

“Love, as we have said, is generally confused with dependence: but in point of fact, you can love only in proportion to your capacity for independence.”

[Most of these quotations have come from *Man's Search for Himself* by Rollo May or *Freedom to Learn* by Carl Rogers]

Chapter 7: Friendship, Relationships and Loving-kindness

What is the key to people's hearts? (Understanding.)

The most valuable thing in life is relationship (friendship).

Life cannot be real if relationships are not real.

Relationship is sacred.

The best thing I can give you is my friendship.

Relationship is the source of the greatest joy and the greatest mental suffering.

The quality of our life depends much on the quality of our relationship with people around us.

It is nice to have good friends. Life would be so flat without *kalyāṇa mittas* (noble/spiritual friends).

How rare it is to have a friend.

Dear friend, I don't have many friends left. So I value whatever friends I still have.

To have a friend is one of the most wonderful experiences in life. To develop a deeper and deeper understanding of oneself and the world is also very wonderful. For me understanding is the most satisfying thing in life.

There is no time and space in our friendship.

I have made many new friends with whom I can relate to; I don't expect anything from them: just open-hearted, free-flowing communication.

Yes, I also have "deeper cravings for some kind of sincere companion".

I want my relationship with you, with him, with my daughters, with my former wife to be a nurturing, nourishing relationship.

Relationships with people are not really reliable in most cases. Most relationships are just games. An honest, open, sincere, genuine, non-manipulative, non-dominating relationship, where there is mutual respect and trust, and which does not have unrealistic expectations — is such a relationship possible?

I want to quote from C. Roger's book *Freedom to Learn*:

Furthermore, I have no desire to instruct my readers, or impress you with my knowledge in this field. I have no desire to tell you what you should think or feel or do.

The only solution I have come up with is that perhaps I can share something of myself, something of my experience in interpersonal relationships, something of what it has been like to be me, in communication with others.

... interpersonal communication is almost never achieved except in part. You probably never feel fully understood by another, and neither do I. Yet, I find it extremely rewarding when I have been able, in a particular instance, truly to communicate myself to another. I find it very precious when, for some moment in time, I have felt really close to, fully in touch with, another person.

I believe I know why it is satisfying to me to hear someone. When I can really hear someone it puts me in touch with him. It enriches my life.

(C. Rogers)

A person needs a good relationship for his/her psychological development. A good relationship is a necessity in a person's life. A person learns and grows in a good relationship. Without a good relationship we are like robots; with a bad relationship we become beasts or worse than beasts. People are becoming more and more inhuman because they don't have good relationships with people.

Relationship is the soil in which we grow psychologically. If the soil is of poor quality we don't grow well or we have stunted growth; if the soil is good we grow well, strong and mature. There can be no real psychological maturity without good relationships. So we need good relationships in which communication is honest, smooth, flowing, and without fear of any kind. Bad relationships are poisonous.

With sincerity, openness, understanding, caring, loving-kindness and patience they will surely work. Most relationships don't work because they don't have free flow of information (openness), genuine caring, real respect for others, and an understanding that we are all human beings (each of us has our own imperfections, limitations). Expecting too much from another person can also be a cause of disappointment which leads to rejection (thinking this is not what I expected, or acceptable).

With openness, vulnerability, honesty, *mettā* (loving-kindness) and understanding it will be a good relationship which will promote spirituality, maturity, etc. Most relationships become routine after a while (lifeless, stagnant).

Without honesty there can be no real communication; without real communication there can be no real relationship; without real relationship there can be no real help (support, teaching, etc.).

You need a good friend (or good friends, which is better, if possible). One should not live in a place where there is no friend. But what is a friend? And you need a place which is suitable to your temperament.

It is easy to have compassion for a suffering being, but it is not easy to live with that person for the rest of your life.

Love is not enough for two people to live together; deep understanding of each other is necessary. Love is not enough in a relationship; deep understanding and appreciation is also necessary. See if you can accept all the bad things about him without wanting to change him and see if you can also respect him as he is now. Dependent relationships don't work well.

Relationships shouldn't be used as a means; it should end in love, understanding, respect and appreciation. Nobody is perfect. Sometimes relationships become entanglement if they are not grounded on right attitude.

Do not use marriage or any relationship as a means to solving a problem. People should relate to each other just because they love, respect and appreciate (admire) each other as the way they are. Otherwise there is no genuine relationship.

It's OK to fall in love but don't be in a hurry to get married. People change once they're in an intimate relationship.

It takes a lifetime to make sure that you really love somebody. The hay stack burns with a big flame and lasts for a short time, but the husk fire burns imperceptibly and lasts for a long, long time.

Marriage is not a bad thing. I've seen many couples living in harmony, supporting each other in *dhamma* practice. It is very rare though.

It is so rare to find somebody who cares for you. Love without hoping for the relationship to last. Look at the glorious sunset while it is there, but you can't hold on to it.

We never have too much *mettā*; usually we have too little. Real *mettā* never makes you unhappy. It is attachments and expectations which make you unhappy. You can't expect *mettā* as a return for your *mettā*; *mettā* can't be traded. If there's an expectation, then that means there's self-interest. If we love somebody because we want to be loved, then we get hurt when we don't get *mettā* in return.

Feelings come and go and desires come and go — let them come and go. Don't take them so seriously. Just watch them. If you don't try to control them and don't wish them to be otherwise you won't get so upset. Our desire to be in control makes us burn out. We don't suffer because we have a heart; we suffer because we have desires and take them so seriously.

I hope you and him can be lifelong *dhamma* friends helping each other on this journey of spiritual growth. Imposing one's ideas and ideals on someone can cause great conflict. Judging and criticising don't help much either; it can cause loneliness. You cannot change him and he cannot change you. Expecting that the other party should change hinders free communication. Better not to have expectations in a relationship.

Sharing and caring is already healing enough. That will lead to his unburdening of all his feelings. People want to unburden their feelings but they're afraid that they'll be looked down upon; that they'll be misunderstood or manipulated; that they'll be talked about and not loved if people know all about them; that they'll be thought of as abnormal, etc. So they carry all that pain, fear, disappointment, and longing all their life, staying lonely the whole time and acting like tough people, but they melt down when they meet another person who will not judge or gossip about them; who will still love them even after they know all about them; and who really cares for them.

Unconditional acceptance is what he needs. Can you give him that sort of acceptance? I will marry you if... I will not marry you if... The ifs are really terrible, terrifying things.

When somebody says, "I love you", we feel very happy, but we don't really believe it. We always have this fear in our minds, "When he/she knows more about me he/she will not love me any more. I have to be prepared for that. I have to be prepared for being rejected." We don't have complete trust; we are

always uncertain. Are we really sure when we say, “I love you”? Very rarely. It seems rare to know somebody who can really understand you. When you have nobody who understands you (or at least tries to understand or empathise with you), you feel very lonely. How many lonely people are there in this world of five billion people? Is there real contact between one person and another? Can we really touch another human being? Will you let another person touch you?

Many people tell me, “You are the only person who understands me.” I am surprised to hear that repeatedly, and the way they say that is really touching. I try. I wish I could understand people deeply; I don’t expect to understand everybody — that would be too much for me. But at least I want to understand my daughters and their mother, and my close friends.

You want someone to love you. Yet when you love someone you don’t feel that you’re worthy of their love. To make you feel worthy of his love you must sacrifice yourself, but that kind of relationship is never secure and satisfying. Security in relationships: it’s possible only for those who are mature and secure in themselves. Those who have feelings of insecurity and unworthiness will never feel secure in any relationship.

People usually don’t love someone who has sacrificed for them; they don’t want to be indebted to anybody. And even more so if you remind them of how much you have sacrificed for them. Strange? Yes, people are strange. If you have helped someone it’s best for you if you then forget about it. If they remember, it’s nice of them, but if you remind them of how much you have done for them, they’ll hate you for it.

“If I sacrifice for him he’ll love me forever.” No! Don’t deceive yourself.

“I love you not for what you’ve done for me, but for who you are.”

“I’ll forgive him and he’ll forgive me, and we’ll love each other.” No! That’s a kind of bargaining.

I don’t want you to live your life always wondering whether or not he is telling you the truth; that will drain all your mental and physical energy. Yes, a liar can do anything. I am not willing to live with a person in whom I do not trust. I can forgive a mistake but I cannot live with an untrustworthy person. Read *Sanity, Madness and Family* by R.D. Laing. You know how you can go crazy having to live with people who won’t tell you the truth.

It’s OK to help a person but to get into a deep relationship with a person who is not truthful is really taxing. You cannot have a fulfilling relationship with a person in whom you do not trust and respect.

People want to be loved, including you and me, but what we do to be loved is different.

To be loved unconditionally, that is what we really want. But can we love ourselves unconditionally?

Do you love yourself? Strange question. We don’t think about it.

It is easier to love than to understand, it is better still if the two go together.

We must learn to love without becoming dependent or possessive. Pure love doesn't cause pain.

Real *mettā* is necessary in relationships; without it relationships don't mean much. With *mettā* comes acceptance, understanding and tolerance. We are not perfect and nobody is perfect. To see our own imperfection and to feel OK about it is very important to our happiness and even to the progress in our practice. If we cannot accept our imperfection how can we accept somebody else's?

People could live in harmony if they were willing to give each other as much freedom as possible, if they were not so manipulative or bossy.

"The power of loving-kindness, even personal *mettā*, *mettā* for a particular person; and how this can have such an impact on someone's spiritual life." Yes.

Real love and deep understanding is much more satisfying than any sense pleasure or money. Moreover a way of life based on mindfulness and wisdom will surely make this life worth living.

You cannot have *mettā* for somebody with the expectation that they will be kind to you. You want to be happy and peaceful, so extend that attitude towards others. There is no other way. You should wish for others all the good things that you wish for yourself.

We need *mettā* from many people, if possible from all the people around us. These days most people are suffering from *mettā*-deficiency syndrome (MDS). Most people are crazy because they don't have *mettā*, *sīla* (morals), *sati* (mindfulness) and *paññā* (wisdom), they're attracted to luxuries and new toys, so they lose sight of good qualities of their heart — they've sold their souls to the devil, so to speak.

Do you think you can find somebody who can make you happy? Do you think you can find somebody who will love you unconditionally forever?

"That our care for others is our care for ourselves, a deep honouring of the being we all share." That is true when there is no ego, and when we see that all beings are related.

"You cannot harm another being without harming yourself." So when you help another you help yourself; our care for others is caring for ourselves also. To see it and feel it we must first lose our sense of ego. Without others I don't exist. Imagine that there was nothing and nobody, what would you be then? So everybody we know somehow affects our lives. Can you imagine what impact you have on me, on my life? You know what impact I have on you, on your mind, on your life? The same is true for me: You also have great impact on my life; you've made my life richer in many ways.

A woman with a mind of her own can love a man with a mind of his own. Two grown-ups, psychologically independent, mature persons respecting each other's individuality and freedom, can have a deep, lasting, meaningful, and nourishing relationship. We can buy a slave but we cannot buy a friendship.

One cannot be realistic when one is overwhelmed with love. Love is irrational. Because we can talk about it, explain it or even have it, we think we know

it. But how mysterious it is. We feel it; we are overwhelmed by it; sometimes we can't believe ourselves. Is it really true that I love somebody so wholeheartedly? Because we are always so reserved and because we don't trust ourselves, we don't trust anybody.

"I love you with all my heart. And I know that you love me. There is no doubt whatsoever. This is tremendous. For me at least, to know that it is possible for me. I have never expected it. How can I expect something which I have never known? So it is more like a surprise. I feel really grateful. But to whom? Well, to life" — sweet-aching longing.

If you have not loved (and if you do not love) somebody with all your heart you are not a fully-fledged human being yet; you're only a *potential* human being.

To be in love is to be in an altered state of mind.

Love is not reasonable; it is beyond reasoning.

You are alive and overflowing with feeling. Such a thing happens once in a lifetime. I'm very glad to hear that your heart is open now. Let it open even though sometimes it may be painful. We're afraid to love, afraid that we'll be rejected; afraid that we won't be taken seriously, or we'll be manipulated; afraid that we'll be vulnerable, and sometimes we don't trust ourselves; we don't believe that we can really love somebody.

Let all your feelings come out. Write down, express your feelings in blank verses.

Don't be in a hurry to get married. Get to know her better. She's a human being; like all of us she has her share of faults. Try to understand the whole person and love her for that, not just parts of her, or your own projection of her.

You said, "She is very honest." That's the most important quality; without it there can be no meaningful relationship.

"But she's so painfully level-headed about things." What do you expect? To be crazy about a guy who is crazily in love with her? Of course she should be more careful. She must have some experience with men who get crazy and then... It's better for her to learn to love you more and more. For a woman the stake is bigger. And love is not enough. You must have read/heard about romantic love. Some of them didn't last long, some had tragic ends.

"It hurts like a raw nerve." Well, well, it hurts and at the same time you don't want the hurt to go away. It's so precious, so special. It's painful and it's pleasant too.

To love somebody with all your heart is to become a real human being. This experience of yours has real impact on the way you look at human beings; it is priceless.

Even love for a woman can be a spiritual experience. There should be spirituality in every aspect of our life. Then only life would be beautiful and meaningful.

You see, nobody can teach you how to open your heart; how to be vulnerable; how to love another human being; how to go beyond all conventions; how to go beyond limits and to find that which is beyond.

What you are going through is somewhat similar to the experience of enlightenment. You are in a totally different world with different values; you have become a different person and you cannot be the same person that you once were — the transformation is irreversible.

“I value heart-to-heart contact with other people.” I know what it feels like to be in contact with people heart-to-heart. Most relationships do not work because there is no bilateral (mutual) caring, sharing, vulnerability, honesty, tenderness, sensitivity, and real and abundant flowing of *mettā* (not desire). There is one more quality which is no less important, i.e., deep understanding of another person as a person (not as a sex object). Sex is also a part of the relationship between a man and a woman; it should not be neglected, but it should be in harmony with the real sharing of pleasure and not just a gratification of one’s animalistic desire.

We talk too much about love. Do we know what we are talking about? You said, “It feels, sometimes, like I no longer know what reality is.” Did you know what reality was about? As long as we think about reality we are separated from it; when we are one with reality we no longer think about it.

If I could give you advice, I would say take your time to understand your own mind very deeply about what it is you really want from this life. One can go on and on doing one thing after another getting in and out of relationships. What do you expect from a relationship? What are you looking for? If you don’t know what you are looking for, you will end up having a lot of things that you don’t want.

I know what you mean when you said “living from the heart”. With most of my relationships with people, I have been very frustrated thinking that something which makes relationships authentic is missing. In quite a few cases, I didn’t have it myself. So things didn’t work well in the long run; something goes wrong. But now I’m much more aware of it. Yet with some people friendship happens so naturally: for example, it’s so easy for me to relate to you.

I hope both of you are really open and honest with each other. There is no such thing as ‘they lived happily ever after’. There will always be some unexpected problems; we only need to learn to solve them intelligently.

It’s necessary to have some problems. After you’ve worked through a difficult time together with sensitivity and patience you become closer, you understand each other better. That understanding of each other makes a relationship more meaningful and long-lasting. Love alone isn’t sufficient. Deep understanding of each other’s feelings, wishes, dreams, fears, hopes, etc., is very important. Our parents love us. How come we can’t relate to them?

You are very fortunate to know what it means to love another human being. I don’t know about the future, but I believe your love for her has already brought much depth and meaning to your life. I think that alone is enough for a lifetime. Most people have lived and died without knowing what it means to love tenderly. They sing songs about that though.

They say the nightingale pierces his bosom with a thorn
When he sings his love song
So do we all
How else should we sing? (*Kahlil Gibran*)

Nice to hear that she and you are intimate now. Get to know the living reality — her mind, her feelings, her difficulties in adapting to you and America and the conflict in her mind if she has any (most people do have conflicts). Do you really know the depth of her being? Do you know how it feels being her? What if she won't marry you?

What makes a relationship really nourishing, satisfying, lasting, alive, and not merely routine?

You wrote, "I wanted her so much... but what do I want?" That question is very important, and nobody can give you the answer to that. You have to look deep inside yourself for the answer.

The union of hearts — deep and intuitive understanding of each other; non-verbal communication; mystical, transcending all reasons; a knowing in the guts that the two are meant to be together on this round of rebirth, loving, caring, and helping each other; knowing that the understanding between the two will grow and grow until the two minds become totally transparent; no fears, no secrets and complete trust; no games or role playing; being vulnerable. Is this possible?

Ask her to tell you all about herself — her childhood, her parents, her brothers and sisters, her hopes, her fears, etc. You said, "So, the nutty intense craving has faded", and also, "Is it because it just faded on its own? Or partly because I have been successful in gradually winning her affection?" Life cannot go on with such great intensity, it would burn you out. Mostly it is (and should be) just simple.

Everything in nature goes in cycles. You can't go on living with that intense feeling all the time; your survival would be in danger, you would not be able to do the usual things you need to do in your life. The intense feeling is too consuming. I am not invalidating or in any way saying that the intense feeling is not important. It gives us some glimpse of what it means to be 'really alive', and it changes our values, our aims. Your second question can also be answered in the affirmative. You've got her affection. So you no longer have to worry about not getting it, which was what made you feel so nutty, but that doesn't mean that your love for her is less than it was before. It means your mind is now more stable. Hot, burning craving (or love) is not good in the long-term. Warm and sometimes even a cool (not cold) kind of *mettā* is much better; it is more reliable and more nourishing. Well, you'll go crazy again when you have your first child. I'll wait for that.

When you have a child let me be his/her friend, companion, playmate. I know how to be a good friend to a child. Let me help him/her learn about nature, life, and about him/herself, please.

Unhealthy relationships should be concluded. If you don't change, you don't live fully. Anything that lives must change of necessity. No change means death. So for a friendship to be a living one, it must always be changing. Most of us don't feel alive because we are afraid of change (going into the unknown). We don't want to take risks.

Before you let go of your attachment to anybody or anything, look at the attachment in the mind. Understanding attachment is very important. Only deep understanding of attachment can free the mind of it. If you force your mind to let go of attachment without really seeing the nature of it, it will come back very soon. Seeing clearly and understanding deeply is the only way to overcome it. Forced detachment is not real detachment.

Most people have grown an invisible, impenetrable shell around themselves to protect them from being hurt, and they're looking for satisfaction in money, status, sense pleasures, drugs, alcohol, and sex mainly because they don't have somebody who loves them and who understands them more deeply. Too scary to be open and vulnerable!

There can be forced (and artificial) love, compassion, contentment, humility, etc. Behind forced love and humility, there could also be (and in most cases there is) hatred, fear and pride. It is more important to see hatred, greed, pride, etc. Seeing through can mean cutting through.

I have similar difficulties in relating to people. I find most people very superficial. Because I'm a monk I can avoid some people whom I cannot tolerate, but we are human beings (social animals); we cannot live alone; we need some human contact; and we're living in a world where most people are very unmindful, selfish, inconsiderate, stupid, proud, jealous, and so on.

So a person who's sensitive and intelligent must of necessity suffer from contact with people. Tolerance and deep understanding of people are very important. At times you have to remind yourself what the Buddha said: "*Puthujjano ummattako*" (mad worldlings)!

You are dealing with people who are crazy. People grow old but they don't necessarily grow up! So you're dealing with overgrown kids. Since you can't run away from people though, try to find a way to relate to people with wisdom and kindness.

When you have nothing in common with another person, you can't share anything with him/her. You feel like a stranger. If you want to have friends see if there is anything you have in common with them. If you're interested in them they will feel close to you.

Learn to listen to people without judging. You don't have to solve their problems. Be open and kind.

To be in conflict with people is tiring. To desire for the respect, appreciation, and regard of people is a prison.

If possible, avoid associating with fools (*bālā*); if not, be careful not to follow their wrong advice, but don't get into conflict with them. We live in a world of

fools. If one associates with fools, sooner or later one will get into trouble. Most people do not take the Buddha who never gave bad advice, seriously.

Yes, *asevanā ca balānaṃ* (not to associate with fools). Identify them and avoid them, but don't make yourself unhappy thinking too much about them. Just like you avoid poisonous snakes, avoid fools. But what makes a person a fool?

If you can find a good friend, live together; if not, live alone. There is no friendship in a fool.

Since I was a boy, I noticed that people are mostly hypocrites. It was/is hard for me to believe in people, but that's the way it is whether I like it or not. Take it or leave it. Once in a while you come across somebody who is not a hypocrite but who is sincere, and because these people are so rare, they are precious.

Most people are after money, fame, position, pleasure, etc., even monks are. Very few people are earnestly looking for (seeking) the truth and peace. Some people use meditation as a substitute for narcotics. Are you upset about that? Then you can be upset for the rest of your life.

I am happy that there are still some people who are honest, sincere, etc. Try to look at the bright side of people. They are not as bad as they could be, they could be worse!

Everybody is bad. After we have accepted that, we can really appreciate it when we see some good in everybody.

It seems to me that you are much older, psychologically, than most people of your age. So you don't fit in your age group. Do you know that highly intelligent people have a hard time doing things that normal people do?

Because your values are so different from the values of most people around you, you are in conflict with them, which is quite natural. Try to understand the nature of the problems first of all. Sometimes, understanding the problem solves half of the problem.

You need somebody you trust to talk about whatever is in your mind, especially the worries and cares. Sometimes I think you would feel lonely in the crowded city. You're living alone away from your family; you must sometimes feel the need to be close to somebody who will not take advantage of you, who understands you and your struggle and pain.

These days it must be hard to trust somebody outside your family. But I think there are good people everywhere in the world. You just have to find them out. Isn't there anybody in your circle who is kind and virtuous?

I understand what you are going through as I had similar experiences. The most difficult part is the decision. The pain heals after a while. I lived with so much fear, pain and guilt for many years, but now those are just memories. Some day I'll tell you my story.

It will take some time for you to recover from whatever damage the relationship has done to your mind. Be more mindful and be more relaxed. Your mind

has reacted for so long in such frustration that it'll need a lot of mindfulness and patience to unlearn the old ways of acting and reacting. No matter how long it takes, be patient and kind to yourself. Change cannot be forced; it should be welcomed. Your personality will change, too.

The worst thing that can happen to a person is losing self-respect.

You said, "What *kamma* to be left alone in this lousy place when all the good monks and people are in Myanmar." Seeing it from another point of view, you could say, "What wonderful *kamma* to have so many good friends and good monks as *kalyāṇamittas* (noble/spiritual friends) in Myanmar." Most people don't have a single friend in the world.

To be loved unconditionally, that is what we really want, but can we love ourselves unconditionally?

To be important in somebody's life. To be able to make a difference. But for me...

A person who does not love herself/himself unconditionally, and who is not independent psychologically, cannot and does not really love anybody. To be able to love we must be free.

Do I really love anybody? In most cases we love because we are so lonely. Hoping that we will overcome loneliness if we really love somebody and if that somebody can really love me. Unless we can accept our loneliness and accept another person's loneliness we cannot really meet each other. Each of us is utterly lonely. Let us accept our loneliness, and not try to cover it or run away from it or try to find a way to overcome it. We will always be lonely. Only for brief moments when we forget ourselves we are temporarily relieved from our loneliness, but it comes back for sure. I am lonely. I am lonelier than ever before. I'm seeing this loneliness more and more. There are very few people who can reach us and understand us. Between each person there is a big chasm of misunderstanding.

I have friends who love me and respect me, but they don't know who I am or understand me as a human being. They cannot know. I am not blaming them for not knowing who I am. They love their projections of who they think I am, which is a false image. But do I know who I am? What I think I am is also a projection of my mind. Better to be mindful from moment to moment without trying to find answers for these questions. Mindfulness is my only refuge.

I know how lonely people are; I know how lonely you are; because I know how lonely I am. I have learnt to live my life quietly, peacefully, and alone, but I appreciate real heart-to-heart contact with somebody.

I suffered a lot and I become a monk.

I suffered more and I become a human being.

How hard it is to have a friend. A friend is one who does not manipulate you; who listens and understands; who has time to listen without interrupting or getting distracted; and who listens with attention and sensitivity. Most people

are distracted, unmindful and unhappy; they are preoccupied with their own problems.

If you are not peaceful, how can you listen?

I know many people very intimately; they've told me things about their lives and their feelings which they've never told anybody else, and in some cases they told me things which they have never before thought consciously. Only when I asked them more questions to clarify some points did they start looking deeply into their minds/hearts and, to their amazement, they started seeing things which they've never seen before. We can hide from ourselves so well. Most people are split; they are not whole. If you are not whole you cannot grow. To be whole you should not deny or reject anything, any thought or feeling or idea, no matter how unacceptable they might be/are.

So from my experiences with people I know that people are lonely, even those who are living with their families, and some with their extended families. Loneliness doesn't just go away by being around somebody; loneliness is when there is no deep understanding and acceptance. Even family members don't understand and accept each other. So much judgment and misunderstanding even among family members.

The source of the problem lies in not knowing or understanding oneself in depth, not accepting oneself. We are always rejecting some aspect of ourselves. Can we love and respect ourselves unconditionally?

So, unless you know yourself deeply (and that is not easy), there is no way to solve this problem. We want relationship mostly because we feel lonely. Relationship as a means to overcoming loneliness doesn't work. Each of us expects that somebody can make us feel not lonely. Relationship as a means to an end always ends in disappointment. Running away from loneliness. That's what most of us do most of the time. We don't have time for other things.

Once you get deeply in touch with yourself your life takes a new turn, and that needs a good friend who is deeply in touch with him/herself; who feels OK about him/herself; who is not afraid to see things as they are; who is used to seeing things which most people pretend are not there. It's like diving deeply in the ocean: you see things which you've never imagined — unlikely shapes and colours, some beautiful and some very ugly.

People looking for rubies don't see diamonds because they (diamonds) have no colour of their own. Even though a diamond is colourless, it sparkles. (Though man-made diamonds have colours.)

It's better to help people the least amount you can because you can do that without too much time and effort, so you don't get tired or burnt out. If/when you can, do a little more sometimes (but not always). If you do the most you can, very soon you will feel that you can't go on doing it anymore; it becomes too much.

You said, "Sayadaw, people are strange. When you are good to them, they take you for granted. You've to be nasty to them." No, you don't have to be nasty

to them. You just need a clear-cut limit to what you can do, and how much you can do. You have to tell them your limit and the way you want to spend your day. If you don't tell them, how can they know? Do you expect them to know your needs without your telling them? They are more concerned about what they want, not what you want. So you have to let them know, you have to demand.

If you don't tell them your limit they will ask you to do more and more, and in the end you feel being exploited and you will react with frustration, which will cause damage to your relationship with those people. I always tell people my limit, even when it's something about *Dhamma*.

So if you go to another place, right from the beginning set a limit, have a strict schedule. Being too good, you end up being too bitter! You end up hating those for whom you've accommodated yourself too much. Everybody, including our family members, expects too much from us, and they take us for granted.

Nobody has any power over you unless you empower them. You allow (empower) people to influence your mind. Now that you are not willing to be influenced by them, they are powerless and have no power over you. As long as you think they are powerful and strong, they have power over you. Don't you see how scared, powerless, and dependent they could be? They will behave like kings and queens if you put them on a throne, but if you put them down on the ground you'll find that they are just like anybody else — powerless, weak, scared, dependent, and lonely.

When we let go of our self-image, when we remove our guard (self-defence), we see who we really are. I am not much different from you.

Real power comes from understanding oneself.

“Real show of power is in restraint.” (*Aristotle*)

A people empower a person to be the president. So the president has power.

Don't let people take advantage of you. When you are taken advantage of, tell yourself that's the price you pay in order to find out whether some person will take advantage of you or not. How else can you be sure about that?

The bamboo waves and bends when strong wind comes. Who's to blame? The wind or the bamboo? I read some good books, write letters to my friends, and try to be mindful. I enjoy being here — quiet and peaceful; beautiful blue skies and white rolling clouds; birds and trees. I am not unhappy but I miss my daughter very much; she has become the focus of my life.

So, you see, there is always one thing or another (somebody). It's hard to live just for oneself. We need something (an ideal) or somebody to live for. Even a hermit has an ideal to live for.

I hope to see you some day, my dear friend. Don't know when that some day will be. You're changing and I'm changing. So let's not get disappointed when we find each other different. I feel OK as long as you are your real self, and you'll find me the same.

One thing I'm sure about: I don't have any power to change anybody; I'm not interested in doing that. I will never be a guru. If I ever become anything, I will become a very simple man, and I hope humble, too.

I value our friendship very much. Something hard for me to let go of at the moment. I will try to keep *mettā* and let go of attachment.

You are my friend. Isn't that enough reason for me to share my deepest feelings with you? Please don't think that you are not worthy of it. I just hope you understand.

I have lived with you long enough, and I think I know something about people from my long experience of relating to them. I think I know you and understand you somewhat. (I can't be totally wrong.) Please understand that there is a friend who trusts you and respects you and understands you. If it is fine with you, I will go on telling you about my deepest feelings.

If I am in any way special, then you must also be special in some ways to be my friend.

There is longing, a yearning in my heart.
I reach for you. I know you are reaching for me.
But I cannot reach you. Something is keeping us apart.
What is that?
I feel like there is a vacuum in my heart.
I am living but I don't really feel alive.
How can I feel alive without that?
How can I reach you without that?
How can you reach me without that?
We are apart? But we don't know.
What's really keeping us apart?

Only lately I found out that I don't have it.
I used to have it.
And I lost it.
I did not know I lost it.
But I know all the time that something is missing.
There is no life in my life.
I feel dead. At all cost.
I must get it back again.
Without it life is not worth living.
How foolish I was to neglect that and
Turn all my body and mind
Toward such superficial things.

Now my heart is crying.
What a lie I've lived.
What a waste it would be to live all my life like this.
How meaningless!
Can I overcome my wrong conditioning?
Have I enough courage to overcome this lie?
Can I live a healthy, meaningful life?
Am I healthy enough to become really healthy again?
To become a really whole and complete human being again?
(Sayadaw U Jotika)

Once I was afraid of losing my friends because of my changing understanding and values. But, slowly, now I am able to accept that. I must be true to myself.

Now it has become a routine. There is no zest anymore.
I remember how it was.
There was uncertainty. There was hope.
There was anxiety that it won't come to me.
There was great sadness. Life was so intense.
Even the intense pain, piercing, crushing pain
in my heart was so, so meaningful.
At least it gave some meaning to my life.
Complete surrender, complete giving away,
complete understanding and complete acceptance.
Longed for the two to merge into one.
Something spontaneous, not planned or calculated.

When I got it I feel like something is missing.
What is it that is missing.
I know. But I cannot define it.
Is it something that we can only dream about?
When it was out of my reach it looked complete.
When it is in my hands, something is missing.
Optical illusion.

Pali Glossary

Abidhamma	The third part of the Buddhist canon/ scriptures [Tripitaka] containing a treatise of Buddhist psychology and philosophy
akusala	unwholesome (states of mind)
anāgāmi	a person who has realised the third stage of enlightenment
anattā	selflessness, no-self, egolessness
Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta	The Discourse on the Characteristic of Selflessness
anicca	impermanence
appakicco	having few duties or responsibilities
arahat	person who has realised the final stage of enlightenment
attā	person
avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā	ignorance conditions formations
bāla (bālā)	fool (fools)
balānaṃ	with fools
bhikkhu	monk
brahmā	a deity of the highest heavenly realms
cetasika	mental concomitants
cittaṃ	mind
cittānupassanā	contemplation of the heart/mind
dāyaka	donor, supporter
Dhamma/dhamma	truth, Buddha's teaching, phenomena, nature, morality
devaloka	a heavenly realm
Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta	The Discourse of the Turning of the <i>Dhamma</i> Wheel
diṭṭhi	wrong views
dosa	aversion
dukkha	suffering, oppression
hoti	to be
issā	jealousy, envy
kalyāṇa	charming, good, virtuous
kalyāṇamittā	noble, virtuous friends
kamma	action, deed, work
karuṇā	compassion

kilesa	defilement
kukkucca	worry, remorse
kusala	wholesome (states of mind)
kuṭi	hut
lobha	greed
macchariya	stinginess, avarice
Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta	The Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness
māna	conceit, comparing oneself with others, pride
mettā	loving-kindness
moha	delusion
muditā	sympathetic joy
nāma	mental phenomena
nijjiva	lifeless
nissatta	being-less
pajānāti	to know clearly
Pali	Indic language used in canonical books of Buddhists
Pañcavaggi	the group of five ascetics who met the Buddha shortly after he was enlightened
Paññā	wisdom
Papañca	obstacle, hindrance (to spiritual growth), illusion, mental proliferation
pariyatti	theoretical knowledge of <i>Dhamma</i> , scriptures
Piṭaka	referring to the ‘Three Baskets’ of Discourses, Discipline, and Higher Truth
rūpa	physical phenomena
saddhā	faith, confidence
sadosaṃ	with dosa
sallahukavuttī	one leading a simple life
samādhi	concentration
sammā-diṭṭhi-vādī	a person with right view
sampajānakārī	one who is thoughtful
saṃsāra	cycle of births and deaths
samudaya	The Second Noble Truth: desire
saṃvara	restraint
sarāgaṃ	with lust, or passion
sāsana	teaching, doctrine, dispensation
sati	mindfulness
sīla	morality, precepts
sīmā	boundary, chapter house

sotāpanna	a person who has realised the first stage of enlightenment
sotāpatti	first stage of enlightenment
sotāpatti maggaphala	the path and the fruit of streamwinning
[streamwinner	see sotāpanna]
sukhaṃ	happiness
sutta	discourse
taṇhā	greed, craving
upekkhā	equanimity
vedanaṃ	feeling, sensation
vedayamāno	experiencing (a feeling)
vedayāmī'ti	'I feel'
vicāra	sustained thought, investigation
vinaya	monastic rules of conduct and discipline
vitakka	initial thought, reflection
upekkhā	equanimity
yoniso manasikāra	wise consideration, right attention

Burmese words

anaday	feeling bad, embarrassed, feeling obligated
hin-lei-o	Burmese curry (with many ingredients)
kyaung	hut
nyanzin	stages/progress of insight

“To stay cool in hell



Snow in the summer.”

THE END