

Wanting Someone Else to Fulfill Our Lives

I have a friend who is lonely, who has such a good heart and desperately wants to find a partner who appreciates that goodness, to share a life with.

We have all felt this, I'm guessing: this desire for a deep connection, this hope that another person will just *get* us and want an intimate relationship with us, the idea that if we could just find this person and merge with them, we'd be fulfilled.

What if we tossed that idea out on its head?

What if everything we need for happiness and fulfillment is within us?

What if all the requirements for fulfillment were in this very moment, not in some imagined ideal future?

What if the idea of a romantic partner who is perfect (*because* of their imperfections!) and who fills our every need is just a fantasy that isn't helping us?

The truth is that even those of us who have partners know that it's not all honeymoon, and in fact a long-term relationship contains a lot of struggle. The fulfillment that we get in life ends up (mostly) not coming from the other person, but from ourselves.

What would it be like if we let go of this fantasy of a fulfilling partner, this fantasy of a better future ... and instead focused on finding fulfillment in the here and now, within ourselves?

Where We Get Fulfillment

Another person isn't going to fulfill us — at best, they'll make us feel better about ourselves, and listen to us. The listening part is great, but we can get that from friends or family as well. The feeling better about ourselves is a function we can fulfill on our own as well. I'm not saying a partner is useless, but I am saying that a partner isn't needed for fulfillment.

So how can we fulfill ourselves, by ourselves?

Well, what brings fulfillment? In my experience, focusing on pleasures like food, entertainment, online distractions, sex, drugs, alcohol, and thrills ... these only bring temporary pleasure, but in the end you're left wanting more.

Fulfillment comes from something deeper — finding meaning in life, finding appreciation for the fleeting beauty of every moment, being in service of others, loving.

But we don't need a partner for those things. We can find meaning by searching within ourselves and in the world around us. We can start to appreciate the impermanence and joyful moments around us all the time. We can be in service of others in our community. We can love anyone, from those already in our lives (even if they don't know we're doing it) to strangers on the street, to all living beings.

Fulfillment From Within

What if we could do all these things just sitting here, doing nothing?

What if this very moment contained all we need for fulfillment?

Try looking within:

- Stop and be still. Sit and do nothing, finding stillness and just noticing the moment.
- Notice your body, your breath, emotions that happen in your body (like a tightness in your chest, or a warmth in your heart area), your thoughts.
- See that there is constant change within you, and a loving goodness as well.
- Fall in love with all that you see, from the emotions and thoughts to the body and breath, from the impermanence to the underlying goodness.
- Reflect on a desire to be in service of yourself, and others.
- Cultivate a love for yourself and all others by radiating a wish for everyone, including yourself, to be free of suffering, to be happy, to find joy.
- Reflect on your innate connection to others — reflect on how others support your life, how the food that nourishes you is brought to you by thousands of others, how you've been created into the person you are because of the influences of every person you've met and connected with. This web of connections is how you are always a part of everything and everyone around you, a deep connection that is ever-changing and everlasting.
- Reflect on your surroundings and in the constant change and beauty that is in every single thing, in the ocean of matter and energy that you are a part of.

These and more are always available, right now and in every moment, in you and all around you.

This practice can bring fulfillment, and nothing is required but attention, appreciation, gratitude and love. You have that in you.