



LOVE RELATIONSHIPS



Over the last 4 years, I have written Tips on just about all of the main coaching topics – apart from one notable exception: love. Oh, I’ve spoken lots about being kind, gentle and loving yourself – but I’ve not written about falling in love, finding love, bringing back the excitement and romance into long-standing love relationships, or even how to separate or divorce with dignity. And yet these are all areas that I regularly coach people on. So why has it taken me this long to write about what is

perhaps the most important aspect of our lives? Many reasons! A key one is that whilst training to become a coach, our mantra became: *“walk your talk”*. So, when my own love life has been less than perfect, there have been moments when I have doubted myself. And yet I also realize that in the imperfection of my love life, lies the perfect way to help people.

If I were still blissfully married, would I know what it’s like separate or divorce with dignity – as my ex and I did? If I hadn’t been on the many blind dates, agency and internet dates, that I have been on over the years, would I know how daunting, nerve racking, sometimes deeply disappointing and yet still exciting these are? If I had only had a few intimate relationships, would I know the depth and breath of what relationships can be like? No. So let me share with what I have come to know. With deep gratitude to the authors of innumerable books on this subject that I have ploughed through, to all of my past loves who each taught me something new, my own coaches, and my wonderful clients with whom I walk, and have walked with, whilst we figured out how to untangle, rekindle and sometimes dissolve their love relationships.

Falling in love: what drives us to find love?

In the book, *The Road less Travelled*, Scott Peck talks about how falling in love is not a conscious choice. No matter how eager we may be, it may still elude us. And at other times, when it’s really inconvenient, we may find ourselves falling headlong in love, or



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falling for someone with whom we 'know' is not a good match. Likewise we can't force ourselves to fall in love with a person we deeply respect and admire. Peck says, "*We fall in love only when we are consciously or unconsciously sexually motivated*". He goes on to say "*No matter who we fall in love with, sooner or later we will fall out of love if the relationship continues long enough*". How unromantic – and not at all how it's portrayed in the movies!

Falling in love though, is different from having a successful loving relationship. I think that real love begins when the honeymoon period (anything from a few weeks to the end of the first year) is over. To behave in a loving manner when you don't feel loving towards your partner – when you are frustrated, tired, feeling ill or sad – shows a much greater depth of feeling and connection to your partner than when you are so *in love* that your beloved is seen as *perfect* in your eyes and you would do anything for them. It's only when you get past being *in love* that you see the person for who they *really* are – and in doing so, you get to see who you *really* are too.

For me, beyond the mating drive that ensures the survival of our species, our love relationships are for that reason: a most wonderful way to know and heal ourselves. Our love partners hold up a mirror and show us both our beauty and our shadowy, less-than-perfect selves. With our loved ones, we show-up both as our best and our worst selves. The latter is fertile ground for learning, for it allows us to see our truth, we get to see (again) beyond the mask we portray to the world, it makes us think, and gives us the opportunity to learn and change.

If you have the courage to see that being in an intimate relationship is about love and laughter – absolutely, but primarily it's about learning about and healing yourself – then falling out of love and beginning the process of really loving your partner, is a great place to be. Books that might help you if you are at this point in your life are: *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* by John Gray or the UK version of the same, *Why men lie and women cry* by Allan and Barbara Pease. And the passionately written, *Are you the one for me* by Barbara de Angellis

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Long term loving relationships

For our grandparents and for some of our parents, the gender roles were clearly defined and society had very clear expectations about how marriages and family were to be conducted. Today those rules have been thrown out of the window and our gender roles have become very blurred. Few people have figured out how to be a 21st Century man or woman let alone to be a successful, happily married couple. No one teaches us how to juggle 2 careers, pay an increasingly high percentage of income into a mortgage, bring up a family and have all of the trappings that the media portray as 'essential'. It's no surprise that many marriages crack under the strain and today almost 40% of marriages in the UK end in divorce.

On the bright side it means that 60% still make it! And maybe with more help, a greater understanding of what relationships are really about, with commitment to take on full responsibility for your own part in the relationship, then perhaps one day we will reach a point where more marriages work, or we will figure a new way for committed partnerships to evolve.

When you were in the giddy state of being in love, you no doubt did lots of loving acts for your partner – poems, notes, flowers, and gifts. You also spent hours talking to and finding out about your partner. You wanted – no needed – to know this person you were about to become your most vulnerable and intimate with.

But when you became a married couple, and more especially after babies arrive, how much time do you spend talking to your partner with the curiosity you had in the early days? How often do you go on dates? How often do you buy flowers or little gifts for each other? It's so easy to forget to do these little things, when jobs, house, kids, family and community demand what seems to be all of your time. Each day we are all changing and growing. To maintain a successful, loving relationship means you need to tend to your relationship in the same way you would a garden. To blossom, your relationship needs sowing, pruning, weeding, feeding and nurturing and maybe even some replanting. If your relationship is at this point, and you haven't been on a 'date' for a long time – then a great way to start 'tending' is to surprise your loved one with a romantic invitation.

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A great book on maintaining long-term relationships is: "Loving Yourself (and it doesn't matter who you marry)" by Eva-Maria Zurhorst. It's truly inspiring.

Ending your relationship with dignity

If you have reached the point of no return, then I would love for you to consider ending your relationship with dignity. No matter who said or did what, at one time you were deeply in love with one another. Let me ask you, even if you feel hurt, is stomping all over your partner and fighting over material possessions going to make you feel better? Oh, it might ease your wounded pride in the moment, but later... will it truly help? Or will it leave a bitter taste after taste? If you have children, then you know it makes sense to do it with love too. No matter how you feel about your partner just now, they are always going to be the other parent of your child(ren). Remember, all intimate relationships are about learning about yourself. Even at this point, you are still learning and healing yourself – even if it doesn't feel like it!

Most people don't realize that you can legally separate and divorce without using a solicitor. Relate, Citizen's Advice, mediators and coaches can act as your go betweens to help you untangle the knots. If you need to involve solicitors, engaging a Collaborative Lawyer may be a much better option as their services are non-confrontational and are based on open, honest and dignified discussions to help you both find the best solution.

Over the last 4 years, I have helped 4 people divorce with dignity. On each occasion, in the beginning, there were doubts that it could be done (in each case it was just one of the partners who came to me for coaching). Their partner would never do this – they said! And yet 3 of them have now successfully made it happen – and one of my current clients is almost there too. These are special, wonderful people – and yet at the same time very ordinary too, just like my ex and me. If we can do it, you can too. If you are at this point in your relationship, know there is a lot of help out there – all you need do, is ask.

...and finally

I hope that this article has inspired you whether you are looking for love, need to buff-up an existing relationship, or begin to dismantle one. As always if you would like some help with your love relationships, then know I will be honoured to walk with you on this part of your journey. Call me on **01305 772220** or email me jennie@reddandelion.co.uk

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