



WHAT GOES WRONG IN

Relationships

by Dr. Greg Baer

From “The Truth About Relationships”

Relationships fail all around us every day – between spouses, lovers, siblings, friends, co-workers, and so on. But despite the abundance of self-assured finger-pointing, the people involved rarely have any idea what actually went wrong, and they prove that as they blindly repeat the same mistakes over and over. Most people seem to be caught in an endless cycle of disappointment

and unhappiness as they associate with other human beings.

When Christopher and Lisa met, they fell in love immediately. Six months later they got married and fully expected to be ecstatically happy for the rest of their lives. But in the first year of their marriage, there were already signs that the magic of their relationship was

escaping them. They began to find fault with each other over little things. Roses and kisses were gradually replaced by expectations and disappointments, each of which left a wound and then a scar. Slowly, the excitement of being in love became a distant memory.

What happened here? How did the hopes and dreams of these delightful

people get lost? Christopher and Lisa poured their whole hearts into making their relationship work. They did not hold anything back – as most people do not – and still they failed. Understanding this is critical, because what happened with this couple is typical of what happens in virtually all unhappy relationships – between lovers, family members, people in the workplace, and so on.

We have all had the experience of starting relationships that seemed promising and hopeful, only to have something go wrong that we did not understand, leaving us feeling disappointed or worse. Until we do understand what happens in these situations, we are doomed to repeat the process again and again.

What Happened? The Lie

As I discuss relationships, I will refer to the participants in any interaction, however brief, as “partners.”

As Lisa became increasingly unhappy in her marriage, she naturally blamed Christopher. We all tend to blame our partners – spouses, friends, children, even complete strangers – when we get upset, mostly because that is what we have seen everyone around us do.

All our lives, we have heard countless variations on these statements: “You make me so mad,” and “He (or she) makes me angry.” We have heard those claims so many times that we have come

to completely accept the notion that other people determine how we feel. If someone does something to inconvenience us or fails to do what we want, we immediately believe that they make us feel disappointed or angry.

But that belief is a lie, a lie we unintentionally use to relieve our own sense of helplessness and confusion when we feel bad and need someone to blame. Until we see that, we cannot learn to have loving and lasting relationships.

What Really Happened? The Truth

It is quite understandable that Lisa made Christopher responsible for the unhappiness she felt in their marriage. He was certainly the closest available person to blame. But that still does not mean he caused her feelings. The truth is Lisa was unhappy before she got married. Christopher did not do anything to make Lisa unhappy.

He did not beat her, or yell at her, or abuse her in any way. Christopher simply failed to provide what Lisa needed to make her happy, and when he failed, she blamed him for both the disappointment of their marriage and for the unhappiness she felt long before they met.

That is what happens in most relationships. When our partners fail to make us happy, we blame them for all the unhappiness in our lives, including the unhappiness we carried with us from the many years before we ever knew

them. We make our partners scapegoats for everything we do not like. How terribly unfair that is, and what an awful effect that has on any relationship.

Imagine that after a violent storm and shipwreck, you and I are stranded on a barren island in the middle of the ocean. After a week with nothing to eat, I begin to complain that you are not doing enough to provide food for me, and the hungrier I become, the more I whine.

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Not an hour goes by that I do not remind you that I am starving, and that you are to blame.

You must think I am insane. Did you cause my hunger? Of course not. I am starving because there was a storm that wrecked our ship and left us stranded on an island without food – and you had nothing to do with any of that.

When we are unhappy in a relationship, all the anger and blaming that we commonly exchange with our partners, are completely wasteful and destructive

And so it is with relationships. When we are unhappy in a relationship, our misery is not the fault of our partner. We are unhappy because we are starving. We are missing the one ingredient most essential to genuine happiness, and it was missing long before we met our partner.

What We All Really Need

What we all need most - the one thing which creates happiness and fulfilling relationships - is Real Love, or unconditional love. It really is that simple. When we learn what Real Love is and when we find it, our unhappiness disappears just as surely as hunger vanishes in the presence of food. Loving relationships then become natural and effortless.

Blaming and Demands

My blaming you for my hunger after the shipwreck was not only inaccurate, but ineffective - it did nothing to help our predicament. It is a simple fact that two starving people with no source of food can not give each other what they need.

No amount of expectation, disappointment, blaming, anger, or manipulation can change that.

And again, it is the same with relationships. When we are unhappy in a relationship, all the anger and blaming that we commonly exchange with our partners, are completely wasteful and destructive. It is foolish to insist that our partner promised to make us happy - as in a marriage vow. Our demands do not magically make them capable of doing anything.

Two people who are emotionally and spiritually starving in a relationship simply cannot make each other happy, no matter how hard they try. Each of them must find that one thing - Real Love - without which genuine happiness and loving relationships are quite impossible.

Abusive Relationships

Although I used the example of a non-abusive relationship with Christopher and Lisa, I recognize that many people are involved in verbally, physically,

sexually, and emotionally abusive relationships. Even in those circumstances, the absence of unconditional love is still the primary problem, and Real Love is the prescription for everyone who wishes to find genuine happiness and loving relationships.

We tend to blame our partners for the unhappiness we experience in our relationships, when the real problem is the lack of unconditional love in our own lives.



Dr. Greg Baer retired from one of the busiest solo ophthalmology practices in the United States to pursue a career of

writing, teaching, and speaking. Author of 16 books, DVDs, and CDs, Greg Baer has presented the life-changing message of Real Love to hundreds of thousands of people all over the world. www.reallove.com