



Love Bytes

Relationship coach **Olga Sheean** shows you how to create healthy, loving relationships from the inside out

How do you deal with pain? And what does it represent for you? Pain can be crippling in its intensity, whether it is of the emotional or physical variety. It is very rarely welcome, yet pain is one of the body's most potent messengers and it can be a prelude to deep healing—if we get the message.

One of the biggest messages that pain brings is to do with self-love. Pain in any form usually means that we are not loving ourselves or that we are going against what is best for us. Although a great deal of pain can be generated by illness, physical injury or emotional loss, the real source of the pain is deep within us and circumstances merely serve as triggers of our pain so that we can address its underlying cause.

When our early subconscious programming is in conflict with our true selves, pain is the inevitable outcome. For example, if we were programmed in such a way as to feel unlovable and come to deeply believe in our 'unlovability', then we are destined for considerable pain in our lives, unless we can recognize the distortion and correct it. If we believe that we are unlovable, there is little that anyone else can do to change that. They may try to shower us with love but we will be unable to let it in because of our negative belief about ourselves. They may tell us we are lovable, but we will deny it and do our best to convince them they're wrong, shunning compliments and intimacy. Or they may finally heed our numerous 'KEEP OUT' signs and withdraw, sending us into a spiral of pain because now we have actual, visible 'proof' of our 'unlovability'.

The power of pain

But there is a higher, wiser spiritual part of us that knows we are lovable. And it will do whatever it takes to show us this. It will cause us to attract the perfect partner or relationship to trigger our pain so that we can heal it. Rarely, however, do we realize that this is what is happening. Instead, we see that partner as the offending party, the one who actually caused our pain. And so we perpetuate the cycle, failing to see the true source of the pain and, consequently, unable to heal the wound.

Someone in a lot of pain over a relationship break-up may be desperately seeking to get their partner back, in the belief that that will lessen the pain and things will somehow be okay again. But it is not the partner that they need to reclaim; it is themselves.

When we are in deep pain, words and good theories are not much help. We simply need to grieve. But when some of the charge behind the pain has diminished with our grieving, there are some emotions to watch for if you truly wish to leave the pain behind for good and to live a life filled, instead, with love—inside and out.

The pitfalls of pain

Next-door neighbours to pain are anger, resentment and blame—much of which we feel towards ourselves but often end up expressing to the one we believe has hurt us. To overcome our pain, we need to understand that these qualities are the inevitable result of our internal rejection of self, based on our belief that we are unlovable. We subconsciously feel the need to blame someone for the way we have been treated because we cannot bear to consciously accept the possibility that we might truly be unlovable. This is what creates the internal conflict and the pain.

The challenge, then, is to have huge compassion for ourselves, understanding the power of the negative programming that caused us to attract the kind of relationship that would reach deep into our pain so that we could access it, see it for what it is, and heal it with an abundance of self-love.

Painful messages

Your greatest strengths lie on the other side of your pain. And the quality or nature of that power can be found in the nature of your pain. If the source of your pain lies in your belief that you are unlovable, then your greatest power (or the greatest expression of who you are) will lie in the transformation of that belief into one of absolute lovability. Your life will be transformed when you are fuelled by self-love. Heed the pain, understand its true origins, and know that, with your heartfelt collaboration, it can be a prelude to love.

Readers' reflections

What suggestions do you have for someone who is saying no to whatever is not working, doing the inner work and still feeling the pressure to be in a relationship? The challenges of being single and having a life is that society still views this as weird.

—LB (female)

Dear LB

If it is true that we attract certain dynamics in order to see what is going on inside us, then the pressure you are feeling from others to be in a relationship would seem to indicate that there is some unresolved conflict inside about being single.

Obviously there are certain qualities that we can only have in partnership with another (just as there are other qualities that we can only have when we are alone), and it might be worth looking at what these are, for you. What qualities do you currently not have in your life, as a single person, that you might like to have? Would they perhaps include tenderness, intimacy (i.e., a deep connection with yourself), or unconditional, loving touch? See if there is any connection between what you might identify and what others are saying you 'need' to be in a relationship for.

Something else to consider: since relationships are one of the most powerful ways for us to discover our true selves, there may be parts of you still hidden or unexpressed, in the absence of the loving catalyst that a partner might represent. As the song goes, "You don't know who you are until you love someone..."

E-mail olga@olgasheean.com with your relationship dilemmas.

Responses will be printed, space permitting.

Olga Sheean is a relationship coach and author of *Fit for Love—find your self and your perfect mate* (available via her website, www.fitforlove.net, from Banyen Books and other bookstores). Tel: 604 638 0772 or 604 999 8429.