

Failing Relationship

It Is Your Fault..... If You Are Lucky

If it is your fault, you can fix it. If the other person is doing it to you, you are a victim, and bad things can happen to you. Have you built your relationship on sinking sand? Relationships fail because **you** made them on false premises. And, you can change them.

- 1) **False Premise** "We are so compatible that we never fight." "In our family, no one raises their voice in anger." And yet, we know that the opposite of love is not anger or even hate. The opposite of love is indifference. You will get angry most often at the people you love the most. If there is never any conflict, the message given is one of indifference. In these households, one person will often start a "fight" just to get an emotional reaction out of the other person.

No one has ever gone to jail for being angry. Anger has never been a problem! It is how you express your anger that is the problem. Learn how to express anger without name-calling, putdowns, threats, silence, and passive-aggressive behaviors. "I am angry at you because I love you and care about you, and if you were not so important, I would not get so upset."

Most of your anger will come from the other person not living up to your expectations. You might want to look at your expectations for yourself and others. Do other people need to live up to your expectations?

- 2) **False Premise** is that if my mate loves me, he/she will make me feel loved. This Premise goes along with the concept that my mate should live up to my expectations. You base your expectations on what you experienced growing up. "My wife should do the same things that my mother did as I was growing up." "My husband should treat me like my father treated me. My father always took out the garbage." "If he loved me, he would remember my birthday, Valentines, and our anniversaries."

Valentines is coming up. This time try saying it a little differently. "Honey, Valentines' is coming up, and if you bought me some flowers and we went out for dinner, I would feel very loved." You may find out that it is not what you say; it is how you say it that makes the difference.

- 3) **False Premise** "We should get married because we are in love." "Our love will get us through." Love is not an accident; it does not just happen! More than 90% of the couples going to get their marriage license would easily pass a lie detector test affirming that they were in love. And yet, within seven years of their marriages, almost 50% of these love birds would be divorced. **The Feelings of Love is a guarantee of nothing!**

Love is a step-by-step process. You did not just fall in love. Love is hard work and requires fulfilling the next three steps:

I. **Spending time together.** Time together is not just sitting on the same couch and watching the same TV show. It requires **listening, sharing, and accepting** the other person for where they are currently in their life. If you are not doing this, you are not spending time together. You may be in a state of lust or even like, but that is not love.

II. **Being open and honest with your deepest and most private feelings.** There are degrees of sharing from the superficial, such as "Good morning. Nice day today," to intense and scary feelings such as "My mother had a mental breakdown when I was a child. Now, I sometimes wonder if it could happen to me." To be in love, you must know and accept the other person to their very center. The love process requires that you spend time trusting yourself and then trusting the other person. The lie that often prevents love from happening is "**! cannot trust** . . . you." Trust has nothing to do with the other person. Can you trust yourself enough that whatever happens, whatever is said, you are always okay? (This does not include intimate details about your past sexual experiences.)

III. **Accepting the other person where they are.** Most people are particularly good at judging but are terrible at accepting others. People judge because they do not distinguish between judgments and feelings. Here are some examples of what feelings statements are not. Judgment statements are often camouflaged as feelings. "I feel that **you are**_____." Whatever follows "you are" will always be a judgment. "I feel that you are lazy and irresponsible. That is just what I feel." Hopefully, it is easy to see that lazy and irresponsible are not feelings. Calling something a feeling does not make it a feeling. "I feel like killing myself" is not a feeling. What does a person feel when they feel like killing themselves?

One helpful way to respond could be, "It sounds like you do not see any light at the end of the tunnel. If I were in your spot, I would be feeling very helpless and powerless. I would just want the pain to go away." (Identifying with the person. This way of responding to feelings allows them to know that they are not crazy and that someone else can identify with their pain.

Confusing acceptance with approval is another common error. Acceptance does not mean approval. Your judgments of someone's behavior and feelings will not help them change. An example, "You know that killing yourself is a sin." A judgment that is not helpful.

On the other hand, acceptance can help empower the person to change. Acceptance sounds something like this: "I accept that is where you are in a very dark place. You may even feel like it will never change. But it will. If you kill yourself, you will miss out on all the good stuff waiting for you. I cannot make you better, but I am here to walk through this dark time with you until your feelings change, and they will."

Spending time together, being honest to your very core, and accepting each other where they are at until they can be someplace else. All three of these steps of love take time, effort, and a lot of hard work. Your love relationship can flourish if you continue to do these three steps. And that is no accident! But it is your guarantee that your love will last.

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