

## Strategies That Build Healthy Relationships

The moment we are conceived we begin to develop strategies to get our needs met or cope with not having our needs met. The moment we are conceived our stories begin—the story of our life, the stories we tell ourselves, the stories we are living. I'm not writing this article and you're not reading this article because all of our needs are met in a healthy way, using healthy strategies and our stories are all loving, compassionate, empathetic and I'm writing this and you're reading this because there is a fundamental disconnect between who we are and who we think we are or told we are. I tell you we are all beautiful, we are all equal, we are all loved and we are all loving, you will probably agree or at least mostly. However, do we feel it, do we embrace it, do we live it? This is perhaps our greatest challenge—to see the true nature of who we are and truly embrace it. It is within our lives. It is the truest millions of people tell themselves stories every day, throughout the day that they are not worthy or they are not good enough, or they are not loveable and much. Why is this? It is this way because the moment we are conceived we begin to feel and/or hear about our value, our worth, our As we grow, we begin to believe stories about stories that hurt, stories that feel good, stories that do not meet our fundamental needs and stories that do meet our fundamental needs. You are born into a family that showers you with unconditional love both verbally and with physical contact then your needs for love, acceptance, and closeness are going to be met. You will probably develop healthy strategies for meeting these needs like simply showing love to those around you in the same manner they modeled for you. This is an example of a healthy you are born into a family that withholds love then you may develop unhealthy strategies for getting your need for love met or for coping with not having your need for love met, such as doing what your parents want you to do in order to feel their love or attention or drinking to ease the pain of not having your need met. In cases like these, attention is often what is sought because it can feel like an expression of love. For example, she must love me if she gives me attention when I act a certain way. Yet, these unhealthy strategies are built upon an illusion being that your behavior affects how the other person feels. These types of strategies can easily turn into life-long patterns of behavior with many different relationships but the lack of completely fulfilling the need for love remains elusive and out of reach and they can lead to wounds and pain. Imagine a young child never experiencing his or her need for love, acceptance, value except when he or she is sexually molested by the parent. It's a harsh reality. It doesn't have to be. A child may grow into an adult or teenager who uses sex to have his or her needs met for feeling loved. This same child may grow into an adult or teenager telling herself or himself a story that she or he is only worthy when having sex with someone. Yet the pain and wound of a lifetime of conditional love will take its toll and create many more strategies and stories around needs not being met. The first step to leaving unhealthy strategies and stories is to acknowledge them and accept them without judgment or admonishment or punishment. They simply are and they wouldn't be if you lived a different life. Think of it like this, if you do judge yourself or admonish yourself or blame others or yourself does it change what is? What is the natural consequence of judging or admonishing yourself? What is the natural consequence of blaming yourself or others? What is the natural consequence of simply accepting things as they are without judgment, admonishment and blaming? The second step is to allow yourself to feel the pain and feelings surrounding the thoughts that drive the strategies and stories and let them go (I often suggest clients imagine them sent to and burning up in the Sun); I am only worthy when I have sex with them or they only believe I am worthy if I have sex with them. This step is difficult because it involves feeling the pain associated with the story and strategy and unconscious beliefs. The bad news is that at first it is or can be extremely difficult depending upon your life. The good news is it gets easier each time you do. The third step is to consciously choose a new thought such as I am worthy and loveable whether I have sex or not. My worth and lovability isn't dependent upon someone else or their actions. Each time you replace an unhealthy thought or story with a healthy one you are reprogramming your unconscious triggered reaction with a conscious one. After an indeterminate amount of times, your will mirror your conscious process. This process requires being conscious of our unconscious. This process is a tool we should keep with us for our entire lives as there is no lack of pain in our world—to pretend there isn't pain is to invite the pain to live within us and that the stories and strategies are as different as each other. For example, a child with the same circumstances may use completely different strategies and tell themselves completely different stories such as I am not worthy because my parent has sex with someone else. As adults, they may withdraw and protect their feelings of not feeling loved by not putting themselves out. They may abstain from having sex altogether and when they do have it they may experience pain and discomfort and doesn't have to be filled with unhealthy strategies and stories and unconscious triggered reactions. There is another way. Ask yourself: do I want to live a life where I feel positive and where I feel loved, worthy, validated, like I belong, like I'm part of something? No one can do it for you have to take the first

## About the Author

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