

Romantic Relationship Advice: From Roadkill to Recommitment



By Elaine Taylor

I am a woman for whom the relationship “r-word” had been “roadkill” more often than “recommitment” (not nearly as often as my almost namesake Elizabeth Taylor but more in the range of Demi Moore or [Jennifer Lopez](#)). So it’s surprising that I leapt to the assumption that “May is National Recommitment Month” was for romantic relationships. A Google search, however, led in a different direction.

Romantic Relationship Advice on the

Importance of Recommitment

Apparently, Recommitment Month originated as a time to look back on New Year's resolutions and reenergize (recommit to) goals set and vows made with a champagne glass in one hand and a noisemaker stuck between pursed lips. Recommitment Month is also an overused leitmotif commandeered by addiction facilities to hawk their pricey rehab gigs.

My only New Year's resolution is never to make one because I already know my commitment will be lip-service deep. I'm going to stick with what I, multi-divorced but now blissfully hitched, finally figured out about both commitment...and its scary twin, "recommitment."

My romantic relationship practices in years past have followed the basic animal kingdom model. I have:

- Been attracted to the peacock version of the species: tall, dark, handsome. Who could resist a nice tail?
- Gone for the all-too-common, unambitious, suburban songbird. He sits atop the feeder, happily chirping at the bright blue sky, waiting for Santa Claus to show up with the seed bag.
- Tried out a white-rumped sandpiper. It could be said that I was attracted to his breeding territory (San Francisco). It could also be said I didn't realize his breed was not monogamous.

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Recommitment? Ha. More than once I sprinted down the aisle – in reverse – to Peggy Lee crooning, "Is that all there is?" Not that any of my paramours had grim character flaws. They were perfectly acceptable husband material. Just not for me. At some point, I poked an accusatory finger at the mirror and confided, "With your track record, maybe it's time to

consider that *you* might be the problem.” So I went to an astrologer/psychic to ask if Peggy Lee nailed it: That’s all there was?

“Oh, no,” the psychic said. “You are destined for great love – the kind about which stories are written – but not until you’re ready.”

Seriously? I had a workout regimen and a classic sense of style, and I waxed routinely. What more did a woman have to do to be “ready” for a relationship and love? Ashton Kutcher came along with his tidbit of relationship advice – vulnerability is the essence of romance – a couple decades too late for me; I had to figure it out for myself. Even more scary, it became obvious that I had to be willing to be vulnerable with *myself* before I could be vulnerable with anyone else.

Over the next years, I spent time on the therapy couch, and I:

- Held my nose and, reluctantly, dived headfirst into my emotional dumpster.
- Dug to the back of the withheld-feelings closet – the one I had never dared peek inside because, yes, I had in fact stuffed it with an army of destructive memories and their full-dress uniforms: shame, sorrow, and self-denigration.
- Didn’t stop diving and digging until that dumpster and that closet were emptied out, spit-shined, and springtime fresh.

That was my first big step in making myself “ready.” The second step – and perhaps my most important insight – was to realize the one person to whom I had never even *considered* committing to – much less *recommitting* to – was...me! Of course not – that would be selfish! I was committed to mothering and wife-ing and bread winner-ing. *Me*-ing would have taken time from the ones I loved.

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My therapist asked if I included myself on the Ones-I-Love list. The question didn't even make sense. Wasn't it someone else's job to love me? The someone I hadn't yet met?

Focusing On Your Relationship and Love with Yourself

The therapist's answer came in the form of a question: If you don't love yourself – believe yourself worthy of love, deserving to be cared about and cared for – then why would that elusive “someone else” love and care about you?

Whoa! That was like a pistol-whip to the head. It left me stunned and reeling. Was she saying it wouldn't be selfish to expect from others what I was so willing to give? Respect? Nurturing? Security? To feel I had the right to the same “love-entitlement” that I accorded the Ones-I-Loved?

The psychic had been right when she said I wasn't ready. I had always hidden my vulnerability, never believed in my own self-worth. I worked hard to change. Soon after, the love – that someone for whom I had yearned for so long – slid right into my life. For more than a decade, he has colored my world with a rainbow of happiness and contentment. Never again have I found myself asking, “Is that all there is?” Recommitment – to him and to myself – is, at last, something I do most willingly, joyfully, and often.

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