

# I CANNOT STAY, I CANNOT LEAVE

## Crisis in relationship – tragedy or opportunity

By Yehuda Tagar

**"Methodical Empathy is the future of human civilization - if human civilization has a future".**

**"Conflicts are created together. They can only be resolved by individual efforts"**

**"a problem cannot be resolved from the same level of consciousness that created it"**

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One of the tragedies of our time is that the most intimate place, the couple or the family home, the place that was supposed to be the shelter, the haven, the most safe place on earth – becomes a trap. When the relationship that was our home in the world becomes an impossible place to stay and to live, and yet the cost of complete separation is so huge in personal, economic and parental sense – I is totally not affordable.

We enter these unions and we create a whole life fabric around it with the best of hope, love, trust and optimism. Then, drastically or progressively – we discover that we simply do not have what it takes to manage it and to maintain it. We never had what it takes, we just did not realise what it takes, and naively acted on our loving feelings in their height.

But feelings and emotions are like the ocean with its ebbs and tides. They give meaning to our lives and they are the motivation for action and decisions, but they are not, in themselves, a solid foundation to build on, and they are not a form of management of the complexity of personal relationship in this latest phase of human evolution.

What is this latest phase in human evolution: The unstoppable process of individuation, the fundamental shift from civilization in which individuals are defined in the context of the group – to a civilization in which groups are defined by developing individuals. We cannot stop this process. It started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and kept accelerating in its speed until today. In the process we became progressively complex: each one of us is a community of various sub-personalities competing for control, and a struggling centre that has to grow continuously in strength to keep them together.

In the past social cohesion and management was focused on external management of the way people live together. Now the focus shifts to the way people live with themselves. In entering a committed, exclusive, cohabitation personal relationship and combined home – we create a new situation which requires a new level of management. Most of us enter it with the naïve assumption that just because we love each other we will find a way to live together, as we are, without conscious development and an upgrade of our communication and negotiation skills with ourselves and with each other. Well, sooner or later we have to realise that a greater complexity of outer life requires a greater complexity of our self awareness. Who is teaching this upgrade in preparation for creating a combined home, long term relationship, marriage, family? Not high school, not university, definitely not tradition. It is mostly learning on the job, the tough school of life, with high cost, especially for the children. They were born to us with the trust that we are prepared for what it takes and that

we are committed to the necessary upgrade. Most of the time they are disappointed, as we were disappointed by our parents.

A new system of preparation for relationships is urgently needed.

The reality is that for any chance of success in personal relationships for today – a drastic upgrade in self-awareness and self-management skills is required. Because the essential capacity for creating, managing, developing and constantly upgrading personal relationships is Methodical Empathy, the ability to understand each other's reality from the inside of the other. And that, as I shared in this medium so many times, requires the development of deeper empathy with oneself.

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In the absence of such a preparation for starting a relationship – preventative action is avoided. I have counselled many couples in crisis in the past 25 years in a few countries, but I only remember a few times when the couple came to me for preparatory and preventative counselling, for the upgrading of the awareness and the skills required for the new level of relationship, or marriage, or parenthood that is coming. Preventative action and development are possible. Looking around us it is obvious that the institution of long term relationship is struggling, it is predictable that a crisis will come, that the skills required to manage one's life as an individual are not enough to manage the lives of individuals in a relationship. But the awareness that a conscious preparation is required and possible before all the mistakes and the failures that we see around us and that we experienced with our parents – that is new to most of us.

In the absence of preventative development, a crisis is inevitable. It is not a question of if but of when a crisis will happen. The crucial question then is how to manage the crisis. Actions taken today in reaction, defensiveness, anger and jealousy – will affect our lives and the life of our children for the rest of our life. The following are some parameters for the work required for the management of a relationship in crisis.

**A. Stop the damage:** The war must stop. There are no winners in this war, only losers in high cost. Fighting and further damaging each other is not helping anyone. It wounds the children, sometimes for life. It is the devil inside that tempts you to fight the person that you once loved. To attack, to retaliate, to revenge, to try to make someone regret that they hurt you, to vent anger, to hate, to react to reaction – is to be tempted by the dark side of oneself. It can be stopped by an act of will.

**B. Re-Contracting:** The contract on the basis of which most people enter long term relationship and marriage is simplistic, superficial and primitive. A contract to take a loan to buy a car is more sophisticated and logical. What fills the vacuum are unconscious, un-negotiated, never agreed assumed contracts that oppose each other, like drivers that cannot agree which side of the road to drive. In times of crisis there is a potential opportunity to renegotiate the relationship contract for the first time, exposing the contradictions that were at the foundation of it from the start.

**C. Restore respect:** There could be substantial reasons to lose trust in a partner and to criticise what they are doing. But there cannot be a good reason to respect the being that once you respected and loved. They are still the same human being that you came very close

to. The loss of respect to the human being in the other is also coming from the dark part of oneself. Disrespect to someone you once loved and respected can be challenged and restored. On the basis of mutual respect – all future communications will be different.

**D. Upgrade communication in the middle of a crisis:** if the fighting stops for a moment – a conscious decision to start listening to each other can be established. That can only be created if an effort is being made to reflect back to each other what the other is actually saying. To insist on one's existing understanding of what the other is saying can destroy any chance of further communication. We tend to hear what we want to hear, what we are afraid to hear, what we assume that we hear, not what is actually being said. A crisis is a great opportunity to start to actually listen to each other.

**E. forgiveness:** Forgiveness is an act of generosity of the heart, of inner greatness, of personal growth. When the inner wounds are helped and being in a process of healing, when personal responsibility for one's own choices and actions is taken, when some learning has taken place resulting from the suffering, when the blaming of others for one's own destiny is stopped – forgiveness can start. It can bring healing and a new lease of life to wounded relationship, and a fresh start.

**F. The art of conscious separation:** sometimes the game is over and the damage is beyond repair, and it is necessary to move on from the relationship. No one celebrates separations, but we live longer with the way in which we separated than with the way in which we met. Inwardly no relationship is completely over, especially when children are a part of it. We can choose to separate well, to carry each other in the light, to salvage some of the friendship that was there, to cooperate well in our common parenting, to stop the negativity. That is the art of conscious separation.

**G. upgrading one's relationship to oneself:** nothing can stop me from continuing my own personal development, regardless of decisions and actions of the other side. I can grow through joy and I can grow through sorrow, through gains and through losses. If I can find an opportunity for personal development through the crisis in the relationship, regardless of the inter-relationship outcome – then I am taking myself out of a conflict and out of an unwinnable war into a spiritual path that is in the interest of everyone. If both sides of a relationship conflict do that – this is a spiritual victory for both. The relationship may survive or not, but on the spiritual level it will be transformed into something good, and it will become a blessing and a higher starting point for the next relationship.

**ALL the above require a conscious act of empathy with oneself and with the others involved.**

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Personal development is a fundamental imperative. It is no longer the hobby occupation for special occasion for those who could spare the time and the money for it. It is what we are here to do, our essential nature as human beings. Avoiding it is a disaster in the waiting, an accumulative damage and the creation of toxicity. Relationship is no longer a place to hide from the necessity of personal development, but the major opportunity to facilitate, stimulate and awaken to the necessity of personal development.

Being alone is always the start of a new relationship. There is a whole range of skills required for living alone effectively, creatively, enjoyably and productively. Most of us tend to lose these skills when entering a personal relationship. Being together can provide so many

opportunities to hide from one's own challenges with one's own thresholds, challenges and development. That is not going to work in the future and it is not working now. The skills of living effectively with oneself should be developed further through the unique opportunity of personal development, not falling asleep.

We will never be able to escape the challenge of constantly upgrading and developing our skills of being an evolving human being, from birth to death. We can do it more and more consciously and methodically.

This will never change from now on: the on-going development of relationship with oneself will be the only successful trajectory for the on-going development of relationship with others.

Crisis is an indication that a change is inevitable. It is an alarm call. It does not have to be a disaster, a tragedy, a failure. Crisis will happen in a relationship. They can be used as opportunities for awakening to the next step of personal development. That is the best each one of us can do for surviving and for growing from the crisis. We owe it to ourselves, to the relationship, and to our children.