



RELATIONSHIPS

LOVE CAN BE HIDING

Relationship coach **Vicky van Praag** says that love, for all its early hopes, can struggle to survive if taken for granted

Whenever I work with a couple through a relationship crisis, I'm always reminded of how fragile love appears to be and yet how strong it really is. Love can seem to be lost in a second with a harsh word or a nasty look. And after too many years of conflict and heartache it can appear to be lost forever. But time and time again it can be found, in the deepest recesses of our hearts, just waiting to be coaxed, reassured and gently brought back into being.

'The pressures of life will often break our hopes and promises for the perfect relationship and we can end up shutting down and feeling that we don't love our partners anymore.'

Most people fall in love at least once in their lives but not so many manage to make it last a lifetime. Some people give up in the midst of conflict and heartache, yet others find a way to allow their love to take shape beyond pain, rather than being broken by it.

We think that great love will survive no matter what. But many people have loved each other deeply and still watch their love burn up in the midst of anger and regret. Because it is not simply whom you love but how you love that determines how long your love will last. We need to know how to love because relationships will always give us some of the greatest challenges of our lives.



When we fall in love we think that love will be easy. We think that we'll never turn on our love in anger, or feel disappointment or hurt. Then, as time goes on and things don't go the way we want them to, we may snap, bite, lie and criticise. The pressures of life will often break our hopes and promises for the perfect relationship and we can end up shutting down and feeling that we don't love our partners anymore.

The way it looks is hardly ever the way it is. If you see someone in anger and blame them, then you don't see the hurt that is underneath, a hurt so acute that it makes your loved one lash out at you. If you hear a criticism and fight back, then you don't notice the unexpressed need and fear that hides behind it.

Love that is hidden deeply under pain, disappointment, anger and resentment can still be unearthed. Sometimes it's too difficult for the people involved in the heart of the conflict to see and feel it, but that doesn't mean it isn't there. To find love again you need to be willing to look, and willing to look beyond and behind the negativity you feel. A successful relationship is not a stress-free relationship, it is a relationship where both parties are willing to deal with the stress and move beyond it.

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BEING HAPPY

COPING WITH LOSS THE EASIER WAY



Loss may be one of the hardest things to cope with, says counsellor **Ian Woodroffe**

If I go to a social occasion I look for laughs, fun and an atmosphere that helps me forget work. Sometimes, because the conversation goes that way, people begin to ask each other what they do at work. There are times when we don't want to be reminded of work. I know people, who when away on holiday, create a fantasy profession for themselves so that they don't have to talk about their real work. If I am in the mood to forget work and an insistent person wants to know what I do I sometimes tell them 'I teach death studies'. That is true but such a reply, in a social setting, has the desired effect. There is silence and an inability to follow up. I know it may be mean, but there is a time and place for everything.

You will know by now as regular readers of this column that I do think that loss and grief should be spoken about. We would do well to understand what happens to people in those situations.

So to that end I have set up informal, fun teaching days for anyone to attend and learn about loss. And I'm throwing out a challenge: I will refund the cost of the day to anyone who genuinely find that the day was not informative and a relaxed way to learn about the subject. On Day 1 we cover how we have come to form our thoughts about loss and grief, and look at family patterns. Day 2 allows for further study on the theories of why we behave as we do with regard to loss and grief. The next Day 1 is January 20 in Cambridge, and costs £35. For more details and venue information contact Sue on: 512 246 or 07941 403 960.

I am aware that such a day would be the last thing some would consider giving up a Saturday - understandable, but for those who are interested or who encounter loss and grief in their work this will be a day not to be missed. And by the way if we meet socially, and I hope we will because meeting people is fun, if I tell you I teach death studies do take the hint, pour me another drink and let's laugh together over something.

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