

Lesson 84: The Challenges Encountered in Personal Relationships

The journey through life certainly brings with it its fair share of challenges that are experienced in so many different ways and personal relationships are surely no exception. The day to day interactions inside personal relationships are often challenging at best, because there are so many mental and emotional variables that can adversely affect a relationship even when it is not consciously intended. As in every other aspect of life: attitude, thoughts, feelings and emotions, beliefs and perceptions play a big role in affecting the quality of personal relationships, especially when it comes to the matter of perceived control and expectations. The discussion in this lesson is intended to focus on the mental and emotional fallouts experienced in personal relationships that are not always understood for what they really are, but are more often understood in accordance with how they are perceived. The difference between these two perspectives are as different as night and day and when they are not clearly understood, it is inevitable that you will fall into those ditches of mental or emotional error that so often results in unpleasant and undesirable consequences, some more serious than others. Given the fact that there are far too many potential ditches of mental and emotional error that you can so easily fall into when it comes to how you function in a personal relationship, the more aware you are, the less likely you are to keep falling into the same ditches of error over and over.

The discussion that follows takes the approach that there are two sides to the coin with respect to how both people involved in the relationship are individually affecting and influencing the relationship. However, unless both people in the relationship are aware of the same information, a cognitive gap is inevitable and it can be wide enough to wreak havoc and ultimately destroy the relationship. Relationships in general require a great deal of open and explicit communication so that both parties involved know what is expected from each other, which should never be unrealistic, as well as to know what each other's needs are without the use of a crystal ball, and no one should have to pry information or make assumptions, or pretend to know what the other wants or needs. However, the cultivation of such interpersonal skills often falls by the wayside in favor of habitually acting and reacting to verbal or emotional expressions of thoughts, feelings and expectations that unfortunately, are often misunderstood or are perceived as something other than what was intended. Falling into this ditch of error is hard to get out of, because the more you try to defend yourself with strong emotions the worse the situation gets. Verbal communications are not likely to be effective in an emotionally charged environment because once cognitive stability collapses, the situation fast becomes a mental and emotional threat to one or both parties involved. Whenever one person's strong emotion overwhelms the other, attempts to be heard becomes a frustrating exercise in futility which inevitably results in a cognitive or emotional shut-down, consequently, one or both parties involved reaches a mental and emotional state of being incapable of hearing what the other has to say. Such debilitating experiences

opens the door wide to thoughtless or intended things said in the heat of the moment that are very hard to take back once feelings are hurt; the memory attached to the hurt feelings is often one that does not dissipate over time, but gets stored into the memory bank of the psyche, or as Jung called it – the collective unconscious, where it is always available for instantaneous recall. In addition to feelings being hurt, resentment and even anger can quickly seep into a highly charged situation which only makes matters worse. In fact, not only is there the risk of resentment seeping in, it can actually linger and become stronger and stronger if similar scenarios keep playing out time and time again. Anger that is not released risks being vented at the other person involved either in the heat of the moment or at some inappropriate time which is equally as damaging and threatening to the relationship and often difficult to forget. Such disturbing occurrences in a relationship are like recording the event with an indelible mental and emotional marker that does not always fade away over time and that sometimes drives in wedges that are hard to overcome.

Your core beliefs can play a self-destructive role in your personal relationships when they are not in alignment with how you really feel about yourself, your environment or about the other person who is affecting and influencing your environment, whether positively, negatively or the combination of both. As the basis of core beliefs can be rather complex, given that they are usually entangled with past childhood experiences, which are often undetected or suppressed for the sake of mental and emotional survival and self-preservation, they also become enmeshed into the fabric of your relationship and do so sometimes without your being aware of their presence. Nonetheless, they have a tendency to surface in ways that are not very productive or conducive to your relationship. Because these co-mingled beliefs can also wreak havoc in your relationship, they are worth taking the time to examine them more closely. While it would be impossible to examine every related belief that might apply to any personal relationship, as neither beliefs nor relationships fall into a one size fits all categories, there are those that are general enough and, therefore, can be adequately described in the normal space of a lesson.

In addition to your well established core beliefs, are the beliefs that may be inflicted on you in an unstable relationship, especially those that fall into the category of incompetence or unworthiness, along with all its associated feelings and emotions. So not only do your own related core beliefs have the potential to destroy a relationship, so do the beliefs that are being impressed on you by the other person involved in the relationship, which can be far more mentally and emotionally damaging than your own core beliefs. And if your own related core beliefs are already closely aligned with the beliefs the other person is attempting to inflict on you, there can be no doubt that the psychological and physiological affect is going to be detrimental to your well-being. If you are already struggling with your own core beliefs in which you perceive yourself to be incompetent or unworthy in whatever way applies to your situation, it will be well

worth your time and effort to investigate the root of this most disabling belief, as your mental and emotional stability is at risk. Because no two situations are the same, you will have to discern how best to unveil the source of your beliefs. You may be successful in identifying the source of your beliefs by means of a self-help approach or you may want to consider outside professional or pastoral help, but whatever approach or method of self-discovery you decide to employ, go with what feels right to you. There are many recommended books listed right here on the website, including my book, *The Dragon of Personal Drama*, that can effectively help you peel back the layers that are hiding the initial source of your beliefs, as they pertain to your relationship. Taking a step in the direction of self-discovery is essential to your own well-being and the quality of your experiences, especially if you have already experienced a succession of unstable relationships. The bottom line is that you cannot fix anyone but yourself, and when you set your mind to act on some method of discovering what you need to know about yourself, you become empowered to change the undesirable and unfavorable conditions you have been living with, which directly affects the kind of relationships you will keep attracting into your reality.

Because the belief of being incompetent or unworthy not only blocks personal and spiritual growth, it stands as a mental and emotional obstacle between you and the person you are involved with in your relationship. The erroneous belief of feeling incompetent or unworthy has certain characteristics attached that also act as a hindrance in the process of individuation; the success of which is a very necessary and vital function in the pursuit of personal and spiritual growth. Individuation is an ongoing internal process that plays an important role, not just in how you identify yourself, but affects who you become or don't become, as the case may be, which is usually attributed to an underlying fear of success or fear of rejection, as well as feelings of inferiority and a lack of confidence, and at least the courage to take the first and second steps toward a desired success. Regardless of any relationships you are involved in, you are an individual who possess your own characteristic and personality traits, as well as possessing a plethora of untapped potentials. So as you individuate in the course of your life, you are actually "becoming" your unique self, in or out of a relationship. But when the individuation process is hindered by internal or environmental influences, especially in a relationship, there is the risk that you will not tap into your own potential and become all that you can and should become. Knowledge of this very important aspect of yourself is vital to your well-being, otherwise there is the possibility that you will continue to encounter many self-defeating and dysfunctional relationships and not individuate as you can and should. But because you are not really incompetent nor are you unworthy in any manner of speaking, you owe it to yourself to investigate the source of these disabling beliefs, if for no other reason than to set yourself free from its mental and emotional grips, which ultimately limits your experiences and threatens to destroy your relationships.

You may find that you have a strong tendency to seek constant approval from someone you are involved with in a relationship and you are likely to be in need of validation on a daily basis, because somewhere along the path of your life someone erroneously indicated that you were incompetent and may have said, for example, that you are stupid and will never amount to anything worthwhile or whatever scenario applies to your personal situation. Nonetheless, that heart and spirit breaking experience influenced you enough to cause you to actually believe that you are incompetent and therefore, are unworthy of the good things in life. Unless you saw that unfortunate situation as an opportunity to prove that person wrong and you accepted it as a challenge for the sake of your own personal growth and accomplishment, you probably learned to settle for whatever comes your way and compromised the realization of your own dreams and the achievement of your goals as simply being your lot in life. Unfortunately, the relationships you attract into your reality mimic your mental and emotional mindset and reflect back your own unresolved internal turmoil. This is very dangerous territory because there are long-term psychological effects that will continue to fester internally and will definitely manifest externally in your personal experiences, especially in your relationships.

The issue of control is another equally destructive force to contend with, whether it is self-imposed or is imposed on you by the person you are involved with in the relationship. The need for control to some degree is innate and relates to the matter of personal survival and self-preservation. However, there is a fine line between how much control is and is not necessary in a relationship. The need for control in any relationship relates to the perception of either being in control of your environment or the perception of not being in control of your environment. To the extent that you feel the need to be in control of your environment speaks volumes about what is really going on internally. If the gauge on your control scale is too far in the direction of needing an unreasonable degree of control in your environment, you can be sure there is some underlying reason that you are either consciously or unconsciously reacting too, such as an adverse condition that most likely occurred during your childhood in which you were forcibly controlled or dominated by a parent, parents or some other authoritative figure. Getting to the root cause or at least recognizing the fact that you are functioning in a needless mental state of survival mode for the sake of a perceived self-preservation, can help you to not only overcome its unhealthy and very self-defeating influences, it will alleviate a number of current and potential future problems that are in all likelihood plaguing your current relationship. The adverse and unwelcomed effect your need for control probably had on your past relationships also exists in your current relationship and will adversely affect the future of your relationship as well as any new relationships perhaps yet to be experienced.

The need to be in control of your environment to the degree that it becomes an unreasonable expectation, suggests an underlying fear-based need for perceived

protection from someone or something, because if you were relaxed and comfortable in your own skin, there would not be such a dire need to be in control of your environment to the extent that it becomes an ongoing obsession. Although everyone has the right to draw the proverbial line in the sand as a means to effectively communicate that certain conditions or behaviors, as well as projected negative feelings and emotions, and especially unrealistic expectations, are simply not acceptable nor will they be tolerated. However, the desire to control your environment becomes a threatening situation in a relationship when the scale is tipped to far outside the range of normalcy, as opposed to striking a more balanced need to control your personal environment which is non-threatening in the relationship. However, the need for excessive control is sometimes the result of not being heard or appreciated as an individual within the relationship, to the extent that there is little opportunity to just be yourself without someone telling you what to do and how to do it more often than not, which is a condition that exists in many relationships. Thus, the act of placing protective boundaries and parameters is perfectly acceptable and can even be respected and appreciated when such conditions are mutually accepted. However, boundaries and parameters become problematic when they have been carried to an extreme, which then becomes an unwelcomed condition when it is forcibly exerted on the other person involved in the relationship, as such actions tend to erect unhealthy mental and emotional fences of questionable protection and self-preservation that are not proportional to what's going on in the relationship, because the underlying cause really has little to do with the other person, but has everything to do with past experiences. The exception is when your own personal needs and desires are blatantly ignored, misunderstood or perceived to be an act of selfishness or self-centeredness when, in fact, it is just you trying to be you within the relationship, but that right for individual expression and healthy independence is continually denied or is controlled by the other person in the relationship. However, the need for disproportionate control is not only excess psychological baggage, needlessly brought into a relationship, it is more like a stick of dynamite just waiting to explode in the face of the other person in the relationship who does not want, need or desire that much control in the environment. In such cases, and when honestly approached, the need for control can be modified or altered once its root cause is put in its proper perspective.

Mental and emotional balance is crucial to maintaining a stable and healthy personal relationship. Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the case in many relationships, because one or both people involved in the relationship are not always consciously aware that there are underlying internal issues that are unresolved, but are habitually acted on with inappropriate behaviors, such as temper tantrums or emotional outbursts. Unresolved internal issues have a way of unpleasantly manifesting themselves in the relationship, which all too often threatens the foundation of the relationship, especially when the foundation was not built on solid ground to begin with. An obvious cause behind the inability to build a relationship on solid ground, once again relates to

undesirable childhood experiences that are left to fester internally; the mental and emotional effects are carried right into adult your relationships along with all its attached limiting thoughts, strong feelings and emotions, well established core beliefs, distorted perceptions and unrealistic expectations, not just of yourself, but also of the other person involved in the relationship. If the mental and emotional baggage can be safely unpacked in a non-threatening and emotionally safe environment, where acceptance is genuine and is not conditional, it increases the likelihood that negative effects from the initial cause can be overcome with very little impact on the relationship, but only when the afflicted person in the relationship feels secure enough to relax and let go of the negative effects of past experiences. But sometimes the negative influences from past experiences are buried so deep in the psyche that the afflicted person is not even consciously aware of the affects and therefore, habitually acts out in response to a condition that no longer exists in reality, but is one that is created in the mind over and over again. Thus, the perception that someone or everyone is out to get you kind of mindset becomes so prevalent to the degree that it is ingrained as a core belief and is a belief that is nearly unbendable or unbreakable, thus causing a great deal of unnecessary anguish projected at others.

The longer this debilitating state of mind exists, the worse the condition gets until it becomes nearly impossible to function in any relationship. Feelings such as mistrust, resentment and anger builds up a psychic barrier that no partner can easily break through, thus the walls of the unstable foundation come crashing down and the relationship falls apart at its emotional seams. The physical move into another relationship generally proves to be just as futile and usually does so in a very short amount of time, because all the excess mental and emotional baggage moves right into the new relationship and gets stuffed even further back into that mental state of denial or continued unconscious awareness. Unfortunately, since denial has a way of rearing its ugly little head, it's generally just a matter of time before suppressed emotions starts leaking out into the relationship and before you know it the mental and emotional downhill slide starts all over again and you are on your way out the door.

But there comes a time when enough is enough and the metaphoric suitcase has to be unpacked once and for all because it no longer contains just the unpleasant memories of a childhood experience, it now includes the unpleasant memories from past relationships gone badly and perhaps even includes the difficulties encountered in the most current relationship, all of which can come crashing down around you at any given moment. Although the emotions attached to such memories can be brutal when they are finally allowed to surface, they do not and should not be denied their rightful place of expression, but at the same time those emotions should never be expressed in a violent or threatening way, whether as a threat to you or is projected at others. There are very safe ways to experience suppressed emotions and painful memories that actually become an internal cleansing mechanism when they are processed and

integrated as events that actually occurred in your reality, but no longer emotionally enslave you or threaten your environment. As was stated earlier in the discussion, there are very viable self-help approaches that most often involve working out such personal issues in writing or talking it out with someone who is not emotionally involved and can be objective rather than subjective. And, of course, there is always professional or pastoral counseling available if this method is more desirable. While a dose of self-help for the sake of self-discovery is very beneficial, it requires a great deal of honest introspection and the willingness to process and integrate the truths that surface. Denial of any truths that are revealed will only hinder or completely block the process of recovery and healing. Even though it can be hard to face your truths as they arise into your conscious awareness, the end result will be well worth the while, as mental and emotional freedom is after all - priceless.

Although the discussion in this lesson was certainly not inclusive, as there are many other aspects that adversely affect personal relationships, the length of the discussion would exceed the average space of a lesson, thus becoming more like a chapter in a book. But in an effort to not entirely drop the ball at this stage of the discussion, the continuation of this discussion will be taken into consideration in a future lesson. In the meantime, we hope that we have provided you with a thought-provoking basis of information with respect to the more general challenges encountered in personal relationships. If you have questions or would like to share your thoughts or comments, we encourage you to please do so.

Many Blessings,

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