

Relationships & the Spirituality of a Broken-Open Heart

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“Let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another but make not a bond of love: let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.” –Khalil Gibran

There are times in life when we are called to be alone. Yet, it's tough to give ourselves alone time when we are used to partnering. In fact, many partner precisely to avoid being alone.

Aloneness gives us the to time process ourselves. If we can't be alone enough, then we are likely to be limited in developing ourselves. We don't have the sacred space to work out the dark places that have a stranglehold on our sovereignty, our deeper belonging to life.

Paradoxically, relationships show us many of these shadow places. So, a balance of together and alone time is crucial to integrate relationship with ourselves and with another. We must also find the time to be alone even while in relationship, not only when we are single.

Mirrors

A fear of depth, especially our wounded parts, can propel us to try to find these essential parts of ourselves in others. When we do this, we are usually presented with disappointment, which returns us to our depths again via our wounding. Ironically, to fear our depths is to stave off our vitality, wholeness, creativity, joy, and belonging. Our wounds happen to be a portal into these treasured and elusive psycho-spiritual treasures, disguised as heartbreak.

Whether a lover becomes a mirror of our own fracture and path to healing or a crutch to continue avoiding our fullness often depends upon if we are interested in our depths to begin with. The pain of relationship can be the one loophole in a defensive ego that protects us against breaking open. Relationships allow us to experience and to face the hidden places in us we might never otherwise choose to. This can be painful, but when we view pain as the mother of healing and integration, fear of pain dissolves and allows us to enter the crucible of our [deep hearts](#).

How the Light Gets Through

So the crutch of relationship can be a gateway, and the pain of love can be what secretly comes to save us. This is why the broken-open heart is a spiritual opportunity of the deepest, most rich and robust kind. All we have to do is make friends with pain to be shown the way down into this path of embodied living.

An ignorance of the dark and doing the deep difficult work of entering core pains in the name of wholeness (which is why to do it at all) often masquerades with the tag-line “Wholeness is inside you,” or “All you need is inside you.” But one cannot arrive at that wholeness or enlightenment, or whatever you want to call it, on the path of bliss alone. We get the answers and retrieve our fuller selves by doing the tough, heart-emptying work, from which [fulfillment as vibrant emptiness](#) emerges.

Because we live in a world that discourages this path—from the American dream mentality, the pleasure and happiness frenzy, to the New-Age external light-seeking obsession—we have left the underworld of ourselves, which is equivalent to our dear Earth, in grave jeopardy. Look around; it is the precipice of climate change and social collapse upon whose edge we are now teetering at the edge.

Love's Hidden Body

In addition to our joy and feel-good loving, the world especially needs our dark love now—our remorse, our guilt, our tears, our grief, our deep pause and reflection. These are not to avoided, as we are encouraged to believe. They each possess hidden gems when we can be with them and give them the time of day to teach and show us. They foster wisdom, compassion, passion, empathy, and thriving simplicity— as no pleasure can.

Each of us can engage these lesser-visited sides of love, even a little more, as our own inner work. This engenders not literal aloneness, the vision of the hermit or the one shy for relationship, but the one who becomes passionately engaged with the world at large.

But easy light, even semi-difficult light, is not enough. We must mine the deep, difficult light, which is simply to embrace and be transformed by our concealed and [tucked away core wounds](#). This is to embody the power of the Great Mother, so that we become Earth . . . once again. And we are able to care of our planet, one another, and the animals at our mercy.

Yin for the Win

All this—more than what is light, easy, and immediately gratifying and exciting—is the essence of the Sacred Feminine, or essential Yin in Chinese medicine terms. And to some degree, it requires a broken heart, one that finds a strange wholeness in being perpetually cracked-open to let our deeper light through—to keep us grounded, embodied, and truly

connected with one another and the world that needs our sanity now more than ever.

So let us use discernment, listen to the whispers from deep inside us, and genuinely consider the advice of wise others to guide us in good balance between aloneness and togetherness, both in and out of relationship. And when our heart breaks, we can rest assured that we are being worked upon and upgraded, though we may sink at first. This practice brings us into more sustainable relationship with the rest of life, which we navigate alone and together.

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