

Create Relationship Memories or Not

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One evening filled with dinner and personal storytelling with our friends Judy Armstrong and Tink Robinson touched my heart. They shared thirty plus years of tender memories of their love and support of each other. In one particular moment in the conversation their hands met and caressed. Les and I drove home with the warmth of the evening still available.

Just that afternoon I'd had a conversation with a young woman who was considering abandoning her marriage, regardless of young children in the mix. Why stay? Why leave? There are no easy answers. In the old days folks stayed in empty relationships because of duty. Carolyn Myss would describe this as unexamined loyalty. The old rules of relationships no longer work. But can a partnership last on fleeting romance and happiness? Not really.

Is your relationship asleep or awake? If we are awake we will appreciate the aliveness and tension brought to us in relationship, an opportunity to live more fully and aware. We can ride the old patterns and unfinished business of our own and our partner's history if we have a strong and aware connection to each other. Problems don't destroy relationships. Not having the skills and commitment to deal with the problems destroy them. Some think that a thriving relationship should be easy—that a divorce would be easier. The truth is that a healthy relationship requires much emotional work and investment and so does a divorce.

Three times I considered leaving my marriage and my insightful therapist asked this question of me, "How is he stopping you from living the life you want?" Of course, I was using my marriage as an excuse not to take some brave personal steps. That is now my yardstick with couples-- "Can you be you in this relationship?" If your relationship is dangerous emotionally, physically or financially with no change possibilities, then an exit is necessary. At its best a partnership supports you becoming the best person possible. As John Welwood said "I am committed to you and will help soften your edges." Though Tink and Judy model the results of a lasting and steady commitment, there are no easy answers.

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