

Hakuna Matata

*This is what enlightenment is all about:
a deep understanding that there is no problem.
Then, with no problem to solve, what will you do?
Immediately you start living.
You will eat, you will sleep, you will love,
you will work, you will have a chit-chat,
you will sing, you will dance.
What else is there to do?
Osho*

One of my friends has a favourite response to any problem: 'Hakuna matata!' Of course, if you've ever seen 'Lion King', you know that 'Hakuna matata' is Swahili for 'No worries'. His attitude towards any obstacle or difficulty is so positive and so confident, that everyone around him starts to feel more optimistic too. It's contagious! With such high energy, solutions come more easily, and everyone feels happier around him, more able to just deal with things in the present moment.

Many people have this energy, this euphoria, when they first fall in love or start a new job. Hormones and pheromones flood the body with exciting, feel-good chemicals. During this 'honeymoon patch' the whole world is seen through rose tinted spectacles. Their lover can do no wrong. Problems are laughed away. Even the worst obstacles seem like adventures. Only the good points are noticed. Mistakes are overlooked. Unfortunately this phase doesn't last. And some people decide that when the good feelings stop, it must mean the relationship is over, the love has died, they are in the wrong place. But is it time to move on, or is it time to deepen the understanding of what is really true and valuable?

Sadly, when people decide to quit as soon as the exciting pheromones diminish, they suffer disappointment and heartbreak. Over time, the heartbreaks stack up in the memory banks, until many people stop trusting their good feelings. Some people become so cynical, they shut them off completely. Then it is not surprising that they scorn any type of 'Pollyanna' positivity, believing this saccharin coating merely masks a sinister intent, and that all will end in tears. They fear getting hurt and disappointed yet again. They believe it is more realistic to think and expect the worst. Being dishonest with themselves, refusing to take responsibility for their own feelings, they blame others instead. Their passive aggressive fear comes out as giving up, shutting down, and withdrawal.

A young film producer felt devastated, 3 days after the break-up of a two year relationship. When I asked her who had ended it, she admitted it had been her decision, yet she still felt powerless in the situation. She said she had worked hard throughout the relationship, to foster good communication with her partner. But he had never been able to satisfy her requirements. It sounded like she had

some kind of fantasy about how her relationship should be, how he should behave, and how it should develop. Of course, most people have such fantasies. But she had been trying so hard to squeeze him into her mould, she seemed to be cutting off all the bits of him that didn't fit. She was more in love with her fantasy ideal than with him.

Some people openly try to get their partner to change and fit their fantasy ideal. Others just keep a silent tally of all the misdemeanours, mistakes and bad qualities. Then one day, whenever the 'honeymoon' patch comes to an end, the rose tinted spectacles come off, and all the old disappointed feelings surface. In NLP, this is called 'Flipping your pictures'. Whereas before you associated your lover with all the best images in your memory banks, now you associate your partner with all the painful, hurtful, unresolved, heartbreak memories. The more heartbreaks you've had, the darker the spectacles you will now look through. In fact, your brain is just trying to protect you, by comparing the present situation to past events, so you can avoid getting hurt again. But this is no more real or true than looking at everything through rose tinted spectacles.

So I said to this young woman, 'Here is the most important question you need to ask yourself: Is this man your true partner?' That is, do you love HIM? And is he really right for you? Notice these questions cannot be answered with your head. Only your heart knows the truth. Your efforts to wake him up to better behaviour, by ending the relationship, may or may not mean it is over. If you really love him more than your fantasy, and if he doesn't want to lose you, then you could both choose again. The more you can be true to your heart, the more truth and love you can bring to the relationship. In fact, the relationship really begins once the honeymoon is over. It is only when both people have chosen and committed to loving one another – even when it doesn't feel good – that there is a chance for a real relationship.

On the other hand, if you ask your heart and you discover he is not your true partner, then you have not lost anything that was important. So there is just the sadness of something ending. Or, like my friend says, 'Thank God that's over! Now I can find someone who really loves me!' But then her question became: what would happen if you decided you really did love this person, and they didn't come back? Firstly, 'deciding' comes from the head, not the heart. That's just kidding yourself on some level. When you look back on relationships that didn't work out in the past – no matter how upset you were at the time – you'll probably realize that none of those people were true for you - so no worries. Here 'Hakuna matata' works on a whole new level. Secondly, as all relationships are mirrors, whatever one person truly feels inside will mirror what the other person feels. If there is real love present - not just fantasy - then that is the truth. However, whether a person has the maturity to choose to love another person, is up to them. Sometimes this requires stepping through layers of old fear, hurt, anger, revenge and pain. Facing such feelings takes courage. And don't you really want someone who has the strength of character to choose love instead of fear?

'But what if we get back together and there's so many bad feelings between us that we can't make it work?' she asked. Well, if you know in your heart that you are in the right place with the person you truly love, then it is a simple matter to 'flip your pictures' back to the good ones. Just choose to focus on all the good aspects of the relationship, all his best qualities, and hold positive optimism for the future. Such positive trust will help you to overlook any mistakes. Love and truth are more powerful than any old bad feelings. Hakuna matata.

*I have learned silence
from the talkative,
tolerance from the intolerant and
kindness from the unkind,
I should not be ungrateful to those teachers.*
Kahlil Gibran

Here's how to 'flip your pictures' back to more positive associations:

First imagine you have accidentally bumped into the person you have fallen out with. [Do your best to feel beyond any nervousness, and access what your heart really feels] The more positive the response to this meeting, the greater your chances of success. Break State.

Next, access your deepest heart energy, your centre, your core self, where you know your self worth. Take a moment to appreciate your own unique and magnificent qualities. Give yourself some metaphorical symbol of this state, and an appropriate place you can touch yourself as an anchor to keep you connected to this state.

Picture the other person in a still photo from when you first met. Holding your self anchor, look at this photo in your imagination, appreciating first that this is a separate individual. The objective is to separate the person in the photo from any of the recent bad associations, hurt or pain that you might have been feeling.

Now, recall all the positive good qualities (looks, personality, humour, integrity, talents, attitudes, common interests, background, values, goals, energy etc) that attracted you to them in the first place. Be thorough – you might want to write these down, so you can more easily remember what you love about them.

While you are reviewing these good qualities, double check that your assessments are based on reality rather than some fantasy you may have projected. Make sure they are qualities they actually have, not what you wish they have, or wish they could develop. Recall specific evidence that confirms they have these qualities. Having convinced yourself of their true inner worth and good intentions, it will be easier to overlook any mistakes they might make later on. Break State.

Again imagine a surprise encounter with this person. Are you appalled or delighted or something in-between? What is the difference between now and Step One? When you can see the person as they really are, (instead of your wish list), then you can choose to love them through thick and thin, no matter what happens.

[process adapted from the 'Threshold Neutralizer' in 'Solutions' by Leslie Lebeau (Leslie Cameron-Bandler)]

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