

## A WORD ABOUT MARRIAGE

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As some of you know, Margaret and I just celebrated our 42nd wedding anniversary. And while I appreciate all of the kind comments and well wishes, I am uncomfortable leaving you with the impression that marriage is all sweetness and light, but many of you already know that from experience.

It is easy for me to smile here on Facebook or to the friends and neighbors I bump into, but much harder to always be at my kindest in a 24x7, one-to-one relationship like marriage.

And please keep in mind that the word "yoga" means union, and the most common form of yoga is marriage. Most of us (particularly me) are not masters of yoga. And marriage reminds me of that each and every day. In my experience, there is no closer mirror of the mind than intimate relationships. Perhaps this is why most monks don't marry. They already have found their mirror. The rest of us find our mirror, sooner or later, in relationships, ready or not. It seems we are drawn to this by love. Amazing!

There is no doubt that marriage is a face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball, kind of relationship, putting ourselves under a spiritual and emotional microscope. And we not only chose this, we seek it out.

I have done personal one-on-one consultations of couples since the late 1960s, and relationships were one of my specialties, so to speak. I have had ample opportunity to see into some of the darkest interstices of human relationships, and that in great detail. The problem I am touching on here is not mine alone, but more or less universal. Most of us are not yogis when it comes to the yoga or union of close relationships. It is tight like that.

And I don't count reaching a truce or standoff in a marriage as solving the problem. It is love that brings marriage upon us, and that love must still remain at the core of any relationship, however buried it may be in time and external conditions. For some of us it is necessary to renew that love, to find its roots and remember.

How we handle close and continued micro-contact with our partner is how I measure enlightenment. Personally speaking, I find that marriage is infinitely difficult, perhaps the greatest challenge that I know of. Yet the problems it so exactly reveals are going to arise in life no matter what.

After years of experience as a counselor I am convinced that in most cases separation and divorce is not a lasting solution because we naturally want to look in

that mirror and will just do it again! The problems a couple faced in marriage goes with them when they separate and usually appear in an even cruder form in their next relationship or even if they live alone. Marriage is just a convenient way of packaging a lesson we all must learn: to look at ourselves in a mirror with clarity. Our partner loves us enough to help us with that. We should be grateful.

I am troubled by global warming, inhumanity, war and strife, the environment, and all kinds of other things, but if I had one wish that could be granted me I would choose to solve this problem of, as the old song says, "You always hurt the one you love, the one you shouldn't hurt at all." That is so true.

In my opinion, if we as humans could learn (and master) the yoga of marriage or any close-contact relationship, then that would do more to heal the world than anything else. Also, it could lead to solving all our other problems as well – kindness to each other up close.

[A photo I took of an herb that heals that I actually use all the time, Echinacea.]



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