

## Measuring goodwill

I am writing this thought as a bit of a word of caution.

My focus is on the nature and extent of investment we make into our relationships in a variety of modes, some examples of which are warmth, time, effort, love, care, resources, gestures, gifts and of course finances. We know what we are investing because we are aware of the choices we are making about this all the time. Our primary relationship is where we channel the best of what we are and have because we are creating meaning both for ourselves and, hopefully for our partners as well. At least, this is always our hope and expectation - that what we are investing into the relationship will be recognised for the contribution that it is and the goodwill we believe we are creating. We also hope that our contribution will be appropriately received. We have a natural expectation that our partners will value our contribution as much as we do, and of course that they will respond with warmth and goodwill too. There is also a natural expectation that our partners are investing as well, perhaps in different modes to how we contribute, but at least with devotion and goodwill. And it's important for us to recognise their gestures and contribution too.

All in an ideal world.

For some of us in relationships with an ASD adult, there is a gradual realisation within our souls that the ways we are contributing are not actually being recognised or valued. I've touched on this in a previous writing, but just wanted to expand on it a little.

The reason why I think it could ultimately create trouble is if or when one of these relationships ends and negotiations are attempted to measure or value each partner's contribution in order to work out a fair and reasonable settlement. We know it's not all about the money, and the Courts recognise the existence of goodwill and all the many ways that partners contribute to their situations over many years. It is always nice to think that a settlement can be worked out without the help of lawyers and courts, but when our partner can only measure their own contribution and not ours, we are left in a somewhat disadvantaged and powerless position, unable to influence an outcome that we know is fair.

What concerns me is that in a number of situations I'm aware of, the ASD adult can only recognise the modes of contribution that can be measured, which are typically only the material and financial aspects.

For those who've adjusted their own careers in order to have children, to study, to support their partner's study or career choices, etc, all things that couples do to support each other and their lives together, they may be left in a shaky position.

I don't mean to create fear, but as we learned in our April meeting, awareness places us in a position where we can make choices now about how and what we continue to invest into a relationship that may not actually ultimately be the relationship and future we have imagined and are working towards.

If an ASD adult doesn't recognise the ways you know you are contributing because he/she cannot measure that, you will not be able to quantify your contribution at any point in the relationship including if and when the relationship ends. This is part of that black hole we talk about. Pouring our hearts and souls into a relationship and person we value, but not having our contribution valued. This is similar to the concept of saving money in the bank but the statements never showing the deposits, and the balance is still nil. Ultimately we may realise a similar feeling to being bankrupt even though we've invested much. Our contribution is too precious to be content with that.

Carol Grigg, May 2014