

Relationships and The Fog of Recovery

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There is an old saying that no one gets out of second grade without baggage, and for most of us - addict and non-addict alike - this is true. Life and time take their toll and we tend to hold onto the past, both the good and the bad. And as we age, this baggage tends to increase, not decrease. So, when engaging, or attempting to engage, in a relationship, how much baggage is too much baggage?

Most of us grow up with a Disney World, white picket fence, “they lived happily ever-after” concept of relationships. To the contrary, relationships are not all fun and games, and they don’t revolve around clean-cut black and white issues where everyone is happy. Instead, they require a lot of work involving compromise, compassion and empathy by both sides. Therefore, it is not surprising that in general, the people with the least baggage tend to do the best at maintaining and sustaining long-term relationships.

Personal baggage comes in an infinite variety of styles, from handbag to warehouse sizes. While there is no golden rule, it is obviously easier to be more attentive, flexible and understanding when you have to expend less energy on your past, so that you can be more focused on your present and future. Also, it’s easy to see why people who have similar baggage might have a smoother time being in a relationship together than those who have very dissimilar or even discordant baggage. Surprisingly, those with very little baggage often find it very difficult to get into a relationship, as it is nearly impossible to find another person like themselves who is as free of past encumbrances. Meanwhile, on the other end of the scale, those who have so much baggage that they need a warehouse to store it all almost never engage in successful relationships, as they rarely find their way

out of their own front doors.

In the end, a relationship can only be as successful as the effort - time, energy and love - that you put in to making it work. Left to itself, the high-flying excitement of “love at first sight” will soon dwindle and, unattended, will lead to a downward spiral and crash. Yet, while it is impossible to bring no baggage into any relationship, the more we do bring, the more difficult it becomes to maintain the momentum and vibrance of being intimately involved in another person’s life.

For those struggling with addiction, dealing with our personal baggage is possibly the most challenging aspect of being in recovery, for it is often that very baggage which drove us to drug dependency in the first place. While having past issues does not preclude the possibility of having healthy, long-term companionship, expecting that a relationship will successfully resolve your past almost guarantees both its failure and a further increase in your baggage burden. In turn, repeating this mistake over and over can undermine one’s self-esteem and stability, opening the doorway to the fog of recovery and relapse.

A relationship is like a piano duet: two people playing and making beautiful music together. But to do so, each person must bring similar skill sets to both the keyboard and life, or one will be constantly be overworked trying to compensate for the other. If you find you’re spending more of your time focused on your own past and, therefore, yourself, then it is unlikely you will have sufficient time to pay attention to your partner, as you are bringing too much baggage into the relationship.

The fog of recovery has many entry ways, and while loneliness is one of them, so too are unsuccessful relationships. Given the potential benefits that being with a compatible partner offers us, it is worth taking the time to prepare yourself as best as is possible to make the most of these opportunities, and to get the most out of them, together. So,

before entering into a relationship with anyone else, it is worthwhile to take the time and look at your relationship to you. In doing so, over time you can let go of and lighten your baggage load, so as to free up more of your time, energy and love for that someone special.

Robert offers anonymous and confidential substance abuse recovery telephone coaching to help those who wish to stabilize and maintain their recovery from substance abuse. Recovery coaching with Robert is available worldwide to anyone fluent in English who can reach him at **786-262-5750** (USA). For more information, please visit **<http://trafn.com/coach.html>**