

Please Try This at Home

Tips for Increasing the Joy in Your Life

From Pedestals to Mosaics

We've all met the Rights: Mr. Right who is going to love us like we've never been loved; Ms. Right, finally the ultimate friend, brother, or sister; Dr. Right who will stand in for the parent/grandparent/mentor we never had; CEO Right who waltzes in to save the company; Rev. Right who will lead us to spiritual heights we've never glimpsed.

And then, what happens? A bit of scandal surfaces. The pedestal we placed them on starts to wobble. We notice that they perform poorly in certain areas. They just don't seem as excited to see us anymore. Pretty soon, they topple right off of that pedestal and we have to admit that they weren't so Right after all. But next time, we promise ourselves, we'll see through the façade that fooled us before. The next person will have to be even more amazing to climb the even taller pedestal we have erected in our minds.

So we meet the next Right, who succeeds in the ways the last one failed...at first. But pretty soon the new Right falls off the pedestal too, joining the shattered fragments on the floor of all those we had hoped would save the day.

Why do we keep putting people on the pedestals of our huge expectations, only to watch them fall off and disappoint us? Well, for starters, we've all been hurt by relationships. Some of us have some bumps and bruises and others of us are missing emotional limbs from the wrongs that have been done to us. Since it hurts so much to be missed, neglected, undervalued, let down, abused—you name it—we keep looking for someone who can meet us in those same places that we've been hurt, and then treat us differently right in that spot so we can get healed of our old hurts and feel whole again.

The problem is that every time we try to get another Right person to heal our old wounds and then that person fails, the original hurt deepens. Now, we've not only been disappointed by the failure of a person we originally trusted, but also by the many failures of those we hoped would save us afterwards. Some of us have been hurt so often in the same old ways that we have retreated into a hardened cynicism about people's ability to meet our needs at all. We'd rather throw out all hope for intimacy and keep things shallow and safe than hold on to hope that would let us be hurt again. Unfortunately, cynicism and withdrawal from others don't actually work. They numb us a bit, but the hurt still hangs out underneath, moldy and seething, stealing our ability to have abundant joy.

So what else can we do? What alternative is there to the pedestal-to-fragments approach to getting our relational needs met?

Wholly Mosaics, Batman!

We might begin by admitting to ourselves that there is a shocking lack of pedestal-worthy statues around us. Michelangelo's David-type people are pretty rare, maybe even non-existent. But there are quite a few Venus de Milo's who have some good things about them, though they

are missing an arm or two. There's no shortage of sphinxes who are essentially stable and fine, with the exception of the missing nose. All around us are fragmented people, who, despite their deformities, retain some goodness and are sometimes capable of meeting a few, though not all, of our needs. As long as we don't put these broken statues atop the pedestals of our ever-increasing, impossible expectations, we can delight in what they do have to offer.

Essentially, I am proposing that we change our art form of choice from single statues to mosaics. Since we are surrounded by fragmented people, rather than whole ones, we may have to take another look at the folks around us and see which of our needs they *can* meet, rather than being irate about the needs they fail to meet. If we are surrounded by enough fragmented people, we can place the good parts of them side by side into our vacant, wounded places to help get our needs met bit by bit, rather than hanging our hopes on one person who initially seems to have it all together. We may not ever feel completely whole, but getting some of our needs met is still a good thing.

5 Ways to Craft Your Need-Meeting Mosaic

To begin the process of letting the many broken people around you come together meet your needs, rather than holding out for the alien invasion of the Rights:

1. Make a list of the people in your life who meet some of your needs right now. Ask yourself which of your physical, emotional, and spiritual needs these people meet for you and which remain unmet. Don't forget that needs include all kinds of things: activities, learning, touch, talk time, challenge or confrontation, help around the house, provisions, insight, food, etc.
2. Ask yourself if the current people in your life might be capable of meeting more of your needs if you were to ask them for help more specifically. Often, we overlook the strengths of our friends because we are so aware of their failures, or because we are afraid of what it would mean for us if we asked and they said no.
3. Take a few small risks with the people you know already, specifically asking them for some of the things that you need. If possible, see if you can diversify your requests so you aren't overloading one non-perfect person.
4. When people you rely on fail, make note of it, but don't throw the person out of your life if there is still some good there. See if you can lower your expectations for that person and focus in on the needs that person can still meet for you.
5. Identify the needs you have that simply can't be met by people currently in your life, whether you ask them for more or not. Think about a variety of settings where you might meet other people who could meet those needs. See if you can add need-meeting people or activities to your life a little a time, increasing the number of needs that you can get met without overwhelming yourself with new activities.

If you or someone you know would like some help with getting relational needs met, *call me at 303-931-4284 for a free 20-minute consultation or email info@jenniferdiebel.com.*

Baby Steps toward Getting Help

Some of you out there may have people in your life who you *know* need counseling. But let's be realistic, shall we? It's *hard* to get help. Change itself is hard and admitting that we need help to change requires a combination of humility and courage that many of us just aren't ready to

muster. So often, when people are thinking about getting help, they need to borrow the old *What About Bob?* concept of “baby steps”—one step at a time to get more and more comfortable with the idea of getting help.

Typically, people need to form relationships gradually to be able to trust helpers. Things need to feel as safe and predictable as possible because change is scary! So the more gradual the pace toward getting help, the better, unless someone is in crisis.

If you are suggesting that someone in your life get counseling, you may want to start by forwarding them a newsletter, sending them a link to a trusted helper’s website, or handing them a card with the helper’s web address on it. Saying, “Why don’t you look at this site and see if what this counselor has to offer feels right to you” or “This person is happy to have a free 20 minute conversation with any friend of mine just to see what kind of help might work for you” may be a lot less intimidating than saying, “You need counseling. Call this person.”

Thanks for reading!

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