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JOEL BRASS AND ASSOCIATES LTD.

The Growing Edge



Co-Dependence and the Royal Me : Two Ways To Guarantee We Never Get What We Want In Our Relationships

As a relationship therapist I have been around the block. I have been working with couples going on forty years now. I have seen couples at every stage of the so-called dance of intimacy – from the ga-ga-goo-goo experience of falling in love and believing that your partner is the most attractive and elevated being you’ve ever met to what I sometimes call the stage of “relationshipit”, where your partner is not only bad and wrong for you, but the bane of your existence.

One fundamental truth that I can give you is that how your relationships in general, and in particular your primary romantic one, end up playing out has way, way, way (should I add another way?) more to do with you than you might have ever imagined or even conceived of. Equally truthful in importance and consequence is that almost all of us, mostly unknowingly and unintentionally, are going our merry way *actively sabotaging* what we most want to experience and enjoy in our love lives.

So as you read further imagine a narrow but well-constructed and traversable roadway, with an uninviting ditch on the left side and an equally unattractive one on the right. Though the ditches look very, very different from each other, each if driven into will *single-handedly*, bafflingly, sadly and sometimes tragically, send your love life off the rails and into a place you never would have believed you’d end up in at the beginning of your journey.

The two most common sabotaging tactics I witness in couples that are 100% guaranteed to have things end badly are: taking up too little space or giving away too much - what I will call *co-dependence* and taking too much and taking up too much space– being self-centered, entitled, and unbending – what I will call the “*Royal Me*”. Let’s explore these very different but equally effective relationship detonating devices more deeply now.

continued

Co-Dependence

Co-dependence could be described as the failure to be true to yourself and to communicate in a transparent and assertive (not aggressive) fashion your feelings, needs, wants and truths. It is an expression of some of our most well used defense mechanisms of avoidance and denial – a seeming inability, but moreover unwillingness, to face and deal with what is right under our noses. This particularly applies to things we don't like or want in a relationship – for example the way we feel treated or spoken to, the systemic inequities in it – privileges, rights and freedoms accorded to one partner but not the other. Discrepancies in rank, power, authority and control. Transgressions or trespasses that are occurring on a regular basis that are not challenged or even mentioned.

An ordinary way to describe co-dependence is the fear of rocking the boat, of conflict, of being misunderstood, rejected or abandoned, of not wanting to hurt anybody, of risking the temporary or permanent displeasure of another in response to your drawing a line in the sand. It is being agreeable or “nice” to a fault.

An integral aspect of co-dependence is enabling. Enabling refers to something in the badly treated one that is allowing this to happen. It is the explicit, more often implicit, condoning of inappropriate or unhealthy behavior, a turning a blind eye, a “going along to get along” complicity, which over time begins to reveal itself as a fool's errand. Enabling serves no one and nothing. It supports and deepens a lack of learning and growth in both partners, a blunting or eliminating of consequences and repercussions that do not ultimately honor or respect the one offended or the offender. Hiding a self-protective motive at its base, enabling excuses the bad behavior of the other. It is founded on a lack of grounded and reliable self-esteem. It is a folding or inner collapse in the face of the courage and conviction required to be real with yourself and real with another and to deal with whatever fall out might ensue. There is always a tremendous, unexamined, multi-layered and complex root system of fear underneath this survival strategy.

The Royal Me

Someone displaying the Royal Me in relationship could be said to be suffering from attention deficit disorder – that is to say that he or she can't get enough attention, or praise, or recognition or approval, or being considered likeable, exceptional or special by others. It is as if they have a “hole in their soul” and no amount of external validation or deference can or will ever fill it. This person takes up, often demands, a disproportionate amount of the limelight, insisting on always standing at the centre of the stage, impressing and commanding the rapt attention of the audience. Their unexamined and relentless inner dictum runs along the lines of: “All human beings are created equal. But I am more equal”.

The Royal Me is actually another, though perhaps more oblique and insidious manifestation of a fear-based being. The Royal Me is a masquerade and far cry from real, humble, honest, gentle, and true self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-acceptance. And sadly for both actor and audience destined to fail in giving and receiving healthy, ever-expanding, genuine love.

It is almost without exception that someone inclined to be the Co-Dependent will be programmed to find someone who will display the Royal Me. Like a perfect dysfunctional hand fitting into a perfectly dysfunctional, overly tight glove, a quid-pro-quo or transactional arrangement or pact comes forward, replacing and undermining a thriving, mutually empowering and upliftingly loving primary relationship.

A wise and profound Hebrew sage of two thousand years ago named Hillel (died C.E. 10) postulated two questions as life-long challenges by which to live a beautiful, well-balanced and rich human life: *“If I am not for me who will be?”* and *“If I am only for me what am I?”*. Every one of us every day places and changes our position on that continuum throughout our relationships and lifetime. Finding that emotionally and spiritually balanced and full sweet spot somewhere between these polarities is the challenge and inner work of becoming a full-fledged adult, self-actualizing being.

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UPCOMING SEMINARS

HEALING THE ORIGINAL PAIN OF YOUR LIFE: THE INNER CHILD SEMINAR

Many of us are aware that we are stuck emotionally or spiritually somewhere in our journey through life. These stuck places may show up as unwanted and self-defeating behaviors or symptoms such as:

- unhealthy relationships
- relationship breakdowns
- an excessive need for money, position or power
- constantly seeking the approval of others and fearing rejection
- constant, unstoppable busyness
- workaholic tendencies
- loneliness
- explosive emotional outbursts with loved ones
- dependency on alcohol, drugs, sex or shopping as a mood-enhancer
- family strife
- low self-esteem
- depression
- eating and sleep disorders
- internet addictions

All of these conditions are expressions of a soul in too much emotional pain and fear, recycling it over and over again in the present day, often onto people and in situations that have nothing to do with the original wounds which produced it.

This seminar will gently and powerfully escort you into some of the most formative moments, relationships and events of your early life so that you can identify the original source of your emotional pain and fear and learn how to heal and release it at its roots. It is my personal and professional experience that doing so can free you up in the present day to live a qualitatively new and fresh life and not just some re-enactment of your past.

DATE: SAT / SUN, FEB. 17 & 18, 2024

RELATIONSHIPS: THE WORK OF LOVE

In this seminar we examine ourselves as the perpetrators of pain. We examine the myriad flight and fight responses that we have employed to keep from our hearts and souls the very people we say we want to love, the very people who have committed the "crime" of loving us. This most certainly could include our love interest but we will also examine our relationship with our father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter and past loves to discover the ego patterns that have run us and our relationships into the ground.

We begin to move from being baffled, righteous, or victimized by our love lives to taking 100% responsibility for the state that our most significant relationships are in. All of our dynamics and imposed barriers to real intimacy, committed love and monogamy are faced.

Only then can we discover and examine the components of a healthy, loving and mutually beneficial relationship. Only then can we discover that with courage, vulnerability, honesty and humility, we can begin to experiment with laying down our survival-oriented, fear based ego patterns and establish an entirely new base from which to interact with the people of our lives.

DATE: SAT / SUN, NOV. 25 & 26, 2023

**COST - \$350.00 + GST per person (deferred payment plan available)
bursaries available to those in financial need**

If you have further questions or would like to register contact:

**Jason (seminar coordinator) at (236) 330-4703 or
email: seminarsjoelbrass@gmail.com**

For Private Individual or Relationship Therapy, contact Joel at (604) 535-4220 or (604) 732-9091. All Sessions Are Being Conducted Remotely.

