



Five Myths About Relationships

1. If I experience any doubt in my relationship, I'm with the wrong partner.

I hate to break it to you, but 100 percent certainty about anything in life is a childlike illusion. Life is uncertain. Doubt about any major decision is not only inevitable but healthy. When you're on the precipice of making a lifetime commitment or even have the sense that your partner is someone you could envision spending the rest of your life with, why wouldn't you have doubts?

Isn't it a sign of intelligence and thoughtfulness to put your partner under the microscope and honestly ask yourself if you're making a loving choice? (Notice that I didn't say "the right choice," as there isn't one right choice when it comes to marriage.) The key question to ask yourself is: *Is my partner someone with whom I can learn about love?*

2. If I don't feel butterflies every time we're together (or if I never had them), I don't really love him or her.

Butterflies are a sign of infatuation, and feeling infatuated is an early, somewhat adolescent stage of a relationship. Butterflies are often induced by the state of longing, which occurs before you know that your partner is fully committed. Unfortunately, the modern psyche is wired to equate love with longing, as a result, when there's an element of chase or drama, we think we've found true love.

True love has nothing to do with longing or drama. Real love is two available people standing face to face, willing to be vulnerable, honest, and committed. There's nothing dramatic about that, and it usually doesn't induce butterflies. If you still feel butterflies several years into a relationship, it's likely because you're the pursuer in the pursuer-distancer dynamic that characterizes most relationships. That's fine, but it's also fine not to feel butterflies. What matters is if your relationship is growing on a solid foundation of respect, trust, friendship, connection, and shared vision and values. Anything else is icing on the cake.

3. If I don't miss my partner when they're away, I must not really love him or her.

Hogwash. If you don't miss your partner, it means that you're fulfilled and whole inside of yourself, which is one of the strongest determinants of being capable of having a healthy relationship.

4. I should want to spend every moment with my partner, especially after marriage.

This belief is part of our culture's propagation of adolescent love instead of mature love. In adolescent love, you live your lives in each other's back pockets, two half people merging to create a whole. In mature love, you value and protect each other's separateness, and from that space of enlivened separateness, you come together to share love in the third space of the relationship as two whole people.

Even after you're married—*especially* after you're married—it's healthy to say to your spouse, *I need some time alone tonight. I'm going to take an hour in the bedroom to write or listen to music.* I'm often surprised by how many of my clients honestly don't know it's okay to ask for time alone.

5. Sex should always be fantastic, and I should want it all the time.

That would be nice, but it's not reality. Sometimes you'll want it; sometimes you won't. Sometimes, you won't want it, but you'll do it anyway to water the relationship garden, and it will turn out to be great. Sometimes you'll be bored; that's okay. You and your partner may have different needs around frequency, as there's usually a high-drive and a low-drive partner; if you communicate about it, you'll eventually work it out. Hollywood and mainstream media do such a number on our minds regarding sex that most people simply don't know what's normal.

How about this? If it's basically working for the two of you, you're fine. And if it's not working well, but you're addressing it together, you're also fine. Sex is complicated in the best of circumstances as it activates our deepest wounds and needs about loving and being loved, so a strong dose of compassion and patience goes a long way in this department.

As a rule, notice how many times the word *should* enters your thinking process when it comes to your relationship and try to let it go. There are no *shoulds* or molds that you have to squeeze yourself into; there's only what works for the two of you (Thagard, 2010).