

# Connections

## Vol. 2, Issue 2

### January 10, 2000

#### *Is this Mr./Ms. Right? - Part I*

In a previous issue we asserted that even saints use potholders - that it is only wise to avoid unnecessary suffering in relationships. In this issue we start to explore more practically the issue of Namaste without Naïveté. We'll start to explore some considerations around the question. Is this Mr./Ms. Right?

You may remember that the three broad areas that lead to unnecessary suffering in romantic love include:

- a) a failure to assess if core values and life missions are shared/are compatible.
- b) a lack of emotional/sexual chemistry
- c) a failure to use the interpersonal skills necessary to navigate the inevitable power struggle.

There are also three reasons individuals fail to use these essential interpersonal skills effectively.

1. **They are ignorant of what these skills are.** We recommend that these individuals start to learn what the necessary skills are by reading CONNECTIONS on a regular basis, as well as taking a look at some of the suggested readings offered in most issues and on the website.

They have an intellectual knowledge of what the skills are, but have not developed the mastery to regularly use them as a "habit of the heart" in conflict situations. They haven't developed mastery because of a lack of dedicated experiential practice. (Can you imagine believing you'd succeed at ballroom dancing after reading a book and doing the "jitterbug" and "slow dance" a number of times?) If you haven't yet developed these "habits of the heart" (the vast majority of people haven't), on your own practice the techniques found in Hendrix's books. Also do the "TRY IT OUT" exercises at the end of each CONNECTIONS issue. Still better would be to participate in an ongoing face to face or telephone singlestosoulmates coaching program that is right for your level of skill development.

In addition to doing the above, you would be best served by attending a Keeping the Love You Find(singles), or Getting the Love You Want(couples) Imago Weekend Workshop (for schedules - go to [www.imagotherapy.com](http://www.imagotherapy.com))

2. **There is a level of childhood wounding or other dysfunction (e.g. substance abuse, brain injury, severe ADD etc.) that seriously impedes the ability to develop mastery of these skills.**

If you believe your partner is truly blocked in his/her ability to master these skills, diagnostic consultation with a physician may be needed to rule out/and, if called for, treat interfering medical conditions. There are also however, psychological conditions that can interfere with the development of these skills which may require more intensive Imago psychotherapy (rather than coaching). These conditions MAY LEAD YOU TO CONCLUDE THAT YOU DON'T CHOOSE TO CONTINUE WITH THIS POTENTIAL MATE - even if there are apparently shared values and emotional/sexual chemistry.

This issue of severe childhood wounding is perhaps one of the most difficult of areas in romantic love to address. It's difficult for a number of reasons. First, given the fact that parents had so little information available to them about the psychological needs of children until very recently, most people in this and previous generations probably have SOME childhood wounding (See Giving the Love That Heals - Hendrix). We're not saying that everyone has severe psychopathology. But we are saying that our childhood wounds have led all of us to develop adaptive character defenses that impede our abilities to relate to others in an "I - Thou" fashion on a continuous basis. Second, it is SO easy to see the psychological limitations in the other person, rather than focusing on how our own subconscious and automatic character defenses hurt or make others feel psychologically unsafe. It's so easy to worry about the splinter in one's partner's eye, while not attending to the log in one's own eye.

Third, Imago theory and experience tells us that we only are drawn to, that we only have emotional chemistry with, potential mates who have psychological limitations similar to those of our parents. Fourth, Imago theory and experience tells us that the healing of this mutual woundedness is the unconscious basis for a committed romantic relationship.

Finally clinical experience tells us that we are generally drawn to individuals for romantic partnership who are wounded at ROUGHLY the same level of severity that we are -- even if one might APPEAR more dysfunctional than the other.

AND YET-- as with everything, there are exceptions that you shouldn't be blinded to. Sometimes we're dealing with someone with severe mental health issues. In these situations Namaste Without Naiveté leads us to recommend that we require appropriate mental health interventions as a pre-requisite for continuing the relationship. Another option is to simply end the relationship.

While the dating individual (or spouse) can obtain expert consultation on the issue, in the last analysis the lay person themselves must take responsibility for what they will do. In the next issue we'll take a look at the kinds of psychological dysfunctions that should be red flags in discerning who is Mr./Mrs. Right.

However let's set the stage in a general way. In general, what we'll be looking at is the individual's ability to have a true I-Thou connection.

In brief, we are ALL impaired in our ability to show up as an I and to welcome the other as a Thou. Yet, some people are so profoundly impaired as to require near super human skill, patience and commitment of their partner to realistically expect healing, through the relationship.

Specifically while we all lie, at least by omission, some people are so disoriented from the truth that they simply don't show up as a genuine "I". They may manifest this by direct telling of important lies or by telling chronic smaller lies. Or they may lie indirectly by refusing to even give consideration to the validity of your frustrations with them. (See Scott Peck, People of The Lie)

3. **Another type of dysfunction shows up in the individual's severe impairment in welcoming you as a "Thou".**

Most of us find it challenging to welcome our partner's differing preferences, opinions, and attitudes. Yet most of us, if pressed, can usually repeat back the content of what the other is saying even during a conflict. Most of us, if pressed, can imagine some reasons why our partner's differing views have credibility. The individual who is severely impaired in their ability to welcome the other as a "Thou" often can do neither. Moreover, they often appear hurt or insulted when faced with a differing view that is experienced as threatening. An example from our own practice illustrates this problem.

Husband: "Please don't scream at me in front of the children. I think it scares them."

Wife: (When encouraged to repeat back what she heard). "I heard him say that he wants me to be a vegetable and never have an opinion of my own."

Again, it is important to emphasize that we all show up like this sometimes. Even in this example we need to consider that on other occasions, the husband may have been repressive of the wife's individuality. And yet, if time and time again, the partner cannot reflect back the simple content of your differing opinions, you may well be dealing with someone with severe mental health issues.

**TRY IT OUT!**

Mutually agree to **hear one another out** about a conflict.

Partner one -- simply voice your frustrations with the other in blocks of 1 or 2 sentences. After each sentence or 2, your partner should repeat back as closely as possible the words you expressed. Say a few more sentences.

Partner mirrors (repeats back). And so on. Then switch. Simply listen to each other. Discuss what that was like for each of you.

## SUGGESTED READING

Harville Hendrix, *Getting the Love You Want*  
Harville Hendrix, *Keeping the Love You Find*  
Harville Hendrix, *Giving the Love That Heals*  
Scott Peck, *People of the Lie*

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KIND WORDS:

Re: CONNECTIONS

"I just received the first issue of your newsletter and found it to be one of the more positive and hopeful things I have seen on the web..."

Chuck Simkinson, Ph.D. - founder and editor  
Common Boundary Magazine

Re: Couples Workshop

"Your workshop exceeded my expectations. Although it seems that all of the exercises we have done dredged up some of the pain that goes with a lot of buried minefields, each class has pulled us up to a new level of spiritual maturity in the marriage. You have managed to ask and expect a level of maturity in a relationship I would not have considered achievable...I would characterize your gift to me as providing a way to new hope from a shipwreck of lost innocence. I encourage you to hold up your vision of what a marriage can be for all of us."

Linda Strand - Couples Workshop Participant

## LETTERMAN'S TEN REASONS NOT TO SIGN UP FOR CONSCIOUS DATING AT SINGLESANDSOULMATES™

10. I already know all there is to know about love and relationships.
9. Besides, if they aren't shrinks or haven't written a book, what could I possibly learn from other members?
8. (See #10) And as far as sharing my wisdom on the subject is concerned, let somebody else do it. I'm too busy with more important things.
7. I hear they talk about prayer and spirituality, so they must be some kind of rabid evangelicals or other right-wing religious nuts.
6. Too much work for me. Unlike any other resource I know, they actually want me to demonstrate that I understand the previous comments, before rebutting them or offering my comments.

5. They even suggest that I outline the sensibleness of the other's comments before offering mine or rebutting theirs. No real relationship would involve that kind of thing.
4. There's just no time - Letterman, Survivor, EBAY, CSI, etc.
3. If a relationship takes a lot of work and intentionality (i.e. isn't spontaneous), you have the wrong partner- **period**.
2. I'd rather find out the rules to get a better lover, than do the work necessary to become a better lover.
1. I do fine with my friends who agree that they too **can't believe** that he/she saw it that way.

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