

AM I CAUGHT UP IN A FANTASY BOND?

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Behind our fear of intimacy, we may live out a fantasy bond as a substitute for a loving relationship

Most people have certain fears of intimacy and can become self-protective yet at the same time fear being alone. Our solution to this dilemma is to form a fantasy bond which can reduce the possibility of being in successful relationships.

What is a fantasy bond?

A fantasy bond allows us to maintain our imagination of love and loving- an illusion of love, closeness and connection with another while at the same time preventing real emotional contact. This self-deception enables us to maintain a belief of closeness and intimacy, yet we act in ways that belie love through robotic forms of going through the motions in our intimate relationships.

A fantasy bond brings about specific changes in a relationship and usually appears following significant events that indicate the seriousness of our relationship. These may include deep moments of feeling love or loved, mutual expression of love, living together, marriage, start of a family.

When love between two people grows deeper it becomes more frightening and as a relationship becomes more intimate and more important to us, we start to feel more vulnerable and susceptible to loss, hurt. In place of our real feelings of love, we substitute our fantasy of being in love. We move away from being initially vulnerable and relating with another person towards being safely involved in our own internal world that excludes anyone else.

A fantasy bond is a substitute for missing care and love in our early life, acting as a painkiller, cutting off our feeling responses, interfering with the development of our true sense of self where the more we rely on our fantasies of connection the less we are able to receive, give love and affection in intimate relationships now.

What are the origins of a fantasy bond?

Our fantasy bond has its origins from our compulsion to relive the past in intimate relationships that lead to defensive re-enactments of interactions in childhood. Typically, our fantasy bond is unconsciously formed by us with our mother, father, (or primary care giver) as an illusory connection to them in which part of our early bonding was missing. And because our bonding attachment with them was insecure, so we formed an imaginary connection with our mother, father, caregiver as a substitute for the real thing. As infants we naturally comforted ourselves through self-soothing behaviours to ease our anxiety of being separated so when those that were unavailable or inconsistently caring for us, we return to images of being connected to them, even idealising them which some of us may initially also do in our adult relationships.

Fear of Being Alone Can Drive us to a Fantasy Bond. We fantasised we were with someone who loved us and would never leave, and this happens at such a young age that it is an unconscious process that repeats now, showing up in close intimate relationships. What once hurt us when younger we continue to protect ourselves from now, so by the time we reach adulthood our defences are shored up in ways we don't want them to be disturbed.

What are the signs and symptoms of a fantasy bond?

At the beginning of a new relationship we may let down our defences, be more open and vulnerable, risk ourselves. However, in this falling in love stage, (or over-idealisation for some) it can be frightening if we also fear loss, abandonment, rejection, engulfment. Anxious inside, we may slowly retreat from feeling close and form a fantasy bond because this new love in our life threatens to disrupt our protective patterns/defences formed in earlier years.

The quality of time together, feeling close and enjoying each other's company has diminished. We may not speak personally to each other, make only small talk or talk at each other. Eye contact has reduced. We become less affectionate, intimate, tender in our lovemaking.

When caught in a fantasy bond, under an illusion of safety, we close down our freedom to express our real desires, feelings, surrendering our individuality, identity, full range of feelings, needs. We can feel weighed down by a feeling of complacency, dissatisfaction. Inside our life may feel hollow, empty as we hide further aspects of our personality. We may also give up our passions, interests, in order to feel safe, secure. We may convince ourselves we don't need others.

In our couple, everyday routines may replace real companionship, full expression of affection and the love that was present in the beginning. Spontaneity, playfulness, and having genuine interest in talking and really listening to each other may diminish. Love making may become mechanical, where sexual attraction, desire may decrease (and we may withhold our own desirous qualities in ourselves that originally attracted our partner). Some of us live through an illusion of merging with another.

Signs When both of us are relating as a unit in a fantasy bond

Loss of independence. Our separate identities may have been surrendered

We speak as a unit, using "we", not "I", stepping in and answering when our partner is addressed,

Lack of spontaneity. Everyday routines are used as props to support our fantasy bond, e.g. doing the same things each week, watching the same things

Using conventional occasions as symbols in place of expressing real closeness, heartfelt acts of love

Taking on roles of being in love than to actually being loving

Routine, mechanical lovemaking

Breaking a fantasy bond

Letting Go of Our Fantasy Bond It is only when a fantasy bond in our original family is felt, understood, and relinquished that we can let go of it in our current relationship. To break the fantasy bond, we have formed with our partner, we may need, want to .;

- Acknowledge that our fantasy bond exists, no longer denying that many of our actions are unloving
- Reveal, express our hostility, withholding patterns, anger towards ourself and our partner
- Face up to our sadness and pain in attempting to bring back, create intimacy in our relationship
- Expose our fears of individuating, separation, fear of losing our partner, (maybe also their death or our own)
- No longer automatically withdraw -being present
- Be in touch with ,express our strong vulnerability, ask for what we need ,name and respect these need, speak up for ourselves, let our partner know our difference, what works best for us.
- Be in touch with express our own true self
- Be open to feedback, being radically truthful, honest
- Move towards independence and respect for each other's true essence
- Move towards increased interaction with supportive others , extending our circle of friends and family allowing for deeper meaningful connections, interconnectedness
- Be in touch and reconnect with our own vitality ,being a loving human being to ourselves and others
- Explore, experience sexual union with our partner

If these experiences speak to you, feel free to contact me for an initial meeting:

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