



The Secret to Building a Lasting Relationship:

First, Learn to Accept and Appreciate the Real You

Part One

People are incredibly complex. We all have an endless stream of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs. But there's one need so essential that if it is not met, even if everything else in your life is perfect, you will never be fulfilled. That need is the need for love.

The major cause of human dissatisfaction is the absence of love. Love is the foundation of security upon which successful lives are built. The need for love begins with *your* need to love *yourself*. When you are not able to love yourself, it becomes very difficult for others to love you. **Self-love, or self-esteem, is essential for you to receive the love you want and deserve.** *You* have a special place in this universe, and part of growing up is discovering that place: your own special niche. This discovery will bring you deep fulfillment and enliven the core of your being. The only way to accomplish this task is to **accept and love yourself today, the way you are.** Loving yourself means giving yourself permission to express who you truly are. And expressing who you truly are means that sometimes you will make mistakes. Sometimes you will be embarrassed. Sometimes you will say or do the wrong thing. But loving ourselves is forgiving ourselves for our mistakes, giving ourselves another chance, an opportunity to continue expressing, and to continue discovering who we are. A self-defeating cycle occurs when we don't love ourselves - sometimes because we expect perfection, which human beings cannot achieve. When we make inevitable mistakes, we punish ourselves and don't give ourselves a chance to grow and discover our *real* talents. It takes time. Consider that a plant doesn't immediately blossom into a flower. It must start as a seed and, over time, grow foliage and develop into a lovely blossom. **When you love yourself, you will have the ability to love and appreciate others as well.**

For each of us, the world is like a big mirror. People who hate the world actually hate a part of themselves. Living to love yourself and *be* yourself is the first step in learning to accept, value, and love others. **Loving yourself is a prerequisite for having a good relationship.**

Every child is born with an infinite supply of love. Our ability to love is first directed outwards as we love our parents, and if they are able to return that love to us, we are in turn able to love ourselves. Each time we embrace them with love and they return that love, we automatically and naturally love ourselves. Did you ever see a baby who didn't want your love and attention? Or didn't make a big fuss when they didn't get it? As soon as a child draws a picture, what's the first thing they do? They bring it to you and say, "Here, look, see. See what I've done?" That's because they're calling out for love. They need that love and when you give them that love, then they think, "Yes, I did that. I deserve to be loved. I can do more." **As little children, we're able to love ourselves to the degree to which we feel our parents love us.** We extend ourselves as children, and when we're received with love, then we feel secure, we feel good about ourselves. But no parent is perfect. No parent can be there for us at all the times when we need them. So we all grow up with certain insecurities, feelings that, "well, if I fully express myself, I might be rejected. If I make a mistake, I might lose love." Because of these insecurities, we tend to hold ourselves back. We've learned that it can be risky to love ourselves or fully express ourselves, particularly in the presence of other people. **There are five unconscious messages that we receive while growing up and these messages keep us from fully loving ourselves:**

1. **It's not okay to appreciate ourselves.**

2. **It's not okay to want more or to desire for ourselves.**
3. It's not okay to be true to myself. **It's not okay to be me.**
4. **It's not okay to make mistakes.**
5. **It's not okay to express who I am,** or to communicate what I think or what I feel.

These five negative messages are really inaccurate. The truth is we *can* be true to ourselves, we *are* more lovable the more we are ourselves. It's okay to make mistakes. That's the only way we can learn is through correcting our mistakes. It's okay to want for yourself. It's okay to desire for yourself. And as you learn it's okay to desire for yourself, then you make it okay for other people to desire for themselves. That's what makes us more giving. And it's okay to appreciate ourselves, because if we can't love ourselves first, how can we let in other people's love? They may compliment us, but we say, "Oh, it was just luck," or, "Oh, I bought it at a garage sale." We put ourselves down. Let's **look at these five negative messages and turn them around into positive messages that we can start giving to ourselves today:**

1. The first positive message is that **it's okay to appreciate yourself.** Ever since you were young, you were taught it's not okay to love yourself. You learn that to appreciate yourself is egoistical. It's vanity and vanity is not good. I still remember when I first heard the word vanity. It didn't make sense to me. I'd been spending time in front of the mirror combing my hair and on that day, I was basically thinking how handsome I was and I kept combing my hair just enamored with how handsome I was, and I was just a little boy. And I remember coming out of the bathroom and my mother saying, "Where have you been?" I said, "I was in the bathroom." She says, "What have you been doing for all this time?" I said, "Combing my hair." And she said, "You've been combing your hair for 30 minutes?" I went, "Yeah," with such innocence. And she went, "You're not supposed to do that. You shouldn't do that. That's vain." And I remember walking around for days wondering, "What's vain?" It was so confusing for me to get that message: it's not okay to love myself because it's perfectly normal and natural to feel good about ourselves. **In our society we learn that when you love yourself openly, others might accuse you of egotism and conceit and they'll reject you.** And certainly, when we feel insecure and, based upon an insecurity that we're not good enough, and we pump ourselves up to be better than others, we will be rejected. **But innocent self-love is the most attractive quality in a person.** In an attempt to get love, you learn to hide your self-love and you may even get in the habit of putting yourself down. Gradually, you begin to believe your own propaganda and your self-love gets repressed and forgotten.
2. The second positive message is that **it's okay to desire for yourself.** It's okay to want. It's okay to want more. Everybody wants more and that is okay. While growing up, we learn very quickly that the world wasn't created for you alone. You're made to feel selfish for wanting more than you have. In an attempt to be lovable, you deny your own desires and, as a result, you begin to seek to fulfill the wishes of others in order to win their acceptance in love. But you lose touch with who you truly are. Even now as an adult, maybe sometimes you go to the refrigerator and you look inside with a dazed look and you say to yourself, "What do I want? What do I want? What do I want?" So much in our adult lives, we don't know what we want. Why don't we know what we want? Consider at a young child. They always know what they want. They want this; they *really* want this. How do we lose touch with who we are, with what we want? It's those messages that it's bad to want more. Children need positive messages that say, "It's okay to want more, and it's okay for this person to want what they want, so we have to negotiate. You can't have it all;" just never to shame a child for wanting more. That's the nature of life.
3. The third positive message we want to give to ourselves and to give to our children is that **it's okay to be yourself.** You don't have to be somebody else. It's okay to be you. Children often get the message that in order to get love, they have to earn it. They have to do what you want them to do and certainly that will get them love, but they need to find that they can be true to themselves and also be loved. If you have experience love being turned on and off, or offered only sporadically to you as a child, then you probably decided long ago that your worth and goodness depends upon your ability to please others. Certainly as children we want to please others, but at those times when we don't please others, if we get the message that we're unlovable, our self-esteem starts to drop. That's where we start to feel that, "If I'm true to myself, if I am who I am, I won't be loved." And so gradually we stop being authentic. **When we don't feel secure that we are loved, and we begin to seek to please others to get love, then our self-esteem becomes something that is based on how much we're able to please others.**

4. The fourth positive message we need to give to ourselves is that **it's okay to make mistakes**. Every child quickly catches on to the reality of conditional love. When we're right, we win. When we're right, we get love. And when we're wrong and make mistakes, we lose love. At the other extreme, is the child whose parents attempted to bestow on him or her unconditional love. Perhaps when you misbehaved or performed poorly, your parents pretended everything was fine. As a result, you unconsciously sensed their disapproval, but never had an opportunity to be forgiven for your mistakes. In both cases, whether your parents are giving and pulling love back and forth or they're always giving you love, you get the message that if you're not perfect, you don't get love and you don't get approval. **The secret is to not withhold love from your children and when they make mistakes, forgive them.** That's the whole key. Both sides: children need to know that if they do well, they're going to get love and if they make mistakes, they'll be forgiven and the love will still be available. When love is dished out only when we're perfect, we begin to mistrust love and we protect ourselves. We even may begin to deny our need for love. And we also begin to reject the approval of others as well as fear the disapproval of others.
5. The fifth message is **it's okay to express yourself**. The result of your need to please your parents and peers is that you lose your spontaneous self-expression. One part of you wants to express itself, but another part of you wants love and acceptance. That part of you that needs love and acceptance will willingly sacrifice itself in order to get love. So to get love, we give up who we are. But in getting love, we get the message that if they really knew who I was, they wouldn't love me. So even though others may love and accept us, deep inside, we don't feel loved. This happens a lot with actors and performers and singers. They put on a show, entertain, and receive a lot of love for that show, but they know deep inside, that it is not to *them* the love is directed. So they feel even more insecure that they're not being loved. All of this conditioning to not be yourself in order to get love has an unfortunate result. **When others express their love for you, a little voice inside says, "Yeah, sure. They wouldn't say that if they really knew me."** You try hard to please others, knowing all along that the real you isn't coming out. And this prevents you from feeling really good about the love you do receive.

In our attempt to find love through pleasing others, quite commonly, we adopt various behavioral strategies designed to win the approval and love we need. These strategies begin like roles we play. Some of them are conscious, and others are unconscious. Let's explore thirteen common roles and see which ones you most relate to:

1. **The first role, *the performer*.** This person was given a lot of love for excelling as a child. **He's always trying to measure up to the expectations of others** and often imposes even higher expectations on himself than others have. **He always feels pressured and driven to achieve.** He can't tolerate weakness in himself or others. No matter what he does, it's never enough. There's always more and he's driven towards that more. Secretly, the performer feels he can never be good enough. A secret fear of rejection motivates his behavior. He generally feels responsible for everything. The performer needs to relax more and discover that he can be loved even when he's not performing. **Give yourself a break.** The high blood pressure just isn't worth it.
2. **The second mask, or role, is *the critic*.** **The critic is preoccupied with pointing out the faults of others.** Whenever he or she is afraid of being judged, he's quick to retaliate. For him, the best defense is a strong and critical offense. The critic is obsessed with changing others and his subconscious attempt to change himself. He's able to soothe his own feelings of inadequacy by proving the shortcomings of others. If you have these traits, try to begin seeing yourself in all those you judge and criticize. Then forgive yourself and them for not being perfect. **Remember, nobody's perfect.** Nobody does it right every time. Even if they know better, they didn't know it good enough. Just as you're good at finding reasons to separate from others, try finding reasons to feel connected to them.
3. **The next role is *the booster*.** **This person compensates for low self-esteem by bragging.** While growing up, he or she learned that to get attention, he had to dramatize things, enlarge the truth. **Deep inside, the booster feels the truth is never enough for him to achieve the recognition he needs.** In his own eyes, and in the eyes of others, what he does is never enough. The booster can never trust the love of others for, deep inside, he knows he's lying. The closer people get, the more secretive and defensive he becomes. **The booster needs to practice being very accurate in what he or she says.** He should find someone who truly cares for him and share with that person all the lies and pretenses he can remember, to see that he can be loved for who he truly is. Many times that's why a person goes to see a therapist. Someone who's not really involved in their life, who they can share their truths,

- share their life story and get the experience that, "I'm not going to be rejected. I'm not so bad after all," and then they start to feel better about themselves. Then they can come out and share who they are without having to build everything up to a higher level.
4. **The next role is the *victim*.** The victim feels unworthy of love and support unless it is preceded by a great mishap or tragedy or at least the telling of some past tragedy. **The victim side of us loves telling other friends about some great injustice that just happened to us.** It makes us feel that we can get attention. It makes us feel worthy of their love. But the problem is, if we're getting attention through telling victim stories, unconsciously we tend to continue being a victim in order to get love. If you're getting a lot of love, attention and sympathy by telling your victim stories, watch out. You're reinforcing a pattern of getting love through experiencing and communicating about pain and suffering. You might even get used to being sick as a way of getting more love. This doesn't mean you can't share the truth about your feelings and your stories, just be careful not to amplify it. Be careful not to enjoy it too much. **The victim tries to control people or get them to love him by making them feel guilty. The victim must learn to develop his or her own personal power through taking responsibility for his life.** If you have a terrible story, always add at the end the more positive side of it. A way you've learned something from it and how, if you could go back in time, you would do it differently. That puts you in the position of power instead of someone who is just fated to have terrible things happen to them again and again and again. Take charge today.
 5. **The next role is the *nice person*.** This person is always good tempered, cheerful and agreeable. He or she generally has lots of friends and acquaintances. It seems like they have an abundance of love in their life. **The nice person learned early in life that compliance brings reward.** He or she is always doing what he should be doing intent on pleasing others. The nice person, on the surface, never gets angry. He never rocks the boat. The nice person is happy to be a part of the group but inside, he is empty and alone. He's afraid of being himself. He's afraid of standing out for to do that, means risking rejection, means risking disapproval. **He's afraid of saying "no". He's afraid of asking for what he wants.** By being nice all the time, the nice person has successfully repressed his own special uniqueness and has become a non-person. **The nice person needs to practice saying "no". He needs to give himself permission to be angry when people mistreat him.** He must risk showing that not so nice person inside. To experience that not only will others love him, but they'll even feel closer to him if he's more authentic and real.
 6. **The next role is the *self-righteous person*.** This person has learned that if he is wrong, people will not love him. **He needs to be right all the time.** In order to get love, he attempts to be right at all costs. The self-righteous person has a rational excuse and justification for everything he does. Rationalization and justification are his favorite ways of avoiding feelings of guilt and shame. This person needs to learn that others will love him even if he is wrong or even if he makes a mistake. **He needs to affirm that nobody's perfect, that it is okay to make mistakes.** Think, "I will still be loved if I make mistakes."
 7. **The next role that we put on is the *angry person*.** The angry person feels an inner inadequacy. To compensate, he refuses to be adequately satisfied by the outer world. **Nothing can please him.** He projects his own inadequate feelings everywhere and feels frustrated and bitter toward the world. The angry person feels ripped off by life and is constantly trying to get even. He gets angry at the drop of a hat and remembers every injustice he's every experienced. He delights in the shortcomings of others. **The angry person must learn that he still deserves love even if he is inadequate in certain areas and the only way for him to learn this is to begin forgiving other people for their inadequacies.** Because, truly, when he can finally begin to give permission to others to not be perfect, then he can rest and relax in the experience that he doesn't have to be perfect, that he can be inadequate in many ways and he will still be loved. Through loving and forgiving others, he will gradually learn to truly love and forgive himself. Generally, when a person is very, very angry, some part of them deep inside feels that they've done something wrong and they're afraid of being accused or blamed for that.
 8. **The next role that we'll take on is the *fake*.** This person has played so many roles to please others that he doesn't even know who he is anymore. **The fake is an expert at impressing others in order to be liked and in the process, he becomes a hypocrite and a fraud.** As a child, the fake never felt appreciated for being himself while growing up so he decided that in order to get love, he had to be someone else. Unfortunately, he can never trust anyone's love or appreciation because deep inside he knows others don't know who he truly is.
 9. **The next role is the *believer, or the follower*.** This person learned growing up that in order to receive love, he merely had to submit to the will of others, to agree with their point of view. **The believer gives away all his power expecting others to take on the responsibility of solving his problems.** He expects others to love him because he agrees with them. Because the believer's

expectations are so inflated and unrealistic, inevitably, he feels disappointed and betrayed. The believer has never gotten over the fact that his parents were not perfect. He always has high hopes, but is inevitably let down by others and will continue to be until he starts to believe in himself.

10. **The next role is the *shy person*.** This person's basic reaction to other people is fear. **He or she fears their criticism. He fears their rejection. He fears failure in interaction.** The shy person has little confidence that he's lovable to others. The shy person has little experience that they will be accepted if they are true to themselves. **The shy person must learn to take risks.** He should practice visualizing a risk and then act it out in his mind and gradually, building up more confidence in himself through acting it out in real life and, thus, dispelling the fear of others.
11. **The next role is the *show-off*.** The show-off believes what he does or what he possesses, what he owns, will make up for what he fails to be in himself. **To the show-off, money is the symbol of love.** He's unable to freely share his feelings directly, but does so by giving or withholding presents or material possessions. Unfortunately, the show-off never feels worthy of the love he receives for his gifts because he knows he's being loved for his achievements and possessions and not for himself. **The show-off needs to work on his inner self-image and relax his outer image.** Then he will learn that he can be loved for who he is and not necessarily for what he has.
12. **Another role is that of the *loner*.** At some point while growing up, this person didn't get the love and recognition for what he wanted so he decided he didn't need it. It's kind of like the old Aesop's fable about the fox that wanted the grapes and when he couldn't get the grapes, he grumbled and said, "Well, I didn't want those grapes, anyway." You take a little child with their innocent aspirations, their desires, their dreams and someone rejects them and makes them feel wrong for that or tells them, "You can't have that." Sometimes the reaction is, "Well, I didn't want that, anyway." This is what happens with the loner. **Because the loner wants love, they need love the most, and when it seems they can't get it, they grumble inside, "Well, I don't need love, anyway."** The loner feels uncomfortable needing love and so he denies his needs. He projects, "I don't need you." Because he doesn't express his needs clearly, he is continually disappointed and hurt in relationships. To the loner, needs are a sign of weakness. The more he feels his needs, the more he will separate and retreat, thus pushing out the very love he needs so desperately. **The loner must learn to share his needs and to show his hurts.** The loner must learn that need is not a dirty word and find people in life who can fulfill his need for love.
13. **The final role you might find yourself playing is the *sacrificer*.** This person learned that to love means to sacrifice. Probably while growing up, the sacrificer's parents never let him forget how much they were sacrificing for him. **Loving is a tiresome matter for the sacrificer because for him, suffering is symbolic of true love.** "I suffered for you, so you suffer for me." This is not a healthy basis for relationships and it certainly doesn't make you attractive to someone else. **The sacrificer needs to learn to give love freely without expecting sacrifice from others in return.** And at the same time, he must remember not to give up his own needs all the time for others.

Now that we have explored some of the reasons we don't fully love ourselves, some of the roles and masks that we wear, **let's now examine some of the reasons why our relationships don't fully express the love we feel in our hearts.**

We all want to live happily ever after. No one falls in love and plans to fall out of love, but it happens, and when it happens, it hurts. Approximately one out of every two marriages in the United States ends in divorce and this phenomenon is now expanding all over the globe. Out of the couples that remain married, it's certain that a good number of them are no longer happy with each other. Between 40 and 70% of married couples aren't satisfied with their partners and have even had extra-marital affairs. You don't have to be a gambler to see that these are pretty terrible odds, yet most people continue to get involved in relationships without thinking about how to avoid joining the ranks of the 50% who don't make it. **Many people who stick it out in relationships don't look at their problems.** They pretend to be happy when they're really resentful, sad or even numb. They keep up the appearance of a relationship, while all the time they're dying inside. **Sometimes the loneliest place in the world is lying next to someone who doesn't love you anymore or someone you've stopped loving. When we don't have clear solutions to the problems that emerge in relationships, we end up approaching these problems in one of these following ways:**

- Ignore the problems and hope they'll go away.
- Justify the problem and tell yourself there's no such thing as a perfect relationship.
- Blame it all on your partner.
- Leave your partner and find another - but you may only to find yourself facing the same problem all over again.

Have you ever felt, "I love my partner, but I'm no longer in love?" Contrary to popular belief, love and romance can last. That flame of love and excitement that you shared in the beginning can burn steadily and even burn brighter as time goes on. We learn how to love and have relationships by watching our parents when we grow up. If you saw your parents lying to one another, you learned to lie. If you saw them hiding their true feelings, you learned to hide yours. If you saw them reacting with anger and blame, you learned to react with anger and blame. If you saw them bearing their pain silently as victims, you learned to bear your pain silently as victims. Long before you had your first intimate relationship, you were thoroughly conditioned and unfortunately, most of that conditioning taught you more about how not to love than how to love. **If you want a relationship that's better than the one your parents had, you have to work at it.**

Start by admitting to yourself that you need to learn how to make love work. Let go of your pride and feel that need deep inside for more intimacy, appreciation and love. Enriching your relationships is an art and a science. Just like building a bridge or playing an instrument. Like all arts and sciences, enriching your relationship will seem like a mystery until you've worked with it long enough to master it. Then it will become second nature. Then it's easy. But until you get to that point, it does require hard work. Everyone is always trying to enrich their relationships either consciously or unconsciously. No matter how much a partner may act like they don't care, underneath their defensive armor is a gentle spirit that wants to love and be loved. **If deep inside every person is a gentle, loving spirit seeking to love and be loved, then why are so many marriages breaking up?** Talking about love and having good intentions are just not enough. After many years of counseling couples on their relationships, discussing the common problems that emerge, I realized that in most cases there's nothing wrong with the people who came to me. There is, however, something wrong with the methods they use in trying to enrich their relationships. Sometimes, the harder they work at the relationship, the more problems would emerge. **In many cases, because a couple has not learned effective communication skills, the more they try to fix the relationship, the worse it gets.** As a result, the underlying problems get ignored and gradually accumulate over time. Because of unsatisfactory relationships, many people today blame themselves and, thus, are obsessed with changing themselves. They feel, "If I could just change me, then I'd get the love I need." But creating more love in your life has nothing to do with changing who you are. It actually has to do with bringing who you are truly out and expressing who you are. As a matter of fact, the more you try to modify your behavior in order to act in a certain way you think you should act, the less you'll be yourself and the harder it will be for others to love you. As long as change is motivated by self-rejection or even self-hatred, you'll never truly feel loved for being you.

Stay tuned for part two of this series, where we will investigate how to get in touch with what you really feel.

For more information just like this visit www.MarsVenus.com where you will find an extensive free section of knowledge and information.

You can also find Part Two of this series on “The Secret to Building a Lasting Relationship” in the membership section at marsvenus.com.