

What is the most powerful secret of loving relationships?

There are many factors that go into creating a loving relationship. Certainly it helps if two people have some things in common regarding how they like to spend their time. It also helps if they have common values around religion or spirituality, around politics, the environment, abortion, and personal growth. It helps if they both eat junk food or both eat organic food. It makes things easier if both are neat or both are messy, if both are on time people or both are late people. Physical attraction is also quite important. It's great if they have common values around money and spending. Yet a couple can have all of these and still not have a loving relationship if one element is missing. Without this essential ingredient, all the other wonderful attributes will not be enough to make the relationship work. This essential ingredient is about intention. At any given moment, each of us is devoted to only one of two different intentions: to control or to learn. When our intention is to control, our deepest motivation is to have control over getting love, avoiding pain, and feeling safe. When our intention is to learn, our deepest motivation is to learn about being loving to ourselves and others. The motivation to get love rather than be loving can create havoc within a relationship. Let's look at a typical relationship issue and see what happens regarding the two different intentions. Jason and Samantha are feeling emotionally distant from each other, and they haven't made love in a month. The problem started when Samantha stated that she wanted to take an expensive vacation and Jason objected. Samantha got angry, Jason gave in, and they have been distant ever since. Samantha's intention was to have control over getting what she wanted. She equates an expensive vacation with love "if Jason does this for her, then he proves his love for her. She used her anger as a way to have control over getting what she wants. She wants control over feeling special to Jason. Jason's intention is to avoid pain. He gave himself up to have control over Samantha not being angry with him. He hopes that by giving Samantha what she wants, she will see him as a good and loving husband. However, because both Jason and Samantha were trying to control each other rather than be loving to themselves and each other, their interaction created emotional distance. What would this have looked like if their intention had been to learn? If Samantha's intent had been to learn, she would not have become angry. Instead, she would have wanted to understand Jason's objections. If Jason's intention had been to learn, he would not have given himself up. Instead he would have wanted to understand why this particular vacation was so important to Samantha. Both Samantha and Jason would have been caring about themselves and each other, rather than wanting to get love or avoid pain. In their mutual exploration about why they each felt the way they did, they would have learned what they needed to learn - about themselves and each other - to reach a win-win resolution. Instead of Samantha ostensibly winning and Jason losing, they would have come up with something both of them could live with. With some exploration of his financial fears, Jason might have decided that the vacation Samantha wanted would be fine. With understanding of Jason's financial concerns, Samantha might have decided on a less expensive vacation. In either case, both of them would have felt fine about the outcome. No matter how much Jason and Samantha have in common or are attracted to each other, their love will diminish when their intent is to control rather than learn. It's amazing how quickly love vanishes when one or both partners have the intent to control. It's equally amazing how fast it comes back when both partners have the intent to learn.

About the Author

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