

WISH LIST OR HIT LIST? IS YOUR LOVE QUEST REALISTIC?

By Olga Sheean

Wanted: handsome, tanned, wealthy, baggage-free, yacht-owning, single 6-foot male who can read my mind, respect my hormones, support my retail therapy, do things my way, listen attentively and doesn't sweat, snore, burp, fart, guffaw or wear white socks with sandals.

Not too much to ask, right? You know what you want and won't settle for anything less. After all, you've spent years sorting through the dross; if potential candidates don't make the grade, why waste your time?

Yet holding out for Mr Perfect can be a lonely endeavour – and we can miss out on some important experiences. We can also miss the whole point of relationships, which is to discover, heal and empower ourselves. We're not supposed to go into them already perfect or use them to have our needs met; we're meant to actively engage and relate so that we can heal old wounds, identify and resolve our personal issues (which must be triggered in order to be addressed), communicate more authentically, and explore deeper intimacy, love, self-expression and fulfillment. This doesn't come in a ready-made package; it's something we must actively, consciously create – by applying some of the key principles governing all relationships.

Principle #1 – Be what you want your partner to be

If you want a partner who accepts, respects and trusts you, you must first ensure that healthy acceptance, respect and trust are integral parts of you. This is not just a state of mind; it's about actively demonstrating these qualities for self and others in practical ways. Do you say no to compromises or choices that don't feel right? Do you have healthy boundaries when it comes to being manipulated, taken for granted or abused? Can you respond calmly and confidently when challenged or criticized? Are you always guided by your intuition? Can you be fully yourself with others (or do you hide certain parts, for fear of rejection)? Can you respect and acknowledge others even if you don't agree with them? Do you connect with others in meaningful, heartfelt ways? What we demonstrate in our everyday lives and interactions determines the kind of partner we attract. (And we always attract partners with the same issues as us.) So it's not about what's out there; it's about what's going on inside you.

Principle #2 – Every relationship has a purpose

No relationship is ever random, accidental or a mistake. It may seem that way, when you think of former relationships, but that's only because you didn't know what was really going on. Every relationship is designed to put us in touch with our fears, self-doubts, insecurities and negative beliefs so that we can address them and become more complete and fulfilled as a result. Our biggest issues are often deeply buried and can only be brought to the surface by emotionally charged dynamics (often conveniently presented in the form of a maddeningly imperfect man). Low self-worth attracts abuse, manipulation, criticism or whatever else is required to trigger this issue so that we can ultimately feel the pain of self-rejection and say no to it. Relationships are not about enduring the bits that don't work; they're about understanding the message behind the

challenge and bringing it home to self. Take a look at your past relationships and try to identify some key negative elements. Was there abuse, rejection, disrespect, manipulation, dishonesty, indifference, disconnection or any other painful, unloving element? If so, identify their positive counterparts. (Manipulation becomes acceptance; indifference becomes heartfelt connection; and dishonesty becomes the deeper truth.) These are your key relationship issues and what you stand to gain (in self and partner) if you actively embody them.

Principle #3 – Love is in the details

When we're looking for a partner, we tend to focus on the big picture. But relationships evolve one sentence, one look or one hug at a time. Every word and action is either reinforcing some negative pattern or breaking free of it. When we focus on how we relate and if we actively engage with others in meaningful ways – whether it's the boss or the postie – we upgrade our self-worth and open the door to truly loving relationships.

Get the message, get the upgrade and you won't care whether he has a yacht or not.

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