

# Relationship

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I was shocked when the swami (yoga monk) teaching a philosophy course said, "Relationship is yoga." I had come to India to study, and still harbored a secret desire to be in a cave somewhere high in the Himalayas. Instead, I was in an ashram with nearly 1,000 other seekers, all of whom were clearly not enlightened beings. At least it was clear to me! Now this teacher was telling me that I was not a yogi unless I was good at relationship. I simply could not take it in, so I completely forgot that teaching for over ten years. Now I can say that yoga has given me not only the ability to be in relationship but to fully enjoy relationship. This is because yoga has given me a sense of Self.

If you did not have a perfect childhood, you might have not completed the process of defining yourself as a distinct and unique individual. Many of your personal traits might unknowingly be an expression of "unfinished business." You cannot blame the others in your life for this, because your karma gave you the perfect family for you. Thus, if you were not raised by enlightened beings, yoga says that you must accept that this is the consequence of your actions in previous lifetimes. Get to work on cleaning up your karma. You might even uncover a deep gratitude to all those pivotal people in your life for making your karma so obvious to you.

Now you can complete that personal work of defining your sense of self. Your sense of self is the key to relationship. Yoga describes different levels of self: the constructed self (ahamkara) and the true Self (atman). When you ground yourself in true Self, you engage in your activities and relationships from an inner sense of joy and inner fullness. Losing track of that deep essence, you resort to constructing your sense of self through your activities and your relationships. When your activities are successful, you can feel that you are a good person. When your relationships go well, you feel that you are lovable.

And when things do not go well, you feel worthless. This places an incredible pressure on the people in your life. The people around you have to say the right things at the right time in order for you to feel good. If they blow it, you feel that you are worthless, and then you take it out on them!

Yoga opens your inner dimension, which provides your inherent sense of worthiness and lovability. If your partner forgets to say, "I love you," you do not feel abandoned and needy. You do not depend on other people in the old (too familiar) ways. When they are caught up in their own stuff, you understand and support them better than ever before. Your whole sense of self is supported from your own inner Source.

When you can see the possibility of living this way, you may begin to question why you need these people in your life at all. It is true; you do reach the point where you do not need them. Still, you can choose to still be in relationship with them. In fact, your relationships may significantly improve when they are not based on need any more. Instead they are based on love and joy. The choice to be in relationship is an expression of your inner experience of deep fullness. It even becomes a way of increasing it.

You have experienced this when you have returned home after a yoga class, feeling so full inside, and then you got to share it with someone you love. What if you could live your life this way, all the time? That is relationship! Do more yoga.