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Intimacy, Sex & Relationship

### Create The 'We' Without Sacrificing The 'I'

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People marry for a variety of reasons, not just because they are in deeply in love.

Patty Baxter, 48, decided it was high time she took the plunge. A brilliant marketing executive with offices in New York, Washington, London, and Paris, she has climbed the ladder of international success. Her estates in the Hamptons and abroad, couture wardrobes and lavish lifestyle attest to that. But when it comes to love and marriage, Patty always has stopped short of the altar.

She never thought she'd say this, but she is lonely. She's tired of attending all her A-list parties with a cadre of escorts and tired of small talk. She's decided she'd prefer to join the ranks of the married. She longs for someone to talk with, love with and laugh with, and to someday grow old with.

Furthermore, Bryce is perfect. A commercial pilot, he comes with two terrific grown daughters and four adorable grandchildren. They've known each other a year and met during one of her business trips in Lisbon. Bryce has charm, warmth, intelligence, and a stunning physique that belies his 54 years, and Patty really loves this guy.

So, what's the problem?

She's scared, afraid to give up her strong individual identity. Patty knows that love is give and take, but she doesn't have much practice with reciprocity.

Many young couples are so eager for "two to become one" at the altar that they fail to consider the losses of marriage realistically. That's right, losses. What they will need to give up to be happy. Marriage isn't all take, and those of you who have been married for some time know what I'm talking about.

We come to marriage, one of the most complex forms of relatedness, with our unique family histories, hopes, ideals and beliefs. When differences arise about money, how much time to spend with in-laws or how often to have sex ... we expect things to work themselves out, naturally. Soon sexual satisfaction



takes a nose dive.

Marriage isn't static. It's an ongoing developmental process buffeted by the waves of time and circumstance. Like the Chinese proverb, a journey of one thousand miles begins with a single step; marriages are created one interaction at a time.

A critical task of marriage is to create the "we" without sacrificing the "I." As the poet Kahlil Gibran wrote: "Be like two pillars that support the same roof ..."

Psychologists refer to the position between dependence and independence as "interdependence."

So Patty is right to be cautious. Couples who marry later in life have a more difficult time achieving interdependence because of their mutually ingrained personality styles. Just like any other business "venture," marriage requires negotiation. If either of you has a "my way or the highway" attitude, your marriage will be in trouble before the first anniversary candle is lit.

After an idyllic courtship, it can be a shock to confront what literary critic Wayne Boothe calls "the other one that bites." It can be as simple as one person wanting to carve the Thanksgiving turkey in the kitchen while the other assumes they'll be carving it at the dining room table. Or something more racy, like he expects to watch an X-rated video before making love, but she feels that's unacceptable.

A conflict-free marriage is impossible and undesirable (think how boring it would be)! Learning to compromise without losing our uniqueness is a challenge.

The Greeks had many words for love: "agape" for pure love; "eros" for passion; "phileo" for friendship; and "storge" for affection. All are a part of the monologue and dialogue of intimacy.

*"Let there be spaces in your togetherness*

*And let the winds of heaven dance between you."*

— *Kahlil Gibran*

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