

## What's Love Got To Do With It?

It is the irony of many relationships that we often treat our loved ones worse than strangers and business acquaintances. We seem to operate under the premise that the closer we are to someone the greater license we have to be insensitive and cruel. We take for granted those close to us, we let go of the politeness that we use with others, and we fall into thoughtless habits of inconsideration and disrespect.

We have to make a conscious effort to be kind and caring, forgiving and accepting, avoiding judgment and grievance against those we hold dear. This involves not being critical, sarcastic, and belittling. This involves being generous, and self-less, focusing less on "what's in it for me" and more on "what can I do to make them feel better." It is this "getting out of ourselves and our self-centeredness" that leads to greater appreciation, generosity, kindness and love in return. It leads to greater communication, union, and self-esteem when we give because we want to, rather than giving in order to get. Rather than resenting what's wrong with our relationships, we should be grateful for what's right, we should appreciate what we have and count our blessings.

It's a matter of changing our perspective. We need to remind ourselves that in every situation that stimulates anger and resentment in us: "There is another way to look at this." When we see people acting badly towards us, when we see people full of rage and resentment, grievance and attack, seemingly trying to hurt and humiliate us, we can choose to see them in another light.

We can choose to see them as people who are in pain, full of fear and confusion, who are calling out for love in the most inappropriate of ways. They want love, but they don't know how to ask for it in a healthy way. So they "ask for love" by screaming, attacking, blaming, judging and hurting. If we can see that what looks like attack is really a call for love and help, and if we can then respond with what is really needed in the situation -- understanding, compassion and love -- then we have a chance to transform the relationship. Instead of responding to an "attack" with anger, defensiveness, and a counter-attack, we choose to not see it as an attack.

The point is: "Would you rather be right or happy?" When we fight with each other we're so busy trying to be right, to prove the other person wrong, that we lose sight of the bigger picture: that we love and care for each other. When we can let go of our ego which needs to be right, which needs other people to know that we're right, we have a chance to find real and lasting happiness.

The bottom line is we can't change others. We can influence them but it's their choice to generate change or not. However, what we can do is change ourselves, change our habitual ways of looking at things, change our emotional responses and reactions to others. This generates a sense of personal empowerment and may lead to transforming experiences for others as well.