

RETHINKING RELATIONSHIPS: TOSSING OUT THE MANUAL FOR A NEW MODEL



In the previous blog, we explored the general themes surrounding the source of our suffering. Today, we delve into how these themes manifest in our relationships and how we can create a new model for experiencing and using relationships in our lives. Specifically, we'll examine long-term romantic relationships and the often-unspoken expectations and manuals we create for our partners. By understanding the pitfalls of this approach, we can pave the way for a more fulfilling and liberated way of relating to one another.

The Manual: Expectations and Control:

When entering a long-term relationship, many of us seek a partner with similar goals, values, and interests. Over time, however, we tend to compile a manual for our partners—expectations, rules, and unspoken requirements. We may expect them to prioritize certain things, act in specific ways, and fulfill our emotional needs. Often, our partners are unaware of this manual, and we hold them accountable for our happiness based on their compliance with it.

The Downfall of Manuals: Disappointment and Dissatisfaction:

We use the items on our manual as reasons to feel unhappy or unloving toward our partners. If they fail to meet our expectations, we may become dissatisfied and seek another candidate or start to question the relationship. This gradual accumulation of rules and expectations transforms the relationship from a spontaneous and joyful adventure into a burdensome task where we become fixated on whether our partner follows the manual.

The Illusion of Half-and-Half: Understanding Individuality:

In our quest to create a unified entity, we often forget that our partners also have their own manuals for us. They, too, have a vision of an idealized partner who aligns with their desires and expectations. Consequently, conflicts arise when our manuals clash, causing pain and distress. This dynamic contributes to the staggering divorce rates we see today.

Proposing a New Model: Tossing Out the Manual:

To break free from the pain and disappointment caused by manuals, we need to consider a new approach—one that involves discarding the manual altogether. Although this may seem radical, it opens up a world of possibilities for our relationships. Instead of trying to control our partner's actions and emotions, we can treat them as separate individuals with their own dreams, thoughts, and priorities. Embracing their autonomy allows us to appreciate their unique perspectives and fosters a more open and respectful connection.

Challenging Objections: Finding Alternative Solutions:

People often argue that rules are necessary to maintain order and fairness in relationships. However, adhering to a broken model yields little success. Instead, we should focus on creativity and finding alternative solutions. For instance, if household responsibilities become a source of contention, rather than shouldering all the burden or expecting equal division, we can explore innovative approaches such as outsourcing or delegating tasks based on individual preferences and skills. By planning and committing to shared responsibilities, we can create a harmonious living environment without the resentment and frustrations that arise from unmet expectations.

Taking Ownership and Seeking Alternatives:

By acknowledging that we have a choice in every aspect of our lives, including relationships, we empower ourselves to redefine our reality. If we genuinely don't want to perform a particular task, we must be honest about it. We can choose to outsource or find alternative solutions, accepting the associated costs. While this may require additional expenses, it's crucial to consider the long-term toll of an unhappy relationship or a breakup. Taking responsibility for our choices and seeking creative solutions can lead to a more fulfilling and liberated existence.

In the pursuit of fulfilling relationships, we must challenge the conventional model that relies on manuals and unmet expectations. By discarding the manual we can embrace a new way of relating to our partners—one that is based on mutual respect, individual autonomy, and open communication. By doing so, we can pave the way for happier, more harmonious relationships and create a reality where love and connection thrive.

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