



## Finding the Deepest Joy in Relationships, by Ezra Bayda

One very helpful tool in both clarifying and working with our relationship difficulties is to return to the three questions:

Am I truly happy right now? What blocks happiness? Can I surrender to what is? Â Â Â [...]

The first question helps identify what weâ€™re actually feeling (often we donâ€™t know).

The second question shows us where weâ€™re stuck in our conditioningâ€”our expectations, demands, or unhealed pain. Once we see our expectations clearly, and once we work through our surface emotional reactions, we usually reach that uncomfortable place where we begin to feel our deepest fears -- such as the fear of being unworthy, the fear of being alone, the fear of being hurt again, the fear of rejection, or the fear of the loss of control or safety. Our fears may not necessarily be logical, but we still believe at our core that they are the truth, and they certainly dictate how we feel and how we live, thus blocking any chance for true contentment.

Finally, the third question leads us directly into the experiential process of coming face to face with our own fearsâ€”the fears that are almost always at the root of our unhappiness in relationships. Asking the third question -- Can I surrender to what is? -- allows us to do the one thing that can help free us from the domination of our fears: that is, to welcome them in and actually feel them. We may think we canâ€™t stand to feel our fears, but the truth is we just donâ€™t want to, primarily because they feel so uncomfortable. But over time we can develop the courage and confidence to stay present with our fears. We learn again and again that itâ€™s awareness that heals; and gradually, the fears, which at one point felt so solid and unapproachable, are now much more workable.Â

As we become more inwardly free from our conditioning and our fears, the love and connection that are possible in relationships tend to flow through us more naturally. As our defenses are lowered, our heart opens, and there is a natural desire to give from the generosity of the heart. We discover that genuine happiness in relationships is not a product of having our expectations met or getting what we want but rather it is the consequence of freely giving in order to bring happiness to another. Nearly every parent has experienced this at some point -- their deepest joy coming from giving unselfishly to their children. Unfortunately, this truth is often forgotten as relationships become more complex, and especially as fear supersedes our innate desire to give from the heart.

-- Ezra Bayda, from "Beyond Happiness, The Zen Way to True Contentment"

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