

Finding fulfilment in Love



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When do relationships succeed?

What you should know

Relationships play a major role in most people's lives, regardless of whether it is a partnership, a friendship, a collegial relationship, or a relationship between grandparents, parents and children.

As humans, we are all dependent on each other. It is therefore important - for the sake of our well-being and comfort - that we feel safe and secure in our surroundings.

Considering how important relationships are in our lives, it is fascinating how little we are actually consciously prepared for them.

Consider this:

What actual skills did your parents **knowingly** give you to deal with relationships, other than the things that you saw and experienced with them?

Did your teachers ever talk to you about this subject?

Were you able to create successful strategies in your contact with friends and schoolmates?

What do you really know about the skills needed to be part of a healthy relationship?

Films and songs paint a romantic picture that only exists – if it exists at all – in the honeymoon phase of a relationship. But this phase only lasts nine months at the most, after which many people lack the knowledge and ability to deal with the challenges of a real relationship.

It comes as no surprise that many couples settle for the smallest common denominator, search for happiness by having affairs, withdraw in resignation, or return to being single.

The high rate of separation and divorce speaks for itself.

If he or she has left

What best not to do

Not every relationship can be salvaged. Separation is a part of life. Separation is painful, a sign of defeat and loss.

Most people have not learned how to go through a separation in a positive way: being thankful for the time spent together, and for everything you learned and experienced with each other.

For most, separation has negative connotations, conveying a feeling of failure, rejection and worthlessness, of being unloved or no longer desirable.

With closer analysis, it is clear that these feelings that we have during a separation all stem from our childhood and the same can be said for the strategies we employ to deal with these separations.

At first, both parties return to their original coping mechanisms: the masculine retreating and the feminine conversations with friends.

In my experience, when it comes to trying to win back their ex, both will try to hold on to the person wanting to leave.

Once the degree of separation becomes too painful, they will withdraw and turn away with wounded pride. It's wiser to avoid clinging as well as withdrawal and instead to find your centre and try to deal with this painful situation in a balanced way.

Both partners can become veritable sleuths when trying to find out if another person may be the reason for the separation.

Both sexes will bombard their partner with letters, emails or phone calls to try and convince them to come back. They will either try to bring up long-gone feelings, or attempt to make their former partner feel guilty.

These strategies are not helpful to anyone, and definitely won't bring your partner back.

The many facets of love

No word is used and misused as much as the word “love”. Pop songs are filled with romantic love, teachers and guardians proclaim parental love, and priests talk about Christian love.

Love is a necessity for people’s well-being. Aside from health and wealth, love is what people wish for the most.

When scrutinised more closely, the word “love” describes a whole spectrum of different definitions, desires, and expectations.

Parental love is not the same as sexual love, which in turn is very different to brotherly religious love. But still, it is all love. Love is the glue that holds the universe together; it governs the rules of attraction. It flows through every aspect of our lives.

On a personal level, however, love may not always be love right away. Using the phrase “I love you” may mean: I need you, I want to be there for you, I treasure you, I want to support you, and much more.

Depending on what stage of your development you find yourself in, the term can have very different meanings and connotations.

In order for us to get a better understanding of the spectrum of love in all its various facets, we will now have a look at the two basic understandings of what love is in relation to our personal development.

To begin with, we will look at the first love that we experience in our lives: the symbiotic love between mother and child. This needy form of love can largely define the relationship of many adult partners.

In contrast, there is the more mature form of love, which you learn about in many – often painful – experiences throughout your adult life, once you are ready to accept the various steps of personal development.