

The Unexamined Life...Part Two

Last month we pointed out that what we're taught about health, romance, and finances are usually someone else's ideas that were passed on to you, and that based on experience, they're also quite outdated. Why did I say they're *outdated*? Well, who among you is healthy all or even most of the time? Who among you has a perfect relationship? And how many of you have attained financial freedom? Most of us don't even believe these goals are possible, and based on our experience, that's totally understandable. However, if these three vital areas of our lives were looked at with a more updated point of view, they'd be more attainable. Not that what you've been taught is wrong, rather, just that those teachings are incomplete. It's like using dial-up vs. dsl—the former gets the job done, but with the latter, so much more is possible and with much greater ease! Because Valentine's Day occurs this month, this column is about attaining and keeping better romantic relationships.

Firstly we have to ask ourselves exactly what it is we want out of a relationship. Is it a backgammon partner, security, sex, that butterfly-in-the-gut feeling, or are we trying to obtain that which we feel we do not have; namely, do we want to receive and give love? None of these are bad in and of themselves; however, when taken to the extreme they're detrimental to a quality relationship. Most of us have within us the illusion that we are missing something, and as a result, we often look to other people to fill it. For example, when I asked a female friend what made her feel love for her partner, she said it was his ability to focus on a particular task—something she felt she couldn't do. When he was asked what made him feel love for her, he said it was her intense gratitude for all the little things—something he felt he did not possess.

So we have this sense of completion we're all trying to achieve: Who among us hasn't felt an initial, say, three months, of a great relationship because we believe we've found completion through the new partner? While sometimes this initial feeling can last years, over time it will turn sour. Resentment begins to build because no one can fill a void in another. If it's not acknowledged and dealt with openly and honestly, anger begins to rise within the person who does not feel their needs are being met. Seeking more of something or someone for perceived needs to be met is a never ending trap toward misery.

Relationships are tools for emotional growth toward self-completion and for learning how to share our innate love with others. We all have emotional wounds from childhood and as they are brought to the surface within the (hopefully) safe confines of the relationship, we work to heal them and become more complete within ourselves. To deny you have old pain within you is fruitless as well as another cause of suffering. The human condition mandates that most of us have any or all of: lack of self esteem; feelings of unworthiness, not belonging, or lack of connection; even feelings of being unlovable. And how we deal with them—or don't—will often make or break our relationships.

The difficulty in healing this lies within our very own psyche. Our ego wants to convince us that everything is ok as it is—that the other person is to blame, that we're better than another person, and that life happens *to* us. The reality is very different. No one is to blame, no one is better than another, and life is an end result of *our* choices. Ask anyone in a great relationship and they'll tell you they chose it and did so while working on themselves. If we're not in motion physically, our energy and health stagnates; likewise, if we're not growing emotionally, we're missing out on the joys of an unconditionally loving relationship. When you become angry at another, (s)he merely has triggered something already in you; it is a gift that can be used for emotional growth. It is a chance to look at and heal the void you were trying to fill. Or, if you prefer, it's just another excuse to close the heart and separate yourself. Closing down the heart energy is not the answer; opening your heart to feel life in all it's glory—the pain, the anger, and the love—always is. This is where and how true growth occurs.

Wouldn't you rather be with someone who's healed a lot of their baggage? Well, so would your partner! Recognize this and be the best you can be; however, know that it takes commitment, time, and energy. The end result is true freedom and the potential for an amazing, juicy, sexy, healthy, and rewarding to-live-for relationship.

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