

# UNKNOWN INFLUENCES IN RELATIONSHIPS

You might think everyone wants the same thing in a relationship. You would be mistaken.

You might think that, at least, everyone wants to be loved. Even that “love song” goal of relationships is not the primary desire for everyone. Yes, the initial feelings of infatuation may draw one person to another, but that may not be what they want for a long-term partnership.

# WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN CONTRACTS

Usually, when others speak of a contract, they're referring to a contract for a home, car, or business partnership. You probably wouldn't think of a contract in a relationship or marriage unless you signed a prenuptial agreement.

In relationships, most "contracts" are unwritten. They're based upon assumptions one person has for the relationship. There's nothing wrong with having assumptions of what will happen in your relationship as long as you both know what they are.

**Challenges pop up when relationship assumptions are unknown to the other partner.** Often, the one with the assumptions doesn't even know they have them.

## LET'S LOOK AT SOME COMMON ASSUMPTIONS:

1. **Take care of me like Mom or Dad did.** When you're living at home, you get used to what your parents do for you. People usually expect male partners to care for them like Dad did and female partners to care for them like Mom did.

- This is a subconscious expectation because you are used to what you parents or primary caretakers did. You subconsciously expect it from your partner.
- **When you're not cared for in the way you became accustomed, something seems missing.**
- You may feel that your partner doesn't love you because they didn't have dinner ready for you at a certain time or didn't check all the locks before bed. After all, this is how your parents demonstrated their love.

2. **I'll take care of you like I'm used to.** This one is more complex as it involves how your parents took care of you and each other, as well as how you took care of them or your siblings.

- Your parents model for you how to treat your partner. It doesn't matter if your parents were together your entire childhood. You watch what happens and the behavior is imprinted into your subconscious mind. This is one reason

why those who see a parent abuse the other can become an abuser.

- **If you witnessed behavior between your parents you didn't like, make a conscious decision to be different.** Know how your behavior will be different. See it in your mind and act it out in your relationships.
- **How were you expected to care for your parents and siblings?** This can be on a physical or an emotional level. How you cared for your family members is ingrained in you as a habit.

3. **Show your support for me.** Everyone wants to feel supported by their partner. The challenge comes in the differing views of how support should be shown.

- For example, "If you love me, if you support me, you will always agree with me." However, if support means always agreeing with the other, there will be major challenges in the relationship. No one is going to agree with anyone all the time.

**Unwritten contracts, or assumptions, are in every area of life.** They range from the general to the specific. If you are surprised at another's behavior because you would have done it differently, you've been introduced to one of your assumptions.

## **NOT EVERYTHING IN A RELATIONSHIP IS LEARNED**

Have you heard of the “nature vs nurture” debate? This is the debate between the primary influence upon your life being genetics or being how you were raised. Science generally swings back and forth between the influence of the two.

Scientists are now learning that, on a genetic level, you can have influences from trauma which affected your ancestors back 14 generations.

That seems almost impossible to imagine. Think of it. **If your 12th great-grandparent experienced the loss of a loved one due to violence, the imprint of that trauma can pass down to you.**

You've probably heard someone say, “She's a throwback to a distant ancestor.” The comment is usually made in jest to explain the differences between siblings or cousins.

If you have siblings, you know how different you are from each other. You also have similarities. Moms often talk about how one child is different from the other in the womb.

## **YOU WERE BORN WITH CERTAIN PREFERENCES IN PERSONALITY AND RELATIONSHIP:**

- Introversion/Extroversion
- How much touch you desire
- How you want love shown to you
- How you show love to others
- Your interests
- Your desires
- The colors you like
- The foods you like

You don't have to know where these preferences came from. You only need to know you have them.

# **SUMMARY AND REFLECTION**

Your desires about what you want in a relationship are consciously known and subconsciously hidden. You learn from your family certain ways of relating and caring for people. There are also preferences you have in relationships which are passed down genetically.

The following lessons in this module will focus on specific areas of life which are important for compatibility. A relationship can succeed even if you aren't compatible in all areas. You simply need to accept each other's differences.

Before you start on the next lesson, physical and emotional intimacy, take a few minutes to answer the following reflection questions.

## **HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TODAY**

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. How do I want my significant other to take care of me?

2. How do I want to care for my significant other?
3. How are these wants similar or dissimilar to the family I grew up in?