One day when she came home for the weekend, her father took a small brown box out of hiding behind the piano. He opened it, showing her numerous articles he had written that had been published by community and denominational church papers. She had no idea he could write! She asked why he hadn't pursued writing as a profession. He shrugged his shoulders as he explained that her mother was afraid they would be embarrassed by rejection since he was "uneducated." Even though he had nurtured a broad and varied interest in literature and poetry in his children and had many letters to the editor published, he believed his wife. A few days later, he unexpectedly died, never having known the pleasure of doing what he loved for a living. His dream was never realized, in part because he was starved to death from lack of encouragement.

I've wanted to write a book since I learned to read. It was a secret desire, not one I dared to share with anyone. While a junior in high school, my English teacher gave us the assignment of reading a classic from the list he provided. We were to write and orally present a book report. I loved my choice and enjoyed writing about it. I was so timid I rarely spoke up in class, but for some reason he called on me to deliver the first book report. When I finished, my teacher immediately jumped up and said, "Now, *that* was a professional-quality book review!" Those eight words fanned the flame of my dream, and helped to keep it alive until I had time to do all the living I needed to do before having something to write *about*!

² Her inspiring presentation is available as a book, cassette, or video from CLASServices, Inc. Phone #505-899-4283 or www.classervices.com.

Before we were even married, Jim began to tell me I had a book in me. As our marriage stabilized and our love deepened, Jim continued to give me occasional words of encouragement to pursue my dream. A few years ago he read about a little girl, like me, who dreamed of seeing her book featured in her hometown library. More than 30 years later, she visited the library where her dream had been born, to see her book promoted on the display by the checkout desk. He cut out the article, attached a note of encouragement, and left it on the stairs where he knew I'd find it. At that time, writing a book was the furthest thing from my mind, but when I read his words of belief in me, I burst into tears. Underneath the clutter of my life at that time, Jim's encouragement fed my dream.

I recently mailed book proposals along with a few sample chapters to six agents in New York. I came home and, again, burst into tears. What if they don't like it? What if they tear it apart? Jim told me, again, that this book is good and, if they have any sense, these agents will fight over the chance to represent me to a publisher! Jim printed "How to Stay Married & Love It! by Nancy Landrum" on a sheet of paper. I wrapped it around a book from our shelf. He drove me to a new bookstore in our neighborhood and was glad to look foolish with me as he took a picture of me holding "my book" up in front of the store. If you're reading this, it's because it has, indeed, been published. Without Jim's encouragement, I seriously doubt that this book would ever have found its way into your hands.

A few weeks after publication, we hosted a "meet the author" session in that same book store!

If, by any chance, you are saying to yourself, "I'm the one who is starving for appreciation and encouragement. Why doesn't George (or Mary) give them to me?" Perhaps because he (or she) is in the death throws of starvation as well. Remember how Jim told me during our dating that he intended to love me, and love me, and love me, until my loving cup filled up and overflowed to love him back? Remember how, by *giving* respect, I *gained* self-respect?³ Do you understand that by *giving* recognition for behavior you want, you *get* more of it back? It's a law. Somewhere I heard it called the Law of Reciprocity. The prophets of all the major religions taught some version of this Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

Call it the Golden Rule, or Karma, or The Rule of Reciprocity—you can't consistently be a *giver* without richly *receiving* in return. None of us needs the influence of high office or great wealth to wield a great deal of power. Each of us has *immense* power to alleviate the "famine" by feeding the "hungry" around us with our words of gratitude, recognition, appreciation and encouragement. Let it begin with your SoulMate!

Puzzle Piece #6: Feed your relationships with thoughtfulness.

"I will nourish my partner and others by generously giving words of gratitude, recognition, appreciation, and encouragement."

³ Corner Puzzle Piece #3 in How to Stay Married & Love It by Nancy Landrum.
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**"The deepest principle of human nature is the
craving to be appreciated."
William James II⁴**

**"Without appreciation, a marriage will begin to shrivel,
wither, and eventually die.
Everyone needs a cheerleader occasionally."
Victor M. Parachin⁵**

*"Kind words are like honey—enjoyable and healthful."
Proverbs 16:24*

*"Gentle words cause life and health;
gripping brings discouragement."
Proverbs 15:4*

⁴ James, William, (August 1920). "Familiar Letters of William James II," [The Atlantic Monthly](#), Volume 126, No. 2; p. 163-175.

⁵ Parachin, V. M. (1995, June/July). "What Makes a Marriage Last," [Modern Bride Magazine](#), page 70.

Putting these rehab tools into practice!

The most effective words of encouragement, appreciation, recognition and gratitude are naming something very specific. For instance, "You're a wonderful husband" is not nearly as powerful as, "It was so thoughtful of you to clean up the kitchen last night" or, "I know you always do this chore, but I want you to know how grateful I am that you take care of the

Is there someone who is demonstrating an admirable quality or has recently accomplished something positive, (no matter how small) that you could recognize and give praise for?

What can you appreciate about someone in your immediately family? (Even, or especially, if it is something that they do consistently but are rarely acknowledged for doing!) What might happen if you were to give appreciate to each member of your family for something specific (and different) every day? _____

Do you recall a story from the show that touched you? Write down the essence of that story or example here. _____

Changing our emotional focus from the negative to the positive has a wonderfully healing effect on the receiver, but also on you, the giver. AND if you are in need of appreciation or recognition,
ASK FOR IT!