

# Valentine's Day: Reflections On Relationships

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-- Valentines Day

## Reflections on Relationships

By, Dr. Linda Miles, LMFT

Valentine's Day provides an annual reminder to focus on the importance of frequent practices of love, laughter and healing for couples.

Relationships are a maturation machine in need of regular maintenance and fine-tuning. Dr.Linda Miles recommends the following tools to maintain, repair and restore love bonds:

1. Kindness and Respect The expression, "we should treat family like strangers and strangers like family," is indicative of the amount of disrespect that is tolerated in relationships. This attitude is a barrier to the basic building blocks of long-term goodwill and respect.

2. Ability To Learn: Curiosity Although it is normal to have disagreements and power struggles, many couples fail to learn from conflicts and may repeat the same self-destructive scenarios and behaviors for decades. As James Thurber noted, our tendency is to look back in anger or forward in fear, instead of "around in awareness."

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*Linda Miles*

3. Flexibility Many people grew up in rigid families, with rigid roles. Since the brain is accustomed to the familiar, patterns are repeated even when not working.

4. Ability to Hear the Partner's Pain is often a reason that couples seek therapy to be learn to sit



Dr. Linda Miles

and listen with empathy and compassion.

5. A Deep Inner Life On A Personal Journey Often couples become too fused together, losing their individual joys and passions.
6. Similar Passions- (Ability to have many varied good times together) – Many couples lose their pleasure bond with each other, sharing mostly complaints and drudge.
7. Similar Values Unfortunately couples read too many “happily ever after” fairy tales, instead of understanding the importance of conscious negotiation of rules, roles, religion, and money issues, early-on in couple-hood.
8. Compassion Many people learn “shame and blame” games in their family. They engage in rascal hunting and learn to use these behaviors in close relationships. Families fail to watch each other with “soft eyes,” (Levine 1995) in order to address problem behaviors in a gentle manner without judgment about partners. Often a partner will take the “moral high ground” and lecture to the other about perceived inadequacies. Instead of compassion shared between two equals, partners often relate to each other like they are parents of children.
9. Ability To Laugh At Oneself Because many people grew up in a shame-blame environment, so it is difficult to at inadequacies with some humor.
10. Substance Abuse, Dishonesty, Cover-up A lack of knowledge about substance abuse introduces a wild card into relationships. Also, dishonesty and cover-ups erode trust. To maintain lasting love relationships, we need protection and connection.
11. Ability to Be a Friend and Not Just a Lover Passion without friendship in relationships, is like doing somersaults on a circus trapeze without a safety net.
12. In great relationships people make lives bigger and not smaller for one another.

Although, this is an easy list to memorize, the difficulty lays in breaking the patterns that prevent maintenance of our desired behaviors. Peggy Papp, a famous family therapist remarked that we come out of our own family of origin with a “cookie-cutter” approach to life and it requires “heroic moments” to change the shape of our own cookie-cutters. Visualize your dream relationship several times a day and that will help to begin to change your cookie-cutter.

#### ABOUT DR. MILES

Dr. Linda Miles is a leading psychotherapist, crisis therapist, award-winning author, and relationship expert. She has studied and worked in the field of counseling psychology for over 35 years and focuses on mindfulness, stress reduction, mental health, and relationships. She has published several books on relationships and mindfulness (the latest: Change Your Story, Change Your Brain) as well as articles in the Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, Reuters and Miami Herald,

and has appeared as a guest expert on numerous national TV shows including CNN, Fox News, ABC, and NBC. You can find additional resources on Dr. Miles' Facebook page, Mindfulness Rewrites, or at [www.DrLindaMiles.com](http://www.DrLindaMiles.com).

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