
Relationship and Love: The Art of Intimacy, The Pleasure of Passion



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It is our soul's purpose to explore, to experience, and to expand.

REJECTION

We often create our masks to protect us from rejection. By altering our personalities and fencing with intimacy, we are actually putting our energy into little more than avoiding rejection. So great does the fear of rejection become that we may wall ourselves off from potential lovers. Thus, the mere threat of rejection is enough to block intimacy and, paradoxically, induces behaviour that will likely preclude intimacy. If we have closed ourselves off from intimacy, we are all but ensuring emotional isolation. We have, essentially, blocked ourselves from authentic interaction with others.

The irony is that another person doesn't really have the power to reject you. For you were never theirs to reject. One of the great pains of life may come from the sorrow caused by a departed lover. You may feel as though your heart has been ripped from your chest. You may anguish that part of yourself which is gone forever. The enormity of this despair may plunge anyone into depression. How could he do this to me, you might ask? It may feel like the ultimate rejection. The unique energy that you shared and the wonderful experiences may now be relegated to memories. And this is, indeed, a poignant loss; however, it is not rejection.

The sense of rejection is really due to a lack of self-love. For whatever reasons, the other person made a choice in life and decided to end the relationship. It was their choice about their life. It reflects on them as much as you. Of course, if you joined with that person in an attempt to

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complete yourself, you will undoubtedly see their behaviour as rejection. Their departure represents a rejection of the self that needed them in order to attain your own completion.

If we loved ourselves sufficiently from the start and selected the other from choice rather than need, the entire concept of rejection would shift. We choose to be with another and we may come to decide to no longer be with them. Life is an endless sequence of choices. In our suffering we may select to internalize another's life choice as our rejection, but in truth, it is not. Rather than dwelling on the loss of our partner and its incumbent feelings of rejection, it is far more useful to contemplate the original loss of love in our life. It is our childhood loss of self-love that creates the very notion of rejection.

In fact, it is this original rejection of self that compels us to seek love and approval from others. As soon as we adorned our masks we betrayed ourselves in an attempt to make it all right through the approval of others. Essentially, what we do is deny our own rejection of self and unknowingly confer upon others responsibility for our well-being. We make them responsible for our happiness. It's as if we are saying, "go ahead, make me okay for me." If we are making someone else responsible for our happiness, we have surrendered our power. This is a prescription for unhappiness and blame.

It's easier to blame them than to accept our responsibility. Our lack of self-esteem is really our rejection of self. For if we love ourselves, we cannot be rejected. Relationship with one's self must precede relationship with others. You can't genuinely love or be loved by another

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until you love yourself. There are no exceptions. You may care for another, be dependent upon them for your own sense of love, but that is not to be confused with unselfish love.

For love to be unselfish, it must be without need. Only then can we honestly love the other without expectations of reciprocity. We must experience our own self-love in an appropriate manner, thereby eliminating the need to extract love from the other. We are then free to experience the true energy of love. A love relationship that flows from authentic and empowered choice is a gift that transforms the mundane into a sacred experience.

CONDITIONAL LOVE

We are coming to see that we seek love in a very circuitous manner. We love another so that they may in turn love us and give us what we could not provide for ourselves to begin with. Clearly, this is unconsciously manipulative and somewhat fear-oriented behaviour. A relationship based upon this premise, as most are, is controlling.

The drama usually unfolds this way: I'll love you as long as you love me, but if you stop loving me I'll be angry and I won't love you any longer. This phenomenon doesn't appear particularly loving. Yet this is typical. Most relationships are not based upon the deeper nature of love. Love has no conditions. It simply is. Love between two people is an energy that resonates in a profound manner. Love energy does not speak the language of conditions, expectations or rules.

Sadly, most of us don't come to experience such love-and our relationships suffer for it. Usually we enter into relationships from a

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needy place, so we are not yet ready to experience unconditional love. From this perspective, many people often reflect that they have never truly been in love. Although we readily employ the word love, we practice it in a very adulterated form. And so we speak of falling in and out of love when we are really falling in and out of need. Authentic love cannot be experienced in a fear-based relationship. Love flourishes only in the absence of fear.

The fear of your partner no longer loving you may predominate the energy of the relationship. If he or she no longer loves you, you may feel you are no longer worthy of love. Again, this is because you don't have sufficient love for yourself. Therefore, many people will manipulate their relationship for the purpose of keeping the other in line. A perceived loss of love may become preferable to having your partner actually leave the union, for that leaves you alone. And clearly unloved. If you can maintain the status quo, you may rationalize your unhappiness by blaming your partner. Behaviour based upon this premise serves as a primary ingredient for failure in relationship.

Control is not loving; it is fear-based. It does not permit each to see the other as unique, sacred and ever changing. The tendency may be to restrict the other's behaviour to insure the false security of the status quo. One of the means by which we control our partners is by selecting which thoughts we will share with them. We behave in this manner in an attempt to control their reactions. We might fear the consequences of sharing the truth and so we create relationships that fail to grow and thrive. We come to think of the relationship in terms of ownership, as if we have a deed to our partner. Lovers are not possessions. Love in these

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circumstances is not at all what we might have imagined. This is when we may come to say that we love our partner but that we're not in love with them. Often this is a result of our fear-based constraints that impinge upon the love energy.

The purpose of relationship is, of course, multi-faceted. A fundamental reason for relationship is to serve as a vehicle for our growth and spiritual evolution. By joining with another in intimacy, we may come to know more deeply of ourselves. The loving partnership may then foster a deeper revelation of the self.

Yet, ordinary relationship blocks that process from the fear that if our partner changes, then we may be alone. Too often, this kind of relationship impinges upon one's spiritual evolution and the self becomes lost in the relationship. So a fundamental dilemma arises; are we to remain in the false security blanket that the form of a relationship provides or are we to utilize the relationship to help us grow toward our full potential? The paradox really suggests that the most expedient way to maintain your relationship and benefit from it might be to loosen the ties that bind.

Picture a couple floating down the stream of life together, hand in hand. They enjoy many experiences together and their partnership serves them well. They find comfort sharing their life's journey together until one day they see an island ahead of them in the stream. One wants to travel to the left side, the other to the right. Each is seeking a different experience. If each insists upon taking their route, conflict and hostility usually erupts. If they cannot agree and don't let go of one another's

hand, they may crash into the island, signifying the end of the relationship. Yet, if they lovingly release their grip on one another, they might well rejoin after they have passed the island. This suggests a more spiritual relationship that is not based upon fear or control. This depiction illustrates that the nature of conscious relationship must redirect its energy toward growth and exploration, not control.

THE MISTAKE

Our beliefs about concepts such as mistakes and failure often prevent us from moving into deeper, more rewarding experiences of life. I believe that there is no such thing as a mistake. Relationship creates the opportunity for new experience. Yet, the avoidance of pain and sadness often limits our ability to experience what we must. These struggles are often necessary to propel us toward deeper truth and cognition in our evolution. The concept of failure comes from a nomenclature of fear and is an artificial construct of our belief in the reality of mistakes.

The fear of making a mistake paralyzes people. Yet, what is a mistake? Generally, a mistake is seen to be a decision that we may come to regret. Most people try to avoid what we refer to as mistakes because they cause pain. Ironically, the pain that we attempt to avoid may be exactly what we need to experience. The marriage that turned bad and was ultimately severed by divorce may be seen through the prism of having been a mistake. However, without that experience neither party may have had the opportunity to uncover greater truths about themselves and to learn from the experience to move on to greater joy. These reflections and

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insights about our partners and ourselves are intrinsic to our spiritual path. They are an essential part of our learning.

When we are terrorized by the thought of making mistakes, we lose the opportunity to experience life more fully. There is never a single correct decision or solution. The more we participate with and fully engage in life's exploration, the more spontaneity and playfulness emerge. And the more potential for joy appears. Wonder and awe reappear. These are the building blocks of a loving relationship and a fulfilling life.

SYNCHRONICITY

There is a synchronicity to life that does not include the construct of mistakes. Carl Jung, who originated the word, defines synchronicity as "... a meaningful coincidence of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved." His insight was that events that appear to have no meaningful connection are in fact, completely interrelated. The more we open to our intuition and release thoughts about mistakes, the more we are in harmony with our higher purpose. Instead of struggling to resist the changes of life, it's as if we are letting the universe take over and guide us. There is a natural unfolding to our lives if we just permit it to happen.

Concepts such as mistake, failure and rejection block us from the richness of our life's journey. Synchronicity implies a magical tapestry of love and purpose. The more we open to the flow of life, the more we experience these amazing coincidences. And we come to see that they are not coincidences at all, only the actualization of our being.

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A number of years ago I was engaged in an entirely different vocation. I ran a business that provided me with a rewarding income, but lacked in fulfillment and passion. After several successful years the business experienced a downturn and I was forced to close the operation. At the time I may have looked upon my business decisions ruefully, regretting the mistakes that I had made. Yet those decisions, which resulted in upheaval and loss at that time, opened another door for me. Those so-called “mistakes” permitted me to find my soul’s work. As one door closed another opened.

We may not immediately recognize that new door, as we focus on our fears of the unknown. However, the absence of comfort should never be construed as a mistake. The new portals that we venture through provide us with infinite opportunities. To benefit from them, all we need is a shift in perspective.

It is our soul’s purpose to explore, to experience, and to expand. Relationship provides a vehicle for this. It is said that life is a journey; however, a journey means not knowing the destination. There is no roadmap for this journey because when we look ahead at the destination, we miss the opportunities that open to us along the way. If our gaze is always focused ahead, at the result, we will miss the experience of the moment, and again we find ourselves sleepwalking through life. Ask yourself, “Is my life an exploration? Am I exhilarated at the unknown opportunities for new experiences and do I view my relationship as a vehicle for the expansion of my soul?” If so, you do not honor the word mistake. On the other hand, if this question made your eyebrows arch in

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disbelief, some deeper self-reflection might be helpful. For you are likely living a life tempered by fear.

Our belief in synchronicity opens us to trusting our intuition. Dreams are a powerful transmitter of these messages, embedded within depths of our unconscious. During our sleep, when our personality and ego have receded, our dreams convey information that it intends for us to utilize. This is a manner in which our soul communicates with us, free of the conditioned bias of the personality.

Earlier in my career as a psychotherapist, I had gravitated toward working with men. In fact, I was facilitating a group of men, and was considering practicing exclusively with men. I was labouring this decision until a dream emerged. In this dream I was playing baseball in a schoolyard. The field resembled the childhood playground that I had played upon and was made of concrete. I much preferred playing on grass and I suggested to the other players that we travel to another field some distance away. They agreed and we found ourselves on a beautiful grass baseball field. However, we found ourselves suddenly short of players, so I wandered off in search of some additional ballplayers. I somehow found myself outside of an aerobic class full of women, whereupon I entered and asked if any of the women would like to join our ballgame. A number of them did, and we went off and had a glorious game of baseball on a magnificent field.

I interpreted the dream in the following manner: First, if I wanted to realize my career vision, I would have to be prepared to leave the “concrete” to play on the field of my dreams. Just as important, I would

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need the energy of women to make this vision come to life. My dream had guided me toward my path. Women are now very important part of my work and I am most grateful that I followed the synchronous message of my dream.

The powerful fear and threat of mistake imprisons us. Who is to judge as to what is a mistake? Who decides? The very notion of mistake elicits a constrictive reaction that suggests conformity and fear. We dishonour our intuition, our hearts and our curiosity when we mesh with the gears of the automaton that directs our “proper” behaviour. In this state we hear only the voices of others, voices that tell us how to act but never ask us how we feel. When your own inner voice cries out in alarm and warns you not to make a mistake, respond gently, “it’s alright, there is no such thing.” I came upon a plaque once that read, “A mistake is an event, the full benefit of which has not yet been turned to your advantage.” The fear of mistakes shackles our relationships, curtails our learning and growth, and deprives us of the three E’s, exploration, experience, and expansion. The choice is simple. Are we to live our lives directed by the voices of others or are we to find our inner voice and create life through our own experience?

THE RULES

If a primary purpose of relationship is to come to know more deeply of yourself, then an ancillary reason is to experience joy and fulfilment. Relationship is not designed to be a duty or replete with obligation. Yet we live as though these rules exist. There is an implicit belief that one must honor the form of the relationship, even at cost of self-effacement.

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Guilt and obligation are cultural imperatives that we have affixed to relationship in a neurotic compulsion to deprive ourselves of happiness. These dictates again honor the form of the relationship, but entirely dishonor the content.

In a therapy session with Paul, a reticent man in his mid-thirties, the conversation turned to his image of a perfect life. His ideal was already complete, at least in its form: an attractive wife, two children, a very successful medical practice and a beautiful house. He had it all. Yet the more he clung tenaciously to his myth of happiness, the more miserable he was. He and his wife hadn't had sex in nearly two years and shared little emotionally. He was frustrated that his life was empty, but a resounding voice kept telling him that he had no right to complain. He asked himself, "Don't I have a responsibility to maintain the guise of a happy life?"

Paul was confronting his myth. We discussed his concerns with selfishness. I told him that it was indeed selfish if he had no sense of self to share. If he was unhappy and unable to nurture himself appropriately, what was it that he had to offer others? Nurturing one's self is the most unselfish thing one can do. If your tank is always running low, you have little to give.

Not taking care of yourself is selfish. Again we are confronted with a paradox. To be truly unselfish you must first provide for your inner self. Fill yourself up with reverence and self-respect and you have much to offer the world. Self-denial has no intrinsic worth and limits your fullness, thereby restricting what you have to offer another.

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Relationship should serve as a vehicle for joy. If we honor the innate values of pleasure and enchantment, rather than the societal lip service to the form of the relationship, our lives might well flourish. There are those who protest that it is irresponsible or wrong to terminate a relationship just because we are unhappy. I respond, “Who says so? Who made the rules?” it is our purpose to be happy. Obviously, I am not suggesting that we leave relationships on a whim; with honest exploration and self-examination, we may come to a better understanding of whether the relationship serves our highest purpose. This self-reflection should clarify our own responsibility regarding the state of our relationship and happiness.

Clearly, the rules by which we relate are not serving us. Indeed, this code of behaviour demonstrates a penchant for masochism. The contradiction between the earlier hopes for happiness and the later resignation into mediocrity is a script for crazy making. First, we believe that we will find happiness by virtue of a long standing relationship. When we don't, for a multitude of reasons, as an epic force informs us that responsibility and duty to the status quo are the moral directives of a proper life. This resignation must be confronted if we are to provide ourselves with the love that we deserve. It is time to send this rulebook back from whence it originated and rewrite the rules. The new rules of relationship must be founded upon commitment to intimacy, passion, wonder and fulfilment.

Excerpted from Mel Schwartz's [The Art of Intimacy, The Pleasure of Passion](#) and published with permission.

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Mel Schwartz LCSW, M.Phil is a psychotherapist, marriage counselor, executive coach, author and seminar leader. He earned graduate degrees from Columbia University and Lancaster University and has been a keynote speaker at Yale University. Mel has appeared on numerous television and radio shows and been interviewed by many major publications.

He has also authored over 100 articles and writes the blog A Shift of Mind, which has been read by more than 1,000,000 readers. He wrote the soon to be published, A Shift of Mind: From Being to Becoming, which is the basis for his landmark course, The Shift. Mel is the author of the acclaimed book, [The Art of Intimacy](#), [The Pleasure of Passion](#), which often serves as a primer for many of his clients.

To know more about Mel, visit his website www.MelSchwartz.com.

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