

Healing a Broken Relationship

Understanding a Relationship

Before we talk about healing a relationship, it is important that we understand what a relationship is, or rather, what makes a good relationship.

1. A relationship is a mutual responsibility. A relationship can only happen when there are at least 2 people involved in it. A relationship is like a clap. It can only occur when two hands clapped. One hand alone cannot produce the clap. Therefore, a relationship is a mutual responsibility.
2. A relationship is a privilege. It is a privilege because one can always choose not to have a relationship. One always has this freedom of choice. A relationship is not one-sided, coerced or compelled. One must be free to enter into or walk out of a relationship.
3. A relationship must be mutually beneficial. We choose to have a relationship because we see its potential to enrich our lives, to make it better, to flourish together. Therefore, both sides must benefit from it. Without these mutual benefits, the relationship will eventually fail.
4. A relationship is a mirror. We like someone or fall in love with someone because that person mirrors something in us that we like, admire or want. At the same time, we must bear in mind that he or she will also mirror our fears, insecurities, weaknesses and limitations. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, this offers us ample opportunities to recognize, acknowledge and heal our own fears and limitations, that may otherwise go unnoticed, unacknowledged and therefore unable to be healed. It is here that you can turn a crisis into an opportunity for growth. Use it well.
5. In a relationship, honesty is the best policy. At any time, a relationship can go bad, go sour or become broken. This often happens because one or both in the relationship fails to or is unwilling to face his or her own inner fears, and therefore ends up unable to communicate truthfully or effectively with each other. In fact, the most common reaction is one that looks for someone to place the blame on. Most egos understand this but cannot seem to help itself. Unfortunately, this is not only unhelpful but often worsens an already bad situation. It is here that honesty is the best policy. For any relationship to flourish, truth must be the foundation of that relationship. Honesty is needed for truth to be upheld.

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When a relationship is broken, these are some of the things we should keep in mind.

1. A broken relationship needs a safe space to heal. A healthy relationship creates a safe space for communication. In this safe communication, the goal is NOT to find someone to blame, or to look for a scapegoat. The goal is to find CLARITY and UNDERSTANDING of the dynamics in the relationship that had led to the unhealthy situation. It is here that we need HONESTY and COMPASSION. We need empathy – to be able to put ourselves in the other person's shoes. Once we see and understand the dynamics involved and can acknowledge it, we can have the opportunity to heal it or to make it better. At times, that may require some compromises from both sides.
2. A relationship offers us opportunities for self-understanding and self-knowledge. It offers us self-growth. This happens through the mirroring effect in a relationship. We can choose to accept these opportunities when they present to us, or we can reject

them. Again, this requires HONESTY, and also COURAGE to face one's own vulnerabilities. A safe space needs to be created for this.

3. Some common, and often unconscious, dynamics need healing because they are no longer serving us well. They may have served us well in the past because they were needed at a time when we were more vulnerable and less mature to be able to handle the situation. Presumably, we are more mature now to be able to see the limits of those dynamics and coping mechanisms.
4. Seek to recognize and acknowledge unhealthy habits and beliefs. One of the most common habits is our habit of looking outward for someone to blame when things go wrong, instead of examining ourselves inwardly. This habit persists despite the fact that it is one of the most ineffective methods in solving any problem. In fact, it often aggravates the problem. We should learn to see it for what it really is – an ego trying to protect itself from perceived threats.
5. Be aware of self-deception and denial. The ego is cunning, and often can and does try to deceive itself through taking a self-righteous position and offering all kinds of justifications for why the blame should be on someone else. Denial is a common coping mechanism, together with rationalization and justification. As we have said before, the goal of the inquiry is not to blame or find a convenient scapegoat. It is to find understanding. Still, some egos may choose this route rather than take the more courageous route to face its own vulnerabilities. While we strongly encourage self-honesty, we also need to recognize that some egos may not be ready or willing to do this. They may reject this opportunity to heal, or they may choose to confront this issue at another time. Self-growth cannot be forced. It has to come willingly from the ego.

Things to Avoid, or How Relationship Fails

It is useful to keep some of these pointers in mind in order to preserve a relationship. Very often, these are what keep a relationship healthy.

1. Do not take things personally. This is a very good advice from Don Miguel Ruiz, the author of *The Four Agreements*. Very often, the problem arises because we take things that are not personal to be personal. This is because we tend to see things from our own perspective, from our own life experiences. We think that everything the other person does is about us. In fact, this is often not true. Everything the other person does is about him or her, not about you. If you are honest with yourself, you will also see that this is true for you. When we take things personally, we get a skewed view of reality, a distortion of what is. This leads us to form wrong or inaccurate conclusions about the situation or person. Based on this wrong conclusion, we act and disaster follows.
2. Do not make assumptions. Often a relationship goes wrong because we simply jump to conclusions about things. We assign a motive for the other person's actions without knowing for certain whether that motivation is true or not because we did not verify it with him or her. Based on that assumption, we act as if our assumption is right, and disaster follows.
3. Do not be accusatory in your approach. Nobody likes to be accused of things, and especially things they did not do, or motivations they did not have. For the same reason, do not put words into the other person's mouth.
4. Do not be judgmental. Our habits of being judgmental and taking things personally are the main reasons problems arise in our relationships. Avoiding these two habits goes a long way in preserving and nurturing a relationship.
5. We do not have to stick to our original narrative. We can always change our narrative. There is a deeper truth in this simple statement. Everything and every experience in

our life is a story we tell ourselves. Fundamentally, there is nothing true in our narrative because we base our story on our past experiences which are themselves also not true. In this way, we create for ourselves an illusory world of make believe. It is important for us to see this and to know that we can change this narrative. When we see things from a different perspective, that is essentially what we are doing – changing our narrative.

Lastly, it is important that at every point in this journey of healing, stick to the truth – the deeper truth. Let the truth be your guide and motivator in everything you do and say, and remember to do this with compassion. It is here that the truth will set you free – free from guilt and free from worries. It is a very liberating feeling, a joy.

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