

Article 349: Open, Honest, Intimate Relationships –part 8

Living a *normal relationship* inevitably implies setting up a system for learning how to learn how to live together, which turns out to be a series of trials and errors following a system of rules through which partners “learn to learn” about living together ...or not! ...for they will find or pretend solutions to the major problems of living together which may satisfy one or both of the partners ...or neither. However, if compatible rules are not established and followed, one partner is likely to determine and impose rules, directly or indirectly, which frequently brings the relationship to a stand-off. In other words, the relationship becomes a constant, overt or subtle struggle to define and control the relationship ...and give identity and position to each partner.

None of this is about knowing yourself or your partner.

Your relationship cannot survive your constant meddling ...or your unremitting repair and maintenance; begin knowing yourself and your partner with these questions continued from part 4 of this series.

21. What for you makes an intimate-relationship more than an agreement, exciting emotions, and companionship? What are the most-important promises and actions underlying an open•honest•intimate relationship? Do you expect your relationship to be more than a convenience for you? What about your life, do you expect that to be more than a convenience? How? What does your partner expect of you and your relationship? How can you be certain?

22. Do you and your partner listen carefully to the other? Are you truly discriminating ...and wise enough not to accept and respond to gossip and rumors? ...yet you don't really listen carefully to your partner, ...do you? ...actually, you listen intently to your own beliefs, opinions, and conclusions, ...don't you? Well, your beliefs, opinions, and conclusions are only gossip and rumor, ...and continuing to believe your opinions and conclusions is spreading gossip, ...is that wise? Are both of you patient, consistent, and persistent in listening? ...original in your thinking and acting? ...assertive about yourself without being demanding or controlling?

23. Do you always commit wholeheartedly? ...or, in your mind, is there a payoff for caution or inactivity? Is it better to be cautious and do no wrong than to act and risk making a serious error? Is there a tendency within you or your partner to act or react unthinkingly or in haste? ...or to delay and judge ...and be slow to respond? Does deliberate mean thoughtful? Does quick mean without thought ...or thoughtlessly? Can assertive be slow and quiet? ...and deliberate?

24. What are outward signs and measures of a person's innermost self-esteem ...and knowing of self-worth?

25. Life and free will is about living as you truly desire, your problems begin when you struggle to do as you want, ...are you living as you truly desire ...or struggling to do as you want?

26. Is purposeful, confident involvement a vital part of your life? ...or your relationship? ...of your partner's life, attitudes, and actions? ...or is safety, satisfaction or gratification, and comfort more-important? What genuinely motivates you? What is motivating your relationship? ...what is its driving force? What would you like it to be?

27. Does gratitude and the words of gratitude come easily to you? Do you want a constant flow of gratitude from your partner? ...and those around you? Is this a reasonable expectation? Does independence interfere with gratitude? ...or with genuinely acknowledging others? How might gratitude adversely affect your acknowledging yourself?

28. Do you or your partner use conflict and discord ...or let's-pretend-struggle as a way to gain attention? ...and keep others, your partner, or life from asking more of you? ...or maybe to keep them from asking much of anything of you? Actually, do you live and thrive on feelings of rejection and loneliness? ...on self-pity? Do you feel stalwart and brave standing firmly against individuals and events you assume reject or disrespect you? ...or which you assume are acting against you? Do you really want to be wanted? ...or are you seeking rejection in order to feel wanted? Do you push people away by pretending they are rejecting you? Are you seeking ways to blame others for your rejecting the self and life you truly desire? Do you tend to reject others before they can reject you? ...and, considering death as rejection of you, is it possible that you are rejecting life before life can reject you? Are you actually seeking complete acceptance? ...or profound rejection?

29. Are there any particular behaviors, your own or your partner's, which you especially enjoy and look forward to? Do you expect those actions to continue as the relationship continues? Is this realistic? How will it affect you as these behaviors change? ...or fade away? Are you willing to adjust your expectations and desires concerning these matters? Do you tend to be carelessly optimistic? ...pessimistic?

30. As this relationship continues, do you expect to spend time together ...and look forward to this time together as you do now? Isn't it possible that "just hanging together" will become too commonplace to continue? Aren't you likely to run out of things to say to each other? If so, what will you talk about then? ...or will you "hang together" in silence? Is it possible that you are tired of "just hanging" with yourself in life and need constant distractions? ...or someone or something new to "hang with" for a while?

31. At the beginning of your relationship, you and your partner probably gave to each other without reserve or strings attached, but what is your history

in giving without “holding back” ...or without strings or conditions attached? Do you normally set limits or provisions, in mind or mouth, on your love and actions? Does your partner? Do you believe that life sets limits, restrictions, and boundaries on offering to you? What are those conditions?

32. Do you discourage easily? ...and when discouraged, do you tend to withdraw? ...reach out for comfort and support? ...or reach out to offer comfort and support? When discouraged, do you quickly abandon projects? How does your partner handle discouragement? Do either of you show a tendency to abandon friendships that are not continuing as you wanted or expected? Is it possible that, in this relationship, you have abandoned yourself? ...or feel that you need something new in your life?

33. Are you courting your companion well and easily? ...or does it seem that this process is too time-consuming and energy-wasting? ...too bothersome? ...too all-involving? ...and how about your courting the self and life you truly desire, ...is that too all-involving and consuming? ...too bothersome? ...which wastes too much energy?

34. Is your life and is your partner “romantic” ...in the ways you desire? Are these actions and your feelings likely to continue? Is it possible that you feel you will have to live without real romance? ...without the romance of life in your life?

Life is not debilitating
...but you can certainly make it so!