

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MOTIVATED ONE

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This letter of 1971 augments some of the principles articulated in his 1966 letter, focusing on the responsibility of the motivated one. Very seldom do a couple come in with equal energy to think about the family system and what is on their plate. Again, the knowledge of how emotional systems operate drives the principles.

Tuesday 5-4-71

Dear

I have one brief communication which I hope may make some sense. It is off this point of your last letter, but it does apply somehow.

Here goes---It has to do with the clank of righteousness, too often worn by the family member who has made an effort to change, whose effort has bogged down or become ambushed, and who then blames the failure on the other, and who makes demands that the other make a similar effort to change. From my experience, the motivation and initiative and responsibility still rests with the one who started the change, and it stays there until the other develops enough motivation to start moving on his own, and if the "other" is really alive, he will usually start a course that the first does not approve.

I think the one who initiates change is the one who is most uncomfortable with the situation. There are no medals nor certificates of commendation for this effort. In fact, the other may be critical of the effort to change. I think the one who initiates the change still has the responsibility for change until the other develops some motivation to change things on his own. Hopefully, there is a stage of cooperative teamwork which is more than compliance. Even after spouses can get into a teamwork project, the initiating one still has the responsibility for defining problems and taking initiative for change until the other can begin to see problems.

Translated to you and _____, I think you are the one who has the basic responsibility for change, if anything is to be changed, that you have bogged down in your effort, that you are blaming him for your discomfort and unhappiness, that the only problem he knows from his own frame of reference is your unhappiness, etc.

End of communication. I have already talked more than I had planned for this note. From my perception of things at the APA, you are not missing much by staying home.

Sincerely,