

## **You Don't Have to Wait for your Partner to Improve your Relationship**

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I was surprised recently to hear that a couple who has been together only a few months is in couples' counseling. How is that possible? At a few months, the relationship hasn't had time to become something definable that needs fixing! Now, at a few months, it may become apparent to one or both partners that this relationship isn't going anywhere, so it is time to break up and move on. However, if the love is there and the chemistry is right, the intensity of couples' therapy, if it comes at all, ought to be years down the road!

That doesn't mean relationships don't need some help along the way. Sometimes, though, making relationship help a group effort is just too much. When it is too much, one of you will dig your heels in and refuse to participate effectively. At such times, you do not have to wait on your partner to make a difference in your relationship.

Truth be told, not only is your relationship a reflection of you, your partner is too. That means if something needs to change you can begin with you. When you do, your relationship and partner must reflect the new you back to you.

To make this idea concrete, let me share with you from my experience. In my husband's and my profession, we work with adult mama's boys and daddy's girls who have fallen in love with each other, some making it all the way to the altar and eventually raising mama's boys and daddy's girls of their own.

By our definitions, mama's boys are more complex than the stereotype! Mama's boys are not only created when appropriate male role models are missing, they are created by fathers who themselves are mama's boys. Usually, a mama's boy can only raise a mama's boy and a daddy's girl can only raise a daddy's girl.

We help such couples by encouraging them to address the issue as individuals. Mama's boys and daddy's girls are experts at being inappropriately involved in each other's lives. To give them new choices, we give them individual homework.

We invite her to practice not rescuing him, not taking care of it for him, not treating him like a child. We invite him to stop pushing against her or pulling on her. He gets to practice taking action and trusting himself. He gets to practice stopping when he is operating to please her and realign himself to his vision, his passion, and his desires.

The beautiful part of this is whoever begins taking responsibility and making changes, the relationship begins to change. A woman who stops treating her man as a child accomplishes the following: 1) she gains some time for herself because she is no longer going behind him taking care of whatever she doesn't trust him to do. 2) The freer he is to express himself as an adult, the more he will meet the challenge. 3) Then she gets to practice letting him do it his way, not hers, which ties into her spiritual growth! 4) The more she lets go, the more the resentment between them begins to fade. 5) He may decide to offer to help in ways that make a difference for her and the relationship.

A man, who quits pushing against his wife, opens up the door for her to trust him more, to fall in love with him again. A man who stops pulling on her, enjoying her approval but no longer needing it, will find her attention on him shifting. In the beginning, she may be a little insecure because he has taught her to equate his needing her with his love for her. However, it can begin to open up their love story to where they can take it to a completely new level.

Even though our primary interest is mama's boys and daddy's girls, anyone can do this with any relationship. All it requires is taking responsibility for the relationship as something you created. Don't do it to beat you up for making an unwise choice. Do it to get to know you better, to improve the relationship, and to get to know the people in your life better too. After all, if they are a reflection of you, then you are a reflection of them.

You not only do not have to wait on your partner to improve your relationship; if you are single, you do not have to wait for your partner to show up in order to lay a strong foundation for that future romance. Review your past romantic relationships. Look for repeating patterns. Discover what in you attracts less than what you are looking for in a romantic partner. Then use that information to get to know you better so you can make better, wiser, more loving choices about how you show up in relationships! How you show up determines the kind of person you attract.

You can also use current relationships with anyone in your life to make yourself a better partner. Using mama's boys and daddy's girls again as an example, is a co-worker or your boss a mama's boy who places inappropriate demands on you? How can you operate in a new way that allows them to be grown men rather than overgrown boys who lean on you too much? In reverse, is a co-worker or your boss a daddy's girl who tries to take care of you in inappropriate or demeaning ways? How can you operate in a new way that sets healthier boundaries with them and let's them know, without you risking your livelihood, they can no longer treat you this way.

If you are attracting dysfunctional relationships anywhere in your life, it will show up in your romantic life as well. You hold the key as the common denominator in all those relationships is you!

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There is a secret to relationship success that is direct, simple, and effective. We and others have used it to transform marriages that felt burdensome and hurtful into marriages filled with love and satisfaction.

You can discover this secret for yourself in the e-workbook called *Creating the Love You Want: Five Unique Steps to Improve Your Marriage*. Go to <http://www.CreateTheLoveYouWant.com> and order your copy right now. With it, you can begin making a difference for yourself tonight!

