Baggage

August 5, 2008 By Kate Ferguson

Baggage. The very word sounds cumbersome, a burden that becomes too heavy to hold, too awkward to carry. Think of going through life having to tote baggage around. It can seem like an exhausting obligation, a load that's wearisome to mind, body and spirit. Now, apply it to relationships.

All of us have a suitcase we drag around with us. The number of items inside make it either light or heavy. If we're aware enough to continuously empty its contents as it starts to fill up with the resentments, grudges, fears and disillusionment of our past experiences. The result is that we come closer to letting go of the past and moving into a brighter, lighter future.

One of the most difficult things to do, letting go of the past entails dropping our bags and learning to take things and people as they come and go in our lives. How often have we judged a whole gender by the actions of a few people with whom we've negatively interacted?

Easy to do, even for the most conscientious among us, passing judgment on others is a way of protecting ourselves from making the same mistakes again. We vow not to allow ourselves to be so open, so vulnerable next time no more cheaters and liars, shady characters who mean us no good.

Often, we think we've moved on, made positive and productive strides in our approach to relationships. The worry, the doubt and the fear, however, remain. What if we make another wrong choice? What if our partner is not who or what he seems? What should we watch for that will let us know what he's planning to do next?

Caught up in the fear of intimacy, which we all experience after love goes wrong and sours our outlook on relationships, we remain rooted in the past, too afraid to move into the future. Sometimes, we become so fearful that we completely miss the wonderful things that come with letting ourselves experience a new relationship.

Determined to never again be played for a fool, we choose not to risk having someone get close. Sure, we may date, meet a lot of new people and seem to be having the time of our lives, but are we truly alive?

Inherent in the structure of interpersonal relationships, risk goes hand in hand with the possibility of experiencing new and wonderful things when we connect intimately with another person.

Perhaps, the answer lies in slowly allowing ourselves to fully heal after we suffer through the death of a relationship we hold dear. Depending on the severity of the situation, healing may, indeed, take a very long time.

Different for all of us, the amount of time it takes to heal after a relationship ends may be perceived as an inescapable phase of that same partnership which must be experienced for us to prepare ourselves for the possibilities of love that lie ahead.
As your bags begin to empty, then, you will usually find that you are more open to taking the risks that come with opening yourself to loving someone again. It’s been said that there are no guarantees in life. In love, too, it seems that this is very much the case.

Are you ready to unpack your bags?

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