

~ Arsenic and Honey ~

Too Much of Either Can Ruin a Relationship

"Eat arsenic? Yes, all you get," Consenting, he did speak up; Tis better you should eat it, pet, Than put it in my teacup."

- Joel Huck

"When you go in search of honey you must expect to be stung by bees."

- Joseph Joubert

"Poisons and medicine are oftentimes the same substance given with different intents"

- Peter Mere Latham

"When you shoot an arrow of truth, dip its point in honey"

- Arab Proverb

People who treat other people as less than human must not be surprised when the bread they have cast on the waters comes floating back to them, poisoned"

- James Arthur Baldwin

"The fly that prefers sweetness to a long life may drown in honey"

- George Santayana

"Friendship is always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity."

- Kahlil Gibran

What is it about relationships, be they friendships or more, that makes it so much easier to distance myself from them, to sabotage them without really trying, rather than create bonds of closeness and love?

I do not doubt that this kind of question has been asked for centuries. What is it that makes it so that if I try too hard to have a relationship I seem to fail? And if I simply try to keep from loving and being loved, I undoubtedly succeed! In either case, the end result is the same – loneliness.

Toxicity is often thought of as too much of a bad thing. But it can also be too much of a good thing. That's often the difference between an ingredient being nutritious and being poisonous. In this way, too much honey can be toxic to a relationship, in much the same way that too much arsenic is also toxic.

I have struggled in my life to understand how relationships succeed. For many years I thought that relationships succeed because I am useful to that person. I do good deeds, or have talents that are in demand, or a skillset that is useful. If I did not remain useful then the relationship would end. I strove to be the most *USEFUL* person around! And I succeeded at being useful but not at having relationships! There was the near consistent, predictable letdown of no longer being useful and then seeing the relationship disappear.

Or was it that I believed I was not worthy without being useful and I sabotaged the relationship myself? Perhaps these words are closer to the truth?

There are always those individuals in the world that are users. And there are those, like me, who are "usees." These are not relationships that are healthy in the long term. Perhaps one could argue they are not relationships at all.

When I would feel "used" and not "loved" as I had hoped, then I would explode the relationship with arsenic. A scenario of disappointment and creating distance. A type of all or nothing response. Often the other person had no clue about my feelings, nor about what I was really after. To say that I

~POINTS OF VIEWS~

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March 2007
Issue 15

understood my own needs would have been untrue, for I did not.

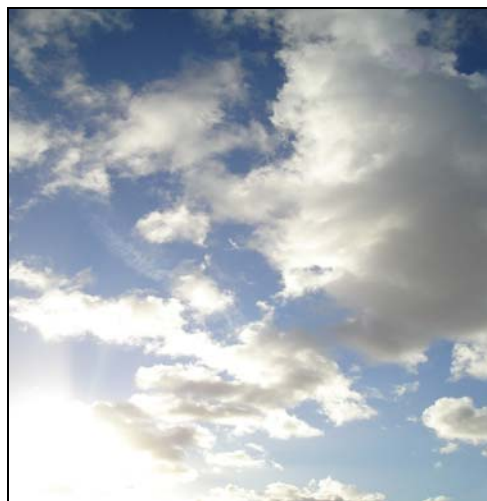
We utilize old habits and behaviors which we learned as children to have relationships. In my case it was being “useful.” Healthy relationships are not based on usefulness. They are based on reciprocity. On our ability to give and receive; on our ability to ask for what we need and want, without necessarily knowing if those needs or desires will be met. And, finally, to have our own limits and boundaries respected, even as we respect the limits and boundaries of others.

Relationships are not an “all or nothing” proposition. Relationships are truly made of amounts of both arsenic and honey. Too much of either creates distance and disables the relationship. If we wish to succeed we need to make sure we are neither users or “useless.” Rather, we need to be able to understand that our worth is not in what we can do, nor in what can be given to us from others, but rather in who we are as human beings worthy of being loved and accepted.

In our world it is often hard to see past all the stress, pressures, and demands made upon us as parents, employees, taxpayers, citizens, children, amidst life’s busy-ness. It is incumbent upon us to remember that what we do is not who we are. Who we are IS who we are. It is important to remember that relationships are based upon clarity and vulnerability.

It is not my abilities, or lack of them, that make me more or less worthy of relationships. It is my ability to accept others as I would wish to be accepted myself. To refrain from judgment and to understand that the best relationships grow from the bitters and sweets of being ourselves, accepting our own frailties, as well as our worth for being loved.

- Helen Hill



“Can there be a love which does not make demands on its object?”

- Confucius

“What makes bitter things sweet? Hunger”

- Anonymous

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