

WHOLISTIC RELATIONSHIPS

by Michael J. Roads

Not long ago I was asked what it is that defines the perfect relationship. Not an easy question! How do you define perfect? What is perfect for one couple could be totally boring for another. But I did have an answer. The relationship you have with Self defines the relationships that you have with other people. Your relationship with Self is your relationship with life.

When I write Self with a capital S, I am referring to Who I Am. No relationship with another person can be truly wholistic until our relationship with Self is based in love and respect. And this is rare. How can you truly love another person if love is a stranger in your own 'inner' relating with Self? In other words, how can you express love out, if love is not experienced within?

Begin by accepting yourself. How do you do this? By ceasing all self-criticism. Self-criticism is probably the most destructive of all habits. The person who continually criticizes himself/herself will criticize other people. They have no choice. Their inner habit demands it. And this, in turn, will cause the souring of any and all relationships. Most families, however close, are a hot bed of small angers, personal grievances, and continual arguments. Without any doubt, we have a far greater potential. In all these cases, the people involved do not have a supportive and uplifting relationship with Self. This is not bad, neither is it wrong, but it does maintain relationships that are non-supportive and demanding, rather than supportive and giving.

In any relationship, look for what you enjoy and admire in the other person. Ignore what aggravates and frustrates you. What you focus on grows. If you focus on what you like about the person, and tell them how much you appreciate this quality, it will expand and prosper. If instead - and sadly, most people do this - you focus on what you do not like, offering criticism, then that quality too will expand and prosper! Why is it so difficult for people to focus on the positive, rather than automatically engage the negative?

If we are fortunate enough to have children in our lives, we, as adults, have the opportunity to again grow with the vigor and energy of youth. I have five delightful grandchildren. I 'really' enjoy them. By observing them I am able to recapture elements of my own childhood that were undernourished. I never experienced having a grandfather to play with me, or hug me as a boy. My own father did not hug me. He was inhibited because he was a man, and I was a boy! So when I had boys of my own I made sure that I hugged them, and told them how much I loved them. I do it to this day, and they are, of course, men.

Equally, when I hug my grandsons, not only am I a grandfather hugging them, but the child in me that missed this experience finds it in them. What I am saying is; when I hug my grandsons, I am also the grandson being hugged. This is real, and very wholistic.

I look for the wholistic connections in my relationships, and the subtlety of some of the connections astounds me. Let me share an example of what I mean. I have a ten-year-old grandson named Jasper. When he was about eight I noticed that I treated him rather harshly. One of my sons and my daughter pointed this out to me, but I was aware of it. I was strict with him, with too much discipline. And none of this was

Jaspers fault. He is an incredible boy, bright, intelligent, quiet, obedient, beautiful to the eye, and a great companion. Why was I so strict, harsh? I knew that it would affect our relationship, and it did. He was wary around me, and inclined to avoid me. I don't blame him! So, why was I treating him like this? I gave it a lot of thought, eventually looking back into my life at around his age. And there I found the answer. When I was about eight, nine, ten years old, I saw my father as a strict, harsh man of about sixty-something. What I saw in my father, I was acting out - as a man of sixty-something - to Jasper who was the age that I had been. In other words, I became what I had hated and focussed on in my father when I was a boy! How subtle is that? We are such complicated Beings in our relationships. Once I had seen this, I changed my behavior immediately. I became open, friendly, receptive, and relaxed with Jasper. Within a month our relationship had completely changed. He was relaxed around me, played jokes on me, and we chatted about things boy to boy. And yet, the key was me, at his age, and my relationship with my dad who was the age that I am now. He married late, I married young!

This is the way of it. We can settle for the way that our relationships with the various members of our family are currently being expressed, and with our many and varied friends, or, we can attempt to raise each and every relationship to a higher level. I chose the latter. With all the people in my life on a regular basis, I attempt to raise our relationships to an ever-higher level. My wife, Treenie, and I have now been married for forty-three years. Each day I deliberately consider that this day is precious to me, and to our relationship, and I do my best that it is never wasted, or treated as trivial, or as yesterday revisited. Each day I tell Treenie that I love her, because each day that is a new and exciting Truth. And each day I uncover more of me, more of Self, and more of Life. This is what it is all about. To live each relationship in such a wholistic way that life reveals ever more of Truth to you ... and with a smile!