

See Old Relationship Dynamics In Intimate Relationships

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Even as you live with the aspiration to make conscious decisions based on what's most deeply important to you, you might, at times, get swept away by unconscious impulses and wake to find yourself in an intimate relationship that is not life-serving for you or the other person.

Intimate relationships are especially vulnerable to the force of unconscious impulses because they can trigger the wounds from your first intimate relationship with your parents. The drive to integrate and heal might have you entering into painful relationship dynamics in hopes of doing it differently this time.

This drive to be fully integrated in body, emotion, and energy is a fundamental part of you. If you have wounding experiences of your past that have never been brought into the light of conscious awareness and met with empathy and compassion, they exist as unintegrated entities of sorts in your physical-emotional-energy body. As a result, your drive to integrate can operate unconsciously. This most commonly shows up as partnering with someone who is similar to your mother or father.

If there is enough support and skill available for an intimate relationship that repeats an old dynamic, healing and integration can happen in a healthy and effective way. However, when those resources aren't present, the relationship can become a re-wounding experience. Such a re-wounding experience could result in at least two forms of reactive attempts to avoid future pain. One reaction is to decide that because you had a relationship that was a re-wounding experience, you will not enter a new intimate relationship again until you are absolutely sure you will not make that mistake again. Such a high standard might result in long term avoidance of any intimate relationship.

Another reaction is to become attached to making a life depleting relationship work. You work at it as if your very survival depended on it. The stressful days outnumber the joyful days 5 to 1 but you keep at it. This can result in a tragic situation of becoming more depleted over time and losing more and more access to agency.

Being caught in either of these poles is a sign that you need support to exit a depleting relationship dynamic. Empathy, acceptance, and compassion from others is an important part of this support that helps be with the pain and fear and connect with what's really true for you.

With adequate support and groundedness, you can engage in intimate relationships as a conscious decision to meet your needs and the needs of another and, ideally, become a collaborative team that is a contribution to your community.

Practice

Take a few moments now to reflect on the decisions you make regarding intimate relationships. Use these questions to discern if you are making decisions from one of the two types of reactivity named above:

- Am I making decisions quickly without reflection?
- Do I have a sense of being trapped?
- Do I feel like I am being pulled in by a tractor beam?
- Do I have a long list of activities or work projects that keep me from engaging intimately?
- Do I assume I know what the other person is feeling, needing and thinking?

Decisions from a grounded place often include elements like:

- Taking time to reflect on your values
- Receiving support from others
- Getting curious about the other person's perspective, feelings, needs, and requests
- Finding a willingness to turn towards discomfort to see what's underneath
- Offering compassion for yourself and the other person.