



Is This the Right Person for Me?

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By Dr. Margaret Paul

"How will I know when I meet the right person?"

I often hear this question in my counseling practice. The answer is fairly complex.

There are two different reasons that people have for wanting to get married:

- To get love, validation, security and safety
- To share love and to grow emotionally and spiritually

If you feel insecure and alone, you are likely to look for someone who will fill the inner emptiness and give you the love you are seeking. You may want to find someone who will complete you and make you feel adequate and worthy.

The problem is that no one can do this for you - it is something you need to learn to do for yourself. Since we are always attracted to people who are at our common level of woundedness or our common level of health, a person looking to get love will attract a person also looking to get love. Each person hopes to get filled from the other, not realizing that each feels empty and really has nothing to give. Therefore, no one is the right person when the intent of getting married is to get love and security rather than to share love and learning.

Instead of asking the question, "Is this the right person for me?" why not ask, "Am I being the right person?" Am I being a person who comes to a relationship filled with love to share, or am I being a needy person hoping to get love and validation?

The main reason that many relationships don't work is because each person is disappointed in not getting what they expected to get from the other person. But when individuals do not know how to love and validate themselves and create an inner sense of safety and security, they certainly can't do this for another person. Yet this is what each person expects of the other.

It is fairly easy to know if this is the right person for you, when your intent in being in a relationship is to learn together and share love. A person who comes from a full place within finds it easy to discern when someone is empty inside, and will not be attracted to the empty person. People who are truly open to learning about themselves, to growing emotionally and spiritually, to taking responsibility for their own feelings of safety and security, worth and lovability, will not be attracted to a person who is closed, controlling, and just wants to get love.

Knowing if this is the right person for you does not happen instantly. It takes months to discover whether or not a person is who they say they are. You cannot really know who a person is until you have conflict and find out what this person does in conflict. Some people can appear very open and loving until a conflict comes up and then they get angry, withdraw, resist or comply, rather than stay open to learning about themselves and the other person. An important question is, how does this person deal with conflict and how long does it take them to open up if they do close in the face of conflict?

Since none of us enter relationships fully healed, it is very important to know that your partner is willing to explore conflict, rather than just protect against it with controlling behavior. Conflict occurs in all relationships, and if both people are not open to learning about themselves and each other within the conflict, the unresolved conflicts will eventually destroy the relationship.

If you are a person who is open to learning and wants a relationship in order to share love, there are three essential ingredients that need to be present for the person to be the right person for you:

- There needs to be a basic spark of attraction. If you do not feel physically attracted to this person within the first six months of the relationship, the chances are this attraction will not develop.
- Each of you needs to be capable of caring, compassion, empathy and acceptance for who each of you are.
- Both of you need to be open to learning in conflict, rather than just wanting to win and be right.

Other ingredients, such as common interests and values, are also important, but without the above three ingredients, they will not sustain the relationship.

How Do You Know When You Are In Love?

By Dr. Margaret Paul

"How can I know when I'm really in love?" asked Ruby, a client of mine. "How can I know if what I feel for Jim is really love or just infatuation? How can I know if this feeling will last?"

Ruby and Jim had been dating for 11 months and were considering marriage. Ruby, 32, felt "head over heels" in love with Jim, but she had felt head over heels in love with Adam, as well as with Mark.

"That feeling didn't last with Adam or Mark. How do I know it will last with Jim? How can you tell when it's the real thing?"

"Ruby," I told her, "the answer to this important question depends upon which part of you feels 'in love' and which part of Jim you are 'in love' with."

I explained to Ruby that she can be in love from her ego wounded self, or she can be in love from her true Self or core Self - her essence, her soul Self. If she is in love from her wounded self, it will be about external things, and the love will not last. But if she is in love from her soul Self, it will be about internal things, and it is very likely that the love will see her through all the challenges that come up in relationships.

"Ruby," I asked her, "What do you love about Jim?"

"I've been thinking about that a lot," she answered. "It's kind of funny some of the things I love about him. I love his walk and his smell. I love the way his eyes crinkle when he smiles, and I love his laugh. I love just being next to him. There is something about his energy - I don't quite know how to talk about it - that I love being around. I love his touch. I love his kindness and sensitivity and his deep caring for people. Even though he would not be considered a handsome man, I love how he looks. There's something about his mouth and the look in his eyes that just fills me with love. And I love the passion he has about both his work and his hobbies. I love his playfulness. We laugh a lot together. "

"How is this different than what you loved about Adam or Mark?"

"I think that with both Adam and Mark I was pretty much blown away by their looks - they were both hunks. Both of them were also very successful and very social. They took me to nice places and great vacations. Jim is not as financially successful nor as social, yet I feel much safer with him. I think I also fell in love with Adam's power in the world. He really seemed to have it together and his sense of power turned me on. But he wasn't always nice to people, and he wasn't always nice to me."

"So it seems that with Adam and Mark, your wounded self was in love with their wounded selves - their more superficial qualities of looks, money and power. But it sounds like with Jim your essence is in love with his essence. The qualities you say you are in love with are qualities that won't go away over time, because they are soul qualities. People can certainly lose their looks and their money, but it is unlikely that Jim will lose the qualities that you love in him, especially if you frequently express your appreciation for these qualities."

"So I really am in love with Jim! This really is different than my other relationships. You know, I think that because of my Inner Bonding practice, I've finally grown up. The more superficial qualities just don't seem to be so attractive to me anymore!"

Is This Love or Emotional Dependency?

By Dr. Margaret Paul

One of my clients, whose ex-girlfriend recently broke up with him, asked me the following question:

"I think I still love her, but is this love or just emotional dependency? Many times I ask myself if falling in love comes from the wounded self because (for me at least) it feels as if I can't live without the other person. When I give love from the heart, I don't expect anything back, but when I 'fall in love' I think this is a different energy."

Falling in love can come from two different inner states. When you fall in love from the wounded self - the ego self - you are in love with how the other person loves you. You are handing over to the other person

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the responsibility for your self-worth and wellbeing, and if he or she does a good job of attending to you in the way you want to be attended to, then you may say you are "in love." However, it is not so much the person you love, but how he or she loves you. When it feels as if you can't live without the other person, it is emotional dependency. The part of you that is "in love" is really a child or adolescent who is needy for love because you are not giving love to yourself or to others. There is an emptiness inside that you expect someone else to fill, because you are not taking responsibility for your own feelings of self-worth. You are attaching your worth to another's love, which is why you can't live without that person.

When you fall in love as a loving adult, instead of as a wounded, needy child or adolescent, your need for the relationship is totally different. As a loving adult, you have learned - through the consistent practice of Inner Bonding - how to fill yourself with love and define your own worth. Instead of needing someone to fill you and make you feel lovable and worthy, you already feel worthy and full of love. You experience this inner fullness because you have learned how to take full responsibility for your own feelings and needs, and you have learned to fill yourself with love from a spiritual source. This fullness overflows and you want to share this love with another person, another loving adult who is also filled with love. Your desire is to share love rather than to get love.

The kind of person you will pick will be totally different when a loving adult is choosing, than when your wounded self is choosing. The people we pick have a similar level of woundedness and a similar level of emotional health. Obviously, the more you have done your Inner Bonding work to bring love within, and the more you have learned to take loving care of yourself, the more you will be attracted to someone who also does this.

When you pick someone from your wounded self, you will pick someone whom you believe wants the job of filling you up. The problem is that the other person may be attempting to fill you up in the hopes that you will also fill up him or her. Two people who each want to get love rather than share love will eventually find themselves very disappointed with each other. They will each blame the other for not loving them in the way they want to be loved. When relationships break up, it is often because one or both partners are not taking responsibility for their own feelings and self-worth and are blaming the other for their resulting unhappiness.

If you are so attached to someone that you feel you can't live without that person, try learning to give to yourself and others what it is you want from this person. Your job is to become the person to yourself that you want the other person to be. Then you will be able to be "in love" rather than "in need." You will be able to love another person for who he or she is, rather than for what this person can do for you. Instead of needing to get love, you can give love from the heart for the joy of it, and feel filled in the giving.

Discerning The Loving Heart

By Dr. Margaret Paul

How often have you had the experience of connecting with someone - a friend or a potential partner - who turns out to be an uncaring person? At first you think this is a really good person, and then down the line you discover that the person is self-centered, narcissistic, angry and uncaring. You wonder how you could be so wrong, and what can you do differently next time?

I have discovered in my many years of counseling that people seem to decide very early in their lives whether or not they want to care about and have compassion for others' feelings. As a result, people have different levels of willingness to feel others' feelings. Some of us deeply feel others' pain and joy, while other people don't. Some people can recall caring about others' pain and joy from a very young age, while other people remember being concerned mostly with their own feelings and needs.

The people who have chosen the deeper level of compassion are often the ones that become the caretakers, while the less compassionate people become the takers. Caretakers are people who have learned to take responsibility for others' feelings and wellbeing, while takers are people who expect others to take responsibility for their feelings and wellbeing and often blame others when they don't take on this responsibility.

If you are a compassionate person who easily feels others' feelings, you might find yourself drawn to people who are in pain. Your compassionate heart naturally wants to help those people who are in pain, not only out of caring, but also because their pain is painful to

you. The problem is that this person might not care about your feelings as much as you care about his or hers.

So, how do you become discerning of who has a loving, caring and compassionate heart? The first step is to focus on developing as much compassion for your own feelings as you have for others. Often, very caring people leave themselves out, caring about others far more than they care about themselves. This leaves them vulnerable to becoming the caretaker for someone who just wants someone else to take care of them, and then gets angry when they don't do it "right." If you develop compassion for yourself through the practice of Inner Bonding, you will start to discern much more quickly when someone is not really caring about you. If you are just focused on another's feelings, you won't notice what you feel, and it is your own feelings that allow you to discern between caring and lack of caring.

The next step is to understand and accept that, no matter how caring you are to others, you have no control over how caring others are with you. You can't make someone be caring, and the more you take care of another's feelings and wellbeing while ignoring your own, the less caring the other will be. The other person becomes a mirror for your lack of caring about yourself.

The more you learn to take full, 100% responsibility for your own feelings through your Inner Bonding practice, the more another's lack of caring will be intolerable to you. The more you are able to stay tuned in to yourself and trust your own perceptions, the quicker you will discern a lack of caring in others. The more you accept your lack of control over getting others to be caring, the quicker you will let go of people who are intent on getting caring but not much concerned with giving it.

It really doesn't take long to discern the loving heart once you have compassion for yourself, trust your perceptions, and accept your lack of control over others. People betray their intention to either give love or to get it, or to give to get, with everything they say and do. With practice, you can learn to discern the loving heart very early in a relationship. If you want to stop recreating the same relationships over and over, then develop your power of discernment through your consistent Inner Bonding practice.