

Five Tough Questions

(*"Do I really love my partner?"*)



When it comes to your relationship, you might wonder why it is so important to be so honest with how you feel especially when so many of these feelings are "negative". It is not that you should then go reveal all of your negative feelings to your partner. Without being honest with yourself, without acknowledging to yourself that you "feel what you feel", you will then either try to *bury* the feeling or at best try to *pretend* that you don't feel the feelings. Any feeling that is not acknowledged will continue to have an impact on your life and *will be acted out in one way or another*. The truth is, we cannot hide our feelings. Your partner already has a certain sense about what you feel but doesn't know what to make of it. Your partner sees certain behavior, senses certain moods and hears your reactions but without knowing what is going on in your inner world can only make guesses about what is *really* going on. And, more often than not, your partner will interpret your behavior as something that is wrong with *them*.

You might be feeling discouraged and you might be thinking, "Our relationship is much worse off than I thought." This does not mean disaster! It only means that you are bringing up feelings that already existed! I want you to realize that feelings cannot be "pretended" away. We must learn to face the reality of our experience and work with our own emotions as a foundation from which to build a relationship that is solid and reality based. The only thing worse than having a relationship in trouble is to have a relationship in trouble and be in denial about it! By getting real about your relationship, yourself and your partner, you have identified some dangerous and powerfully destructive forces in your life that you must now contend with. I am convinced you can deal with anything as long as you know what it is. If you can face your feelings, no matter how "negative" they are then at least you know where the bottom is and you know where to go from there. Be glad that you are leaving the world of lets pretend!

It is important to realize that these exercises are **NOT** about airing your dirty laundry to your partner. Nor does it mean, "Because I have all these negative feelings, I should get out of this relationship." You are learning to take responsibility for your part; you are learning to take responsibility for your own feelings and not lay them on your partner. That has been the problem up to this present time. It is not "bad" to have negative feelings. The problem is acting them out on your partner. It is what we *do* with our feelings that make all the difference. We can attack, blame, accuse, or avoid our partner for all the bad things that are going on but attack takes no responsibility for the emotion, which lies beneath. It is the never-ending circle of attack and defend, retaliate and defend that must cease if your relationship is to heal.

The following questions encourage an honesty that may be difficult to face and certainly bring up insecurities in your partner if he or she "really knew the truth". *It is best not to share these responses with your partner* but you are encouraged to "get it all out" and reveal the truth to yourself. If you have any fear that your partner

would ever read your entries, then write them out, read them clearly and then burn them. Telling the truth about what you think and feel to yourself is the only foundation from which you can experience true freedom.

1. Considering that at least one definition of love is the regard and respect that one has for another human being and that being regarded and respected is as significant to you as it is your partner, then would you say that, based on results, you behave in a way that reflects that you are in love with your partner? Why?
2. Using the same definition, is your partner in love with you? Why?
3. Knowing what you now know about your relationship, would you still get involved with the same person if you had to do it all over again? Why?
4. When comparing yourself to other people in relationships, do you feel that you have been cheated or have settled too cheap? Why?
5. If you could break off your relationship or get a divorce from your partner right now without any inconvenience, legal costs, or embarrassment, without any undo hardship on your children (if you have any), would you do it? Why?