



Marriage Rules[©]

“HURT THE ONE YOU LOVE”

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It has often been said you always “hurt the one you love”. If true, two questions arise: why does this happen and what can be done about it?

For a long time, we have recognized the distinction between a person’s public face (personality, image, role, etc.) and their private face. The former is often reflected by various virtues such as patience, consideration, understanding or helpfulness.

We want others to view us as being OK and so we act accordingly.

However, “things are not always what they (outwardly) seem to be.” As “one cannot judge a book by its cover,” similarly, one cannot solely assess a person by the public face he or she presents.

Each of us has, I believe, an innate imperative to become what we fully are. The paradox occurs in attempting to become what we are to be by being what we are to become!

Watchwords are congruence (matching words with actions and values) and consistency (stability and persistence over time.)

To become a person in the broadest humanistic sense necessitates permitting oneself to be who one really is. In most every instance, I suspect, the real identity will fall ingloriously short of the ideal image.

Typically, conflict will develop between the bleakness or imperfection of the real and the radiance or perfection of the ideal.

The resultant emotional experience will often be characterized by feelings of guilt in having fooled everybody by one’s duplicitousness.

It is as though when you are who you are not, you are not who you are. So, in order to halt the charade and to be true to one’s self requires a ‘loosening’ of the rope of the noose of the game.

A game I define as any tactic or maneuver designed to prevent intimacy with self or others.

Noose is hereby defined by the roles we adopt which may sometimes strait-jacket our real and spontaneous natures.

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In order for me to be me with you, requires me to be me with me. To be me with me, requires me to feel safe with me. So in order for me to be me with you, I must feel safe with you.

If I don't feel safe with you, what you see is what you get, which is the public me. If I do feel safe with you, what you see is the private me.

Perhaps, we can now approximate an answer to the first part of the question posed earlier. Why do we hurt the one we love? Because it is only with them that we feel safe enough to be who we are.

Of course, this hypothesis is not intended to provide a rationalization with which to excuse negligent or hurtful behavior. But if we think about it for a moment, how can we reconcile acting one way in public and another way in private unless, in the one case, we feel more permitted and more encouraged to let down our guard long enough to be who we really are.

Unfortunately, sometimes allowing our true selves to surface is a big letdown, in general, to those whose love and understanding permit their tolerating our less-than-noble actions, attitudes and antics.

There is another aspect of this 'hurt' theme which is equally, if not more, important to consider.

If I can be me when I am with you, then it surely stands to reason that I must need you in order for me to be me.

However, if I am only partially me with me, and also with you, then maybe I need more of you to help me be freer to be more me.

In the complicated interactional process which ensues, by hurting you, I mobilize you to hurt me. It is almost as though I cannot hurt myself alone except by hurting you which is the only way I can possibly hurt me.

To be the cause of your hurt makes me hurt.

And when I hurt, I allow myself to feel and only then to ask for you, that part of you I most need, for me to be me.

And when you hurt, because of me, I allow myself to soften the armor which viciously protects me from you, as well as from me.

Only then can I let you in, because only then can I let me in, because only then have each of us paid the price, of loving, by first needing to hurt, then needing to comfort and finally atoning for the hurting and being hurt.

Perhaps this is what is meant by Original Sin.

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For out of the ashes of spiritual pain, desperation and solitude spring forth the possibility of love, hope and unity-in-communion with another. Save a soul? Hurt somebody you love. Then kiss away the hurt. Only it doesn't quite work that way!

There is an inherent contradiction of logic in having to hurt someone you love, in order to feel enough hurt in return, in order for them to help you, to help them, to love you, to love them, to love you, to feel safe enough to be who you are, to become, and to become who you are to be!

Wouldn't it be much easier to color the world in terms of black and white while ignoring any of the confusing, variegated shades of gray?

Assuming the difficulties of becoming a person, why should developing a relationship within its own context be any less difficult?

To hurt the one you love is at once an act of certainly communicating something! But what? Is it a feeling of frustration? Or anger? An experience of alienation? Or despair? An experience of loss? Or psychological death itself?

It is my opinion that when we hurt someone we love, we want something from them.

The intensity of the hurting provides an index of the intensity of the need. Sometimes, the need is all-consuming, or so we believe.

And in our compulsion to reach out for gratification and at the same time protect our benefactor from giving, and thereby, depleting their own resources, we pull back by hurting.

Hurting to get and hurting to give back. Needing to hurt and hurting to need!

What can be done, is perhaps so obvious, that to present it juxtaposed to the preceding comments would appear to unduly simplify and make sophomoric a resolution to a seemingly, multi-dimensional problem.

But apologies, notwithstanding, to prevent or minimize the hurt to one you love, is to risk *loving them more than yourself* and to tell them clearly and honestly what it is you need and what exactly it is you want.

You may be surprised to learn that it is exactly what they have always needed and wanted from you!

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