

Living Out Love In Your Relationship

by Jean MacKenzie

What have you done for me lately? In this age it has become popular to pose this question to our partner or at least to think to yourself, “What has my husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend done for me lately? What does he or she do to make me happy?” After all, relationships are supposed to make us happy, are they not?

You can probably come up with a number of things right now that you think your spouse should do for you but doesn't, or things that he or she could do better. He could be more attentive to my need for help with the household chores. She could be more responsive when I am affectionate with her. He could be more sensitive about my feelings. She could show more appreciation for all the work I do. There is probably no end to the faults that you could find in your partner. After all, who knows them better than you.

Unfortunately this attitude of expecting others to make us happy is very prevalent in our society. For this attitude is probably the demise of many relationships. If each partner in a relationship always waits around for the other to do something to make them happy, who is ever going to be satisfied? It is all too easy to think of things our partner could do to make us more happy. How often do you think about what you can do to better your relationship?

I am going to propose a more effective attitude for achieving marital harmony - that is, self-sacrifice. I know a lot of people will balk at this idea at first glance. “How do I know if my spouse is going to reciprocate?” “What if I get taken advantage of?” “Won't that just cause resentment to build in our relationship?”

One website author was quick to dismiss the value of sacrifice in marriage. She defines sacrifice as “giving up something you value in exchange for something you don't value, or for no reason at all. It means identifying something you love only to destroy or abandon it for the sake of something that has no meaning for you.”

Sacrifice is more commonly defined as giving up something you value in exchange for something of greater value, a higher ideal. In marriage you go that extra mile not because your spouse loves you but for the sake of love, because in giving up the smaller comforts and giving of yourself you create a more loving relationship. This could mean granting a request cheerfully even though you would much rather be doing something else, going out of your way to take on an extra task for your spouse or biting your tongue in an argument when you would rather prove that you are right.

In giving of yourself this way you can hope that your spouse will also try to live up to this higher ideal of love. In many cases, given the opportunity, your spouse will reciprocate, but there are no guarantees. You do make yourself more vulnerable through your sacrifice. All growth requires some vulnerability. Nonetheless, whether your spouse follows suit or not, you can grow to be a more loving person through your self sacrifice. As for resentment, there is always that danger. If you continue to offer your sacrifices for a greater good then you can work against this tendency.

So, instead of focusing on all the things your partner could be doing to make your relationship better why not try undertaking one thing that you can do to make love flourish in your relationship? You may be surprised with the results.

About Jean

Jean is a marriage and couples counsellor whose approach in working with couples involves the development of techniques for solving current problems and achieving unending growth in relationships. Jean strives to assist couples of various backgrounds in learning to solve their own challenges because a couple that knows how to problem solve can keep their love—and their marriage—alive forever.

Jean also offers Catholic counselling to couples wishing to incorporate the Catholic faith into the counselling process, helping couples to develop a relationship pleasing to each other and God. Jean has a Master of Arts in Counselling from the Franciscan University of Steubenville and has trained in marriage and family therapy.

So, if you think that your relationship could use a little help-- or even a lot of help,--give Jean a call today and take that important first step in turning your marriage into a “happily ever after” story.

Where do you start?

Look no further.

1. **Go to www.jeanmackenzie.com and sign up for my free newsletter “Happily Ever After: A Guide to Healthy Relationships,” filled with helpful tips on how to nurture your relationship.** You will also receive the free report, “**10 Tips for Resolving Anger in Your Relationship.**”
2. **Call today for a free, no obligation, 20 minute phone consultation.** We will discuss your problems and together decide how I might be able to help you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jean sees clients in her office in Fredericton, NB and offers telephone and online counselling. She can be reached at:

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