

These are the states of mind and being that touch glittering stars. All of us — not just you — are programmed to feel unhappy. That's what D.H. Lawrence was protesting. All of us are made to feel guilty for feeling happy, because we are taught to dislike ourselves, to hate our creative energies and the emergence of our authentic individuality. Sometimes this teaching happens in dysfunctional families; at other times in the culture at large — churches, schools, friends, acquaintances — but it happens.

That's why it takes such courage to break free, to do just as you did the other night — stand up in high heels to the full height of your gorgeous stature, let the woman-scent awaken in your body, smile your beautiful smile, let sex and love and happiness flow in light-beams from your eyes — let that genuine, full-out womanhood breathe and smile and sigh with pride and excitement and spontaneous joy. Wonderful! Good for you! I think there is nothing more breath taking than a splendidly tall woman in full glory, regal, alive and luminous with vibrant, life-affirming energy. That's you! That way of feeling is who you are!

LI Time/Distance/Youth/and Love

Indeed, lovely one, you are a muse to musicians, writers, and artists. You are also a writer, a siren-singer, a poet in your own right. Being in love — with sunlight, with moonlight, with flowers dancing in the rain, a bird floating on the wind, a book you are reading, a man who desires you — being in love in every way gives energy, laughter, tears, joy and juice to life. Am I right? You know I am. ☺

I understand how you feel about time, distance, partiality

Time moves so slowly when winter skies never seem to clear, or the cold never seems to quite go away. When is the sun going to shine brightly enough to give heat and sex back to life again! Spring seems to take forever. Ah, yes, the waiting is the hardest part, somebody once said. And I know how it feels.

And the distance between one's hopes and imagined trysts seems so great. How can one possibly fly like a bird to the happy embrace of a friend, or the open arms of a lover? And which smile to respond to? Everything is partial — a beautiful smile and a sexy gleam in the eye, but sometimes a bad temper, or a problem with money, or so much depression that it drains one's light and energy without ever moving into laughter.

But I hope you remember that although you have so many people in your mind, that does not mean you will automatically make the wrong choice. Unless, of course, you want to — sometimes the wrong choice makes for the greatest intensity and the most excitement. And why not? You are young and gorgeous. You have time. Joy and heartache inspire magnificent poetry! The honeybee sips from more than one wild flower. Youth, beauty and time are endless when you are young and able to recover quickly. In a way, there are no wrong choices — all choices offer excitement, however momentary — and all choices help you learn who *you* are. How sweet the yearning, how sweet the touch, and how bitterly sweet the parting — and then, once more, how sweet the new yearning and how sweet the new touch.

As for youth and age, ah, yes, how natural it is for you to want and need a young man. Even if a young man has yet to learn a few things, he is vibrant, strong, and good looking. An older man may not look as good, and he may be worn down somewhat from the trials and tribulations he has experienced over many years, but if he has learned well, then, when the lights go out and the passion surges, age disappears. He will know how to take his time, how to touch you gently yet firmly in all the sweet places you need to be touched, how to create a singing bridge between your heart and his, how to enable both of you to relax into each other, merge into each other, and how to bring you both to the heights of ecstasy and

Once again, no guilt, no blame, no shame. Go for it. Enjoy it all. Every which way is good!

SL **The Fear of Love and Pain**

I know one of the great fears involved with love is the fear of pain. And I know, too, the thought that love *equals* pain. It's rather like the fear of success — suppose I am successful (at whatever I'm contemplating — work, love, friendship). Is my sense of fearful inadequacy debilitating, or do I have strength enough to bear up under the responsibilities? And what about other peoples' envy? If I am successful, will they hate me?

And even *thinking* about love brings up the fear of loss, pain, mental slavery, just as thinking about success brings up doubt, hesitation, the fear of being ridiculed or of making an ass out of myself.

Maybe I should just withdraw and hide and remain completely dependent, do what others tell me to, maintain the status quo and not rock the boat. And so it goes with such thoughts, assumptions, and conditionings: because of our fear of love, it becomes difficult to reach out or to open up and receive.

But you are discovering that when you love and are open and vulnerable and receptive and giving, the response is *not* always condemnatory the way your parents' responses were. Sometimes, the other person feels confident enough to open up to you too; sometimes, your love creates the conditions for the other to shed his or her fears and open up and love in return.

You are right, of course, that passion in any form is nearly always better than inner numbness. But love in and of itself does NOT automatically equal pain or loss or humiliation. To the contrary, your kindness, lovingness and understanding for the other, often enables the other to come alive, transcend fear, and grow and flourish — even as your plants are flourishing in the newly cleaned up greenhouse and so are all the now-thriving wild birds, lizards, yellow king cups and other plants and wild creatures in and around your lovely pond. It's not only the environment they are responding to. They are also responding to *you*.

There is so much to learn from nature, isn't there? So often, we fear other people to the point where we hide inside and remain unavailable. That, of course, makes others feel nervous, or even afraid, so they too close off and hide. We may think they are afraid of us; but maybe it is we who are afraid of them, and our fears cause them to back away. And when one opens up like a new spring rose, and smiles, and offers sympathy, understanding, good cheer, and personal availability, well look there! — before very long, others feel free to be themselves too. Before, they were fearful and withdrawn; now, they are progressively more open and responsive, relaxed and communicative.

And so the question emerges, Are others afraid of me? Or is it I who am afraid of them? And if it's a little bit of both, can I learn and practice how to be as open and giving and relaxed with others as I am with my plants and birds and other furry/feathered friends?

I think so, m'dear, I think so indeed — and you are doing it!

CS The Dancer Did the Right Thing

A dancer and I were deeply in love, but I was drinking too much and causing havoc in her life, draining her energy and disturbing her focus. Although I loved her, I didn't treat her right, because I was afraid of love, commitment, getting in too deep. I kept pushing her away, sort of forcing her to come on to me, which reassured me that she loved me, and I was safe. I thought I didn't have to worry about being rejected or dominated or hurt as long as I kept her loving and needing me more than I loved her.

She loved me deeply and passionately, but warned me that her dancing was suffering; she had only a few years in which to fulfill her dream; if I wouldn't sober up and get myself together, she would be forced to leave. I ignored her warnings. She ran out of patience and energy — and left me. I suffered the worst broken heart in my life. I could not remotely conceive of ever loving anybody else that way or that much again. In fact, I didn't think I could ever love anybody at all.

It took several years before I could see and understand that she did precisely the right thing, not only for her, but for me. She continued her dancing and a couple of years later met and married a sober, intelligent, hard-working musician who made lots of money (bass trombonist for Doc Severinsen's Johnny Carson Tonight Show band). As far as I know, she is still with him.

As time went on for me, and new life and new relationships flowered and faded away, I was forced to recognize the fact that my lost love would never disappear. Her presence would always be a part of me. Even as the years passed and details faded, the pain of her loss remained. It took many years to realize— and accept the fact — that this was a permanent heartache. What could I do, or say to myself, that would assuage this pain? In a grocery store, the checkout woman's brown eyes were her eyes. In the aisles, a woman's black hair was the cut and shape of her hair. In a passing customer, the smile, the lips and teeth were hers. Everywhere, I saw flashes of her breasts, her shoulders, her honey-colored skin. How could I cope with it? I tried to kill the memory. But even as I died, she lived the more. I have never forgotten my dancer. In fact, she still shows up in my dreams.

But for both of us she did the right thing. Her leaving put me on the path of sobriety. The pain of loss brought me to a place in which I could discover and embrace my authentic self. The heartbreak cracked the inner shell that had prevented me from loving her unselfishly, and, over the course of time, new light poured in. I also learned there are no two loves the same; no love can ever be repeated; each love is unique and precious; wherever we are in the world — California, Tokyo, Paris, Kamloops — we always heal and we can always find love — and every love is absolutely perfect in its time and place.

Even as each individual is already unique (the exploratory journey serves primarily to help us come to realize — and accept and celebrate — the inherent uniqueness that is already ours), so every love relationship is unique and perfect-as-it-is, never to be duplicated. After heartbreak, the pain and anger nearly kill us in the early going. But slowly and naturally, the wound heals over, a scar forms on the psyche and in the heart, and we are able to go on, and eventually flourish.

Several years after my dancer, when I was ready to settle down and make a commitment to one person, I met Sonia, who is four years older than I, divorced with three children — and we have been together ever since — over 30 years. If we had met earlier, no way we would have gotten together — she with her kids, me with a broken heart and my bottle and a wandering eye. But when we eventually met, the time in Sonia's life was right. The time in my life was right. And here she and I are today, gettin' it on better than ever!

SL Mindsex, Friendsex, Lovesex

. . . . The brain is the most sensual organ of all, and the mind is its messenger. Already you know how to awaken your thoughts and images and let them rush over

and through you. Your bodyflames follow your mind's lead and do the rest. When a word or an image or a sound sparks your loins, you're alive again. Mindsex is a blessing, is it not?

Some of the most thrilling, adventurous, titillating sensual delights you can ever have come through self-pleasuring. Solitude and one's own thoughts and needs are a boon to humankind. The mind in sexual ecstasy is one of life's greatest gifts. There is nothing else like it. Never should it be condemned. It is one of many ways to satisfy sexual urges, and nothing can take its place. It is its own domain and should be treasured and celebrated.

There are other ways, of course, including lovesex. It is "more" than mindsex, because in lovesex, there are two participating, and through their sexual dance, the two become one. But that unity does not always happen. Just because two people are having sex, that does not automatically lead to ecstasy. Unity is sometimes difficult to achieve.

Perhaps two people are together, and wish they were able to disappear in love, but the love is not there. Or the love is there, but the couple may have been together for many years and mystery has dissolved into routine. Or one or the other is shy and feeling self-conscious in that particular moment, and in that way the mind with its thoughts and images proves to be a barrier.

Love alone is not a guarantee of good sex. In the domain of sex, there are no guarantees, only possibilities, some of which fulfill themselves sometimes, but not always, and some of which never fulfill themselves except through one's own dreams and the sleek, smooth touch of one's own hand.

On other occasions, one can be with a friend, or perhaps a sexy stranger, and disappear in sex so completely that the ecstasy is overwhelming — you totally vanish into one another, moving body to body, emotion to emotion, skin to skin with such harmonious attunement that you egoically slip and slide into waves upon

waves of bliss. This kind of sex may even pass for love, because it seems so complete. But later, one may realize, hey, that was great sex, but, no, I cannot call it love. Nor is there any reason to. It was a profound pleasure in its own right, and asks for nothing more. It was like getting high — it comes, it goes. Done.

Or, as sometimes happens, friendsex may eventually turn into love. Who knows?

In any case, in spite of what Puritans may proclaim, love is not a prerequisite for intense sex. With a friend or a stranger, one might lose one's mind completely and disappear into the other, and through this kind of bodymusic transcend words, judgments, and all the rest — and that is okay. No need to validate it outside of its own context; no need to force a link with love or procreation. (In fact, in the East, sexuality became a source of spiritual ascendance in its own right — hence, Tantric sex gave birth to meditation. As Osho once put it in a title to one of his books: *From Sex to Superconsciousness*.)

SL Male/Female: Everything In Your Dream Is You

. . . . As for night dreams and day dreams, remember that everything in your dream is you. There is no "other." Each person, each gesture, each object is you. When your dreams involve sex, you are participating in your own beautiful energies.

Although we have taboos against homosexuality in our mainstream culture, and therefore feel guilty or anxious about homosexual dreams, men and women are by nature both. We are men. We are women. We are born of male and female and carry both temperaments within us. Unfortunately, society, in a distorted vision of "morality," endorses only heterosexuality. That only creates hypocrisy, of course, because everyone occasionally has same-sex dreams, although hardly anybody admits it.

A same-sex dream doesn't mean one is gay or lesbian. It means the woman side of you is connecting with the woman side. Since that conduct is condemned socially, a natural desire to touch a woman or make love to the image of yourself, either in dream or real life, is suppressed. It may emerge in a dream, as it did for you, but that in no way means you're "a lesbian."

Apparently, one's fundamental sexual orientation, homosexual or heterosexual, is pretty much biologically determined. However, the more one is open to the totality of one's own sexuality, the more s/he recognizes the attraction of possible same-sex encounters. Interestingly enough, in the culture at large, women tend to be much more flexible, open, adventurous, and delightfully amoral in this domain, than men. Most men have so deeply repressed their feminine side that they get crazy if to a straight man you suggest even a hint of homosexual attraction. What a shame.

(Just watch how men squirm if the subject comes up in conversation. Total, absolute denial! No way! they say. Even the thought scares the hell out of them, because the mere notion of homosexual feelings is a huge threat to a man — what, me? Never! That one-dimensional machismo thing is nothing more than a prison cell built out of ignorance, fear, and, more often than not, stupidity.)

I thought Anis Nin's observation was terrific when she said, "The day that woman admits what we call her masculine qualities, and man admits his so-called feminine qualities, will mean that we admit we are androgynous, that we have many personalities, many sides to fulfill. A woman can be courageous, can be adventurous, she can be all these things. And this new woman who is coming up is very inspiring, very wonderful. And I love her."

Happy to say, I have explored my sexuality thoroughly. I don't mean *all* sexuality, simply my own. Whatever I have fantasized, I have explored, thereby finding out who I am — and who I am not. Questions bothered me until I checked them out. Am I this? Am I that? Is it just a whim, a vivid fantasy, or is it really me? Am I

denying who I truly am? So I investigated (which requires not only curiosity, but daring — overcoming your own inhibitions, taboos, self-image, etc). I explored. I dared to try things out. That liberated me from the grip of fantasies, enabled me to learn who I am and am not, and awakened me to the many levels of sexuality that all of us have as human beings.

As a result, I don't feel uncomfortable when meeting a homosexual any more than I feel uncomfortable meeting a heterosexual. And when various things happen in dreams, I recognize them as images of my own many selves and I smile, enjoying them all and not panicking, simply because I now know who I am.

In a word, relax. In another word, enjoy!

TC Need and Love

. . . .It is not always easy to understand the difference between loneliness and love. Sometimes that lonely yearning feels like love, but it may not be. It may be a serious case of loneliness and need. Love is different; it's a matter of giving, not taking; of understanding and cherishing, not demanding; of wanting to make her happy, not just keeping her around to make you happy. So, the physical distance between the two of you right now gives you a great opportunity to feel things in a more detached light, examine them, sort out what's what, and come to a greater understanding of who and what you are, what she is, and what the relationship is.

Seems to me that your regrets about those arguments and the things you said and the language you used have helped you know yourself and her better. The empathy that has awakened in you, about how it must have felt to be on the receiving end of your emotionally abusive anger, speaks well of you and your on-going maturation. And your recognition of how she came to the gigs, did the flyers, took care of you

after the gigs, cooked for you, didn't make demands about marriage, and how well she understood and appreciated you, has made you much more understanding about what a good thing you had and she had too. It may not be emotionally easy sorting these things about, but it can certainly be beneficial.

However and whichever way things go, it will be the best for both of you.

JC Love, Need, Dependence, Freedom

. . . . When you got married ten years ago, you were nineteen and she was the same age, thereabouts. You were both very young and you both felt you were in love. Areas of agreement were strong. The two of you were happy, compatible, hopeful, and creating a future together.

During the course of these ten years, both of you have changed radically. For you, what you once thought of as love has become a painful sense of need. You feel today's chasm intensely; you cannot bear to be without her; if she leaves, as she apparently needs and intends to because of your serious religious differences, you will feel abandoned. Indeed, you already feel the fear that you cannot keep your life intact without her. Even as you once depended upon your addictions for strength, then turned to Christ and depended upon Him to give you strength enough to stand tall without the addictions, so now you face the prospect that you will fall apart if your wife leaves. This is not really love, you know. This is need — the need for addictive substances and activities, the need for a savior, and the need for your wife are very much the same, are they not?

All rest on the notion that you yourself are not an identity, a mature and fully developed person who can cope with life without some substance or belief or divinity outside of yourself to help you make it through the night. The very prospect

of her departure leaves you feeling bereft, lost, dependent, and more or less unable to cope. Apparently you would rather have her stay with you in an unhappy relationship, than face the future without her.

No question, that your post-9/11 Christian orientation helped you face the trauma of the bombing with a sense of strength. Beliefs can do that. They give one comfort, solace, a sense that one is not alone, a sense that a person, a spirit, a God, or a savior exists, cares for you personally, and will not only be by your side in daily life, but will give you eternal egoic duration in an afterlife.

Such beliefs do not, however, help you develop into a self-reliant, autonomous, psychologically independent, fully mature human being. If one needs a god or a savior in order to face life and himself with strength, then one forever remains dependent. Take away the consoling drug, the savior, the god, or the person upon whom one is dependent, and one feels he simply cannot go on. The dependence needs can be suppressed by beliefs and their consolations, but those needs and the doubts that go with them remain in the psyche's basement, still active, ready to rear their heads at a moment's notice. Take away the substance, the beliefs, or the person (such as your wife), and those doubts, fears, and deep needs reassert themselves. With the beliefs, one does not and cannot grow psychologically. One remains dependent. Without them, one gives oneself the opportunity to become self-reliant, autonomous, and psychologically mature.

If you face these insights squarely and without flinching, there are ways to view them that can help you find your way forward into a new life, a new way of being with yourself, a new way of living and thinking that can open new doors into a future in which you can be happy, independent, self-reliant, productive and full of light, love, happiness, and creativity.

You are not the person you once were. One chapter in your life appears to be concluding. Loss of love or the death of a loved one feel very much alike. There is a period of grieving. It's painful. But one passes through it. The process is not artificial. It is natural. (It is also a great time to play and compose music. Every painful loss can generate incredible creative energy. Nearly all of the pop songs on today's charts are about love in process or love lost. Transmute pain into art. You're a musician. Put it in a song; you can't go wrong.)

Between yesterday's chapter in which love was fulfilled and thereby completed, and the opening of a new chapter in which a new life offers new as-yet-unknown possibilities, one comes to see and understand what happened. Surveying the situation, one also sees that the urge to remain together and have things be like they were a long time ago may not be possible, because you and she are now two different people. Yesterday, you were compatible. Today, you may have already embarked upon separate roads. As soon as you see this clearly, you feel the pain. That pain may feel as if it is forever, but it is not. You pass through it over time, and ultimately come to accept the reality of the situation.

If this scenario proves to be the case — you suggested that it may still be an open question — if it proves to be the case, then is it possible for each of you to bless each other with love and compassion in your hearts? Is it possible to hold each other in a gentle farewell embrace that honors the beautiful youthful life you once shared? Is it possible to honor and respect the love you felt for each other then, and can still feel for each other in your heart, as you venture forth into the new life that appears to be emerging as if on its own?

You and she are still very young. Thousands of young people find themselves in the same position. They married when they were in their teens or twenties; they grew in different directions over the years; they parted ways; they passed through the grieving period and accepted the fulfillment and conclusion of the relationship.

They are now thirty-something and back out in the world, seeking new partners who are compatible, not with the person they used to be, but with the person they are now.

The thirties are fabulous years, potentially full of adventure, excitement and creativity. People are exploring, meeting new people in their churches, in their synagogues, in the workplace, out walking their dogs, in clubs, in stores, offices, restaurants and other places in every big city or small town. You have a job, and you have skills enough to move to a new place and get a new job. You have experience in sex, music, computers. You would be a perfect partner for someone who feels and thinks the way you do today.

In a new-life chapter, you do not have to give anything up in order to be with a new person. If you met a woman in your church, for example, she would probably share the same faith, beliefs, philosophy, and value-orientation that you have. So the religion issue would not be a problem. . . .

I recognize that orthodox religious faith and the beliefs that go with them can indeed give people a strength they feel they cannot get on their own in psycho-spiritually healthy ways. In this instance, I put myself in the "whatever works" camp. If Christian beliefs help you personally, wonderful.

The goal is to find a mate who feels the same way. In that situation, religion does not divide. It helps both parties move ahead together. Religion becomes a problem only when it creates wars between individuals or between whole nations, as it did for you and your wife and has done and continues to do for millions of other people over the course of centuries all over the world.

There are certain processes in life that have a life of their own. Don't resist the river's flow. See clearly what that flow is, attune yourself to it, and go with it. Relax.

Processes will sort themselves out. Either it is possible to stay together with your wife and be happy, or it is not. Everything will make itself clear as it unfolds. Whatever transpires will be the only thing that is possible, and it will be the right thing, because it will be in accord with reality.

If we look through only one open door, and that is the only door we can see, then we weep and gnash our teeth if and when that door closes. But if we look around and see all the other doors that are opening, we give ourselves the power of choice. Once perceived and embraced, that power can be exhilarating and beneficial.

There is always more than one way to go. There are always options. Every moment is new. Nothing is determined. You are free, there is nothing deciding your fate for you, and you can choose.

All the very best to you and your wife.

I know things will work out well.

Thank you for being honest and open with me.

I hope some of the things I have said will prove helpful —

With highest regards,

L

DS After 30+ years: Married

I moved in with Sonia on August 3, 1975, and we have been together ever since. We did not get married back then, because we had each been burned a bit by a previous marriage; I was not yet the most stable of fellows; and because we did not want

either the church or the state to have a hand in our love life. So we simply lived together, quietly affirming our freedom and renewing our love each day.

However, this last August 3, after being together more than 30 years, we did the deed. We got married. Yikes!

We did it out of love, yes, but also because we are getting older. At the beginning, we were younger, and wanted nothing to do with church and state and their interference. We still want nothing to do with the church, but if either one of us dies, the state would interfere with legalities. So now, getting married will help us cope with legal matters, if and when that becomes necessary. So we got married.

We invited the folks we know in Oakhurst over to our house, about 35 people, and packed them into the living room, most of them standing. A Native American woman friend of ours did a beautiful ceremony, after which we had a pot luck party, with everybody either sitting at the great round oak table, or spilling out onto the back porch overlooking the stream, sitting at the picnic table, or in our many folding chairs. Inside, outside, food, wine, music, laughter, conversation.

What an easy, fun-filled, joyous occasion. Everything went off without a hitch. Another great time in our lives!

(And see? — Love *can* last. Ain't it great? ☺)