

THE BODY and RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are like the human body: they are either healthy or they are not. In this respect, even a healthy relationship can "catch a cold." If we treat the cold properly, then the relationship returns to its naturally healthy state. If we neglect it, though, it can develop complications and die — the relationship ends. We can expand this analogy and compare relationships to the various parts of the human body.

HEART and BLOOD (Flow of Love)

If the body represents a relationship, then the heart would circulate the blood ("love"), pumping it throughout the system. When you are completely in love, you feel it though your entire body. This makes it the most important organ of the body. Obviously, without the caring energy of love, loving relationships cannot develop. Keeping the blood flowing is essential. Remember too that cholesterol (neglect, materialism, or ego-centeredness) clogs the arteries and cause the system to shut down.

IMMUNE SYSTEM (Health)

Truth is the immune system of a relationship. Once the immune system is compromised, the relationship becomes vulnerable to many diseases. Lies, deceit, and putting material things before your relationship will naturally weaken the system. The antibodies of truth can stave off most infections; so to keep the body strong, prevent the free radicals of deceit from compromising the system.

BRAIN (Communication)

This organ is in charge of communicating and perceiving, along with other functions. It must function properly if we are to have normal social relationships. In intimate unions, it becomes even more significant.

A healthy brain expresses itself *freely and spontaneously*, yet with *common sense*. This implies being both introverted and extroverted at once, which is not an easy task. Here's why.

Introverts have trouble communicating spontaneously. When they eventually say what's on their mind or in their heart, several filters have already processed the information, which clouds the message. Introverts are often careful, and they show common sense. They are more the "thinking" type.

Extroverts, on the other hand, blurt out whatever pops into their head. Because extroverts do not "think" before they talk, they can say things unintentionally that may offend others. This often results in "Foot in Mouth Syndrome," which stamps out the *common sense* part. While some argue that blurting out everything is healthy, this misses two points. First, just because something occurs to you doesn't mean that it is worth saying. In extreme cases — like a person with no "Off" button — the speaker drowns the listeners in an endless stream of small talk. Second, being thoughtless can cause permanent damage to a relationship and is often the source of regret. On the plus side, extroverts are usually gregarious and spontaneous.

A healthy brain requires both common sense and spontaneity. How, though, can a person be introverted and extroverted at the same time?

One way is to *follow your spirit without hesitation*. Some confuse this with "following your thoughts or emotions without hesitation," which is the same as being an extrovert. The spiritual path of "following spirit" requires that you distinguish between the voice of your mind and the voice of your spirit. This is difficult: in advanced metaphysics, it represents the greatest hurdle to spiritual progress. The way to succeed, of course, is to practice. Meditation, yoga, listening to classical music, prayer, or communing with nature can help.

Once the brain becomes balanced, it can be one of most useful tools for developing and maintaining a loving, intimate relationship.

SEX (Union)

Sex, the most intimate and intense expression of love, can be bonding because it imprints one's energy on the other, especially during orgasm. It is the closest two people can be in physical bodies. Symbolically, it represents two being one. In addition, sex is the mechanism through which new life enters the world. Metaphysically, where does new life come from? It flows from the miraculous energy of creation. Sex, then, has the power to summon profound energies.

While Western religions have wrapped sexuality in a thick shroud of guilt and science has reduced it to chemical interactions, Hinduism has recognized its spiritual potential as expressed in tantric yoga. Sex, when used as a vehicle to express love, is pure, organic, natural, and uplifting.

ARMS (Security)

Arms reach out. They are for embracing, for feeling close and wanted, and for furnishing emotional warmth and security.

HANDS (Communion)

Hands denote touch. You can learn much about people not only by how they touch you, but also by the energy that accompanies it. The sensation can be caring or indifferent, peaceful or disturbing, trusting or fearful, gentle or rough. Additionally, we can touch each other physically, mentally, and emotionally. Being aware of how we contact others is an exercise in Zen.

FEET (Grounding)

Feet keep you in touch with reality. When a couple is in touch, they have a greater chance of understanding the challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities that face them. Being "in the clouds" is uplifting, but without the necessary grounding, it leads to misunderstandings and confusion.

THE SENSES (Appreciation, Gratitude)

The senses — seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling — are receptive mechanisms. They provide ways in which we can appreciate and enjoy our partner. Loosely speaking, each sense is a different form of touch. In intimate relationships, our senses delight in touching the one we love.

SOUL

Although the soul isn't a physical part of the human body (it's more of an aspect of consciousness), we can include it in this analogy as representing a person's love. Everyone loves differently, and if we could say love was tangible, each would be as unique as a fingerprint. The many different ways we express love — in gestures and voice — all spring from that same "entity." While the blood represents the expressions of love in this analogy, the soul represents love itself. When we love purely and freely, it is our soul that expresses itself and, as such, is a spiritual act. Like that, we bring a touch of Heaven to Earth.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

When our relationships are healthy, we glow. We are happy. The flow of love makes us radiant and animates us. We dance. If life has blessed us with a loving relationship, we are wise to nurture it and keep it healthy. Health is wealth, and being healthy in this way means we are rich in spirit.