

Recipe For Awesome Relationships

Here are a few eye-openers to inspire and enable us to see deeper and wiser into gaining the best possible life.

- Our intimate relationships teach us more than about the hearts of the ones we love. They teach us about ourselves. There is no greater people-growing machine than that of love.
- Our culture often views love as some fuzzy feeling that gets passed around and makes us feel warm inside. But as we all know, this happens only part of the time. The other part is full of anxiety, confusion, and frustration.
- Having problems in our relationships are inevitable. Even our soulmates cause issues sometimes. According to John Gottman, couples disagree on unsolvable, never-ending issues 69% of the time. While many see conflict as a sign of incompatibility, conflicts that most couples experience are signals that the relationship needs growth.
- The feeling of disconnection from your partner can be used to find new horizons of communicating. Your sex-less marriage can cause you to take a deep look at your integrity. It can teach you how to embody your deepest desires and how to truly want your partner and experience life-changing intimacy.
- Your relationship can be a foundation of profound growth and vitality. Even Abraham Maslow, famous for creating the Hierarchy of Needs, argued that without bonds of love and affection with others, we cannot go on to achieve our full potential as human beings.
- Our relationships can teach us profound life lessons if we let them. If you don't let those lessons sink in, then you are likely to prevent growth from occurring, which ultimately will leave you stuck in an unfulfilling relationship. To quote Maslow, "My own relationships have caused me to face anxiety. To stand in the threshold of what I thought was happening and open myself up to see what was actually happening. My intimate relationship taught me how to let my partner tell me what I am doing wrong as I swallowed my defensiveness and took a step into a new realm of loving my partner.
- Hashem has destined you to be with your partner. Let's be grateful for what your partner brings to the table. You only live once! Make the most of each moment. Don't waste a second on focusing on what your partner DOES NOT HAVE, on the trivial nuisances. Instead, focus your energies on noticing and complimenting them on WHAT THEY DO HAVE. It's all about the focus. Where do you put your energy? Notice the good as the Pirkei Ovot says and ignore the bad! Once you live a life of gratitude, and only notice the good that your partner is bringing to the table, rather than the bad, you will begin to have a whole new positive loving energy in your life! It's all about what you choose to focus on!

8 Ways Intimate Relationships Teach Us Credit: Karl Benson

- Happiness in our relationships does not come just by finding the right partner, it requires you to become the right partner as well. This requires massive personal growth. Your relationship gives you an opportunity to learn how to control your anger, your reactions, and your defensiveness, so you can find new ways of being affectionate, giving, and respectful of your partner's differences. It causes you to let someone depend on you. To behave in trustworthy ways that prove your commitment and reliability in the relationship. To face the vulnerability of giving your heart to one person fully, without a secret life and without escape routes. Being the right partner is not an easy journey. But the emotional depth and growth you will experience will bring fulfillment beyond what you ever imagined.
- Facts matter less than feelings. In any relationship, there are two roads of communicating. There is fact and there is feeling. As a guy, I have habitually clung to the facts of what was going on in my relationship. But your feelings are not some fact we can fact check; they are emotions. When communicating with your partner, the one thing you don't want to miss is the feeling. Because the feeling is what really matters. If your partner is angry, realize there tends to be a feeling of hurt underneath that anger. Ask your partner why they are feeling hurt. That's how you diffuse anger. Once you can show your partner that you understand why they feel the way they do, even if you disagree, the quicker both of you can connect and find a solution.
- There will always be a reason to reject anyone. Every single person is imperfect and every single person will cause you to want to push them away. To dump them. To leave them. "Every [relationship] demands an effort to keep it on the right track; there is constant tension...between forces that hold you together and those that tear you apart." – John Gottman. The trick to making love last is to discover – and to continue to discover – reasons for staying together.
- Withdrawal is death. A dysfunctional relationship pattern that emerged from 40 years of research in John Gottman's love lab was withdrawal. When we turn away from our partners, the affection, shared humor, and joy goes out the window. Withdrawal tends to happen when one person is emotionally unavailable or when a couple continues to behave in negative ways that push each other away. It's emotionally crippling. Withdrawal kills intimacy and sexual passion. Personal growth comes from learning how to be hurt or angry and not withdrawing from the relationship. To learn how to say you're upset, frustrated and hurt, so both your partner and you can come together to talk through it. It takes emotional depth not to put up a wall. If you want a close, intimate relationship, then that's what you need to learn how to do.
- Touch is the best aphrodisiac. Affectionate touch brings us closer and causes us to stay close. If you're not touching your partner often, your relationship is not going to feel passionate. Both of you will feel that the connection and closeness you once had is diminishing. While sexual touching does improve romance, affectionate touching deepens romance. It's the gentle brush along the back as you pass in the hall. The touching of one's hair as you lay in bed. Love thrives in the micro-moments of connection, and sometimes the best way to create connection is reach out and touch your loved one. Consistently ask yourself, "If I'm going to make this relationship

work, what must I do? What must I quit doing?" Often, we know what we want from our partner, but very few of us have a clear idea of what our partner needs from us. If your answers to this question are unknown, or if they feel superficial or vague, then it's time you ask your partner. "Am I helping you get your needs met in this relationship? (And if not, what can I do differently?)" Honour what your partner says. It matters.

- Complaining to friends and family doesn't help. Often, we feel so frustrated with our partners that it becomes easy to gossip with our friends and family about their flaws, their lack of sexual desire, or their horrible communication skills. Unfortunately, our friends and family do not have the power to change your relationship. If you have a problem, go directly to your partner. That's the only person who can make the effort to change your relationship.
- Love is a verb, not a feeling. If you want your relationship to work, then you have to make an intentional effort to make it work. If you want the romance to stay alive, you have to keep it alive. As unattractive as that may sound to some people, I think that is the most attractive thing a person can offer. "I'm making you a priority in my life and will continue to court you and learn new ways of making you happy." If you take the time to think about it, some of the biggest lessons we've learned have come from our intimate relationships. Our relationships offer us a window into ourselves. We grow from miscommunication and misunderstanding. We become mature by learning how to control our emotions and improving the way we communicate when we are flooded with anger. Our relationships teach us what is and isn't acceptable. With every relationship problem that occurs, ask yourself, "What lesson can I learn from this? What is this problem teaching me?"
- Relationship problems can be a catalyst for profound personal growth. If you listen, you will quickly discover that life's powerful lessons are taught within our relationships. With those closest to us. I'll leave you with a quote that profoundly continues to touch me and my relationship. "Romantic love requires courage – the courage to stay vulnerable, to stay open to our feelings to our partner, even when we are temporarily in conflict, even when we are frustrated, hurt, angry – the courage to remain connected with our love, rather than shutting down emotionally, even when it is terribly difficult to do so. When a couple lacks this courage and seeks 'safety' from pain in the refuge of withdrawal, as so commonly happens, it is not romantic love that has failed them, but they who have failed romantic love."