

Dr. Linda Miles, Leading Psychotherapist, Discusses Dragging the Past Into Your Present Relationships

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UNITED STATES, May 29, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As Johnny Depp and Amber Heard's bitter case heads to the jury, there are important lessons about relationships that can be seen in the on the big screen. Relationships can make us bitter or better.

The rapture phase of love in a relationship fills each partner with buoyant, lively, and fulfilling feelings. At this stage, each person projects onto their partner images of beauty, goodness, and love, as if the other were an empty canvas which is decorated with vibrant paint. The energy of this consciousness shines a bright light across the world, obliterating all the differences between characters, lifting each one to a higher state of being. Each feels like they are on top of the world, as if the one person who fulfills them has been found; each partner seems to sparkle to the other like a diamond with many facets of light.

Johnny Depp and Amber Heard sparkled just so at each other when they fell in love. Anyone who's been watching the defamation trials and listening to accusations from both partners about domestic violence understands that their sparkle has long disappeared. Exposing each other's faults and flaws publicly, these two celebrities have become a case study of love gone wrong. Although the highly publicized relationship between these two is extreme, it still serves as a cautionary tale to all couples about the powerful forces of falling in love and the need to recognize how past relationships affect current ones.

Famed Jungian writer Robert Johnson once observed that falling in love is "to project the most noble and infinitely valuable part of one's being onto another human." It's meant to be an initiation into a world much greater than the individual: an introduction to the ideals of love, truth, and beauty that transcend the personal ego and ordinary life.



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Problems arise when couples do not learn how to manage the powerful energies that are released by love; when, months or years later, they begin to become aware of differences with their partner and begin finding fault with each other. Couples may fall from that mountain top into a valley, and the intense energy they had once felt becomes soulless and rigid as they engage in “right-wrong” games.

In the case of Johnny Depp and Amber Heard, the intense feelings of love—and whatever passion grew between them—shifted to darker intense feelings. Their energies were channeled into a power struggle that lasted for years as they stumbled in the darkness, with the light of their love extinguished. Each person lost sight of the partner they had loved so much and mentally transformed them into a threatening figure from their past. Johnny had a mother who was cruel, abusive, and rejecting, and his parents frequently fought until their divorce when he was 15 years old.

On the other hand, Amber felt insecure in her family. She participated in beauty pageants during childhood, forced to uphold specific standards at a tender age. Johnny recounted how abusive his mother was and then played tapes of verbal abuse from Amber. Amber testified to repeated physical abuse from Johnny, yet tapes showed her falling apart if he attempted to leave her and taunting him to “act like a married man” and stay. They performed a destructive dance with the energies of love.

Both partners in this high-profile case come from violent and abusive families. They turned into each other’s personal nightmare. Rather than realize they were projecting familiar patterns from the past on one another, however, they trafficked in shame and blame. Shame and blame never lead to change; instead, they lead to more of the same. A decade later, Depp and Heard are still mired in litigation and pointing the finger at one another.

What does their cautionary tale teach us?

1. The brain loves the familiar. People are attracted to what was familiar in childhood.
2. Such attractions can make couples bitter or better. If each person can take their own inventory and commit to growth, partners become teachers for one another.
3. Everyone has a shadow side that represents negative parts of personality that are hidden from the conscious mind.
4. Shame and blame games keep people stuck pointing the finger at one another, never allowing them to grow or evolve past those patterns.

5. Holding on to anger is like drinking Drano and expecting the other person to die.
6. Shame and blame do not lead to change. Instead, they lead to more of the same.
7. Alcohol and drugs can flambe a relationship, burning all potential.
8. Love needs to be combined with communication skills—and other elements, like respect and empathy—to maintain relationships over time.
9. Ask questions like “What are WE doing that is destructive?”
Identify destructive dance steps together and commit to change.
10. Avoid criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling.

Depp and Heard’s potential for transcendence and a relationship that is greater than the sum of its parts was squandered, and they lost themselves in the jungle of faultfinding and blaming, further fueled by drugs and alcohol. Their relationship exemplifies “the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,” as coined by researcher John Gottman: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling—the four elements which lead to divorce.

If one’s relationship resembles this, a person must work on either freeing oneself or reigniting love’s light. To do so, they first have to identify the forces at work in the shadowy realm surrounding them. Changing the future rests in each person’s hands.

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*.

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