

## **What We Need to Do Before We Can Have Happy, Loving Relationships**

By Rhiannon Smith

*“Once you have learned to love, you will have learned to live.” ~Unknown*

Ever since I was a young girl, relationships have fascinated me, particularly romantic ones. I had beautiful fantasies of my perfect partner appearing and completing me. We would fall in love and live happily ever after.

As a child, I believed that being in a romantic relationship, and especially being married, meant lasting happiness. All the love and joy I would ever want or need would be mine when “the one” arrived. Daydreams of my soul mate filled my teen brain.

This fairy tale view of relationships didn’t disappear when I came of age, but followed me into adulthood when I married a man that I knew in my gut simply wasn’t right for me.

At first, it was exciting to be someone’s wife and to have a husband, but my high expectations quickly created tremendous disappointment for me. We both demanded that the other change and the relationship quickly became one filled with resentment and contempt.

After struggling to “work on” our relationship and seeing no improvement, we separated and eventually divorced. I was devastated and bitterly blamed him.

He was the “bad guy” and I was the innocent victim. I lacked the awareness necessary to examine my own actions and learned nothing, except to fear entering into another relationship.

The only thing that I knew for sure was that I never wanted to go through such a painful experience again.

I had no idea that I had any power at all. I felt like I was at the effect of what others said and did, and I was so easily wounded. The world of men and relationships felt very scary and I was apprehensive when I re-entered the dating world.

In what I now understand was an attempt to protect myself, I made terrible judgments and generalizations about relationships and men.

My reality reflected these fearful thoughts, and in the year following my divorce I dated men who were perfect examples of the stereotypes I adopted. Even though I had left my marriage, nothing had truly changed and, in fact, through my own fear had grown worse.

In spite of this, having a relationship with a man still remained a strong desire. I certainly didn't want to repeat the past and I refused to settle for just any romantic relationship. With absolute resolve, I vowed that I would have a healthy, happy, close, and loving relationship.

This became my intention, and I became passionately committed to learning and doing whatever I could to get me there.

For over a year I studied the ways in which a relationship between a man and woman worked and how it could be close and loving, but was discouraged and frustrated by most of what I read. It seemed that most of what I learned required the effort of both partners.

While I understood that a happy, healthy relationship takes two people, I knew I had to first work on myself.

My question became: "What can I, and I alone, do to create a close, happy, and loving relationship?"

As I studied over the next few months with this new distinction, I noticed something unexpected and wonderful unfolding.

I had shifted from how to find the right man and get him to give me love and make me happy, to learning who I had to become in order to create and maintain a close, loving relationship.

This was a brand new way of looking at things and a brand new way of being that was incredibly exciting for me.

For the next two years, I learned as much as I could and put into practice everything I was learning. It yielded radically different results than I had ever gotten before. All of my relationships greatly improved, including, and especially, my relationship with myself.

My relationship with myself had always been love/hate. Now, as I became more and more aware that I truly am empowered to create loving relationships as well as a wonderful life, I began to see myself and others in a new light.

My new understanding of myself and others became: We are all infinitely and eternally beautiful souls, intrinsically worthy of love.

Each one of us are intrinsically worthy of love, not because we are entitled to other people giving it to us, but because we are love. We are all whole and need nothing outside of ourselves to complete us. These words weren't new to me, but for the first time I understood and felt the truth of them.

For so long I had been trying to force others to give me love, manipulating them, making demands, giving with an expectation of receiving in return (also known as barter), and it only led to frustration and resentment.

It struck me all at once that everything I had learned over the course of three years was truly about giving love joyfully from a place of being love. Wholeness was the name of that game.

I was no longer concerned with trying to find the perfect man, fix relationship problems, or change anyone else.

Although I'm not perfect and never will be, I've had increasing moments of awareness and clarity when I was able to keep the focus completely on my self. Not focused on my "needs" and how I can get those met by others, but what I could do to become more whole and full of love so that I'm more focused on giving than taking.

Interestingly, my original intention in studying relationships was only to improve my own chances of having a good, lasting relationship with a man. It was my hope

that I would learn some tricks to get a good man interested and then to get him remain attracted enough to me to shower me with gifts, affection, attention, and praise.

What I have learned and continue to learn is infinitely better.

What I've learned is how to use the resources that lie within me, that lie within each of us, to be the kind of partner that naturally has a close, loving, happy, healthy relationship with her mate without always "working on it."

As most of us can attest, this kind of struggle never works long term. I learned to grow through my experiences in my relationships, become more loving and more whole, and give from a place of joy, which effortlessly creates a close, loving, happy, healthy relationship.

This journey to "love enlightenment" has been amazing so far, with many ups and downs, as I'm sure it will continue to be.

The wisdom I have gained has been invaluable for creating positive change not only within myself and in my relationships, but in my entire life. I have learned to be a better partner for my partner, for myself, for everyone I know and meet, and for the world at large.

The goal is not to reach some destination, but to understand more about what it means to be whole. Perfection isn't possible, but perhaps your intention could be to become more aware of what you are giving and being, and let it be love more and more of the time.

In short, through your relationships with others grow more into the truth of who you are at the core of your being: you are love.