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Disinhibited Thoughts #27

Having continually returned to the topic of how to combine relationships and disorders in this column, perhaps it is high time to address the topic from the other end – making the choice to stay single in your neurology (that muffled din you hear is the simultaneous cheer of my past partners ☺).

Musings from this side of the lawn prove more difficult; one quickly finds oneself defending against claims of bitterness, sour grapes, depression, trying too hard, or the right person not having come along yet. That last one in particular bears mention. I've had some genuinely exceptional people in my life who will be (or have become) the best thing to ever happen to someone else now. I would have been lucky – many times over. What most well-intentioned people seem to implicitly exclude in their understanding of my recent decision is that I just really, honestly don't want to look anymore. Do I at times feel tempted? Sure. So do alcoholics – that doesn't make THEIR abstention any less important to everyone's health though...

I know that I am attractive to some people. Some of them I'm attracted to too. But I've come to believe I need to think about this on a level beyond some glandular craving or genetically encoded drive, and to not worry so much about what others may think. Ample evidence suggests it would be the height of irresponsibility and recklessness to simply throw caution to the wind yet again, cast a blind or minimizing eye to the relationship destruction in my wake (!!), ignore everything I've learned about my neurology, and just get involved with someone new. It would be an unfair set-up to us both, for ignoring my better judgement in the past has done a lot of damage.

Everyone has their boats rocked when they bring another person into their lives; regardless of the love they feel, having someone else around involves change, transition, compromise, and a number of other taxing events. Could it be that some boats, given a person's neurological load of tics, obsessions, unregulated attention, impulsivity, and sensory sensitivities, might just be designed to be one-person dinghies? If so, then bringing someone else aboard means you will promptly capsize. This makes any desire to have another alongside you suddenly irrelevant; to invite them in is to consciously jeopardize not only yourself, but him or her as well.

I still want to feel loved, and to enjoy the companionship of others. But being as comfortable as I am with myself now seems to have helped remove any 'hard and fast' conditions on what will bring me to those goals, or what those goals have to look like. Dr. I. M. Jackson said, "You can never become what you want to be, until you accept what you are". It's taken me a long time (and I've been dragged here kicking and screaming) but I now accept that I function worse, don't like who I am, and make other people's lives miserable when I try to force the 'traditional' relationship model. That doesn't have to be fair or desired, but it IS the way it is. Facing that frees me to pursue new ways of enjoying the companionship of others. I'd be fooling myself if I said I don't need people in my life. I'm just learning how to be smart (and responsible) about how 'people in my life' needs to look given things like the structure I require in my day, the frequent time alone I need, and the symptoms I deal with.

Might things change? Sure. Maybe my stimulation levels will lower over time – research indicates that neurotransmitter levels decrease as we age. Or, maybe someday it won't be as important to me to fill that precious-little space in my dinghy with my ideas for making the world a better place. Certainly throwing my personal standards for career and volunteer work overboard would clear the spot needed for another to sit in my dinghy – in that way, my situation is due as much to the choices I've made as it is to my neurology. But maybe I won't wait around pining for either of those days to roll around. The alcoholic won't find a healthier lifestyle by lingering outside his old haunts. Neither will I.

I guess if, at the end of my life, I feel that I was loved, loved others, and made a difference then the means by which I accomplish those ends aren't so important. And if I did it 'my way' – if I bucked the odds and found these things even though the 'normal' way didn't work for me, well then I suppose I'll just have that much more reason to feel proud of myself.

Until next time, my friends!

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