

Dear Olga

*I've been in a long-distance relationship with a guy for six months, and recently I've noticed myself acting like my parents with him, which really bothers me. My parents have been together for 33 years, but they're often incredibly mean to each other. I don't want to repeat that cycle with my spouse. My boyfriend and I are talking about marriage, but lately I've been so mean to him that I can't imagine this working. We're both willing to change, but the more we work on things, the worse they get. Please help.*

—Sarah

Dear Sarah

I understand you not wanting to end up like your parents, but you're not like them in the way that you think; you just have the same 'missing pieces' as them—and that is something you can fix.

Think about what was missing for you when you were growing up—and what is obviously missing between your parents. If they are constantly criticising or being nasty to each other, then acceptance, respect and connection would be some of the formative qualities that you—and they—failed to learn as children. These 'missing pieces' have a profound effect on our relationships and on our lives. If we don't receive the acceptance or acknowledgement that we need in order to feel good about ourselves, we end up feeling undeserving of love, wealth or success. We become subconsciously programmed to attract problems, loveless relationships or unfulfilling careers. We also become needy and reactive in relationships and, more importantly, we attract partners with the same missing pieces as us, which can cause conflict and resentment because they're unable to give us the love and acceptance we seek.

Filling in our 'missing pieces' is one of the most powerful ways to resolve your relationship issues and create a life that you love. So let's look at acceptance—the #1 missing piece for everyone. Acceptance from others is what makes us feel good about ourselves, so it's hard to be happy when it's missing. If you failed to get the acceptance you needed as a child, you'd have a hard time putting yourself first, making healthy boundaries or choices, doing what's best for you, or maybe even *knowing* what's best for you. You'd also find it difficult to let love in, to feel deserving of love or to experience a truly intimate connection with your partner.

When we feel undeserving of love, we tend to fight off anyone who gets too close or tries to love us more deeply, so it's interesting that you're in a long-distance relationship—and that the idea of marriage is making you 'meaner'. The challenge here is to understand that it is your subconscious programming that has created your current situation. Changing your programming (by filling in your missing pieces) will automatically transform your relationship dynamics—and everything else.

### **Filling in your missing pieces**

Practising self-acceptance means making yourself #1 in your life, saying no to whatever doesn't work for you, rejecting choices or compromises that don't feel right for you, expressing yourself honestly and openly with others, and taking care of yourself physically, emotionally, nutritionally and spiritually.

When we cultivate strong self-acceptance in these practical ways, we automatically enhance our self-worth and we start to attract all the good things we've been missing.

Connection is another key missing piece for you, given your long-distance relationship. How do you connect with your emotions? How do you connect with your boyfriend? In what ways do you disconnect emotionally and when do you do that?

If we are disconnected from ourselves, we cannot truly connect with another, nor can we connect with what's best for us or be connected to what we feel in our hearts. So try to find ways of connecting with your emotions. Play some passionate music, go for walks in nature, stir up your body with dance or aerobic exercise, and make a point of engaging in meaningful conversations with your partner—with eye contact and with feeling. Talk to him from the heart, with as much raw honesty as you can, as this helps you get in touch with your deeper feelings that you may not be aware of. It's really only by openly expressing ourselves to our partner that we can build emotional 'muscle' and discover who we are.

The distance between you and your boyfriend is not just geographical. Nor is it just about the emotional distance between you and him; it's also about the distance between you and your heart. Start closing the gaps here and you will find that your meanness has nothing to do with your boyfriend—and everything to do with your heart longing for all the affection, respect and acceptance you missed out on as a child. Start practising these qualities for yourself, in practical ways, and you'll create a much more loving, meaningful connection with yourself and with your man.

*Olga Sheean is a relationship coach and therapist who specialises in addressing the negative subconscious programming that runs—and often ruins—our lives. She is the author of Fit for Love—find your self and your perfect mate, the ultimate guide to healthy, loving relationships and personal empowerment. [www.olgasheean.com](http://www.olgasheean.com)*