



HERS OPINION HIS



Why Do People Stay in Dysfunctional Relationships

..and when is it time to leave the relationship?

By Vickie Hughes

As a young Black woman attempting to answer these questions, I invite you to take a journey through a Black woman's mind and examine a dysfunctional relationship from beginning to end. As we begin our journey I remind you to put yourself in her shoes. First, let us begin with this scenario: This Black woman, we'll call her Sheila, meets a man and the two are instantly attracted to each other. Both are single and decide to spend time with each other in efforts to determine what can develop from these encounters. The first couple months are spent impressing each other with flowers, cards, attention, and quality time. Sheila loves all the attention, but one day the attention she has come to love disappears. When this fantasy ends, true identities surface and it is time for them to get to know each other for who they really are. And now the challenge begins...

As Sheila faces the challenge which is "Can we make this last?", she is searching for ways to fit her partner into her life. After months of juggling her lifestyle and schedule, Sheila discovers that this man simply does not fit yet she continues on with this relationship. At this point, Sheila's relationship has become a dysfunctional relationship. And now I ask you, "Why does Sheila stay in this relationship?" If you cannot answer this question, step away from Sheila for a moment.

In my opinion, again I'm speaking from a Black female's perspective, the first leap toward a dysfunctional relationship begins when people get too comfortable in a relationship and they don't feel it's necessary to give their partner the same attention they gave at the onset of the relationship. I've heard so many women complain about men who wine and dine them when a relationship begins and then when they think they have you, all this attention and affection diminishes. I say to you, brothers and sisters, let's keep love alive. As the singer Christopher Wil-

liams sings, we should "Never Let Our Love Die". Why do we let the good relationships fall apart to become dysfunctional relationships? Being content with the ways we show love may be the solution to avoiding dysfunctional relationships. Open communication and compromise are the key.

Dysfunctional relationships take on many forms. I can list several situations that may be present in these types of relationships:

- one or both individuals are subject to emotional/physical abuse
- one person depends on the other to get them through each day
- the two partners do not share the same goals, lifestyles, or backgrounds
- the partners are not on the same maturity level or do not want the same type of commitment
- one or both people do not communicate

Again the question comes to mind, "Why do we stay in dysfunctional relationships?" I'm sure that we are all guilty of doing this at some point in our lives. I feel that people stay in these relationships because they are afraid of being alone and may want to hold on to their partner until someone better comes along. After reading a recent Essence article that focused on women who have affairs as a result of unhappy marriages, I am strongly convinced that as women stay in dysfunctional relationships because society places so much emphasis on being with someone/having someone. We are supposed to fall in love, get married, and live happily ever after. As a result, we fear being alone because society will examine us and think, "There's something wrong with her".

We must learn to love ourselves. Only then can we realize that being alone, temporarily or permanently, is not so bad. For whatever reasons, it is

not healthy to stay in dysfunctional relationships. I personally would prefer to be happy by myself instead of being miserable with someone else.

If we find ourselves in dysfunctional relationships we must decide when it is time to leave them behind. It is time to leave when our self-esteem, pride, and sanity are at stake. It is time to leave when you find that your life is going in a different direction than your mate's life. By this I mean when your lifestyle is changing, you are moving ahead and striving to achieve your goals and your mate is happy with his/her life the way it is. It is time to leave when you and your mate do not agree on what you want out of the relationship. It is time to leave when the two of you stop communicating. It is time to leave when you are embarrassed or unhappy with your mate. And most importantly, it is time to leave when you have put all of your mate's needs and desires before your own and God's.

Many women feel that they cannot make it without a man. Contrary to popular belief, we are surrounded by many single women, even single mothers, who have made it on their own. Some of these women have gone on to become quite successful. It amazes me when I meet a woman who cannot function without a man in her life. Black women have been strong people ever since our race came into existence. Learning to be strong and independent builds character.

Do not become Sheila. If you find yourself in a dysfunctional relationship, challenge yourself and build up the courage to leave. Evaluate your life and strengthen your self-esteem. Don't make excuses as to why you shouldn't leave your mate. Instead, think of all the reasons why you must leave your mate. Let go of your relationship and go on with your life. The right person will come along one day. Plunge forward and don't look back.

By Ulysses Tucker Jr.

"...an assertive method of ending a relationship does not include sarcasm, degradation, humiliation, or blaming self or others. If you decided to leave an unhappy relationship and be firm, there are no guarantees that your partner won't harbor hostile or depressed feelings about the change."

Mary Ann Klausner
Bobbie Hasselbring
Author, *Aching For Love*

Recently I ran into an old friend at the Safeway, who I had not seen in over six years. She was recently divorced and very happy. In her marriage of five years, my friend was psychologically and physically abused by her husband. I thought it was none of my business, I asked her why she endured the situation for so long and to say the least, I was shocked at her answer. My friend said that for a very long time she did not realize how he was abusing her. Is that possible? As we talked more, I learned that her father had (and still does) physically and psychologically abused her mother for years. My friend accepted the abuse from her husband because it seemed like normal behavior to her. Her parents have been married for 27 years and "mother" never thought about leaving, so why should she? My friend, basically, grew up with an attitude that accepted abuse.

Thank god for her sisters suggestion to get help. No one should be subjected to any type of physical or psychological abuse, be it in marriage or a relationship.

Many people find it difficult to end or leave a relationship. I'm most confident that we all know family members and friends in dysfunctional relationships. Why is it so difficult to leave a re-

lationship for some people? If you reflect on it for a moment, we leave relationships all the time and it is a rather simple process in my opinion. Just think what it would be like to still have all of your old relationships still hanging around you? We leave all the time...

A separation, divorce, or termination of a relationship or a union does not mean that someone has failed or should be blamed for what went wrong. People change and grow apart from each other. You are not the same person, at thirty, that you were at age twenty. I've definitely changed and matured over the years, believe me. In the process, I have found and lost love. I've done wrong by people and people have done wrong by me. I've left relationships and people have left me for one reason or another. No one is perfect or immune from this phenomenon. As a human, only you can determine whether your current relationships or marriage is serving the purpose or conclude whether it is good or bad for you. I've always said that if it does not involve another person, via infidelity, people or couples should be able to work out a positive solution through their church or seek professional help--that if it means that much to the parties involved.

People make all types of excuses for not leaving unhealthy or dysfunctional relationship. Excuses like not wanting to be alone, fear of not finding another mate, the kids, economics, good sex, and a host of other reasons. Are you in a dysfunctional relationship or marriage? Are you happy or are you just tolerating the situation? Does your mate consistently violate the principles of your relationship or marriage? Is there constant justification for criticism, public humiliation, lying, disrespect or unwillingness to adequately communicate

and do what is necessary to make the encounter functional? Sometimes, people act strangely or fail to cooperate because they do not want to be the first to leave the relationship. In the process, they withhold communications, love, sex, intimacy, and basically act like jerks.

Have you made a serious effort to make the relationship or marriage work? If you have made an honest attempt to make it work and find yourself still in a "dead end" then leave.

Everyone deserves to be happy. No one should deprive you of that right. In closing, could you have a relationship with yourself? Chances are if you realize that you would be a hard person to date-- it would definitely be hard for someone else to endure you. People should realize that it is them (sometimes) or their destructive personality, not the other person, that doomed the relationship. If your relationships end consistently in the same pattern, it might be time for self-re-evaluation or for some help. If you do not like yourself, how can someone else like you?

In this day and age of moral decay, racism, career competition, declining values, and general despair--the last thing a person should want is tension or friction from the person they love the most. Granted, relationships are not easy and good relationships have to be worked on.

You want someone to be understanding, loving, supportive of your dreams/goals, respectful of your wishes and more importantly, you want a good listener. You deserve these elements. So does the person in your life. If you are not getting the love you want and deserve, it is my advice that you seek other options. You do not need anyone else to be unhappy or to do bad, it is so easy to do that alone.

Schools: Education or Social Services

By Matthew Prophet

Part I of a Two-Part Series

News reports of the Portland Board of Education's final budget balancing for next year prompted several responses from the community.

Some were very positive and laudatory about the openness of the process, the extensive citizen involvement and the clear directions provided by the school board's goals and objectives. Disconcerting, however, were the more negative statements--the complaints about spending on "social needs."

"Social needs" are important. The world continues to change rapidly and today's generation of children is seeing, feeling and facing things on a scale not even imagined by most adults.

Legal requirements have multiplied a hundred-fold in the past 25 years. And we are greatly reforming our efforts in Portland Public Schools and inviting everyone to join us--to become our partner, to work with us--within the plan we have outlined as we reach for new possibilities for our children.

A CHANGING WORLD
"Why can't things be the way they used to be?"

For the most of this century, the "basics" have been more than reading, writing and arithmetic. Reading is at least English literature, study of the classics, comparative literature. Writing must focus on theme development, expository essays, composition and structure. Arithmetic must include algebra, trigonometry and advanced calculus.

And we do teach science--biology, physics, geology and anatomy--plus a number of other academic courses. Think of what has happened in the world in just the past 50 years: World War II, Korea, Vietnam; U.S. involvements in Central America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East; world communism, coexistence, detente, perestroika; the erection and demolition of the Berlin Wall, democracy breaking

out in Iron Curtain countries; assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King Jr.; Watergate, Irangate; brown-outs, acid rain, ozone-layer holes, Brazilian rain-forest depletion; supersonic jets, high tech, television, computers, microcomputers, lap-top computers, lasers; atomic weapons, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Three-Mile Island, Chernobyl; marijuana, LSD, speed, heroin, cocaine, crack, ice; Bloods, Crips, Asian gangs, Aryan Youth.

In 1955 fully 60 percent of United States households included a working father, a housewife-mother and two or more school-aged children. By 1985, that "typical" family represented only seven percent of America's households. Households of two working parents or single parents make it impossible for many parents to be as involved as they should be--indeed as most would like to be--in caring for their children and supporting their schooling.

We cannot underestimate the negative influences of youths watching television for many too many hours, of unsupervised activities, of drug and alcohol abuse, of teen pregnancy, of poverty and child abuse.

Our children live a more rapidly changing and very different world than experienced by today's adults.

In the increasingly complex, fast-paced, intricately interwoven ethos of our city, who will take care of the young? Can schools provide education while ignoring the social erosions that have and are taking place?

Can children concentrate on gaining an education when they have no homes to return to at night, are painfully hungry and have emotionally absent parents? Can we expect uniform success by students who live in neglected and unsafe neighborhoods?

Society clearly has made schools the basic institutional structure for meeting

most of the needs of children. We cannot turn our heads, cannot blink it away. Required and Transferred Responsibilities

Just as our children's world has changed, the events I noted have also changed public education. We have been pushed from a simple Three-Rs approach to giving attention to equal access to all students regardless of race, economic level, handicap or ability.

As we have approached equal access, the focus has changed to trying to provide equal outcomes. That means we are now seeking more equity in the results of education and what is learned by all children of all races and social classes.

More than 90 percent of today's adult population attended public schools. The world prominence America now holds in fields such as space technology, science, business, medicine, electronics, worldwide communications and even sports is due largely to the work and achievements of graduates of public schools.

Many of us are worried that we may lose that prominence. Besides expanding the Three-Rs, what are the schools doing?

Because the world continues to change rapidly--and because schools are the identified institution for meeting the needs of children--the schools provide breakfast and lunch to many students, regularly check their hearing, vision and teeth and instruct them in hygiene and nutrition.

Schools carry the main burden for integrating neighborhoods and providing recreation. Schools teach safe driving habits and help students learn convincing arguments against the abuse of drugs. Schools counsel the upset, encourage the listless, search for the absent, provide for the uninterested, motivate the lackadaisical and challenge the gifted. (continued next week)

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