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Loving Without Losing Yourself

By Allie Ochs

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Loving Without Losing Yourself!

You are in love and this time it is different. You are prepared to do anything to make it last. To prevent this ship from sinking you work hard to steer this relationship into a safe harbor. In the process you lose yourself and your romantic relationship becomes all-consuming!

Kyra fell head-over-heels for Dan and went out of her way to create a wonderful relationship. She found herself at hockey games, at parties with his friends and on vacations with his family. At home, things were not much different. Kyra cooked his favorite meals, kept house the way he wanted and listened to music of his choice. On Dan's advice, she cut her hair short, wore less make-up and a conservative wardrobe. For Dan, this relationship was perfect. She had adapted to his lifestyle, defended his views and even began to talk like him. Kyra's friends witnessed her change from a spirited and happy woman to a subdued and pleasing personality. This relationship had sucked the life out of Kyra, yet she was the last to notice.

While compromise in a relationship is necessary, denying the core of who you are is not. When you finally realize that an all-consuming relationship is depleting you, there will be nothing left but resentment. It will be difficult to reclaim yourself while remaining in that same relationship. The outcome of such a relationship is usually a heart-breaking crisis, with no one but you to blame.

The opposite of an all-consuming relationship is a half-hearted relationship. In this relationship one or both withhold affection until the evidence is in that the other is hooked. I love you, if you love me first has become a common trend. Fearing that you will give more love than you receive, you put your partner on probation. You judge according to your expectations and keep track of his or her scores. The higher the scores, the more you are willing to love. This conditional view creates tremendous emotional insecurity.

All-consuming or halfhearted relationships are unhealthy and both types are guided by fear. In an all-consuming relationship, fear of not being loved is the driving force. In a halfhearted relationship, fear

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of being hurt prevents you from knocking down protective walls. To you love wholeheartedly without losing yourself requires a very different perspective of relationships. Even though you know that relationships require work, deep down you cling to a sweet illusion that meeting the right person is all it takes. You will then take off on your magic carpet ride. Think again! Soon that magic rug will be pulled from underneath you.

If you long for a partner who is wholeheartedly behind you, ask yourself, are you the same partner? Do you give what you seek in your relationship? Ironically, many lack the qualities they seek in their partners. Listen to your heart and when it feels right, feel the fear and love anyway. Love without hesitation and with all your heart. Don't let your fear of rejection or getting hurt kill your desires or steal your dreams. You may have stared in the face of love before. Maybe you "chickened-out." Next time, don't be a chicken!

Love is choice and if you choose it wholeheartedly, you are never going to lose it. Love teaches you to become a better human being. Restore your faith in love and become emotionally available to each other. Put your fears and your past behind you. Become lovable by being loving. Learn to trust by trusting yourself. Here is the number one reason for losing yourself in a relationship: Your belief that love is something you either deserve or not! This misguided belief leads you to do almost anything to get love and even more to hold onto it:

- You modify your identity to gain approval from your partner.
- You hold back intimacy to protect yourself.
- You have a need to manipulate your partner.

If you can believe that there is nothing you have to be or do to earn love, you will accept that:

- You can be loved even if you are not perfect
- You can be loved while keeping your course in life
- You can be loved without getting lost in love

Love is the most powerful human lesson you will ever learn. It is a purposeful interdependence through which you become so much more than on your own. Love is not something to be found, rather it is in you to share, you can love wholeheartedly. Don't turn your back on love every time it touches you, because when you give up on love you give up on yourself.

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Allie Ochs is a speaker, relationship coach and author of: *Are You Fit To Love?* Her book has received the honorable mention at the USA 2004 Best Book Awards. She has appeared on TV, Radio and is published in numerous magazines and newsletters. www.fit2love.com or e-mail: allie@fit2love.com

Fight, Flight, or Loving Action

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

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Fight or flight – our automatic response to danger. When fear is present, adrenaline pours into our system to prepare us to fight or flee – from the tiger, the bear, the lava from the volcano....

Fight or flight – today we automatically respond this way to the present dangers, the deep fears that come up in relationships: rejection and engulfment – fears of loss of other and loss of self.

Often, when we feel rejected and fear the loss of the other, we fight for love not to go away by defending, explaining, blaming, attacking, complying, fixing, or we flee through withdrawal. Often, when we feel engulfed and fear losing ourselves through being controlled by another, we flee through resistance or withdrawal, or fight by attacking, defending, or explaining. Just as our ancestors fought or fled from physical danger, we fight and flee from emotional danger. The problem is that, while fight or flight is appropriate in the face of physical danger, this same behavior in the face of emotional fear causes deep problems in relationships.

When we respond automatically to the fears of losing ourselves and losing another, we behave in the very ways that create fear in the other. Our fight or flight reactions create fear in the other person – the same fears of losing themselves or losing us. Our fighting and fleeing activates others' fear of rejection and engulfment, creating a vicious circle of fighting and fleeing.

These unconscious, automatic reactions to emotional danger were learned long ago, when we were very small and had to rely on fight or flight as part of our survival. Today they are now longer necessary for our survival, and need to be replaced with loving actions toward ourselves and others.

What does it mean to take loving action in the face of another's fight or flight behavior? Where do we get the role modeling for what it looks like to take loving action in the face of another's unloving behavior? Most of us had parents who did not role model loving action in the face of conflict. We have not seen much of it on TV or in movies. How do we learn to take loving action in our own behalf when in conflict with another – action that takes care of ourselves without violating or threatening another?

This role modeling exists in the form of our spiritual Guidance. Tapping into this Guidance is not as hard as you may think – it just takes practice and a deep desire to move out of fight or flight and into loving action.

The steps we can take to move out of automatic fight or flight and into loving actions are:

1. Start to attend to your feelings, the physical sensations within your body that let you know when you are anxious or afraid.
2. Stop and breathe when you feel fear or anxiety in the face of conflict, or in the face of another's fight or flight behavior. Give yourself some breathing time to make a conscious decision rather than go on automatic pilot.
3. Open to learning with the source of spiritual Guidance that is always here for all of us by asking with a sincere desire to know, "What is the loving action? What is in my highest good and the highest good of the other?" Asking this question with a deep desire to learn opens the door to receiving information.

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It does not matter whether you are asking this of your own highest self within, or from an external source of wisdom. The information will come in the form of words, pictures, or feelings when you sincerely want to be loving to yourself and others.

4. Take action on the information you receive.

Examples of loving action are:

1. Move into compassion for the other person, recognizing that he or she would not be in fight or flight without being in fear. Asking the other person, again from a deep desire to learn, what he or she is afraid of that is causing this behavior may de-escalate the situation and lead to understanding and healing.

2. If the other person is not open to calm discussion and exploration of the conflict, disengage from the interaction, speaking your truth without anger or blame. For example, you might say, "I don't want to fight with you. I'm going to take a walk and let's try to talk about it later." Or, "This isn't feeling good between us. Let's take a break and get together later."

3. If the other person has withdrawn from you, loving action may be to do something fun or nurturing for yourself.

Both staying and learning together or taking some time apart to reflect on the issues or self-nurture will break the cycle of each person going into fight or flight in reaction to the other person's fight or flight. It takes conscious practice to stop going into automatic behavior, but the payoff is well worth the time it takes to practice loving action.

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:

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The Underlying Cause of Nervous Breakdowns

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Fear of Intimacy

Unconditional Love

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How to keep up the SPICE in your Love Life.



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