

# EXCESS BAGGAGE

by Elizabeth Broyles and Barry Rinderknecht

**Packing for a journey is an art while packing for a marriage is a challenge!**

**What are the needs and wants in your relationship? The list might include trust, romance, loyalty, independence, respect, intimacy, quality time, empathy, commitment, passion, integrity, recognition, romance and humor, to name a few. What have we packed to support each other on our travels through our marriage? The contents will indicate the rewards we reap, with the depth in sharing our human spirits. When partners choose to identify our common and not so common needs and wants, they will be joined in a bond of awareness and understanding. The feeling of fulfillment within a relationship comes from interacting with positive regard and the nurturing of another's desires. For us as a couple, vulnerability, choosing to be locked into our own self-centeredness and fear can prevent us from being open to awareness and change in our individual perspectives. FEAR is false evidence appearing real. Most of what we fear does not come true. Often, we choose our own "emotional blindness" within a marriage.**

## **Magnifying Glass**

**Let's take a close look at the items we choose to carry. Could it be that we are blind to our baggage? Are we aware of our quirks? Do we spend more time pointing the finger at one another? If only he was not such a people pleaser! If only she were not so picky! Examining honestly, what we pack and carry with us can be detrimental to our relationship. Deciding to discard it, we can create a closeness with our beloved. If you look at your baggage, you may feel anxious which is understandable. Without inspecting our flaws or quirks, we are unable to move forward with the opportunity for connectedness.**

## **Blind Spots**

**Our inner obstacles may be difficult to dispose of because we tend to rationalize, deny or blame them away. We have a constellation of beliefs,**

feelings, personality traits and behavior patterns that are comfortable for us. We feel threatened by the possibility of ridding ourselves of these blocks without viewing a larger context, our marriage. If your blindness comes between you and your partner's peace of mind and sense of well-being, then throwing some of the contents in that baggage off the train is the solution.

Let us contemplate six tangible items to draw an analogy for our possible blind spots.

- \* TV Remote -- Need for Control
- \* Pad Lock -- Need for Security
- \* Hand Mirror -- Need to Focus on Self
- \* Judge's Gavel -- Need for Might Makes Right
- \* Feather Boa -- Need to Create Drama
- \* Spool of Twine -- Need to be a Victim, Tangled

Explore these six blind spots and perhaps others in your relationship. Decide to dialogue with each other and make plans to practice not falling into a continued sightless approach with interactions. Beware of expectations of yourself, your spouse and your marriage. These can range from old childhood ideas, the hopes and dreams for the future and unrealistic expectations.

## **Check the Side Pockets**

You may want to "unpack" some irritations, hurts or annoyances. These may be things left over from an earlier part of your trek together that needs to be trashed. Each of you make a list and share, while extending no judgment about the content. Assertively listen with your heart and paraphrase back your partners responses. Praise each other for taking the risk to share and confront the feelings that have in the past kept you apart emotionally.

## **Valuables, Souvenirs, Mementos**

We hold many dear memories in our hearts, including smells, sounds, vistas and music. Examples could be our wedding day, the birth of our children or grandchildren, a gift for an anniversary, a vacation we enjoyed or participating together to achieve a mutual goal. Regardless of the event,

time or place, they are all treasured and we carry them with us always. Revisiting these memories strengthens our connections and provides the warmth of structure to the foundation of our lives. If we take the opportunity to repack our bags from time to time, including our memories, the journey will be most rewarding. The challenge is getting started and just doing it!

## **If I Had to Choose One Moment**

Moments can be included as we pack our bags. Our moment was one sunny autumn afternoon in 1985. With a brilliant kaleidoscope of leaves swirling around us, we stopped to rest from a cycling ride on the Great River Road in Illinois. We held hands and kissed for the first time. This is music that plays in our minds when we reminisce about this moment. Nat King Cole's voice is heard with his rendition of the song, "That Sunday (That Summer)" with the words....

**If I had to choose one moment to live within  
my heart**

**it would be that tender moment recalling how  
we started**

**Darling it would be when you smiled at me  
that way, that Sunday, that Summer**

One of the most powerful activities that you can do for your marriage is to realize that you have your own amazing memories of two people joined together as a result of a special moment. We can take a pledge to replay the story of us, including these special touches that enhance the romance and we will surely smile as we take that stroll down memory lane as we check the content of our bags.

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