

Mastering Relationships By Sheila Radha Conrad, M.A.

We all want to be accepted and loved. Many of us reach for love and acceptance from others before we are willing to love and accept ourselves. This results in our dependency on others to provide for us what we feel unworthy and unable to give ourselves. It also sets up a repetitive pattern of frustration and discontentment. Adult love involves honesty, commitment, communication, maturity and wisdom, especially about ourselves.

To develop our capacity to love and accept ourselves, we must be willing to be aware and to take responsibility for our own feelings and needs. As we develop this capacity it will be reflected in the people we attract into relationships. In over thirty years of counseling, I have seen how problems in relationships develop because certain negative patterns, in each person, which have not been addressed keep repeating themselves in the relationship

Here are some insights into how you may be preventing yourself from attracting love and acceptance and perpetuating negative patterns in relationships.

As human beings, we all have lovable and unlovable qualities. If we don't like some of our qualities or beliefs, we have the ability to change them. For example, we may feel that there is a limited amount of love to go around and we aren't worthy to receive as much as we want. Judging ourselves as not worthy, we may not put much effort into sharing our love with other people. This belief shuts us down emotionally and does not attract love. It confirms our belief that we aren't worthy of love and creates a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If we are afraid to share love, we need to ask ourselves where this fear stems from. Are we afraid of being rejected because we believe we are unworthy or have little to offer? Self-judgment and fear will always make us feel unhappy and insecure. These feelings will be reflected in the way we carry and present ourselves. If we don't like ourselves, people will pick that up and distance themselves from us.

The solution is to start treating ourselves with acceptance, love and compassion, instead of self-condemnation. We will then be more willing to share our kindness, caring and compassion with others, they will respond to us accordingly. To do this we must gain clarity about our patterns, this allows us to choose whether these patterns are creating the relationships we want. If they aren't we can change them.

A key to good relationships is learning how to take loving care of ourselves.

As we do this, it teaches us how to love others. We need to treat ourselves this way, and we need to treat our partner and others this way. Work with the thought, "When I am loving you I am accepting, kind, thoughtful, generous and compassionate." Most of us care deeply for the people close to us. We want to see them happy. One way to support their happiness is to share our own pleasure in loving them.

Loving kindness toward others does not mean sacrificing ourselves. Positive and loving relationships are about give and take. Practice being grateful for what you are getting from others rather than focusing on what you are needing and they seem to be withholding. We all need to give up the belief that other people are the cause of our feelings of lack, inadequacy, loneliness or abandonment. Instead understand that our own thinking is actually the cause of these feelings. These thoughts can attract people into your life who is more likely to mistreat you, this is a reflection of how you are treating yourself.

The solution is to explore our own feelings of abandonment, for example, and discover how we might be abandoning ourselves. Recognizing that we are the source of our negative and discomforting thoughts and feelings also gives us permission to let them go.

When we learn how to take full responsibility for ourselves, our thoughts and our feelings, we can then stop blaming our partner, friends and associates for our upsets. They will be relieved, admire our understanding and this will assist the other in changing and opening themselves to a more loving relationship with us.

Personal growth is a life process. You are the one responsible for your growth. Only you can change yourself. The only way to grow is to put effort into understanding what you are thinking and feeling and releasing the thoughts that keep you from evolving into the person you are capable of being. This will allow you to create and enjoy the rich relationships you deserve.

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From her book, "Self Recognition", counselor and life coach, Sheila Radha Conrad offers free Life Mastery Skills exercises on her web site at <http://www.lifemasteryskills.com>

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