

# Love, Wholeness and the Nature of Change

So many times I hear stories of relationships that end after someone is injured or becomes seriously ill. When this happens I am saddened for both partners. It is difficult enough to be ill or injured without also losing the companionship and support of a partner or friend. Such a loss can be devastating.

At the same time it is very sad to realize how confused the friend or partner who leaves may be. This world we live in can teach people to miss the deepest opportunities for love in their [fear](#) and confusion about the nature of change.

Think about loving a child. When we love a child, we love both the child just as he or she is and we love the developing adult as that adult emerges. We celebrate the ongoing change and transformation. Once our child reaches "adulthood", that change and transformation continues and, if we are [wise](#), we continue to celebrate the unfolding lives of our adult children. The same is true for our life partnerships.

Every one of us is a work in progress, an ever-changing form. None of us is static. Holding onto an idea that we or the person we love must stay the same in order for us to love ourselves or one other is born of the fear of loss. Everyone changes and, yes, everyone dies. We will, if we outlive the person we love, lose their bodied presence when they die. That's part of the deal. Loving is also the courage to let go.

When a person is injured or ill, the fears of loss that we have been ignoring may suddenly be unavoidable. Our partner is in front of us. The illness or injury is evident. We cannot help but realize that our illusions of permanence are exactly that, simply illusions. If we are unprepared, this realization can be overwhelming.

And yet as we witness the sudden changes in our partner and our illusions are challenged, we can also remember that each of us is unique and always whole, no matter what. No one else is like us. As long as we are alive, we each have contributions to make to life.

As we enter into relationships, it may help to prepare us if we keep in mind that our relationships will change and that our changing bodies are simply one of the ways we will experience that change. Who we are and who we are becoming are not dependent on whether or not our bodies can do all the things that are possible for a body to do. Our uniqueness, our individual wholeness, is inherent in each of us. That wholeness is ready to emerge in a myriad of ways in every moment and is expressed in our bodies just as they are.

When we are faced with illness and injury, when we can no longer avoid our fears, we may find a profound opportunity to see past our confusion and discover our own wholeness and that of someone we love.

Just as I have seen situations in which someone who is injured or ill has been abandoned by his or her partner, so too have I seen injury or illness bring partners closer together. The other day I listened to the wife of a man who had a stroke talk with wonder, profound admiration and respect for the courage and [humor](#) her husband demonstrated in his willingness to create a new life, injured as he was. She was eager to support his efforts and celebrate this new expression of who he is and is becoming.

And what of those of us who are injured or ill and do not have a partner - those of us who are seeking love? Will someone love us or will they see the injury or illness and turn away?

Recently I met a remarkable man. Injured in an accident years ago, this man is a paraplegic who devotes his life to working with people with [traumatic](#) injuries. As we were chatting he shared with me his delight in the plans he and his fiancée are making for their upcoming wedding this summer. He was radiantly happy talking about the fullness of his life. He has created work that has meaning, that expresses his inherent wholeness, and he has found a partner to share his life with. The love that these two people have for one another is so palpable the power of it was reflected in his eyes in a way that I will never forget. That love is not based in fear or an illusion of permanence. That love is based in a celebration of wholeness.