

Relationships!

So let's talk about relationships for a minute, should we? I mean, we're all experts by now, aren't we? While we're at it, let's cover the whole gamut...not just romantic relationships, but relationships with EVERYBODY! Friends, family, acquaintances, and strangers—let's throw them all in there. Okay, now what? ;)



Well, we know that communication is the key, right? Hmm. Maybe it's the KIND of communication, though. I mean, sarcasm and hidden meanings and digs only make things worse, right? Oh, but it comes so easy when you're hurt or unsure of things! It's so much "easier" to protect yourself and act tough than to be vulnerable. Unfortunately, we hurt ourselves the most when we do this...

I find myself less patient with any kind of discomfort, but especially with discomfort that involves other people. **I realize it's such a waste of everyone's life, not getting along, or even worse, holding back how you really feel, when it's good feelings.** Oh, I annoy the crap out of people close to me sometimes, because they are not always wanting to expose their deepest feelings, but somehow, I drag them through it a little and they love me enough not to ditch me. See, that's the wonder...no matter what, certain people will always love you, just because you're you. I hope you all get this, by now, because it's the very core of harmony with others and peace for you. In reality, people are most comfortable and love you most when you are your true and unique self. So while you find fulfillment in being true to yourself, you help others find peace and inspiration, as well. It's pretty darn cool!

If you've read much of my stuff, you should realize how critical you are to the world. Ya, YOU! It DOES matter if you're doing what makes you genuinely happy. Your happiness has a direct effect on everyone around you, and on the world. This is no exaggeration. If you just think through all the people you affect in one day, you know you can't argue with me. **At every moment, you are either helping or harming yourself or others.** You are either working towards or away from inner peace and happiness, and affecting others in the same way, automatically. I tell ya, there's a reason we are not alone on our own little planet. There's a reason there's so many of us interacting with each other!

So, relationships are really pretty simple; we just make them difficult sometimes. To have the best relationships possible—with anybody—you simply need to be true and genuine to yourself. Does that mean that if someone punches you, you stand up for yourself and punch them back? Well, not quite. You see, in the end, if you hurt that person, you're really not going to feel very good about it, in the end. You'll feel like a schmuck. Deep down inside, you will. So that's not really doing what's best for you.

The way we treat others puts our level of self-respect on display. Catch that? Whenever we do or say anything (and sometimes when we do nothing), everyone can see how much self-love and self-respect we have. Right? Think about things others have done where you were impressed. You know you drew a conclusion that the person is happy, confident, and genuine, didn't you? Now think about the other extreme, when you were appalled by someone's horrible behavior. You came to a very different conclusion that the person is miserable and has some big issues, didn't you?

The truth will always come out, so why not go straight to the source and work on it? Work on you. I try my best to do just a little something, every day, to learn (especially from interaction with others) and to be aware of anything that I'm either not proud of, or that isn't working in one of my relationships. **I don't give the weakness the attention, rather, I ask myself what it could be trying to teach me.** Maybe I haven't shown appreciation to God and/or to the other person. Maybe I'm putting myself down and need to clear my perspective. Maybe I'm not being open-minded enough. Maybe I didn't do or say what my heart was really telling me to do, and I'm worried I won't get the chance now. Maybe I didn't take the time to be grateful and ask God for specifics of what I wanted. **Whatever it is, I have to remember that**

we are human, we will never be perfect, but because God loves us beyond comprehension, we need to remember to love and accept ourselves and that He put each of us here for a very big purpose. When I don't love myself enough to allow my happiness and naturally let "my purpose" occur, I push peace away from me. This pushes peace away from the others around me, at the same time. There's just no getting around it. But the beauty of this perfect design is, when you move towards peace in your life, you automatically move others towards peace as well, **ESPECIALLY THOSE YOU HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH!** It's all pretty darn cool, don't you think?

So my whole search for peace in my life is what created the words for **RISE ABOVE THE SH**!** **Down-to-earth thinking from Wisconsin**, and honestly, I wrote it down so I could refer to it, when I need reminders. I still pick it up and re-read it, every now and then. It always helps me understand myself more and to understand what others may be going through, as well.

But if you're looking for a couple of quick ideas today on how to be a little gentler in your relationships, I'll throw a couple of ideas your way:

1. Realize that your loved ones often let you see things you didn't know about yourself...they're kind of like a mirror, sometimes. The things your really love about them, as well as the things that aggravate you, are probably due to you having that quality, and either loving it or hating it, about yourself.
2. The same principle can be applied to others that you really admire, or really can't stand. It's something within yourself that you recognize, or even an insecurity you have about yourself that's trying to teach you something more about yourself. Learn the lesson and you're golden.
3. **Regardless of what others do, are we REALLY happy with ourselves when we're rude and disrespectful to others?** I don't care how much we think "they deserve it," it still makes us feel icky. Go back to the respect and kindness we usually give to children. MOST of us wouldn't yell or turn our backs on a young child that just didn't know any better. We would gently explain the expectation and suggest what might be better, next time. We might even bring in our feelings, to help them understand how it made you feel. We consider what is best for them, and try our best not to enable bad behavior. Why do we stop doing this with teens and adults? In my mind, stress, insecurities, bad memories, and the burdens of the world put most of us into a protective state where "we just don't know any better," and thus, we all behave badly sometimes. STOP and remember this, no matter who you're dealing with, and apply the gentleness you would show a child. No matter how they respond, your self-respect will show and you will definitely feel good about your actions. In the end, they will respect you and possibly even learn from you, whether you see the impact directly, or not. Peace to you and your loved ones!

~Mary Anne

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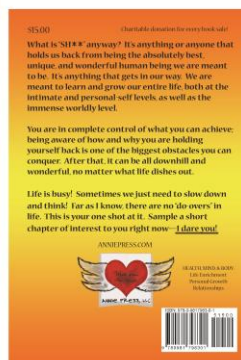
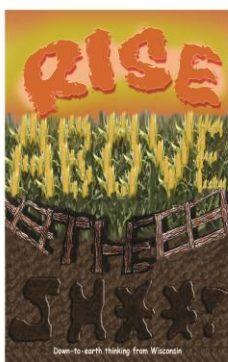
*-Mary Anne, Author
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