

Love, Relationships and Romance

*the number one reason why relationships fail and what you can do to
avoid heartache, disappointment and frustration*

It's everywhere!!!! It's in the movies. It's on the radio. It was passed down to us by our parents and we are all working so hard for it. We will do just about anything to get a taste of it. When that magical moment comes, we experience a high like no other . . . but only to be followed by a crash. Like an addict, we seek it with reckless abandon.

I'm talking about . . . conditional love. It is the main reason why relationships fail. It is the kind of love that both men and women have spiritually, emotionally and sometimes physically prostituted themselves for. It is seductive, toxic and destructive. It is a kind of love that is in response to the ideas of separation and fantasy. It is built on selfishness and sustained by fear.

At best, conditional love will bring moments of relief. Your partner will give you a gift and that makes you feel good. It makes you feel thought of. And for a while, you feel loved. Until . . . you are expected to pay the price of that gift. Now they want something in return – for you to never leave, to always look good, to take care of them or more sex.

Most of us would not admit that this is the dynamic of what is being played out in our romantic relationships, but it is. We would like to think we love our partners unconditionally. We would like to believe that we only want the best for them. But we don't. And until we can be fully honest about that, nothing will change in the area of romance.

We have idealized this whole idea of romance. We have made it about beautiful weddings, hot bodies and “happy ever afters.” If you have a pulse and you have been in a romantic relationship you know that it's anything but a fairy tale ending. Usually, we are left with heartache, disappointment and deep frustration.

Why?

Because we ultimately did not find what we were looking for. We want love and we will practically sell our souls to get it. We will lie, manipulate and suppress our truth for the sake of someone else's love, affection and security. We will protect ourselves, build walls and run like hell when things get difficult.

At worst, conditional love compounds the feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and emptiness. It is simply nothing more than a “fleeting high” followed by a painful crash. Once the newness wears off and our “stuff” starts to surface, we are faced with the harsh reality that what we thought would bring us happiness has only brought us disappointment.

So let's retrace our footsteps for a moment.

How in the world did we get so far off track? How did we get ourselves into such a state of heartache? Is this world really an unsafe place to live? Is our external world to blame?

First of all, we have to take a wholehearted look at what we believe about love. Most people would say that love hurts. I disagree. Love doesn't hurt. Love is not the enemy. Love is not the cause of our suffering. Love did not leave us lonely. And Love has not nor will ever abandon us. Not the kind of Love I'm speaking of . . . *unconditional Love*.

Most of us cannot even comprehend the idea of unconditional love because we have felt the sting of ridicule, criticism and shame. Somewhere along the line we learned the difference between “right” and “wrong.” If we did the “right” thing, we received love. If we did the “wrong” thing, we received punishment and banishment.

Usually, we learn this when we are children and developing our relationships with parents, teachers and other authority figures. As children, if we don’t feel loved or we are afraid that love will leave us, we will feel it as though it is death.

Remember, that is from a child’s perspective. Our adult self can look back and say, “oh yeah, they all did the best they could.” As adults, we can see it all very differently. The problem still remains that what we learned about love is all based on conditions and doing it “right.” Early on, our foundation was built on getting good grades, making the team or squad, being accepted into elite programs, getting along with our siblings, being quiet and not causing problems. The list could go on and on and on.

We are brilliant in our figuring out how to get love. When we related to people who only showed us love and affection when we were good and disappointment when we were “bad”, it leaves us with a very distorted view of love. How in the world could we possibly expect ourselves to know anything different in our adulthood?

Until we have really questioned what we believe, know and experienced love to be, we cannot be open to changing it. How do you know if what you believe about love is “off”? *You know it by the way you feel.*

Ask yourself, in the area of romance, “have I ever felt or currently feel” . . .

Disappointed

Abandoned

Betrayed

Empty

Alone

Afraid to speak my truth

The need to hide or suppress who I am

Emotionally, spiritually and mentally exhausted and drained

Hopeless

Depressed

Apathetic

Numb

If we feel or have ever felt these emotions in romance, our perspective of love and relationships have been or are currently skewed. That doesn't mean that we are a "failure" in relationship if these feelings arise in us. Sometimes we just can't help it. However, the difference lies in *what we do with them*.

If we keep playing the victim and choosing to believe that love and other people are the cause of our suffering, we will never experience what it truly means to give and receive unconditional love. On the other hand, if we retrace our footsteps and really get down about what we learned about love and how we have gone about getting it, the true source of our pain will be revealed to us. From that point, we can begin to learn how to do Love, Relationships and Romance differently.

How can we learn how to approach our romantic lives differently?

Take Responsibility

We have to be willing to see that other people do not cause us pain or disappointment. When we feel empty and unsafe, we naturally look outside of ourselves for some relief or validation that we are good and worthy.

The problem is that it never works. Even if the external world tells us that we are beautiful, smart and talented, it's still never enough. We must know those things for ourselves. Then when someone shares a compliment with us, it only magnifies our "knowingness" that we are beautiful, smart and talented. Their compliment becomes a gift of love rather than a drug that induces temporary relief.

It is so vitally important that we understand that our thoughts, the stories we make up, the negative conversations we are having in our heads, the assumptions we make, the judgments we project, etc. *is the cause of our pain*. When we look outside of ourselves and believe that our partner's behavior is hurtful, judgmental or less than what we think it should be, we will perceive them as the "bad guy." That automatically places us in the victim role.

Victim / Perpetrator; Worthy / Unworthy; One Up/ One Down; Parent / Child; Controller / Submissive – all of those roles will ultimately crumble. They will not sustain a relationship because they are based on conditional love which is not really love at all. There is always a price to pay and in the end, you never get to experience the authenticity of your heart's desire.

Resolution and powerful transformation occurs when we really take an honest inventory of how we have shown up in romance. We must take an honest look at our negative thoughts and emotions we hold towards our significant other – past or present. And we must place our behavior under a microscope so that we can be very clear about *how* we close our hearts, push people away and protect ourselves.

We have got to stop making our pain and suffering about our partner. We must have the courage to look in the mirror and see that we *are the ones perpetuating our own agony*. By doing so it allows us to really get “in the game” of our own life. So often, when we engage in relationships based on conditional love, we feel powerless and as if the world is against us. You can not change your partner, but you can absolutely change the way you show up with your partner.

We want to feel free in the presence of someone else’s opinions, agendas and authority in our lives. We want to be able to navigate our experience with clarity and certainty. We want to feel grounded and of sure footing in the truth we desire to speak. And those things will never happen until we splash a glass of ice water in our face and become responsible for what we’re thinking and how we are showing up in our romantic relationships.

Resist Making Up Stories In Your Head

There is never a better time than right now to tell ourselves the honest truth about ourselves, about our life and about our world view.

If we keep holding on to that tired old belief that one day our romantic life is going to magically be all that we have ever hoped and dreamed it would be, we need to smack ourselves. If we think that hiding our flaws and only showing our “good side” is going to get us the love we are desperate for, we need to smack ourselves. If we tell ourselves that “I’ll wait until they can get themselves together and then we can have a beautiful relationship”, we need to *really* smack ourselves.

We can never, ever really know what someone else’s heart is until we are face to face with them and they are speaking for themselves. If we start making up how we think our partner feels or how we think they will respond to us, we have constricted the energy flow between us and there is no room for truth.

It is so important for us to see our partners as who they really are. They are not an object meant to make us happy or fulfill our hopes and dreams. They are never meant for our convenience and entertainment. And the same holds true for us. They are people with feelings, heartache, gifts, talents, abilities, disappointment, hurt, etc. In other words they are just like you and me.

Our significant others have good days and bad days. They, too, are in the process of waking up and you and I both know that that is not always easy. Some days they are loving and some days they are insecure and fearful. At times they can listen to us with a sincere heart. Other times they want to make us their source of happiness and demand we meet their expectations. They are just like you and me. And just like you and me . . .they just want love and to be loved.

So we must do our part and quit making up a bunch of stories about who we think they are and who we think we should be in their presence. We have to relinquish our neediness long enough to have compassion and a real sense of honor for who they really are and to whom they belong to.

Just because we are married to them or in a committed relationship with them, doesn't mean we own them. The flip side of that is true also, we are not owned by them. We belong to Love. And Love is the only relationship worthy of our time and attention to cultivate and nurture within us.

That means we fall in love with our life, with our brilliance, our genius, our quirks, all the ways in which we procrastinate, past mistakes, the part of us that feels inadequate, the part of us that feels magnificent, empowered and capable of achieving all of our hopes and dreams. We fall in love with our whole self – every bit of who we are. And we learn to see that everything around us is either love or it's a call for love. It's one or the other and it's never more or less than that.

Mind Your Own Business

I mentioned earlier that you can never really know another person's heart. Most of us don't know the fullness of our own hearts because we are too busy in the business of other people. A lot of times we will determine if someone is deserving of our love by the way they treat us, the attention they give us and if whether or not they show love to us first.

If they don't do these things first, we are tempted to pull our love and affection back and wait until they take the first step towards us. In that space we feel like a yo-yo. We open and then close. We come out of hiding and then we retreat. It's exhausting when we calculate what another person is going to do or how they are going to respond.

That kind of mindset is a perfect set up for resentment. We think they are going to show up in a particular way allowing us to feel safe to show up lovingly, only to find out they are in a foul mood and snap at us when we ask how their day was. Instead of thinking about how *they are going to show up*, it's much more useful for us to think about *how we are going to show up*.

When we come at it from that angle, we can remain steady and firm in our love. We are so quick to pull our love back when we perceive our partner not being loving towards us. We feel attacked so we attack back. They withdraw so we withdraw and feel sorry for ourselves.

Nothing will ever get resolved in that space. One person has to be willing to stay in a space of love if the dynamics of the relationship are going to shift. In order for that to happen, we have to stay in our business and get out of theirs. As long as we are in their business and worried about what is going on with them and why they are being so difficult, we lose connection with love.

That is basically the difference between conditional and unconditional love. When we stay with us and our love, it is much easier to see our partner without making their issues personal to us. When we stray and become worried about losing their love, we will manipulate, lie, hide and protect ourselves. That is crazy making and we can feel the constriction in our bodies.

It really is much easier to stay in a place of love. It is very freeing to allow yourself to love someone who isn't perfect. But a lot of times we will "tally up" their bad habits and compare them to their good qualities and make our decision to love them based on our consensus. That is conditional love.

If we were to love them *without* conditions, we would find that our love really has nothing to do with them at all. It has everything to do with us and what we choose. When we can really get the emotional and spiritual understanding that we have the ability to express love in spite of being hurt, in spite of being disappointed, in spite of our partner's absent mindedness, in spite of their selfish ways, we will know a deep peace that truly surpasses all understanding.

I think it is so important for us to remember that real, authentic love is indestructible and it doesn't need protecting, justification, or defending. Love is love. And genuine love - the kind that isn't based on conditions, contracts and bargains - is deeply transformative and life giving.

Let today be the day for healing all of our misguided thoughts and perceptions about romantic love. Let's begin living *our lives* according to *our truth*. Love is not the enemy. It is not the source of our pain. Real, authentic Love sets us free. It gives us the courage to not only reach for our dreams but also bring them forth into physical reality. Love is our "go power." And when we can source our lives from that place, then we will know Holy Communion with another.

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