

# Awakening Newsletter

## # 24

### Conscious Relationship Part 2

*What we want is to be accepted, what we expect is to be rejected,  
what we conclude is that we're defective.*

Continuing our discussion on Conscious Relationship...

We may enter into relationship hoping it will confirm our positive self image and take away who we are afraid we are. We will then act in ways (manipulate) in order to get the responses we desire from our partner. When we get it, we're happy. When we don't, we're resentful. Our partner is responsible for our self esteem and well being.

This is what often passes for intimacy, but is an unhealthy closeness – when we believe someone else is responsible for or capable of filling our needs, we will unconsciously expect our partner to protect us from our own anxieties. We then rely on our partner's validation and affirmation to bolster our self esteem, which is never successful (*You can never get enough of what you don't really want* – Werner Erhart.) We willingly abandon our self to get our partners to stay. This keeps us trapped, unwilling to address our own needs and desires, neglecting to develop our own internal acceptance. We may make constant demands on our partner to respond to us in ways that reduce anxiety and minimize discomfort. From here, it is a short jump to feelings of engulfment, inability to please, and withdrawal. The spark of attraction is stifled by the lack of space for us to be as we are.

This is based on the peculiar, but common notion that our partner has the power to make us feel good or bad about ourselves. That it is up to the “relationship” to provide us with the sense of wholeness we desire. From this perspective, we become preoccupied with getting our partner to change so we can feel happy, loved, or peaceful. The result – we feel like our partner controls us, and we can't be ourselves.

In *Passionate Marriage*, Couple's Therapist David Schnarch speaks of differentiation – the ability to retain the inner source of validation in the face of partner's demands that we respond differently.

*By differentiation, I mean standing up for what you believe. Calming yourself down,  
not letting your anxiety run away with you, and not getting overreactive.*

*Not caving in to pressure to conform from a partner who has tremendous emotional  
significance in your life.*

*Differentiation is the process by which we become more uniquely ourselves by  
maintaining ourselves in relationship to those we love.*

The other side of the polarity is what he terms fusion – we lose our sense of self in relationship. In fusion there is room for only one opinion, one way of being. This is the typical romantic fantasy of being a single unit flowing perfectly together. The unseen trap is codependency, manipulation and control. If there is disagreement, someone has to be wrong. We can't risk being ourselves without the other being hurt or angered. Self presentation – presenting what will get the response you want – replaces self disclosing. The unspoken demand that our partner doesn't change or disagree provoke feelings of being consumed, engulfed. One partner may conclude they have to withdraw intimacy or create upheaval to escape from the tremendous power the other has over them. You may experience fights about what “really” happened, which are really about whose reality will dominate. The door is opened for deadness to enter.

David continues,

***Other-validated intimacy involves the expectation of acceptance, validation, or reciprocal disclosure from one's partner. This is often mistaken for intimacy.***

***Self validated intimacy is maintaining one's own sense of identity and self worth while disclosing, with no expectation of acceptance or reciprocity from one's partner.***

He invites us to imagine you are a Siamese twin. You can't afford to anger or upset the other, you must move as one being, you can't be individual or different, everything needs consensus. You are constantly aware of the great impact your partner has on you. If one of you begins to change or become their own person, the other feels dominated and controlled. This is emotional fusion.

***“It is good that neither men understand women, nor women understand men. There is no need for knowledgeability. What is needed is enough space for each other, so that your secrets and your mysteries remain hidden. It is because of that mystery that you have fallen in love. If you demystify the other, the love may also disappear.” - Osho***

Next time we will address the other key component, which is the ability to consciously put aside our own agendas to serve the “usness” of being together. The balance of these two qualities is the blueprint for Conscious Relationship.