



RELATIONSHIPS

NO COMPROMISING?

Relationship coach **Vicky van Praag** says a relationship will disintegrate if you have to compromise who you are to stay in it

It is interesting how the causes of a relationship going wrong are often the very things we do to try and make them go right. Compromise can be one of those things. Compromise may not be a bad thing in itself, but when we start to compromise not just what we want, but who we are, in order to hold a relationship together we are headed for disaster.

When I see a couple together I'm always interested to notice who they are as individuals, and what parts of themselves they might be compromising in order to hold onto the relationship.

It is understandable that people believe they need to shut down parts of themselves to make their partner happy. When we are first in love our partner loves everything

"When we are first in love, our partner loves everything about us. Later, they complain about certain parts of us"

about us. Then, as time goes on, they start to complain about certain parts of us. Perhaps they don't like our friends, or our hobbies. Perhaps they don't feel comfortable with how gregarious we are, or with the kind of clothes we like to wear. And so, to keep them loving us, we stop doing these things, or we do them behind closed doors, until eventually we realise that we no longer express all of who we truly are.

But a "shrink to fit" relationship will only



find a lot of anger. Anger at our partner for apparently not loving us for who we truly are; and anger at ourselves for putting up with the situation. Thus we will find ourselves in confrontations, the giver and receiver of anger that is too scared to express what it really feels: the fear that you will not be loved for who you are. But the truth of it is that our partner does want us to be happy. They just might be scared that certain aspects of our self-expression will lead us away from them. They might try and hold us back from taking dance classes, because they're worried that we'll have an affair. Or they might oppose us having parties because they find social occasions scary. So, you compromise yourself in order to hold the relationship together and you find yourself with a relationship full of pain and anger. You do it to be happy, and you end up miserable. A great relationship consists of two individuals who inspire and support each other to be the most amazing versions of themselves they are capable of being. To wear the clothes they love, pursue the hobbies they love, to express with passion who they are and who they want to be.

So next time you find yourself doing something to placate your partner, remember, there is another way.

Ring Vicky on 511154 or e-mail her on: vicky@vickyvanpraag.co.uk

REFLECTIONS

HARVESTS COME AND GO – OR DO THEY?



November may be a good time to reflect on the past, says counsellor **Ian Woodroffe**

Early morning whilst walking the dog is thinking time for me. I am aware that this year's harvest is now forgotten and next year's is already climbing out of the earth. Some people want to forget the harvests that life deals for them. They want to move onto new growth and think that the old harvest is buried and forgotten. Not so for others. This month saw the chapel at Addenbrooke's hospital full of families from several generations gathered to remember difficult harvests.

They were there for the Annual Remembrance service for the death of their baby. A powerful event with the Chapel full of very powerful memories and many tears. Many said it was a good event and it was good to see staff members supporting the parents. Some will say how can such a tearful event full of sad memories be a good event?

The answer has to be that some people choose to honour the past harvests of their lives including the death of someone they loved whatever the age. In honouring, there is recognition that lives are changed by contact with others, however short that contact may be. Some might have stepped into the Chapel on that day and asked 'Is this helpful or healthy – are you not just holding people in the misery of their past?' The answer from the families would have been, 'certainly not – we cannot forget'.

This month contains a national mourning event we need to remember. However young we may be we need to remember that there is a generation of people trapped in their silence caused by terrible memories of the wars. Two minutes is not long to reflect on the events that may have permanently damaged people. When we join people in the depth of painful memory, we affirm that as sensitive human beings we can be alongside others when they hurt and that is a better option than to be causing pain.

(Please note that the January grief and loss day is Saturday 21st and not Friday 20th as published last month)

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