

UNCOUPLED

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Things to do now:

1. Make a list of the people you value. Use Valentine's Day as an opportunity to tell them so.
2. Make plans for Valentine's Day. Invite one or more friends to do something fun.
3. Focus on what you have—your friends, home, pets, job, achievements, the interests and hobbies you enjoy—rather than what you don't have.
4. Remember that Valentine's Day is only one day out of the year. It's only as important as you make it.

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EXERCISES FOR YOUR MIND

BY DEAN SIDWELL

Beliefs

Our beliefs determine our reality. If your reality is not working for you, then change your beliefs.

Try this exercise: Answer yes or no to the following questions about yourself.

- Do you feel **competitive** in relationships?
- Are you afraid of **emotional intimacy**?
- Do you **distrust** yourself or others?
- Is it easier to **tell lies** than to tell the truth?
- Is it hard for you to communicate your **needs**?
- Do you hide your **authentic self** on dates?
- Do you feel **undeserving** of a relationship?

Look at the boldface words in the questions to which you answered yes. Ask yourself the following questions about the boldface concepts: What do I believe about this? Where did this belief come from? If this belief is outdated, then change it. Write out your new true beliefs. Read them and feel them for 30 days.

Unleash the power of your creative mind

Collect a stack of at least 10 magazines that you can cut up. Allow your creativity, imagination and inner wisdom to create a collage from the images you find. Place in the collage images that represent your authentic self—the real you, your hopes, desires and intentions for living a life filled with bliss.

Once you have glued these images to a medium of paper, wood, glass or anything you like, ask the universe to join you in manifesting this or something better. Hang your self-collage in a place of honor and notice it often, feeling its essence in your soul.

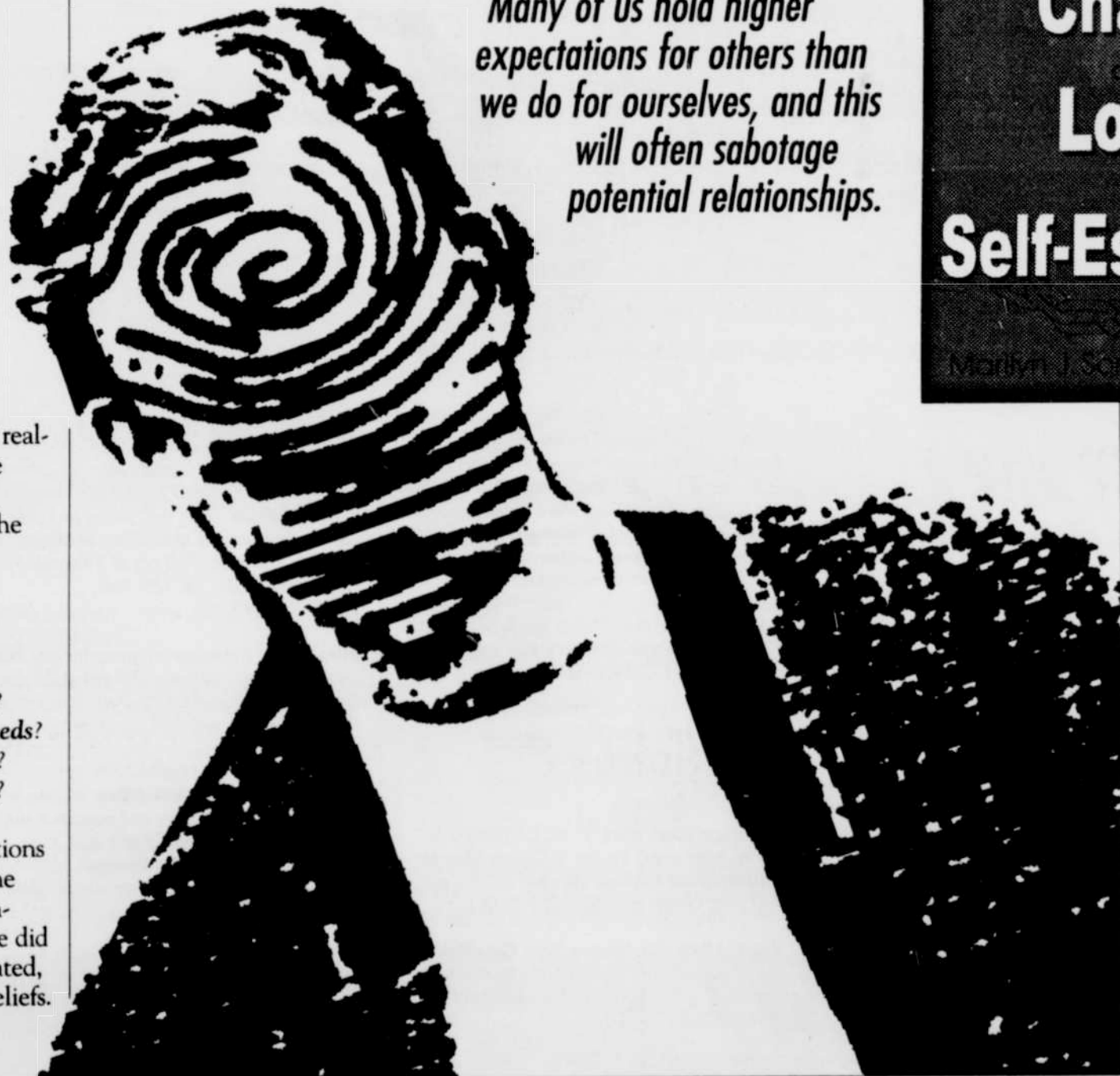
Partner inventory

Make a list of the qualities you want in a partner. Then consider whether you yourself do or do not possess those characteristics.

The qualities you don't possess in yourself are areas you may wish to work on. Many of us hold higher expectations for others than we do for ourselves, and this will often sabotage potential relationships.

■ DEAN SIDWELL, M.S.W., has been a counselor in private practice since 1992. He believes in healing through understanding and removing unconscious barriers, and specializes in the areas of relationships, addictions and childhood traumas. For more information, call (503) 788-9440 or e-mail him at Sidean@pacifier.com.

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RESOURCES

There are literally many hundreds of books on developing self-esteem; below are a few that speak directly to the queer community.

AMAZON SPIRIT: DAILY MEDITATION FOR LESBIANS IN RECOVERY
By Eleanor Nealy. Berkley Publishing Group, 1995.

BREAKING THE CHAIN OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM
By Marilyn J. Sorensen. Wolf Publishing, 1998.

EMPOWERING THE TRIBE: A POSITIVE GUIDE TO GAY AND LESBIAN SELF-ESTEEM
By Richard Pimental-Habib. Kensington Publishing, 1999.

THE GAY & LESBIAN SELF-ESTEEM BOOK: A GUIDE TO LOVING OURSELVES
By Kimeron N. Hardin. New Harbinger Publications, 1999.

LAVENDER REFLECTIONS: QUOTATIONS & AFFIRMATIONS FOR GAY MEN & LESBIANS
By Eleanor R. Wagner. Alamo Square Press, 1995.

Breaking the Chain of Low Self-Esteem

The Gay and Lesbian Self-Esteem Book

A GUIDE TO LOVING OURSELVES



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