

Why do all my partners turn out to be the same?

I see a lot of people that come forward for Therapy because they 'keep on meeting the wrong partner'. This is pretty much even in terms of male and female clients. People can invest a lot of time, effort, emotion, trust and parts of their future in somebody that 'turns out' to be the same as the last two partners. I think there may be a clue in that - you are the common denominator in these relationships and if you don't want this to continue to happen - perhaps exploring yourself would be helpful?

Most people tend to think that 'things just happen' to us e.g. you think you have met a great person, you start dating, take it forward, make a commitment together and sometime later, it emerges that you think this person is the same as your previous two partners. Why is this? Well things don't 'just happen' and people don't just randomly feel attracted to each other, there is a lot more that is going on than we realise. We all operate from a conscious awareness and an unconscious awareness. A conscious awareness is what we can see, hear and feel about other people. We are conscious of these matters, i.e. we can identify, acknowledge and think about these things. An unconscious awareness is what we **can't** see, hear and feel about other people - but this does not mean that nothing is happening in our unconscious mind - it is.

None of us come to a relationship totally free of the previous influences on us and experiences we have had. This can extend from childhood to adulthood. An example I often use with people is; Let's say you and your sister and brother grew up in a family where both parents were alcoholics. You all hate alcohol, you hate what it done to your parents and family and you vow never to touch alcohol yourself. When you are an adult, one day you look around and realise that you have stuck to your principles and have not drunk alcohol, BUT you seem to keep getting involved with men that drink too much and all the negative consequences that brings. Your brother has become an alcoholic himself and your sister does not have any alcohol in her life, including in relationships. Why is this happening? There are biological and social influences affecting our behaviours, but what we also do as humans, is gravitate to what unconsciously feels 'normal' to us. We may hate something with every bone in our body, e.g. alcohol, but we know how to deal or 'survive' in situations where alcohol is playing a big part in the relationship. A similar example is, growing up with a violent father that physically abuses your mother. You hate violence and how it impacted on your family, BUT you now realise you keep choosing partners that are violent. Attraction is not one way as we know. So a man that also grew up in a family where his Father was violent, to his shy and passive wife, can also continue to affect their children. The man may have longed for his Mother to have found her voice and courage to stand up to his father - leave with the children so they don't have to witness and feel the terrible emotional turmoil this violence creates and he may be angry and resentful that his mother did nothing to protect herself or her children. So one starry night two people meet. The man with his resentment and anger and the woman with her loathing and neediness for attention and love. What attracts them to each other is;

a) their conscious awareness e.g. they like the look, the sound and the emotional states of the person, all of that in the honeymoon phase is wonderful, positive and bonding.

b) their unconscious awareness e.g. there is a 'shadow side' - not illuminated by conscious awareness. That shadow side in this example is about how attracted the woman is to the man's decisiveness - always deciding what they will do as a couple and making important decisions for them. The female feels shy and unassertive and is glad he can take charge, - somebody must. The man feels strong and good at fixing things and likes how demure and none aggressive his lady is. However, as time goes by, the man becomes an abusive dictator and the woman a victim that avoids taking responsibility for her part in the relationship and they grow apart. They may have accused each other e.g. 'you are just like your mother, or you are just like your father'. So people seek out what they are familiar with and that includes parental models of behaviour. They also seek out a way to resolve the emotional crisis they have been through when growing up - but without them gaining insight to their own behaviour e.g. through counselling or therapy - they keep trying to find a different ending to the dynamic i.e. a happier ending - where they don't behave like their father or mother and they don't have a partner that behaves like their father or mother. When they are unable to change behaviour in that relationship - they split up and put themselves out in the world again. They reluctantly start dating again and eventually meet somebody else and the pattern continues over and over again.

Remember the common denominator is you. You can learn to understand yourself better and get help to move on much more positively into new relationships without having the same negative influences destroying each one. If you recognise your own patterns of repeating relationships - I would be pleased to help you understanding yourself better and to break the repeating pattern.