

WHAT TO EXPECT IN RELATIONSHIPS

Seduction And Romantic Love

We are seduced into relationships for many reasons, for support and approval, to overcome our feelings of loneliness, fear and insecurity, to explore our passion and sexuality, to feel power and control, to be needed, to have fun, to love and be loved, to have children, or even because we're curious. If you look at romantic love closely, you'll find yourself most passionately drawn to those who provide you with feelings that are familiar, even if unpleasant. For this reason, our first relationships are often very similar to our parental ones. What we know and understand feels safe. That's why unconsciously, you will find yourself romantically attracted to people with qualities and values like yours, your parents or people who you knew and gave you support as a child. This isn't bad, because we need to feel comfortable and safe before we can open our hearts and express our love for another. In an environment of fear, love is impossible. Unless there is some kind of safety, chemistry or romance in a relationship, few of us will want to continue. Keep in mind however that this chemistry is brewed out of what we find safe, comfortable, familiar and what seems to offer the opportunity to satisfy important needs left unfulfilled in past relationships. It often feels like, "This person can love and accept me like my parents or past lover never could."

The Challenge

No matter how passionate and perfect a relationship begins, when and if we are ready, our deepest fears and emotional wounds will eventually begin to surface. This is the **painful gift** and **challenge** of any long-term relationship, a challenge and opportunity for growth that very few of us expect, ask for, recognize, or know how to handle effectively.

Most of us have been led to believe and expect that our relationship partner will support, value and love us above all else and that the passion and romance will continue, at least at some level. When these fears and wounds begin to surface, it feels and looks like the person we have grown to trust and depend on for our support and love is trying to hurt, betray, or abandon us. Since our own fear and pain begins to block love from being felt or expresses, the honeymoon phase comes crashing to a halt. At this point we strike out with blame and anger or withdraw and close off our heart, or leave the relationship. The wounds and fears that surface revolve around issues like abandonment and disappointment, or loss of identity, trust, control, power, worth, respect and approval, or feeling trapped, overwhelmed, helpless, and vulnerable. By far the most threatening and painful involves the issue of abandonment and the fear of being left alone, which we equate with death. It's uncanny just how well our partners, children, parents and bosses can trigger, or reflect our deepest fears and emotional wounds. When we are young and have the opportunity, we get pretty good at the anger, blame and leaving response to this kind of experience.

The Gifts

Lost in all the fear and pain, few of us can see any gift in this experience, especially when we are young with Cinderella expectations for our relationships. It feels more like betrayal. Since these fears and wounds are within our own consciousness and since they act like dark clouds that block the light of our inner peace and happiness, any relationship or situation that brings them to the surface where they can be recognized and released is a real gift. These fears and pains have been hidden within us for so long, however, we have no idea they exist or just how much brighter our life would be if they were removed. Without them, our ability to experience the light and joy of unconditional love will dramatically increase. It will be like removing a heavy, metal, suit of Armour and walking straight into the warm, summer sun.

Relationships are mirrors. Our partners, parents, children and bosses reflect and trigger what we see and like within ourselves as well as what we don't see, don't like and fear. You can be sure you are looking at a part of yourself if you have a strong reaction of like or dislike, love or hate, towards anyone you are relating to. We won't react unless what we see or feel is hitting close to home. The gift here is a good chance to see and accept yourself, a primary key

to emotional growth and change. Acceptance does not mean we must like or be content with what we see, but does give us the ability to change.

***“The Awareness and Acceptance of where I am are my Keys
To the Kingdom of Change.”***

How to Deal Constructively With Relationship Issues

In any relationship, the hardest part of this process is getting to the point of giving up the anger and blame or desire to leave. When we begin to feel our pain and fear in a relationship, everything within us screams out with righteous indignation, “This is all your fault. If you change, I will feel better.” If we are ready to deal constructively with this experience, the universe usually gives us a hand by placing us in a situation where we cannot too easily escape. Next we connect with articles like this or teachers who point to the light at the end of the tunnel. If you find yourself locked in a relationship of anger, pain, fear or blame, see if you can give up the blame, breathe into, feel and express the pain and fear. To rid yourself of pain and fear, you need only experience, endure and survive it. At this point, counselling may help you give up the blame and hang in to feel the fear, express the pain, and heal faster.

When To Stay And When to Leave

Sometimes the lesson in a relationship is to gain the courage to leave. Sometimes the lesson is to gain the courage to stay and make it work. It really depends on where and how great the fear. Most relationships come to a not too pleasant end when the pain and fear experienced by one partner becomes too strong to endure. Although blame is most often and strongly cast, usually the real issue is feeling too vulnerable, too fearful, too much love or too much pain, too fast. The pain and fear we leave unfinished in one relationship will surface as soon as we are ready in the next. In each relationship we enter, we will go as far as we are able into experiencing these fears and emotional wounds. Sometime we just need some breathing space and rest from the issues of one relationship to get us ready to face them more successfully in the next. Because our growth is so accelerated these days, few of us will learn all of our lessons in one relationship. As we get older, wiser, and less fearful, we tend to hang in a relationship longer and start dealing more constructively and responsibly with the fear and pain based issues that arise.

No one can really tell you when to stay in or leave a relationship and many times the decision will be taken out of your hands, always for right reasons. In an abusive relationship, the abused must gain enough courage to leave and face the fear of being alone. It’s called “suffering ones death” because to be alone feels like dying. If the fear, on the other hand, is opening up your heart and feeling vulnerable, then the challenge will be to hang in and experience your vulnerability and the love beyond. For a large part of our lives, we’re usually angry, blaming or out the door before we know why. When you are angry or upset in any relationship, withdraw, do some deep breathing and get a handle on what fear or pain within you has been triggered. See your parent, partner, child or boss as the trigger offering you a chance to heal this pain or fear, not the cause. Once you have experienced, endured and successfully survived these issues, it will be easy for you to decide whether it’s time to stay or leave. Your heart-felt feelings will tell you. If you leave with anger, blame, or fear, then your lessons in that relationship have not been learned and will present themselves in the next. You probably just need a rest so you’re more ready to learn them in your next encounter.

Whether we are left or leave a relationship, the end goal is to move beyond the anger and the blame, feel and heal the pain and fear, forget all except the love experienced, and finally, feel only gratitude for all the lessons learned. This is the true meaning of forgiveness. **Good Luck!**

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