

Happily Single

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For most single people, finding a life partner is top of their list of priorities. Whether or not they're actively dating, a great deal of time and energy goes into that important quest. Susan, an attractive woman in her mid thirties who had been single for several years told me, "I'm desperate to find someone I can love. There just don't seem to be any good men around anymore!" I explored with her a bit further what she was feeling and why finding a mate was so important to her. "Oh", she said, "My life would be so much fuller and more meaningful."

That set off warning bells in my head. Susan shared that she felt lonely, needy and despondent without a partner. It seemed to me that these very feelings might be creating a roadblock to her finding the elusive relationship she yearned for. When I mentioned this to her she was puzzled; how could wanting something, especially something so important for her sense of well-being get in the way of finding it?

I asked her to tell me more about how being single effected her life. As she talked I developed a picture of someone with relatively few friends who spent quite a lot of her time alone at home feeling sad. She didn't have a feeling of being supported by her community and rarely reached out to other people apart from a few friends at work. Would she, I wondered, consider dating and committing to herself as a lifemate?

Susan laughed at that idea. No, she admitted sadly, she wouldn't pick herself across a crowded room. I requested that she look at the steps she would need to take in order for her to attract people to her because of her energy and her fun-loving passion for life. Once Susan has developed herself so that she is building a sense of community and friendship with people she loves being with, it is far more likely that without her doing anything different or making a special effort, the right person will come into her life.

We began to look together at her talents and abilities and how she could incorporate these more into her everyday life, building on the strengths she has. It's surprising how many of us think we're no good at anything, when in fact everyone has skills and abilities that can be further developed. Over the next few months Susan's desperation and neediness began to dissipate as we identified her needs and how she could meet them herself and help the other people in her life to support her better.

As Susan worked on strengthening herself and building a fulfilling life that used her abilities independent of the availability of an intimate relationship, she became more animated, more alive and more enthusiastic about what life has to offer. As she developed more friendships and met more people she also became clearer about the people she wanted to share her life with; which relationships were satisfying for her and which were not. This helped her to get much clearer about what she wanted in a partner; instead of being desperate for anyone who would take her, she began to see herself in a

new light and realize that she too could make choices and decisions about her relationships.

The old catch phrase, "Look after Number One because no-one else will" still operates in many people's lives. There are those who adhere to the first part "look after Number One" and always think of themselves first, and those who hear the second part loud and clear "No-one else will". Both of these attitudes can be major stumbling blocks which prevent the development of meaningful and rich lives. Susan was looking for someone else to look after Number One and she was afraid that no one would.

She had lost sight of the importance of looking after herself in a healthy way; a way that allows her to develop her own sense of her self and her enjoyment of life on her own or with others, single or in relationship. She was able to use therapy to re-establish her relationship with her self and rediscover her own potential.

Without a sense of connectedness to her own true nature, Susan was desperately seeking someone to come and look after her. She was looking for someone else to help her feel complete and fulfilled. That's something we've all done at different times in our lives, but the richest and most fulfilling relationships are those in which both people are confident and fulfilled in themselves first. Then the relationship can flourish on a basis of mutual enjoyment rather than desperate neediness.