

## Prosperous Meditation: “What about me?” and “The Dance”

### Introduction:

In January I presented background information on understanding the relationships we have with ourselves and with others in terms of what those relations are and what they are not.

In February I discussed the concept of using aspects of self as a modality, those being *heart, mind* and *soul* in order to make relationship decisions.

This month we will begin to look at other concepts and techniques that are informed by mindfulness and meditation that may be applied to help view and improve your relationships.

### “What About Me?” The Idea of Normal Narcissism within a Marriage

When we first fall in love life and our love-object is idealized. Our loved one is wonderful, we see all his/her potential and life is a bed of roses. We do not at first see our loved ones’ foibles and weaknesses; we do not recognize the thorns that are part and parcel to our roses.

Often disillusionment sets in; the glass is no longer half full, it is half empty. Worse still is the fact that in primary relationships i.e. couple/marriage relationships expectations run higher than any other kind of relationship. Face it, we treat our spouses in ways that we would never treat a friend. At times we regress, have tantrums and expect our spouse to be our everything, to be our mother, father, lover and friend. This is the state of normal narcissism within a couple’s relationship that can be better understood by the statement, “What about me?”

The tenor and tone of our “What about me?” feelings and statements convey important information about us. Is your, “What about me?” angry? Is it childlike and whiney or is it of an adult expecting to be treated fairly?

Often couples regress going to a, “What about me?” place at the same time expecting the other one to see their point, their side of the story while not seeing their lover’s point of view. “How could you treat me this way? How come you do not understand me? Where is my bed of roses? What about me?” We all do this to one extent or another.

So how is this concept helpful? If one is mindful and pays attention to the, “The what about me?” occurring in self and other one can begin to mitigate. One can adjust, one can apologize etc. This is obviously not easy because by definition we are talking about dealing with regressions, tantrums, the experience of voids and so on not only in self but in others as well. This is why meditation and meditative activities are so important. They give us the ability to observe self and other, to resist regressions and act from our point of power which is the present. **The present is our point of power!**

### The Dance of Marriage and Changing the Steps

In the February 06 newsletter I wrote about meditation and patterns. Now I would like to discuss patterns that occur within couples and marriage. Often in my work with couples the presenting problem involves negative repeating patterns of behavior that has created an impasse. These patterns are made up of thoughts, feelings, words and actions that seem to occur over and over again usually involving, “What about me?” Here is an example of a dance...

Betty: Bob sat down at the dinner table and he was drinking a soda. So I asked, “Would you get me a can of coke too?” And this was just the last straw. Do you know what he said to me? He said, “Get it yourself!”

Bob: I did, I told her she should get her own damn can of coke. Why can’t she get her own coke?



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### The Dance Dissected

**Step 1** Bob sat down at the dinner table and he was drinking a soda. He is in whatever thinking and feeling state that he is in.

**Step 2** Betty sees that Bob has not asked nor brought her a soda.

**Step 3** She reacts: there is a sense of, “I know this pattern,” it has happened before!

**Sub-step A** She thinks this is selfish, and inconsiderate.

**Sub-step B** She becomes upset and this intensifies.

**Step 4** She takes action: So I asked, “Would you get me a can of coke too?”

**Step 5** Bob takes in Betty’s tone and presentation.

**Step 6** He reacts: there is a sense of the repeating pattern.

**Sub-step A** He thinks he is being attacked...again!

**Sub-step B** He feels attacked.

**Step 7** He takes action “Get it yourself!”

**Step 8** She reacts and recalls other times Bob has “hurt” her and her feelings magnify in intensity. And this was just the last straw!

**Step 9** There is no resolution and they both feel terrible.

This pattern of feeling unloved, unappreciated and attacked gets repeated in one way or another over and over again until it becomes completely stilted. The steps become hardened pieces of barely perceived reactions.

One can see that even a short interaction like above carries so much information, most of which does not get communicated or is even present in the awareness of either party. In fact the amount of information in this little dance can’t be fully broken down and represented in this space. This is why language by itself is the poorest of communicators. One must listen with their eyes, and see things with their ears and use intuition along with language.

The idea now becomes, “How do I change the dance? One must change a step.. What if Bob did not react? What if he acted instead at any number of points or steps within the dance? “Honey, I will gladly get you a coke but I hear in your voice you seem upset?”

What if Betty changed a step and was able to think and feel out of the loop? Should a can of coke be equated with love?

### Implications

To truly change a step in “The Dance” can be difficult. One must become conscious of the steps yet this might not be enough to withstand the reaction to the regressive pull of “The Dance”. One must act not react. The idea of, “this is the last straw” indicates that in “The Dance” the couple is not in the present they are dealing with the thousands of times that it seems this pattern has occurred. No one can deal with the weight of a pattern, a, “here we go again,” repeated thousands of times. In therapy I slow it down for couples so they can see with their ears and dissect the pattern.. For someone to change a step within the dyad one must act not react, this means treating the step and the pattern as if it is the first time it has ever happened. To change a step one must change themselves and then the other is forced to deal with the new step. I hope the reader understands why meditation and mindfulness is helpful in this regard. Next month we will flesh-out some of these concepts and build from there.

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