

Daphne Rose Kingma

on Relationships and Love

By Donna Strong

Daphne Rose Kingma has been described as the ‘Einstein of Emotions.’ A prolific author of ten books and a perceptive therapist, her words bring the soothing balm of wisdom and understanding. Daph-ne’s books have sold more than a million copies.

Awareness: When checking in on this interview, a favorite line came from the poet Rumi. ‘Enlightenment is intimacy with all things.’ We thank you for the opportunity to spend time and consider how relationships and love call us to deepen our intimate connection with life.

Daphne: I can not think of a more gorgeous quote to undertake this walk together! In the human experience, when we think of a relationship, usually we think of it as a connection between two people, as the locus of intimacy.

The last century in Western culture became an exploration of who we are, what has affected us, and why we behave the way we do. In particular we have been asking, how have our childhood relationships affected our consciousness and shaped the whole arc of our behavior?

There are three points I see all tied together: What you experienced as a child becomes a vast interior blueprint for what you will be. Your relationships exist to show you who you are, and how early childhood affected your development. As a result, the adult is on a quest to find the relationship that will heal the childhood relationship blueprint. We consciously and unconsciously look for resolution and clear definition of relationships beyond our childhood and first adult definition.

A great quest of our lives is our search for an intimate relationship, a human connection with another person that would be the locus of the experience we call loving. We have very powerful internal myths about it; that it will be an exclusive connection with one person, and a lifelong sharing of a daily domestic situation.

This one person will be everything; lover, friend and intellectual companion. We have held this myth of relationships in our heart, in our unconscious and in our quest. We are always looking for ‘the one.’ We either have the one or we have lost the one, and wonder when are we going to find the next one. It’s almost that we have elevated the personal relationship to that of a god.

I offer this in contrast to the beautiful words of Rumi, to be estranged from nothing and no one. Yet, our whole life of relationships in Western culture is one of the powerful habits of the human condition: to connect, civilize the land, use money, and conduct war. Intimate relationships, are also one of the powerful habits of the human condition.

And now, it is like Rumi said, and I believe I joined this perspective in the Future of Love; it’s a habit that is time for us to get over. We are being invited to move into a state of expansion. It is time to look at the qualities of intimacy itself as a bridge we can make to more human beings than just this beloved one we have defined and divined our relationships to be about.

I believe this brings us to the moment where we are standing on tiptoe, at the edge of possibility, to experience intimacy as Rumi suggests, of being one with life. It’s like any moment of juncture in a human

life, or even that of a culture or the cosmos. There is always a death that opens new vistas. There are stars that are imploding and dying while other stars are being born. It is this constant evolutionary process of death and expansion simultaneously. We are all on this incredibly powerful and frightening brink of possibility. We are now being invited to let go of a very parochial definition of what a relationship is and expand into unimagined vastness...

Awareness: On that note, I would like to ask you to respond to one of your key concepts of relevance to our evolution — that of surrender. You describe surrender as a creative condition...

Daphne: (chuckling) Well, I'll create a nest for that concept by saying, a very familiar definition of an intimate relationship in our culture looks like a woman and a man getting together and living happily ever after. We have had that one specific picture, and yet right and left it is being broken down. Someone told me recently that the current divorce rate is now 65%, and in cutting-edge California, as the leaders in breakdown/frontier, it's about 73%!

What I believe all this indicates, is that as a Western human community, we are having a lot of second thoughts about this configuration called marriage. We tried it, we were impassioned about it, but we are finding that we are not willing or able to walk this path for an entire lifetime. Other energies are insisting that we do something different.

So, this brings me to that notion of surrender and the possibility that all this breaking down is not an indication of failure, but an invitation to a larger definition of love and relationship. And this is extremely scary. In contrast, we have seen how computers have taken over the world and we are not sitting here saying, 'isn't it terrible we have all this plastic.' Instead, we are saying isn't it wonderful that because of this technology we can now communicate with someone in India, or our mother while she's asleep. In other words, we have surrendered to the larger possibility embodied in this technology.

However, when it comes to relationships, we are quite attached, because they are so personal. They evoke the feelings of falling in love, they give us security and provide structure for society in the form of the family. So there are all these ways in which we are emotionally, psychologically and sociologically connected to the form of our relationships.

So the surrender you remind us of is very, very difficult in the world of relationships. Okay, technology can go ahead. We have surrendered to the grace, ease and flexibility of what computer habits provide, and beautiful possibilities encoded in that form. Okay, we can batter the other half of the world to bring democracy to their shores. We are going to change 'their' political system, that's fine. There are all these places where we say it is okay to bash something to bits in order to get to the future. But when we come to our relationships that's a really tough thing for us. We don't want to hear it, we don't want to go through it. We can't handle the fact that our relationships are undergoing this tremendous upheaval, of being battered on the 'rocks of possibility' to find a new form of expansion in our connections.

Awareness: That is so true... but circumstances are moving us to reconsider our direction with relationships.

Daphne: Yes! To speak personally, the book, *The Future of Love*, came about because of the experiences I had through a sequence of relationships with very different formats. Each of them had a very powerful life-changing influence. The effect was mind boggling and I sometimes felt myself expanding in ways I never thought I would in this lifetime. Then I realized it was a very powerful form of evolution and I was informed on a soul level that I was to share the deeper spiritual meaning of it.

What does it mean that I am not married to the same person I was married to five years ago, or forty years

ago? I think people are beginning to move beyond asking the psychological questions, like, 'why didn't I get this person?' to what is the larger meaning — the spiritual meaning — are we all idiots or is there something larger being asked of us here? So the surrender is to that process. We are being asked to let go of something old so something larger, and in my opinion, far more grand, can emerge.

Awareness: *You certainly hit the Zen bull's-eye with my life circumstance! I was very much in the midst of change and it helped me to orient through a very transitional phase of my own life.*

Daphne: It is amazing, the birth process is painful — it's a stretch, out of safety and into the unknown. Collectively, we are in that birth process. Every relationship has a life trajectory that goes through seven stages. The first stage is romance, where we are absolutely titillated and transformed, connecting on a soul-to-soul level. That is what the 'falling in love' experience is. We unequivocally see, for a few moments, the absolutely exquisite essence of another person.

There's no question about the beauty or awe we hold for the beloved. So then we come back to the real world, make some kind of commitment, and explore and connect on deeper levels. Somewhere in this process there is a crisis, something shows up. Oh, this isn't just going to be bliss and we are not going to stare into each other's eyes until kingdom comes!

Tales of this crisis are amazing. The drama begins with someone getting sick or losing a job, or following a death, the mother-in-law comes to live with the couple...it can be a small thing or a great thing, but suddenly we are into the arena in which you start to discover the other person on a human level, and you see their limitations. Issues come up about children, money, in-laws, where to live. I identify these issues as a phase called the ordeal, the major work of the relationship. Underlying the ordeal is a power struggle where each person is saying, no, I want to do it my way, can't you see this is better?

There's this ongoing journey in which people reveal themselves within a struggle. This then is the prelude to chaos, in which both people realize that no one can get the upper hand. This chaos indicates a critical point in a relationship. It's a point of possibility for spiritual transformation because people either break through or realize there is no mutual resolution. As they say in the divorce court, 'there are irreconcilable differences.' This becomes the turning point at which 65% of divorce occurs.

After that comes a surrender and an awakening. Oh, okay, I get it, this relationship was about my learning about my femininity, or how my father's alcoholism affected me. There's a surrender to the whole process that has happened and the awakening of awareness, and the final stage is transformation. The person is forever changed by the process of relationship.

Awareness: *Yes, there is an alchemy that occurs and something shifts...*

Daphne: There is psychological growth, there is spiritual opening. Those last couple of stages sometimes come within a relationship and the people move to a much higher spiritual level. Other times that is the point at which the relationship ends. Basically, the path relationships go through is what I believe we are all going through collectively right now. We are at that chaos point with all the divorces and we're saying, maybe relationships aren't supposed to be what we've thought, with one man and one woman living happily ever after.

This whole upheaval right now is the chaos stage in a relationship and we have the opportunity to surrender to that and awaken; learning to love more just what is, and forgive more, whatever the configuration of the relationship. Learning to love strangers, former lovers, and people who are different from us. So that opens to the possibility of transformation, which you articulated in the beautiful quote from Rumi.

Awareness: *What would you say then, is an alchemy of the soul that allows us to let go into surrender*

and see things differently?

Daphne: The crisis in a relationship is always an opportunity for expansion. If you can stay present and ask the bigger questions, what does this mean to you? What does this evoke for you? Then you can understand something about the other person so you can have intimacy. It opens the frame to allow movement from judging to compassion.

I'll give an example: A friend was always in conflict with her husband. He was constantly judging her because she could never remember anybody's name. They would go out to a party and he would introduce his wife to his boss, secretary, colleagues at work but she could never remember their names the next time they met. The husband castigated her and it became a significant source of conflict. He was angry because of the reflection on him in the business arena. One night when they were home from a party he thought to ask a question. Do you have any idea what this might be about, what this might mean for you? When did you stop remembering people's names?

Then what came out from her was, 'I guess it was when I gave my son up for adoption when I was seventeen years old.' Suddenly, by asking that opening question, the situation changed. Her husband sighed with the weight of the burden she had been carrying and a recognition of, 'oh my God, now I understand. This is about the deepest pain in your life!' He finally realized it wasn't that she was stupid or unwilling, there was another barrier to her remembering. Of course when we get to these moments of alchemy, as you say, something inside us shifts. In this case, the woman began to remember people's names more, because she didn't have to unconsciously repress the pain of not being able to name her own son. These things are endlessly true for us.

It is absolutely amazing how perfectly, organically organized each of our psyches are. It is never that someone is just willful and stupid. There is always some exquisitely connected reason underground if we just have the patience, or the grace, to ask the question. The thing we keep needing to be reminded of, is that every exchange in our life has a deep meaning for us, an emotional meaning that opens to a spiritual possibility, such as compassion and connection.

Awareness: Sometimes people can step up and maintain connection, and bring the quality of compassion. What have you seen that allows people to bring more heart into a situation?

Daphne: What you are pointing to is the ability to allow each of us to let our own heart be broken and see how it opens. We are always defending and pretending about a broken heart. But what we need to do is to surrender into the feeling, into the brokenness, and into the expansion that comes from that broken feeling. When we do, that is when we can look at the other person whose heart has been broken as well, because we all have broken hearts, in many ways. When we can really reside in that, then we can have compassion. When I say reside, I don't mean with bitterness, blaming or victimhood. Just reside and feel the hurt, and know that in loving, we would not want to hurt. It is when we keep denying that we have been hurt, that we end up in judgment of everyone else.

We are living at a moment when the world is aching for compassion. 'We' are and 'they' are. We are being asked to see that in these realms of the spirit and our heart, we are all living, suffering and rejoicing in very similar ways. The farther we look, the wider we open the screen, and we just can't indulge in otherness. When we have moments on a personal level that allow us to be close and share, we can open that screen to realize this is a profound gift of living.

Awareness: A wise woman friend has coined a term for those exquisite times, a 'marriage of the moment.'

Daphne: Yes! I'll give you an example. About two weeks ago, I was attending a concert in New York City. Sitting in the audience, I became engaged in an delightful exchange with a professor and discovered that we both share the same favorite neighborhood spots in Paris! While we were talking, he mentioned an issue in his field of French literature and his description, amazingly enough, provided an answer to a significant puzzle in my own writing. We talked for about twenty minutes, and I don't even know his name. Yet he offered a profound gift, a key that I had been seeking, during the course of an intimate sharing between two beings. It was such an abundant exchange that a woman sitting in front of us turned around and thanked us for the conversation. All were blessed...

As we draw to a close, I would like to return to your question about surrender. It is the time for us to learn how to surrender. The traditional forms of relationship aren't working, and that is for the best, our souls are urging us to expand. Moments such as the one I have described show us soul communication.

It is truly our time to surrender as an opening, to receive and give thanks for all life. This is 'the one' it is time to discover.

Donna Strong's first book, "Coming Home to Calm," will be published later this year. She can be reached through her website: www.donnastrong.com

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