

## Love and it's lessons

Recently I was in Paris and happened to come across a book about **love**, «but, what else» whispered the city of love. Before we even fall in love, we have to go on dates. This first phase of getting to know each other is especially important because, depending on our choices, it could either save us or inflict future suffering. So, what should we pay attention to during this important phase?

### **Intensity**

Being in love for the first time is like a roller coaster of emotions. Everything feels incredibly intense and new. But intensity is often short-lived because we can't ride a roller coaster every day. That would simply be far too exhausting. Intensity is beautiful, but it's also deceptive. It is quite possible to feel intense emotions for people with whom we are not really compatible. So, we chase the butterflies in our stomach that make us feel alive instead of looking for consistency, commitment, and compatibility. **Intensity is not the same as compatibility. Intensity doesn't last, compatibility does.**

It's worth asking: is there a lack of passion, or is there simply no emotional turmoil?

By the way, healthy relationships can also be intense. They're just not detrimentally intense. The intensity people feel in healthy relationships often comes from a place of fulfillment because they have found someone with whom they are truly compatible and can grow.

### **Familiarity**

Who hasn't experienced it: we meet someone, and the spark is instantaneous. We have in-depth conversations about things that deeply touch and interest us. An immediate bond develops. In the process, we quickly forget that we've just met our counterpart and don't really know yet who we're dealing with. It's important to take the time to really get to know someone, because initial familiarity is not always a positive sign. Just because a person or situation seems familiar doesn't mean that person is good for us. We often confuse familiarity with rightness.

It is important to acknowledge that what we are drawn to is shaped by our experiences. For example, if someone grows up without a parent, that person is likely to be comfortable with absent and emotionally unavailable partners because they already know the absence and think it's normal. If someone grows up with constant arguing and chaos, they are used to turmoil and think it is «normal». **This being said, we sometimes fall in love with people not because they are necessarily good for us, but because they feel familiar**, and that's where the danger lies. It feels familiar and safe, when in fact it maybe isn't. What can we do about it?

It is important to ask ourselves what behavior patterns we have unconsciously adopted and what familiarity exactly means to us. Behavior patterns can be unlearned. Do I end up with certain people because they feel familiar and unconsciously remind me of my childhood/past experiences? Or because they are persistent, and I feel I don't deserve more? Or do I end up with people because they have the qualities I want in a partner? Because they are good for me on many levels? Love is ultimately not always just an uncontrollable feeling, but to a certain extent also an (un)conscious choice.

### **Potential**

And then it happens: We get to know someone, and everything fits like a glove. The humor is right, the common interests, even the values. But the other person doesn't want to make a firm commitment at the moment or only has time every other weekend. «That will come», we tell ourselves, «we just have to give them time». And so, we find ourselves in a constellation that keeps us in the **«one day» bet** for months, if not years.

We tell ourselves that this person will turn out the way we want them to. We invest more and more because we hope for a certain end result. And then when the person doesn't turn out the way we want, we feel frustrated and don't understand why the person can't be the one we need. We keep putting more and more into it, but things don't change. In this process, we often betray ourselves because we do things that no one asked us to do. We try very hard to make our partners happy, even though that's not really our job. In the process, we ourselves become unhappy and affect the relationship negatively. **It's important to realize that self-betrayal does more harm than good to a relationship.** All we can do is accept our partners as they are and support them in their happiness and not hinder them.

## **Love is (not) a struggle**

Love means fighting for your counterpart, right? Love can go through ups and downs. Facing the challenges should be a team effort of both partners, not a one-sided duty from one because the other lacks respect. If only one person faces the difficulties and struggles to get a «happy ending», then something is wrong. **Something doesn't have to be difficult first to turn out well.** Those who suggest that struggle must first be experienced before love, are simply excusing lack of respect and effort.

Love is simple. However, intensity, false familiarity, and expectations based on potential can make love difficult. A spark and chemistry between two people are important to get the car started, however, the gas that keeps the car running is ultimately a mix of compatibility, communication, mutual commitment and respect.

More on this topic can be found in the books by Toni Tone, Alain de Botton and Thomas Meyer.