New Research Examines Why People Struggle to Build Lasting Relationships

Dr. Azita Sayan connects marriage, loneliness, family conflict and the search for intimacy and offers a path from survival to being extraordinary

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Young people have not stopped wanting marriage. In a Pew Research Center survey, 69% of never-married adults ages 18 to 34 said they wanted to marry someday. Yet wanting a lasting relationship and knowing how to create one are very different things. In 2023, the United States recorded more than 672,000 divorces in the 45 states and Washington, D.C., that reported them. (pewresearch.org, cdc.gov)

Dr. Azita Sayan believes we need to ask a harder question than why people cannot find the right partner: What has happened to our ability to know ourselves, speak honestly and stay connected when love becomes difficult?

The pressures begin early. Young people who lived through the COVID years lost ordinary time with classmates and friends during a period when they were learning how to socialize, disagree, recover from embarrassment and form close relationships. In the CDC's 2023 survey, 40% of high school students reported persistent sadness or hopelessness. That figure cannot be attributed to COVID alone, but it speaks to the distress many young people are carrying into adulthood. (cdc.gov)

Some are looking for connection in places that ask less of them than another person does. An Institute for Family Studies survey found that 28% of young men believed AI could potentially replace a real-life romantic relationship. That is a belief about the future, not a count of men who have AI girlfriends. To Sayan, the question behind it is deeply human: What makes being known by another person feel harder than being answered by a machine? (ifstudies.org)

At the same time, the images of romance surrounding young people can move from instant attraction to sex to a promise of forever in minutes. Sayan worries about what happens when people expect a real relationship to feel like that. Intensity can be thrilling. It does not tell you whether someone can keep a promise, respect a boundary, work through conflict or care for you when life is hard.

She urges people to slow down, including sexually, before commitment. Her reason is practical:

physical bonding can make it harder to see incompatibility, while a partner's response to "no" can reveal how they handle your autonomy.

"People think that chemistry is decisive, but in my methodology, what is familiar is decisive," Sayan says.

In her work, the person who feels irresistible may resemble someone whose love was difficult to reach years ago. Two people may then spend a relationship trying to resolve pain neither fully understands. The result can be years of blame, withdrawal, control and arguments that never seem to end.

Sayan is also concerned about distance within families. Some young adults are estranged from their parents; others remain in contact but cannot speak honestly with them. She does not believe every family should stay together at any cost. She believes we have to learn how to tell the truth, take responsibility and repair what can be repaired. National survey data do not show that most young adults have lost their family ties: Pew found that most rate their relationship with a parent positively. The quieter problem, Sayan says, is that contact does not always mean openness or belonging. (pewresearch.org)

The pain people are living with also appears in national health data. In 2024, an estimated 48.4 million Americans ages 12 and older had a substance use disorder, including 27.9 million with alcohol use disorder. In 2023, 11.4% of adults reported taking prescription medication for depression. Sayan does not treat a needed prescription as a personal failure. Her concern is that relief from symptoms, however valuable, does not by itself teach someone how to rebuild trust, belonging or intimacy. (campusdrugprevention.gov, cdc.gov)

That is the work she has spent nearly four decades doing.

The Sayan Method™ Human Architecture for Extraordinary Living™ asks people to examine the ways they learned to survive and the control strategies they now bring into love and family life. Sayan challenges an approach that ends with identifying who is to blame. She asks a further question: Now that you can see what happened, what will you take responsibility for creating?

In her workshops, that question becomes action. Participants examine the promises and agreements they have broken. They learn to express anger without handing it control of their lives. They ask for forgiveness where they have caused harm. They practice saying "no," communicating what they need, and listening when someone else tells them the truth.

They work on belonging through bold transparency: letting themselves be known rather than performing a role to be accepted. They identify the principles, values and boundaries they intend to live by and bring their actions into line with their word.

Sayan also brings men and women into direct conversation about how they experience respect,

safety, affection and intimacy. When people hear one another answer openly, years of conflict can begin to make sense. They can stop arguing with what they assumed their partner meant and start relating to the person in front of them.

Her belief is that human beings are far more magnificent and powerful than the patterns they learned in pain. Healing is not the end of her work. It is the opening for people to live with integrity, love with freedom, and create families and relationships in which they can truly belong.

Sayan has brought this work to audiences of millions through radio and television and to clients and workshop participants across generations, from children as young as nine to adults in their eighties. She invites people to do more than hope the next relationship will be different. She teaches them to become someone who can create a different relationship.

About Dr. Azita Sayan

Dr. Azita Sayan, Ph.D., LMFT, is a Los Angeles marriage and family therapist, author, speaker, and longtime radio and television host. She is the founder and CEO of Embrace Growth Inc. and creator of The Sayan Method™ Human Architecture for Extraordinary Living™. Her work addresses trauma, responsibility, authentic forgiveness, communication, relationships and human transformation.

Dr. Sayan is available for interviews on marriage and divorce, the impact of isolation on young people, AI companionship, family disconnection, addiction and recovery, the difference between chemistry and compatibility, and how people can reclaim their power to create love and belonging.

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