



matters of the heart

Love is everywhere in this section.

Included on the following 18 pages are ideas for **date nights** and **Valentine's gifts**, a look at **10 eligible singles**, an escape to one of the **most romantic retreats in Florida**, plus love for **objects of desire** like vehicles and art, and **expert insight into relationship troubles**.



In a Date-Night Rut?

Here are 10 ideas to help get you out of it.

BY KRISTEN MANIERI

Let's face it, date nights of dinner and a movie have the potential to become predictable and, honestly, a little boring. Come on, people, isn't the whole point of pairing up to actually experience life together? Break out of your romance rut with an entirely new plan for date night, one that combines quality time with new and exciting things to do together.

Show Your Artistic Side

Have a zero-pressure artistic experience at Cheri's Art Uncorked, where budding Picassos produce a frame-worthy painting from a pre-sketched work of art. In this informal setting in Winter Park, participants sip BYO wine as they're taken step-by-step through the process of creating the "piece du jour" on canvas. The result is a memento to keep forever. From \$35 per person. cherisartuncorked.com

Indulge With Chocolates

Partake in the making of an age-old aphrodisiac during a date-night chocolate party at Farris and Foster's Famous Chocolate Factory, with three Orlando-area locations. On Friday and Saturday evenings, the chocolatiers add a touch of romance with dimmed lights and Michael Bublé tunes while couples whip up sweet treats using molds, dips and even the conveyor belt. \$29 per couple. farrisandfosters.com

Wish Upon the Stars

Take your date night out of this world, literally, with a visit to the planetarium at Seminole State College in Sanford, where weekly interactive shows bring thousands of stars and the stories behind them into clear view. During the

IS IT 'LIKE' OR 'LOVE'?

Whatever the state of your relationship, we've got Valentine's gift suggestions for you.

LIKE HIM

Timex 1600 watch, \$195, J. Crew, The Mall at Millenia



LOVE HIM

Emporio Armani chronograph watch with embossed strap, \$295, Neiman Marcus, The Mall at Millenia



LIKE HER

Pearl and diamond earrings, \$89.95, red ENVELOPE, redenvelope.com



LOVE HER

Pink spinel and diamond earrings, \$50,000, Tiffany & Co., The Mall at Millenia



LIKE A LITTLE

Love and Hugs solid milk chocolates, \$8 each, Godiva



LOVE A LITTLE

Handcrafted chocolate box, \$7, with assorted truffles, \$2.50 each, Chocolate Provocateur, College Park

—Jordan Snyder

ILLUSTRATION: BRIAN NUTTI; CHOCOLATES: NORMA LOPEZ MOLINA

LOVE SCENES

Romance movies that stir emotions.

For many couples, a Valentine's Day date is dinner out and a movie at home, streamed or in the box. Here are local movie critic Roger Moore's suggestions for romantic movies guaranteed to land you a smooch at evening's end.

Flipped (2010)—The day he (Callan MacAuliffe) moved in across the street, she (Madeline Carroll) knew she'd be saving her "first kiss" for him. Only he needs to be convinced. The glory in this 1960s-set nostalgic middle school romance is the ways he must mature to stop letting her down, and how she has to recognize her true value. Not many have seen it. Everybody should.



one day over and over until he's a man worth loving. Listen for Sonny & Cher's "I Got You Babe," whose lyrics change meaning every time you hear it.

Nick & Nora's Infinite Playlist

(2008)—Kat Dennings and Michael Cera are the 20ish "straight edges"—"edgy" kids eschewing drugs and unsafe sex—who meet, flirt and court over one long night of New York club

Sleepless in Seattle

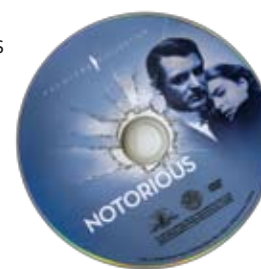
(1993)—A Baltimore newspaper reporter (Meg Ryan) treks cross country to meet a lonely widower (Tom Hanks) she heard on a call-in show in Rob Reiner and Nora Ephron's exquisite expression of romantic longing. Rent it or catch the free outdoor showing of it in Winter Park's Central Park Feb. 9. Valentine's Day Brunch at the Enzian, Feb. 12, features the 1957 film it is based on—*An Affair to Remember*.

Groundhog Day (1993)—Andie MacDowell is the winsome object of desire in this Bill Murray comedy about love that you must earn. He's the cynical weatherman sent to Punxsutawney, Pa., to cover Groundhog Day; she's the assistant he lusts after. The heel must relive that

hopping. A great reminder that love is not something you rush, even when you're young and in New York.

Notorious

(1946)—Ingrid Bergman plays a party girl who parties with Nazis in post-war Rio in this romantic thriller by Alfred Hitchcock. Cary Grant is the suave, aloof government agent who recruits her to spy on her friends. The film is sexy, exciting, famed for its longest-ever screen kiss, and Bergman never lets us forget that it's not just trapping Nazis that's at stake.



winter, planetarium staff also host "Sidewalk Astronomy," a series of outdoor telescope viewing events designed to enlighten smitten stargazers about Central Florida skies. \$6. seminolestate.edu/planet

Take in Shakespeare

Experience the legendary romantic train wreck *Romeo and Juliet* on stage through March 17 at Orlando Shakespeare Theater. One of six signature shows billed each season, this dramatic classic is presented in a traditional setting, with the epic sword battles arranged by a certified fight choreographer. \$15-\$38 per ticket. orlando.shakes.org

Laugh With Each Other

Get a healthy dose of hilarity at Sak Comedy Lab, where a troupe of actors unfurls a screwball series of improvisational sketches reminiscent of the show *Who's Line is it Anyway?* February marks Sak's second anniversary at downtown's CityArts Factory, where a completely off-the-cuff show is presented Tuesday through Saturday each week in a 200-seat theater. \$2 and up per person. sak.com

Paddle Under Moonlight

Toast a full moon on a kayak excursion through the Winter Park chain of lakes with Adventures in Florida. After the two-hour jaunt, paddlers congregate on Dog Island for wine, nibbles and fireside conversation. \$40 per person. adventuresinflorida.com

Put Your Heads Together

Get some intellectual stimulation courtesy of the Winter Park Institute at Rollins College, which hosts a series of thought-provoking and sometimes controversial high-profile figures throughout the year. Upcoming speakers include former CIA Director Porter Goss (Feb. 20) and legendary animal and environmental activist Jane Goodall (April 19). Free. rollins.edu/wpi

Know Your Wines

Join a small group of fellow wine lovers for an evening of tastings at The Wine Room in Winter Park. Held in the downstairs wine vault, the sessions generally focus on six wines paired with cheeses. Besides basic know-how on wine tasting, participants also learn about wine storage, serving and decanting. \$30 per person. thewineroomonline.com

Get Naked

If you're comfortable in your skin around each other, make a date to attend Nude Nite (Feb. 9-11) in Orlando. Live nude artistry and nude art, interactive installations, burlesque performances, music and wine combine to create a tastefully done event. \$20 per person on opening night, \$25 thereafter. nudenite.com

Kristen Manieri regularly posts date-night ideas on her blog, greatdatesorlando.com

Love Shack

Tables for two on Little Palm Island

Little Palm Island Resort in the Keys is a place where couples can get together.

BY DENISE BATES ENOS

THE FIRST QUESTION

someone asked me when I returned from a few days at Little Palm Island Resort & Spa was if there were televisions in the rooms. Honestly, I didn't notice, though I do recall that the thatched-roof cottages with a pair of sumptuous, adults-only suites were without phones, and I couldn't get a decent signal on my cell phone or computer if I were standing more than a few steps from the main lodge.

But that's really the point of being here: Little Palm Island is about truly getting away from distractions so you can focus on what brought you here in the first place—love.

A five-acre speck of land located about two-thirds of the way to Key West, Little Palm Island is accessible only by boat or seaplane. Guests who arrive by cars park at the resort's welcome center on Little Torch Key and take a ferry to the private island. If you go, try to time your boat trip for sunset; the view

of the island's tiki torches sparkling in the twilight as you approach is stunning.

Once ashore, guests are escorted to their private suite, which is decorated with a Tommy Bahama-meets-West Indies plantation vibe.

The bedroom, dominated by a majestic four-poster bed swathed in gauzy mosquito netting, is the stuff of which dreams—and honeymoons and anniversary getaways—are made. In addition to the decadent beds, the suites' oversized jetted tubs and outdoor showers are clearly designed for sharing. (The resort allows guests to bring children 16 and over, but LPI is not a family destination.)

For guests who can drag themselves out of their rooms, there are kayaks, boats, water bikes, snorkeling gear, beach floats and fishing poles available for the asking, and chaises ready for lounging along the shoreline and by the pool.

But the most tempting reason to venture outdoors is to enjoy the resort's

incomparable cuisine, which has won numerous awards from AAA, Mobil and Golden Spoon. The menu boasts such delicacies as imported caviar, Kobe beef and fresh-caught seafood, all expertly and delectably prepared.

During one of our dinners, a young couple got engaged, with the groom-to-be announcing, "She said yes!" His newly minted fiancée went from table to table showing off her ring while guests applauded.

TVs and good cell reception on Little Palm Island? Who needs them when you have each other?

Prices for the Island Escape Suites average about \$1,190 per weekend night in February and March. Dining on the island is over-the-top expensive, which makes the meal-plan option, at \$195 per person per day (excluding tax and gratuity), a bargain. Liquor, also very pricey, isn't included. Bring bug spray to keep the mosquitoes at bay. littlepalmisland.com.

SOWING THE SEEDS

For Valentine's Day, send her an arrangement that says where you're at in the relationship.



TASTE BUDS

Chocolate-dipped fruits are a delicious start to something beautiful. Eat them together while you talk about the possibilities. Hearts & Berries Dipped Strawberries, starting at \$66, Edible Arrangements, Winter Park Village

BUDDING ROMANCE

A modern arrangement of mixed varieties escapes predictability and expresses warm emotions. Perfectly Pleasing Pinks bouquet, \$84.95, Teleflora, teleflora.com



IN FULL BLOOM

Traditional roses and lilies in an embellished red vase are a sure-fire way to say, "I love you." XOXO bouquet, \$69.95, Teleflora, teleflora.com

—Jordan Snyder

It's Only Dinner—or Maybe It Isn't

Wherever you are in a relationship, there's a restaurant to suit the occasion.

TESTING THE WATERS

RELAX GRILL, LAKE EOLA PARK

Take your new potential sweetie for a bite under the stars at Orlando's landmark lake. Open until 10:30 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, the very casual Relax Grill features dishes like a Mediterranean platter of hummus, falafel and red pepper dip (\$11) and shrimp kabobs (\$16) in an al-fresco setting. Romance might be in the air after a stroll around the lake. 211 Eola Parkway, Orlando, 407-425-8440; relaxgrill.com



GOT GAME?

JERNIGAN'S AT AMWAY CENTER

You want to see a Magic game, but your object of affection isn't into sports. But who isn't up for dining out? Settle in at Jernigan's, the all-you-can-eat restaurant with balcony seating overlooking Amway Center's basketball court. For the price of game tickets, plus Jernigan's \$39.95 per person charge, you may win your date over to watching the Magic with you. 400 W. Church St., Orlando, 407-440-7000; amwaycenter.com/restaurants-and-bars

TURN ON THE CHARM

MAMA DELLA'S RISTORANTE AT PORTOFINO BAY HOTEL

The "this may be the one" date calls for cozy and romantic. Mama Della's is a little slice of Genoa, and surprisingly intimate for a hotel restaurant. Dinner for two with wine will set you back around \$100, and the branzino del Mediterraneo (\$29)—bass with pappardelle pasta and fennel—is highly recommended. Embrace the illusion by strolling hand-in-hand around the reproduction Italian village of Portofino Bay. You'll think you've left Orlando, at least for the night. 5601 Universal Blvd., Orlando, 407-503-3463; loewshotels.com/restaurants/mama-della-s-ristorante



SAVE THE LAST DATE

EOLA WINE COMPANY

So, it didn't work out; these things happen. Splitting a duck, fig and brie flatbread (\$14) and a bottle of "The Last Straw" from Washington's Isenhower Cellars (\$44) might be the last thing you'll ever have to share. Or perhaps savoring an artisan cheese plate (five samples for \$20) and a flight of four two-ounce shots of California red for \$18 by yourself while he checks his text messages is the best way to say, "Let's still be friends." 136 Park Ave., Winter Park, 407-647-9103; 430 E. Central Blvd. (right), Orlando, 407-481-9100; eolawinecompany.com

—Joseph Hayes



PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

You can make a bold statement of love for all to see.

Go for a Slam Dunk

At halftime during every Orlando Magic home game, effusive romantics can declare their everlasting love via Magic TV. \$50 buys a message, a.k.a. Magic Gram, on the giant scoreboard suspended over the court, with all proceeds going to the Orlando Magic Youth Foundation. Call 407-916-2400 to order.

Make It a Grand Gesture

Order a serenade courtesy of the piano entertainers at Baby Grands Dueling Piano Bar (babygrandsduelingpianos.com) on Church Street, where \$20 buys a tailor-made shout out. Simply jot down the details of your request, including song choice and special message, and hand it to the imaginative piano players with your greenbacks. They'll take it from there.

It Pays to Advertise

Surprise your sweetie at the Enzian (enzian.org) by purchasing a pre-movie ad for \$50. Supply the content and a photo to the creatives at the art-house movie theater in Maitland, and they'll whip up a passionate plug to run a handful of times before the film starts. Call 407-629-1088 ext. 236 to order.

Send Your Hearts Soaring

Flying 15,000 feet above the city, Aerial Messages (aerialmessages.com) will write your heartfelt memo across Orlando's wild blue yonder for \$2,000. The sky must be completely cloudless, and the message needs to be very short. For a less expensive and more practical option, request a banner, which can hold up to 45 characters and requires fewer weather restrictions to go aloft. For \$500, the same company will make five passes overhead with your tender tidings strung behind a plane.

Make a Big Scene

You can put your sweetheart in the middle of a mob scene with a surprise flash mob that'll make him or her a YouTube sensation. Starting at \$1,000, Flash Mob America (flashmobamerica.com) will organize a customized mob moment with the help of Orlando locals connected through its Facebook page, Meetup group and Twitter account. FMA handles all the details (site permits, music, rehearsals, filming).

—Kristen Manieri



Confessions *Former* of a Ladies Man

“Way more than a hundred” is John Hill’s guess when asked how many women he has dated. And, how many of them has he fallen in love with? A lot, he replies. Best known as “Johnny Magic” on XL106.7 FM’s hit morning show, *Johnny’s House*, Hill, 47, has earned a reputation of being a serial dater, though he would argue he’s not a “player.” Whatever the label, the once-committed bachelor says he is ready to change his status to “married.” He’s moved to the burbs, bought a dog and is preparing to nest with the still-to-be-named love of his life. But before he takes the plunge, Hill takes a deep breath and exhales.

“I’ve dated all races, colors and creeds, except atheists.”

“When you date, everyone is looking for the same thing—that love of a lifetime, that one person their soul connects with.”

“That first date, you wonder, wow, could this be ‘the one?’ But after 30 minutes you realize she may not be ‘the one.’”

“The most important thing for me is a woman’s heart. If she has a good heart, that’s more attractive than a woman in a *Playboy* magazine.”

“Dating is just an interview over a meal.”

“Listening is the key. Just listen. A woman will tell you everything. A lot of guys are just like, ‘I just want you to talk so I can get us to where I want us to be.’”

“If you really want to know the woman you’re with, spend some time with her mother.”

“I fall in love every day. I can fall in love driving home.”

“I always wait for them to say it [I love you] first.”

“Most women tell me I have a fear of commitment because the relationship doesn’t go to the level they want.”

“The person you meet is not the person who they are. It takes time for that person’s true self to show. I will intentionally start an intense argument with someone to see how they handle it.”

Has he cheated on a girlfriend? “When I was younger I did. And I realized that I hurt someone really, really bad.”

“I make sure it [sex] is what they want to do. . . . I stop that moment in the heat of passion and make sure we both acknowledge what’s about to happen. Let it be their decision.”

The longest he’s gone without sex: “Wow, geez. Ummm, well, maybe two to three months.”

“Dating is getting old. I ran the gamut. There are no new things in the dating world I haven’t done.”

“I made it a point about a year ago that I wanted to change my life. I got rid of the bachelor pad [a swanky downtown condo], moved into the suburbs and bought a dog. So I am preparing myself now to settle down. I don’t date now for the enjoyment of knowing someone; I date now for someone who’s going to be there for longevity.”

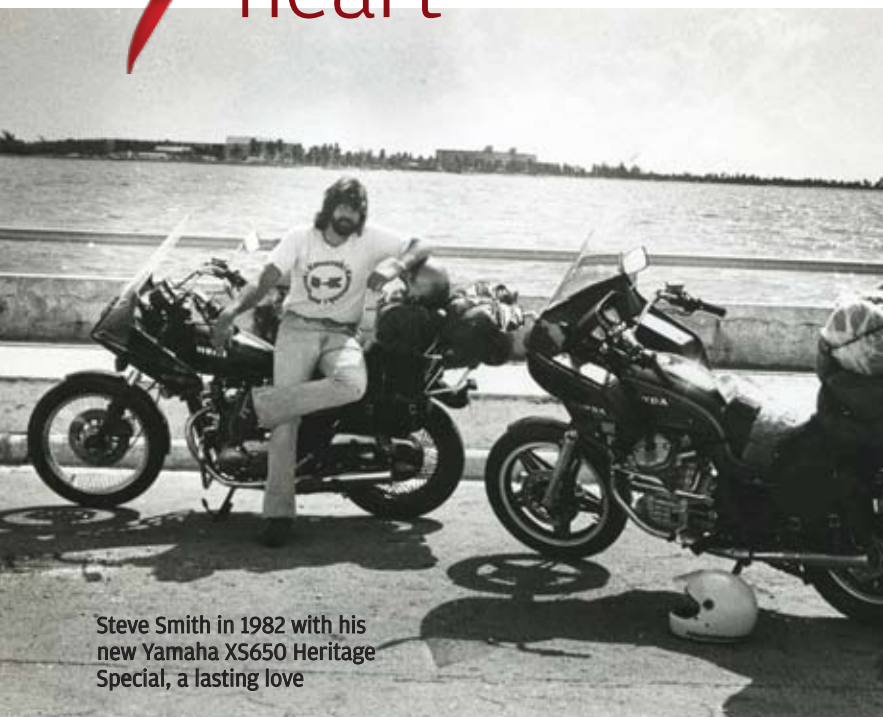
“Being married to me? You’re going to have a devoted, hard-working guy whose whole goal in life is to make that marriage work. I can’t say I always thought that way, but I think that way now. I am ready to grow, to learn and change. . . . I don’t divorce.”

On his current love interest, a woman much younger than him: “Your heart wants who your heart wants. There’s nothing you can do about that. I am attracted to someone younger. I can’t run from a situation because it doesn’t fit society’s standards of what I should have.”

Is his current girlfriend “the one?” “She’s closer than anyone I’ve been with.”

—Mike Boslet

John Hill, aka “Johnny Magic,” says he’s ready to be a one-woman man forever.



Steve Smith in 1982 with his new Yamaha XS650 Heritage Special, a lasting love

Love in the Fast Lane

One man's relationships with vehicles that passed through his life. BY STEVE SMITH

IT'S ODD, AND PERHAPS A LITTLE FRIGHTENING, HOW VIVIDLY I CAN recall the names and faces of lost loves. Of the Ones That Got Away.

Old girlfriends? Oh, my, yes, those too. But I'm thinking of the cars. And trucks. And motorcycles.

Love—purportedly a many splendored thing—sometimes comes with rubber tires. For many men, and likely a few women, deep and abiding affection for a vehicle seems so ingrained and irrevocable that we have to wonder what it replaced a hundred years ago—affection for, and devotion too, a loyal, fast horse, perhaps?



Plymouth Road Runner, a college love

There are those among us who tell time by cars. The first vacation I remember? It must have been in 1959, because we had a black Ford Fairlane. The first car I drove? A 1962 Chevrolet Impala, which my father let me steer on an abandoned World War II-era airbase. I must have gone away to college in 1973, because that's the model of the Plymouth Road Runner I took, towing a 1972 Suzuki Titan motorcycle in a U-Haul that also held a black-and-white 9-inch TV, a used Marantz stereo and suitably faded, flared jeans.

Vehicles have outnumbered girlfriends, and while the names and faces of many of the women have sadly faded, I can quote troublingly detailed information on

VALENTINE'S GIFTS FOR HIM

Our picks for perfect presents.



INDULGE BAD BEHAVIOR

Personalized Royce leather flask, \$42.50, J. Crew, The Mall at Millenia; cigar set, \$58, Brookstone, The Florida Mall



CARRIED AWAY

Montague leather satchel \$298, J. Crew, The Mall at Millenia

Yes, carry-alls and chic tech bags are manly!



IN HIS POCKET

Tiffany 1837 money clip, \$170, Tiffany & Co., The Mall at Millenia

Engraved, it can become a family heirloom.



LINKED IN

Donald J. Trump cufflinks, \$45, Macy's, The Florida Mall



TIE ONE ON

Calvin Klein Ties, \$59.50 each, Macy's, The Florida Mall



WHO'S THE BOSS?

Boss Bottled Night, \$67, Nordstrom, The Florida Mall



BLINDED BY LOVE

7 For All Mankind Westgate Sunglasses, \$140, Saks Fifth Avenue, The Florida Mall

What man doesn't love a cool pair of shades?



CLOSE SHAVES

The Power Shave Collection, \$450, The Art of Shaving, The Mall at Millenia

There's nothing sexier than a smooth face.

ROAD WARRIORS

3-piece Tommy Bahama Signature set with shaving bag, deodorant and cologne, \$68, Tommy Bahama at Pointe Orlando



BOSS: NORMA LOPEZ MOLINA

—Leigh Duncan and Jordan Snyder

the salmon-and-white 1957 Mercury, the 1970 Jeep J-10 with the chrome grille that looked like it was saying “ahhh” for the dentist, the 1966 Chevrolet El Camino, the 1954 Ford pickup with the “Mileage Maker” six-cylinder engine and a three-on-the-tree transmission.

Sometimes the relationships are so fleeting, two ships passing at the used car lot. The green 1967 Jaguar E-Type traded in by an old lady schoolteacher: \$3,600. The salesman even let me drive it, though I was just 16. I can still remember, as vividly as my grandmother's kitchen, the smell of the Jaguar's tan leather. The red and white 1960 Chevrolet Corvette convertible, a “rough but runs” model with brakes that slowed the car as effectively as dragging a stick on the ground and with a hole in a valve cover where a rocker arm had worn through. But for \$1,000, why in the world didn't I buy it?

Then there are those longer relationships that should have never ended, but did. The grass is not always greener, but I thought it was when I let go of the 1970 Ford Mustang Mach 1 that I bought new. And the 1969 Chevrolet Corvette painted UPS-truck brown. And the half-ton, short-bed Chevy pickup with the factory-installed 454-cubic-inch V-8. The black 1977 Pontiac Trans Am with the T-tops and the full-boat *Smokey and the Bandit* package, which I bought new two weeks before the movie came out. That Burt Reynolds flick nearly ruined the experience of driving the car. Shouts of “Hey, Burt! Breaker breaker, there, good buddy!” still ring painfully.

Sometimes, late at night, I moon and pine and even pout about those lost loves, but at least I was consistent: My philosophy was buy high, sell low, and I was very good at it, unfortunately. The Mach 1 went for \$1,200, the Corvette for \$3,000.

And finally there are those relationships that endure forever, or at least “forever” as it applies to me. See the black-and-white photo on the facing page? That's me and my new 1982 Yamaha XS650 Heritage Special, taken midway through a trip from Louisiana to Key West and back. After 30 years, I do not look the same. The Yamaha does. I just rolled it out of the garage. It has aged so much better than I. And it isn't even my longest-running required love story: The Yamaha is parked in my garage next to a 1972 BMW R50/5 motorcycle I bought in 1975, a “toaster tank” model so named because the gas tank has huge chrome plates on the sides that make it look like a vintage six-slice Toastmaster. Aside from my mother—87, with Alzheimer's—this BMW is the longest continuous and comfortable relationship in my life.

Sell it? No, I don't think so, and had it been as easy and as affordable to haul a dozen cars across seven states these past 40 years, I'd still have some of my four-wheeled true loves around, too. After 29 years of marriage, my wife is still beautiful. But the Yamaha and the BMW—well, they're perfect.



Ones That Got Away: Ford Mustang Mach 1 (above) and Pontiac Trans Am





Donna Dowless is the city's official "Ambassador of Love."

A Work of Heart

Donna Dowless loves what she does for a living and it shows. BY STEVE SMITH

THE PROCLAMATION—CITY OF ORLANDO SEAL AND all—is dated Oct. 3, 2007. "Whereas Donna Dowless uses her love, wisdom, generosity, energy and art to inspire us," it says, "I, Buddy Dyer, Mayor of the City of Orlando, hereby do proclaim Donna Dowless 'The Ambassador of Love.'"

Thus making official what many inside the Orlando arts community already knew: Dowless lives the loving nature of her paintings daily in her affection for, and devotion to, spreading love across The City Beautiful.

Dowless spent three decades as an executive in the entertainment industry before semi-retiring so she could devote more time to her art. She's known internationally as "the heart artist"—many of her paintings feature big red hearts, puckered lips, the word "love" or some combination.

"My subject matter was always about the heart, about love, always inspired by the connectivity to the soul, also to the interactivity of people. I choose love rather than hate. Everybody can identify with the power of the heart in the way that they choose. For me it is the vibrancy of love and caring and sharing and giving and receiving life and love."

Dowless' artwork is cheerful but never giddy. Perhaps her central talent is her choice of colors, which can attract and engage long before you're conscious of the content. Layers of color washes, acrylics, oil pastels, India ink and translucent glazes give her paintings tone and texture. With no formal training in art, it comes naturally, she says. "My mother was an artist, so I was around art all my life."

The artist and her husband share a two-story lakefront home near downtown Orlando, and her studio is a window-filled room at the rear. Even as a business executive, "I intentionally made time for my art, because there were times when each one of us was not treated so nicely along the way. It's a conscious effort that comes to me to choose nice, to choose caring, to choose love."

Her art hangs in homes and studios around the world, and locally in the Amway Center Art Collection and the Grand Bohemian Gallery in downtown's Grand Bohemian Hotel, among other venues. Her website is heartartist.com.

"I'm in love with love," says the Ambassador of Love. And with that philosophy, it's never unrequited.

VALENTINE'S GIFTS FOR HER

Nothing says "I love you" like a dozen red roses—and a little something extra.



Eco-friendly and made from all-natural soy that doubles as a skin moisturizer when melted!

STAGE SETTERS

Skin-moisturizing SOI candles in a variety of fragrances, \$5.95-\$24.95, The SOI Co., thesoico.com

AFTERNOON DELIGHTS

Tea tower with heart-shaped infuser, \$42, Infusion Tea, College Park; assorted French Macarons, 4 for \$5, Chocolate Provocateur, College Park

For locavores in love.



PERFECT POUTS

Iman luxury moisturizing lipstick, \$8.99, and lip shimmer, \$9.99, Ulta

A woman loves beauty products no matter how many cosmetics she has in her purse.

SCENTUAL STARTS

Organic hot chocolate body scrub, Giovanni Eco Chic Cosmetics, \$13.95, Whole Foods, Target and Ulta



SUGAR & SPICE

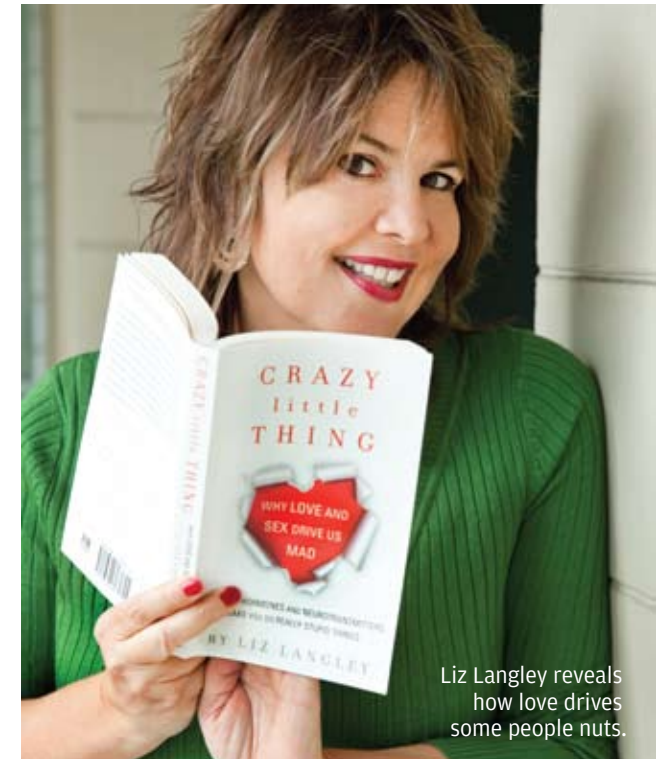
Figure-flattering pink garter slip, \$58, Victoria's Secret, The Florida Mall



ETERNAL LOVE

Tiffany gemstone and diamond rings, from left, \$35,000, \$90,000, \$200,000, Tiffany & Co., The Mall at Millenia

—Leigh Duncan and Jordan Snyder



Liz Langley reveals how love drives some people nuts.

Psycho Drama as a Love Story

In *Crazy Little Thing*, the author shines a light on the dark side of romance. BY KRISTEN MANIERI

EVER WONDER WHY SOME PEOPLE, LIKE FORMER ASTRONAUT Lisa Nowak, for example, go off the deep end in the name of love? "Every day you read about a crazy crime someone has committed over a relationship," says Liz Langley, an Orlando author who explores the underlying causes behind extreme acts of devotion in her new book, *Crazy Little Thing: Why Love and Sex Drive Us Mad*.

One culprit, as her interviews with therapists, biologists, psychologists and anthropologists revealed, is dopamine, the hormone responsible for creating pleasure. "But it also creates craving and addiction," says Langley after learning that the same brain areas activated in cocaine and nicotine addiction are also galvanized by romantic rejection. "It explains why it's often so hard to let go and why someone on the bad side of love needs compassion and engagement—not just wine and tide-over sex—to help them move along."

Another startling fact: It takes just a half-second to fall in love. "It's like taking a drug you didn't ask for," says Langley. "All of a sudden, you're smitten." Smitten enough to make even a seemingly smart person go a little cuckoo. As illustrated with several real-life stories in her book, Langley discovers that our reactions to rejection are highly primal, and when the right cocktail of hormones and chemicals mix, the resulting behavior can be downright destructive.

"These were really fascinating stories, but also very sad," she stresses. "Some were actually funny and even uplifting." Her advice: Seek support when you're hurting. "We don't have rehab for love, and maybe we should. People obviously need more support than they're getting."

Photos by Norma Lopez Molina

SINGLE IN THE CITY

Location: One80 Grey Goose Lounge at Amway Center

Brains and Beauty

Meet five unattached professional women who seek men of a certain caliber.

"I love being outdoors and on the water. I love challenges and trying new things. It is important to me to find balance in everything I do, say and think."

Erica Leach, 41
Orlando

Education: Nursing degree, Nassau College, New York

Profession: Registered nurse and owner of Crown Legal Nurse Consulting, a service that analyzes health-care practice as it relates to litigation

Hobbies/Interests: Family and friends, music, travel, the arts, dancing, cooking/baking, shopping and fine dining.

Likes: A man with confidence, sense of humor, emotional and financial stability. He's also physically active and has a genuine concern for others.

Dislikes: Roaming eyes, negativity, insecurity, emotional instability, needy/smothering behavior and smoking.

"At the end of the road, I will have a drink in one hand and chocolate in the other saying, 'Whew, what a ride!'"

Lynn Mulherin, 48
Celebration

Education: Master's degree in organizational management, University of Phoenix

Profession: Regional vice president, University of Phoenix
Hobbies/Interests: Time with friends and family, travel, snow skiing, sports events, blackjack and contemporary country music.

Likes: A handsome gentleman who makes me laugh and is up for all life has to offer.

Dislikes: Inflexibility and insecurity.

"I like a guy who's not shy of stepping up to the plate when it comes to making decisions and who's not intimidated by a strong, independent woman."

Kim Sachse, 45
Downtown Orlando

Education: Bachelor's degree in advertising and marketing, Syracuse University

Profession: Vice president of Creative Services for Massey Communications

Hobbies/Interests: Love to travel. Enjoy lots of Napa's finest, good food and spending time with friends. And for staying in shape and keeping my sanity, working out is a must.

Likes: A man who is educated, ambitious, athletic, funny, independent, trustworthy and TALL (I'm 6-foot-2 in heels).

Dislikes: Commitment-phobic men and smoking.

"This is going to sound incredibly cheesy, but I wake up every day excited about what the next 24 hours might bring."

Kathy DeVault, 32
Downtown Orlando

Education: Master's degree in public administration, UCF
Profession: Business development manager for the city of Orlando

Hobbies/Interests: Spicy food, UCF football, living an urban lifestyle, exploring new cities, and the Red Fox Lounge.

Likes: The most attractive quality in a man is his sense of humor. I'd also like him to be taller than me (5-foot-7 in high heels), have a job and a vision of what he wants in life and the ability to bowl over 150.

Dislikes: Men who dress like a cast member on *Jersey Shore* or who take themselves too seriously, and need time to "find themselves."

"I love creating laughter and smiles. I am very driven and a true serial entrepreneur."

Nekeya Nunn, 34
Downtown Orlando

Education: Bachelor's degree in physical therapy, Florida A&M University

Profession: Owner of The Labor Pros Inc., a labor-relations consulting firm

Hobbies/Interests: Home-improvement projects, restoring old furniture and giving it to people in need, world travel, and experiencing spas and blogging about them.

Likes: Men who are talkative, open-minded, confident and successful in their own right.

Dislikes: Smoking and men who don't tip at least 18 percent when eating out.

Emotionally Available

Here are five successful men who would change their relationship status for the right woman.

"I feel compelled to help those in need. I guess you could say I am 'For the People.'"

Mike Morgan, 28
Orlando

Education: Juris doctorate, University of Florida

Profession: Attorney, Morgan & Morgan law firm

Hobbies/Interests: Fishing and snow skiing, and spending leisure time at the beach or on a lake with friends, family and my dogs, Maggie and Gunner.

Likes: A woman who's social, spontaneous, funny or at least has a good sense of humor, career oriented, loyal, loves her family and the Gators.

Dislikes: Talking in the third person, orange spray tan and correcting grammar in e-mails.

"If your mother told you to go find a nice Jewish doctor, maybe I'm your man."

David A. Diamond, 43
Winter Park

Education: Medical degree, University of Florida College of Medicine

Profession: Physician/partner, Florida Oncology Network; medical director, Florida Hospital Cancer Institute, Winter Park
Hobbies/Interests: Exercising, hanging out on Park Avenue, travel (love Asia, Miami and Manhattan), wine and art (particularly classical Chinese and American Abstract Impressionism). I love dogs.

Likes: A fun, kind woman who is cultured and well-traveled, traditional but up for adventure.
Dislikes: Texting during dinner and smoking.

"I'm optimistic, creative, thoughtful and thorough, quick with a joke and good in the kitchen. I'm quite the catch."

Bobby Wesley, 29
Downtown Orlando

Education: Bachelor's degrees in political science and history, University of Georgia

Profession: Vice president and founder of Thompson Wesley Wolfe, a PR-marketing firm
Hobbies/Interests: Armchair politicking, indie music, baseball, artsy stuff, good dinners, better wine, working out and things that are funny.

Likes: A woman with clever, cultured sensibilities. Someone who is as enthusiastic about food-truck tacos as wine tastings in Napa.

Dislikes: A reluctance to try new things.

"I value spontaneity, appreciate humor and embrace the relationships I have with my extraordinary family, friends and staff."

Jeremy Litwack 41
Downtown Orlando

Education: Bachelor's degree in business administration, University of Delaware

Profession: Founder & CEO of Jeremiah's Italian Ice
Hobbies/Interests: Travel, music, ice hockey, poker, trying new restaurants and cuisines.

Likes: A woman with positive, vibrant energy. Someone who can easily enjoy kicking back on the couch, a night on the town or attending a formal business function.

Dislikes: Pessimism.

"I rely on listening to those I interact with in order to understand their perspective."

Matt Anderson, 27
Winter Park

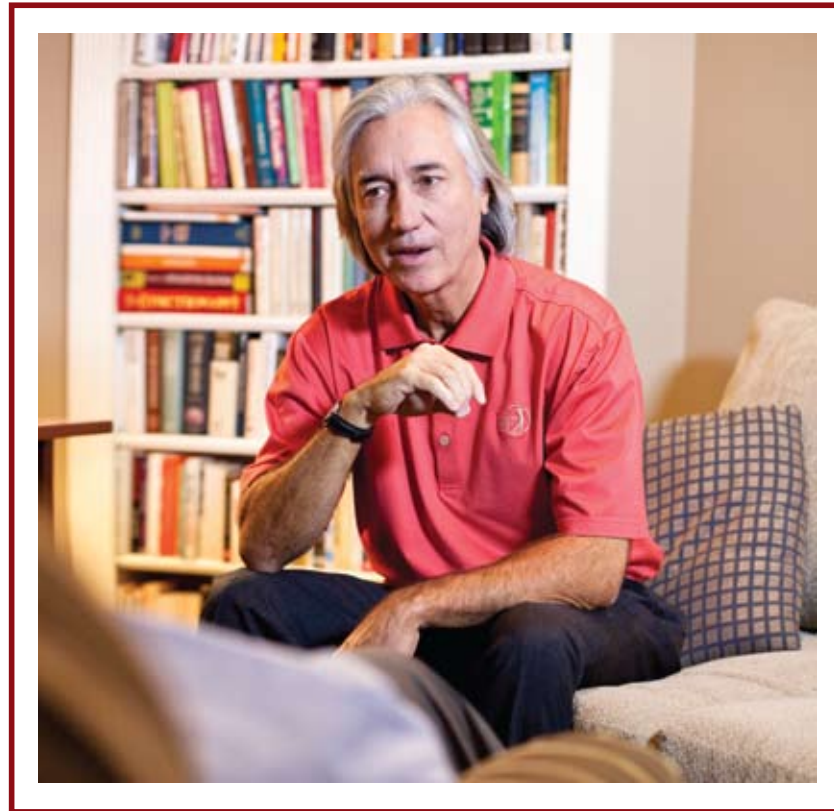
Education: Bachelor's degree in international business and economics, Rollins College

Profession: Founder /CEO of Enlightened Grain Spirits vodka

Hobbies/Interests: Tennis, surfing, playing guitar and trumpet, art, reading, cooking, spirituality, technology, global business and humanity.

Likes: Intelligent, cultured and enlightened women who exude confidence. A sense of humor and athletic lifestyle are necessities, as well as being able to handle vodka.

Dislikes: Extensive tattooing, smoking and a need to be the center of attention.



Couples therapist Rick Brown

When love hurts, the cause of your issues with a companion may not be what you think. Couples therapist Rick Brown says there are much deeper psychological forces involved in a couple's transition from feeling connected to feeling discontentment. So deep, in fact, that you may need some help digging yourself out of the hole your relationship fell into.

INTERVIEW BY MIKE BOSLET

NORMA LOPEZ MOLINA

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM



TO HEAR RICK BROWN TELL IT, FALLING IN LOVE IS THE PRELUDE to an inevitable power struggle in a couple's relationship. Feelings of compatibility and contentment often fade as a couple comes out of the "anesthesia" of romantic love. Suddenly and inexplicably, the love of your life is not giving you what you want, and, more importantly, what you need to feel loved. As a therapist who counsels couples and conducts relationship workshops across the country, Brown has seen this tug-of-war play out countless times in his 35-year career.

Brown recalls similar struggles in the early years of his marriage to Celeste, who's also a couple's therapist. They share an office in Winter Park. Some years ago, Celeste suggested they travel to New York to attend a marriage workshop conducted by Harville Hendrix, the founder of Imago Relationship Therapy and author of the best-selling self-help book *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*. That session not only strengthened their relationship, it brought Brown and Hendrix together as colleagues. Brown went on to write a book directed toward helping marriage counselors practice Imago Relationship Therapy, a discipline based on the theory that we are drawn—consciously as well as unconsciously—to a partner who bears positive and negative similarities to our parents.

In 1993, Brown appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, counseling three couples whose marriages were in serious discord. After the show, Brown says Winfrey paid for the three couples to travel to Orlando to attend his two-day marriage workshop.

As you might expect of someone in his field, Brown, 58, is low-key and soft spoken. He greets me in his office with a gentle smile and a firm handshake. Sit anywhere you like, he offers, pointing to my options. There's "the couch" where couples sit as Brown, seated in a chair a few feet away, listens to their troubles. I have sat on a couch similar to his many times in couples therapy, sometimes with a cushion of space representing the schism between me and my then-companion—a spouse and, five years after divorce, a girlfriend with whom a power struggle erupted almost the day we moved in together. My latest relationship having recently ended abruptly and me still in a deep funk over the breakup, I can't bear to sit on "the couch." Let's sit over here, I suggest, walking over to two upholstered, high-back arm chairs facing each other. The setting is more business-like and formal. I can stay focused over here, I tell myself.

Wearing a golf shirt bearing the logo of Interlachen Country Club in Winter Park, casual slacks and loafers but no socks, the trim and handsome Brown, with a mane styled back to his shirt collar, looks like he belongs on a practice tee teaching mid-handicappers how to improve their short game. When I offer that description of him, he smiles approvingly and says he tries to get out on the course every week. Nice life if you can get it, I tell myself.

For the next two hours, Brown discusses how love often begets tension and strife, as well as various emotional and behavioral complexities that mess up our love lives. That's not news to me, but what is are the origins of the inevitable power struggle and how, according to Brown, couples can best deal with the issues that separate them like the middle cushion on his couch.

Yes, love hurts. But to hear Rick Brown tell it, love can heal the wounds inflicted on us in our pasts. We just have to know how to apply the ointment—and that's where therapy can come in.

* * * *

Orlando magazine: You're a disciple of Harville Hendrix, who wrote the best-seller *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*. What's the upshot of that book?

Rick Brown: It really helps couples understand why they are drawn to the kind of partners they are drawn to and why, despite their best hopes, wishes and dreams, they inevitably find themselves struggling with those partners. Just as importantly, it also addresses how couples can fix their relationship, make it better, so they actually get the kind of relationship, the kind of love they wanted.

OM: Is that book based on the "imago" philosophy?

RB: Yes.

OM: Can you explain Imago Relationship Therapy?

RB: Imago is a Latin word that means image. The imago relationship refers to how we very early on in our childhoods begin to take in the positive and negative experiences and traits of our parents. And very early on we begin to form this image, or imago, and that becomes a guiding factor in the partner we will eventually select.

OM: So, when we select that partner, we're going to look for the great things we remember about our parents in our past, but we end up with the negatives we associated with them, too?

RB: We will consciously set out to find a partner who possesses certain positive traits. Most likely these are traits we admired in our parents or someone who was significant to us

when we were children. For example, you may set out to find someone who is hard-working, a good provider and ambitious—traits you admired in one or both parents. However, you will unconsciously be drawn to someone who not only embraces these positive traits, but also some of the negative traits of being distant, emotionally unavailable or preoccupied—traits that frustrated you in one or both of your parents.

OM: But wouldn't we want to avoid such a person?

RB: It would seem so. Consciously you would avoid such a person. But remember, falling in love is an unconscious process. Your logical brain says: Well, if I grew up with somebody who was emotionally unavailable and distant, go find somebody who's emotionally available and present. The problem is there will be no attraction. There will be no chemistry. Those people do exist; you just won't feel any chemistry. The chemistry will come when you find somebody who looks like he is hard-working and looks and acts available

but he really isn't. You go out and have a glass of wine. He listens, and he's attentive to you. And here is where romantic love comes into play: Romantic love will temporarily blind you. It is like anesthesia. It will numb you to your partner's negative traits while you enjoy all their positive traits. If you stay in the relationship long enough, the anesthesia will wear off and you will find yourself frustrated by the negative traits in ways that feel similar to the frustrations and disappointments you felt as a child. That emotionally available partner was really unavailable all along, but only your unconscious mind knew that, hence the attraction. You will feel like you have fallen out of love and question your choice of a partner.

OM: At this point, the fight or flee mechanism kicks in, right?

RB: Yes. Many people do leave the relationship at this point, believing they have made a poor choice. Or, they may find themselves settling into a relationship that is less than satisfying or fulfilling. But I believe it is

"I believe it is precisely at the point when couples fall out of love that they have the greatest capacity to fall in love." —RICK BROWN

NORMA LOPEZ MOLINA



Rick Brown says our choices in companions are preordained by our childhood experiences with our parents.

STRETCH Your Relationship

Rick Brown suggests the following methods for working through struggles in a relationship. The techniques were originally introduced by Harville Hendrix in his best-seller, *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*. Published in 1988, the book focuses on Imago Relationship Therapy, a principle Brown adheres to in couples counseling.

MIRROR: Quiet your own reactivity and mirror back your partner's words. You don't have to like what they are saying; just try reflecting back their words. For example: "So you're saying you . . ."

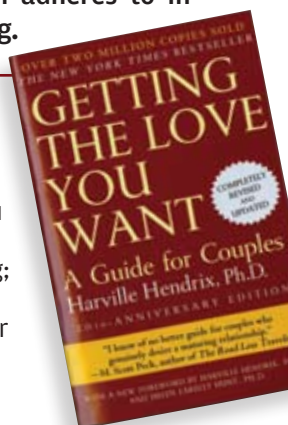
VALIDATE: Seek first to understand before being understood. If you mirror long enough, you will hear something that makes sense. You don't have to agree with what your partner says, but you try to understand their point of view. For example: "You make sense. I can understand why you could think that . . ."

EMPATHY: Try to empathize with how your partner might be feeling. For example: "I can only imagine how you might feel . . ."

INQUIRE: Now that you've heard, understood and empathize, inquire as to how you might be able to address their need or concern. For example: "Can you share with me what you need from me that would help address that concern or hurt?"

STRETCH: Be willing to stretch into becoming a resource for healing by meeting your partner's needs. In doing so, you will find yourself growing in ways you've probably needed to grow to become a fuller and more alive human being.

—MB



“First, we need to recognize that all the incompatibility and frustration is growth trying to happen.”

—RICK BROWN

Couples Workshops

Rick Brown conducts couples workshops across the country. He says the workshops help couples “better understand the dynamics of their inevitable power struggles and frustrations, and, more importantly, how they can fix the problems.”

“Getting the Love You Want: Workshop for Couples” is scheduled for Feb. 11-12 in Orlando. Later dates are available too. The cost is \$695 per couple. Go to rickbrown.org to register.

precisely at the point when couples fall out of love that they have the greatest capacity to fall in love. What they have fallen out of love with is an illusion. Nobody marries a real person. We all marry illusions. We marry who we think this person is or who we hope this person will be, and then we become disillusioned. Typically, at this point many people tend to just get busy with careers, home, children or hobbies, hoping if they stay busy long enough, they won't miss the feeling of being in love.

OM: Is this when an affair is likely to happen?

RB: It can and often does. Affairs grow out of couples feeling disconnected. Some people will pour their energy into their work, children, friends or a hobby, and some may pour their energy into another relationship. There is a universal yearning to feel connected. People want to feel connected to something or somebody. Unfortunately, they will often find that this is only a pseudo sense of connection or at best a temporary feeling of being connected. But it lifts them out of the pain of feeling disconnected with their partner. And there is the illusion that they have found someone with whom they are more compatible. If they stay in that relationship long enough, they will often re-experience the frustration of incompatibility.

OM: So what do we do when we begin to feel incompatible?

RB: First, we need to recognize that all the incompatibility and frustration is growth trying to happen. At an unconscious level, we are trying to heal and complete ourselves. And it appears that the unconscious will not rest until it gets what it needs to get, and that is a need that went unmet in the past.

OM: But is that possible? Can we really expect our partners, even ourselves, to change? Don't we all just want to be accepted as we are?

RB: Not only is it possible to change, it is necessary. It is a myth that you will find someone who accepts you as you are. You may find someone who looks like they accept you as you are, but if you stay in the relationship long enough you will find that they want you to change. And I would argue that you need to change. Change is necessary. For example, as one learns how to become emotionally available, one not only provides the healing that his partner needs, but he will find that they are growing and becoming all they were meant to be. This is the exciting possibility of marriage for me. It is the one relationship unlike any other in that it will urge you to become all you were meant to be. It appears the unconscious will not rest until that occurs.

OM: There's a vicious cycle that occurs when the frustrations set in, isn't there?

RB: When we get hurt, we react to it in a way that usually wounds our partner in their most vulnerable places. So my wife may be critical of me, saying, “You know, you just don't ever give me what I need. You're inadequate.” Well, she is hitting my tender place. I grew up in a family of four boys, very competitive, and if I brought home a report card of three A's and two A-minuses, my father asked, “What happened?” The message in that is I'm not good enough. So when my wife would hit that spot, it would hurt deeply. So I get even more defensive, and I refuse to listen, which is going to intensify her hurt.

OM: Is this the point where you're in a power struggle?

RB: Yes. Most of us, when we get married, don't want to change. Even people who come in to see me in therapy really don't want to change. What they really want is their way to work for them. The problem is they are with a partner who also wants their way to work for them. And therein lies the struggle.

OM: Let's talk about that. The imago philosophy says you really aren't in a relationship for compatibility reasons. You're in it to grow and heal.

RB: That's right. The unconscious is not interested in compatible people. What is the unconscious interested in? Healing. Getting what I need to get. Growing, becoming all I was meant to be. The unconscious is always going to take you to someone with whom you first think you're compatible because it's going to numb you up. But if you stay in the relationship long enough, you'll feel the friction of your incompatibility. All that friction, all that conflict, all that tension—all of that really is growth trying to happen.


OM: It's how you deal with it, how you handle it, that matters, right?

RB: The problem is no one really helped us learn how to handle that. Most of us do the best we know how to do.

OM: In general, what are some things that you have seen that hurt men and women in relationships?

RB: I don't like to get into stereotypes, but in my experience women are a little more tender about feeling invisible, feeling a lack of attention. Men are a little more tender to things that feel like shame, criticism, inadequacy. So if the wife doesn't feel like her husband pays attention to her, she will often be critical: You're never there, you don't listen. He'll react to that by pulling away.

OM: Marriage seems to be losing favor as the foundation of relationships. What's your take on that?

RB: Regardless of all its flaws, it's still the best structure for the raising and nurturing of children. . . . But people are putting it off for various reasons. Some of it is because they have seen so much destruction in marriage, so many divorces, and they don't want to repeat that. They don't want to do what their parents did. . . . Whether people move away from the institution of marriage, they're always going to be in a relationship. And the same dynamic will occur: The romance will wear off and you'll feel the friction. This is true in gay relationships, older-younger couples, interracial couples. The same dynamics occur. The unconscious does not see race, gender, age, economics. The unconscious is really about trying to get what you didn't get, but you really needed to get. 



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