

HOW IS MY RELATIONSHIP GROWING?

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By Rhoberta Shaler, PhD

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When you choose your partner and commence a full-time relationship, you look forward to a future of love, support, encouragement, communication and intimacy. Right? After all, you are in love and you're both on your best behaviour—so how could there be any problems?

Learning how to establish and maintain a loving, supportive relationship is much like creating a beautiful garden. It takes information, planning, thought, skill, time, and most of all, attention. Like many gardeners, you learn your skills and styles from your parents, close friends and relatives. You watch them from the time you are little. They teach you both your roles in a relationship, and how to play them, through their example. This happens in every family and much of the teaching is unintentional and unconscious. Many of you did not like what you saw and, yet, in your poorest moments, you may behave just that way. In angry, tense times, you revert to the ways you learned in those early days! No wonder your relationships provide you with challenges that cause you to forget the "honeymoon" period sometimes!

The good news is that you can learn how to have a full, rich, loving relationship that allows each partner to express his/her thoughts, feelings, wants, needs and vulnerabilities AND FEEL COMPLETELY SAFE!! You can learn to be assertive (not aggressive) and to collaborate with your partners. You can learn to listen with your minds and hearts. You can learn to fight fair and resolve conflicts equitably and sanely. You can learn to value and acknowledge both yourself and your partner. You can learn to speak from your hearts and be safe. You can learn to ask for what

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you need and want. You can learn to love more fully. You can learn to DEEPEN your love. It may take some unlearning, releasing habits, fears and beliefs that are blocks to experiencing and expressing love but YOU'RE WORTH IT!

Remember, too, that you are teaching your children how to have a relationship by the way you are conducting yours. What would you like them to learn? What are you showing them every day?

Healthy relationships allow you to fully express yourself and fully expand your capacity to love. Remember, most of your relationship skills are caught, not taught. So, if your

relationship is not what you know it could be, there IS a remedy. You can learn new ways—if you are willing and you really want to. What is it worth to you?

If love, acceptance, approval, respect, safety, trust, honesty, integrity, and wholeness are what you want in your life, begin by giving these things to yourself now so that you will have those gifts to bring to your relationships. You cannot give a gift you do not have, can you?

Rhoberta Shaler, PhD, Motivational Keynote Speaker, Corporate Team Builder and Executive Coach from San Diego, CA, is the creator of The Consociate Way™: Promoting Performance & Peace in Your Workplace. Call Rhoberta at 1.877.728.6464 or email at RS@SpeakingAboutWork.com. Visit: <http://www.SpeakingAboutWork.com> for further information and free ezines.

Should I Give Up Me To Not Lose You?

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

How far can you afford to bend your values to preserve your relationship? How far can you go in giving yourself up to avoid losing your partner? How much of yourself can you afford to sacrifice to not lose someone you love? How do we find the balance between maintaining our integrity and bending our values?

Most relationships require us to bend to a certain extent, but how much can we bend without a sense of loss of self?

There is an inherent paradox in these questions: A truly loving relationship is a relationship where each person accepts and even values the differences between them. If you have to excessively bend your values to preserve the relationship, what are you preserving? You are not preserving a loving relationship since love does not demand that you excessively bend your values.

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Rather than look at relationship in terms of bending values to accommodate another person, let's look at it in terms of each person learning and growing as a result of their differences in values.

For example, Patricia is a highly responsible person with a strong work ethic, while Sam tends to let things go a lot, which results in an imbalance regarding financial responsibility in the relationship. Patricia is not happy about this. Does she just accept these differences to preserve the relationship? No! That is not what a good relationship is really about. Since a good relationship is about each person learning and growing from their differences, rather than one or both people giving themselves up, Sam and Patricia need to engage in open explorations about their differences. They each have beliefs that can be explored, and in this process, new learning occurs that leads to intrinsic change rather than superficial compromise.

The real problem occurs when one or both partners are not available for exploration and learning. If one partner says, "Just accept me the way I am," or gets angry or withdrawn when the other partner attempts to discuss the situation, no learning can take place. Then the other partner either has to accommodate or leave - not a healthy situation.

Joe is extremely neat, while Julia has a hard time putting things away. Roberta is always on time while Cecelia is always late. Maggie is a spender while David is a saver. Carl has a high sex drive while Andrea has a low sex drive. Angie is an authoritarian parent while Curt is a permissive parent. Ronald is highly social while Greg is a homebody. Depending upon whether or not each person is open to learning, these differences can lead to: Constant conflict One partner giving in to avoid conflict Both partners opening to learning and growing as a result of their differences

The outcome of these conflicts depend entirely upon intent. There are only two possible intents in any given moment: The intent to protect against pain or the intent to learn about love.

When one or both partners have the intent to protect against pain, then they will find many controlling

ways of avoiding dealing with the differences. They may argue, defend, withdraw, blame, give in, resist, explain, and so on, Each is intent on having their way, not being controlled by the other, or avoiding the other's rejection. This will always lead to distance and unhappiness in the relationship. The problem is not in the differences themselves, but rather in the unwillingness to learn and grow from the differences.

When both partners are open to learning about their differences, their differences become fertile ground for the exciting process of personal and spiritual growth and healing.

We cannot make another person be open to learning - we don't have that control over others. If you are in a relationship where your partner refuses learn and grow from the differences, then you need to be honest with yourself regarding how much of yourself you can give up and still maintain a sense of integrity. You cannot afford to compromise your personal integrity. You can bend and accommodate as long as you do not feel as if you are losing yourself. Once you feel that you are losing yourself to preserve the relationship, you will likely find yourself so resentful of the other person that the relationship begin to fall apart anyway as a result of giving yourself up. You are not preserving it by

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accommodating - you are destroying it while losing yourself.

The key is to be willing to come up against conflict and rejection, and even lose the other person rather than continue to accommodate when going along with what your partner wants means a loss of your personal integrity. On the emotional and spiritual level, you can afford to lose your partner but you cannot afford to lose yourself.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?" She is the co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding healing process. Learn Inner Bonding now! Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course:

or

. Phone sessions available.

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Top 10 Tips for a Great Relationship

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