

Silver Linings: Finding Happily Ever After, Once and For All

Why is it that so often the "match made in heaven" doesn't seem to fare so well here on Earth?

By Kathryn Dixon



Henry Maynell Rheam - Sleeping Beauty

I don't know about you, but ever since I saw Walt Disney's "Sleeping Beauty" at the age of 4, I've been waiting for my prince to come and wake me up. That was the fateful day on which I convinced myself there was someone "out there," of the greatest nobility (and likely on a white stallion), and I was destined to be the happy ending of his sacred mission. He would spend his late youth championing his way beyond all worldly trials and tribulations to find and awaken me with his tender, lifegiving kiss, thereby delivering me from the oblivion of life without him.

Well, I'm here to tell you nearly 47 years later, it still hasn't come to pass. I've had my share of earnest endeavors and false promises, but so far, no dice. And sadly, this set-up is not just a feminine problem, for the masculine suitor is as squarely ensconced in this dilemma as any damsel, although the layout is a little different. If you are the wannabe Prince, chances are good that you are still waiting for Sleeping Beauty to wake up. What's the deal? And when will the "happily ever after" part really happen?

The long and often harrowing search for love conceives art of infinite expression. Our desire for the match made in heaven is mercilessly exploited for marketing everything from deodorant to autos. And yet, statistics indicate that 50% of marriages end in divorce. Of the remaining betrothed 50%, how many are truly happy together? How many couples do you know who have mastered (or even want to master) wholehearted communication and live it regularly? How many of us have abandoned the search for happily ever after, and settled for timid mediocrity?

The Sleeping Beauty model contains the inherent notion that we human beings are somehow lacking unless we find another with whom to share our lives. Can we really know that without Prince Charming or a wide-awake Sleeping Beauty life will be less full, less whole, less worth living?

Let's investigate this juicy question using the clarifying agent known to many these days, "The Work of Byron Katie" (www.thework.com). The Work consists of four simple questions which, when applied to a challenging (or scary or painful) belief, can produce profoundly new perspectives, resulting in greater awareness, greater freedom and greater peace.

You are invited to go deeper than simply reading the following inquiry process. If you would like a little more breathing room in your heart and life, give yourself some time with these questions and find your own answers. You might be delightfully surprised when you look inside of you.

Boiled down to basics, the quandary above can be simply stated as: I can't find True Love without a partner.

Question 1: Is it true? Everyone seems to think so except for those vehemently opposed (who doth appear to protest too much). It feels almost blasphemous to even ask the question, interestingly enough. And, the truth is I don't even know what True Love really is. So, I really don't know if it's true or not. It hasn't worked so far.

Question 2: How do you react when you think this thought?

Well, I spent my childhood in fantasies of the day my dreams would be fulfilled by someone else. And I also spent my adolescence, 20s, 30s, 40s and now even my 50s, wondering the same darn thing.

I worship marriage as the ultimate goal of my life, the ultimate relationship, and I miss the countless wonders and joy of many other connections relegated to inferior status by this story of mandatory coupling. I also find myself worshipping men as the ultimate target and treasure and consequently funnel my entire creative life force into to securing one.

However, I also notice that the search for, and endeavoring to maintain, partnering are deeply tinged with hatred of the object of my "affections," because I feel imprisoned by my narrow and worshipful bondage.

I get to wonder what is wrong with me that the partnering/True Love thing never seems to work. This leads to countless self-improvement efforts, covering all aspects of being.

I treat prospective partners like they just might be The One. I watch them like a hawk, cherishing every small sign of resonance and possibility until I drop them like a hot potato at the first sign of inattention or differing priorities.

With the belief that I can't find True Love without a partner, I inadvertently treat my unwitting partners like they had better deliver--or else. I try myriad tactics: seduction, manipulation, kindness, accommodation, brilliance, beauty, brains, barter, begging,

boobs, arguments, withdrawal, attack, praise, indifference -- and never has any of it worked.

When I think I can't find True Love without a partner, I don't care a whit about the deepest passions that stir my soul. I only care about finding the elusive other that will fill the big hole in my life and heart. I stop being honest to myself and also to the object of my affection. And the operative word here is object.

I care more about what the prospective One thinks of me than what I think of myself. Oh my. This belief produces quite the pest-infested harvest, and I've only just begun. But let's stop there. We've got plenty to work with.

Question 3: Can you see a reason to drop the belief? Oh yes, indeed I can.

Question 4: Who would you be without the belief? Without the belief "I can't find True Love without a partner," I would stop looking outside myself for my well-being. I could just be happy in my own life, in my own body, mind and heart, just exactly as I am. I wouldn't be lacking anymore. I wouldn't see myself as deficient or inadequate or romantically retarded.

I would see men as fellow human beings, instead of walking empty promises and feeble fulfillers of desperate need, because there would be no desperate need.

Without the requirement of an "other" for my happiness, I would begin to look for True Love inside my own life, right here and right now. I would have fewer conditions and constrictions on my access to True Love, which sounds and feels much more true and much more loving.

Without the belief that I need a partner to find True Love, I'd have no more excuse to wait a minute longer to find it.

And, I would be more loving--of myself first, and also more naturally loving of everyone else. I would be partnered with myself. As Byron Katie might say, "I would be the partner I've been waiting for." I would give myself everything I've been looking for from men: security, compassion. Without this belief, I would be free to love wholeheartedly now, anyone and everyone in my life at any time.

The grand finale in "The Work of Byron Katie" is what she calls "the turn-around." This is where one takes the original statement and turns it around in various ways as your creativity directs, to discover new and often truer statements. We can use the opposite statement, switch subject and object around, and we can make it all about us. So, here we go.

I can't find True Love with a partner.

Well, that has clearly been the case so far for me. Moments, yes. Lasting True Love? No.

And this turn-around is also much truer in a profound way. Consider this: If I think True Love is only found in an exclusive affair between two, that leaves other people--even the whole rest of the world--out of True Love's dance, and how loving can that really be? Special love requires separateness to be special and so becomes Partial Love instead of True Love. Truth and Love are for everyone, so if someone is left out, True Love is no longer true--or love.

I can find True Love without a partner.

What I can share from my own experience is that I actually do experience more love in my life than I've ever known before, despite the fact that I have been sans partner for over two years now. I feel True Love with lots of people, and I feel it every day. It happens with my daughter, with my friends, with my clients, and even with strangers when we share an unexpected smile or sparkle. It feels deep and true, quiet and profoundly unlimited. I also feel it when I silently connect with the Divine. I can't find True Love without me.

Oooh. This could well be the bull's eye. Perhaps the magic ingredient that has been missing all of this time in my relationships has been me. The real me. The 100%-honest-with-myself-and-others me, who therefore has the capacity to trust. The me that engages naturally without any agenda whatsoever.

Does this mean that I will never partner again? No, only that partnering is not a requirement for my own happiness and access to True Love. This is radical freedom. Now any and all relationships will be the celebration of True Love, instead of the clamoring search for what already exists within me.

Maybe, just maybe True Love is bigger than two bodies and hearts; maybe it lives in the eyes and hearts of one and all instead of a one and only. And maybe True Love isn't lingering somewhere in the future but flourishes right here in this moment, where happily ever after is finally found in the boundlessness of now. Kathryn Dixon is the founder of Clarity Coaching, www.kathryndixon.com. She's a graduate of Byron Katie's certification program and has been a facilitator of "the Work" with individuals, groups and organizations for eight years.