



Catherine McCall, CGE from the very First Cohort, Speaks of her Experience with Bringing Baby Home

-By Catherine McCall

I'm a grad of the first CGE training. A convergence of personal and professional experiences fueled my eagerness to invest in the program. I'd been a marriage and family therapist for many years and had grown weary of interviewing couples on the verge of divorce 5-10 years after their children were born. I was also deeply disturbed by the plague of father absence from the day-to-day routine tasks of childrearing in our culture. At the same time, the older two of my four daughters were pregnant and having babies. In preparation, they and their husbands attended various courses at hospitals, and it became clear to me that though these classes were excellent, none of them attended to how having a baby will impact the marriage. So, I created a three-hour course, which I taught at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta. In fact I named the course *Bringing Baby Home* (which I later dropped, for obvious reasons). Almost a year into it, I heard through the marriage and family therapy grapevine that John Gottman had been doing research about what happens in marriage after the birth of the first child, and that he was creating workshops based on this research. Already familiar with the quality of his work in my field, I contacted the Relationship Research Institute to inquire, and the rest is history!

Speaking of history, my husband Peter and I have been married for 40 years, but, both born in St. Mary's Hospital in Brooklyn, NY, we met the day I was born and my Isolette was wheeled into the nursery and placed beside his. Couples get a kick out of this, as I advise them to be sure to take note of the baby next to their infant in the hospital nursery!

There is another, darker aspect of my history however, that is a core source of my passion for these workshops, and it concerns the horrific abuse I endured as a child. Much of my time these days goes into speaking engagements and book events geared at child abuse prevention and recovery. But *Bringing Baby Home* is my favorite child abuse prevention project. It allows me to draw from every aspect of my life experience as I meet and engage with these hopeful new parents, and they gift me with the privilege of influencing their lives during this profoundly tender time of their lives...*and* as a real perk, I get to see pictures of their adorable new babies if they email me after the birth!

I remain grateful to John and Julie Gottman and the BBH team for all the work that has gone into their efforts to strengthen marriages, parents, and babies.

Catherine McCall, author of the memoir *When the Piano Stops*, leads *Bringing Baby Home* workshops for the Care and Counseling Center in Sandy Springs, GA, a suburb of Atlanta. Their next workshop is scheduled for Oct. 23 & 30. She is also a contributing writer for Psychology Today Magazine www.psychologytoday.com/blog/overcoming-child-abuse. More information about her can be found at www.catherinemccall.net.