

Relationship Advice from the 'Hunger Games'



By Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D.

If any of you saw the *Hunger Games* recently, you were in for a bloodbath—a very entertaining, very well produced bloodbath.

I'm a huge fan of Suzanne Collins, and the movie was one of the best I've seen in a long time. But while I cheered for Katniss, cursed the gamekeeper, and threw popcorn at President Snow, I couldn't help but notice that some of the lessons of *Hunger Games* could also be applied to relationships:

Hunger Games Tip #1: Don't Let Him (or Her) Own You

Before going into the *Hunger Games* arena, Peeta and Katniss

spend a quiet moment looking over the city. With a wistful glance at his would-be lover and soon-to-be fellow Gladiator, Peeta tells Katniss, "I keep wishing I could think of a way . . . to show the capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than a piece in their games." And show them he does.

Healthy relationships are built on equality. If you feel owned or used, there's a good chance that you are being played in someone's game. You may be their most important game piece. But regardless of whether you are a queen or a pawn, if your relationship feels like a chess match, run!

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Hunger Games Tip #2: Don't Eat the Berries

While Katniss is out hunting for food, Peeta tries to be helpful and unknowingly picks poisonous Nightlock berries to eat with the meal. Foxface watches Peeta and picks berries of her own, thinking they are edible. She dies instantly upon ingestion.

Affairs, abuse, and drug and alcohol addiction are common forms of relationship Nightlock. While they are possible for some couples to overcome, they can be instant relationship killers. So if you are tempted to stray, to use, or to be otherwise despicable, be aware that you are putting your relationship seriously at risk.

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Hunger Games Tip #3: Just Be Yourself

When Katniss first arrives at the Capitol, she is told that she needs to make people like her. Sponsors, Haymitch (her mentor) states, can make the difference between life and death. Katniss fails miserably at this until Cinna, her stylist, tells her, "Don't try to make people like you . . .

Just be yourself.” When she forgets about public opinion and is true to herself, she becomes beloved by district and Capitol people alike.

It goes without saying that it’s important to be yourself in a relationship. There’s nothing worse than sushi and ballet when all you really want is barbeque and line dancing. Don’t pretend to be someone you’re not, if for no other reason than it’s just plain tiring—and it’s impossible to keep up the façade forever. When the walls come down and the real you shows through, don’t you want someone who shares your secret passion for all things Woody Allen, or at least loves you for it?

Suzanne Collins is more about opposing the Man and the media than providing commentary on romantic relationships. But forging relationships based on equal power dynamics, avoiding toxic situations, and having personal integrity are lessons as applicable to the bedroom as the Hunger Games arena.

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