

*A risk shared is a risk doubled- Doctor Who*

It's a risk we must take. I told you before that I was warned about my first and second wife. Yet, I had to try. Taylor Swift uses the word "risk" in two songs (maybe more). She says she "can't risk" and "won't risk." It's how the heart rolls. Keep telling yourself that Taylor. I know she will risk it. Heartbreak is part of the risk and joy in a relationship. It's hell when it happens. Yet, when love hits, its euphoria by taking a risk and winning.

Why would we risk our heart? Those who don't will never know. We all want to know. Know what? What it's like to ride a roller-coaster, skydive, and jump from a cliff. Sure, people say they have no interest. Yet, at the Grand Canyon I beg to differ. You go there to marvel at the beauty and be that much closer to danger. We made a dangerous space program to try and risk. We crossed the seas with the risk of adventure. The heart screams "no, I won't risk it." But... We have to, don't we?

I was reading through a list of relationship advice. It's the same stuff. To be in a relationship, they advise you to go through a check list. I'd love to recount that list but you know the drill. We have all seen it before. We should listen, spend time, have rules, and communicate your life's intentions. In love, we forget it all. The pretty girl or handsome boy make us forget. All we care about is being there. Being in a relationship with them. What is their definition of a relationship? In that moment nobody cares.

That is why people pick bad choices. Love wins. Is it bad love? Who cares in the moment? I could end this book decrying a message of caution. Who cares when love strikes? It's not like you chose love. Usually it just happens. I wonder if love chooses you. Love wins. I can tell you that there were plenty of pretty girls in high school. Yet, why in the hell did I pick her?

The one who looked (at the time) more like a boy. Love wins. Why was I distracted, in an instant, at a community event, when I saw my second wife for the first time? Love wins. I can remember both of their first kisses more than any other moment in time in those relationships. Why? Love wins.

“Being relationships” is what I want to end with. When I was single in my thirties, it was time to do a make-over. I realized pretty quick that all the advice and books pointed me to being a better person. I needed to be Mr. relationship. Why? It’s because, if I was going to do things better the second time, I needed to change and learn a thing or two. Remember insanity is doing the same thing twice, expecting different results. It’s not the way we work.

Humanity has always been about going forward, learning, expanding, and understanding. People blow it when they think science has all the answers. It’s an end to a means. Science exists because humanity demands it. Science is all about talk, understanding, and communication. We use those tools to move forward. To find cures, write relationship books, and hold conferences to share ideas. As science is knowledge: we are relationships. No matter what we endeavor to do, humans will continually seek, risk, and discover. The science of relationships is interesting.

How to be Mr. relationship? Science says our hormones are involved. Senses are enacted by attraction. I need to recognize that. What is my picture of love? Is it a good or bad view of a healthy love? What part of my family life will I use in my new relationships? Not all of our upbringing is healthy. You take all this information and study yourself. Mr. relationship is really being a student of companionship.

It’s relationship 101. I remember old commercials to join the military. “Be all you can be.” The army will break you then make you. A person will never know their potential until they

risk it all. To be fair, I want the risk, but I will not try chocolate covered bugs. No! Make a bucket list? Na, I'm not into that. Could these things define you? The answer is no, but it can change you. Relationship 101 is trying to communicate, tolerate, endure, compromise, respect, love and a whole lot more. To be all we could be if we have loved well. To make Mr. relationship: a relationship must break you first.

*As for you, my galvanized friend, you want a heart. You don't know how lucky you are not to have one. Hearts will never be practical until they can be made unbreakable- Wizard of Oz*

The only way to love deeply is to be deeply hurt. How do you unbreak the broken? I know a woman who has never been hurt. She knows how to hurt. Yet, she yearns for acceptance and love. The crux of it is love. She has never lost love. It's the sad irony of it all. This girl knows of love but has never truly loved.

Let's take a quick look at Paul of the Bible. At the end of 1 Corinthians 12 he talks about our gifts, and talents. Paul says in verse 31 "But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." Then he tries to describe love, or at-least what love can achieve in a relationship.

Starting at verse 11 of chapter 13 Paul opens up a little.

*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

We must "be" what we want in a relationship. Paul got it. In the mirror are we fully known? You can see into your eyes. We know the truth about ourselves. Paul then ends his talk

by calling the greatest achievement of all: is love. A relationship begins with “you.” How were you taught to love? What is your view on love? Do you love yourself? Can you love others? A relationship is bound together in love. It’s nice to fall in love. Yet, the glue of the relationship is being the relationship. Are you Mr. or Mrs. Relationship?

Don’t you desire to give the best gifts to the ones you love? What I mean is to give yourself in love to that relationship. We should begin by giving the best “you.” With that said many of us need to create the best “you” first. Back to Paul talking about being known fully. That comes with hard questions. Who am I? What am I meant to be? How can you completely give yourself to another if you don’t know what you’re giving?

Who are you? Everything you will become is wrapped up in that person in the mirror. What were your parents like? Who do you hang out with? What baggage do you wrestle with? Every piece of these things will affect your future relationships. Not only those but your children’s too. It seems like a tall order. Yet, can’t your relationships be a serious matter? God said it would affect your children and their children. It was not meant to be harsh or mean. It’s a warning to take care of business now. Be the difference between good and bad relationships.

It’s not time to panic. There is no need for sorrow or self-beratement. There were men who were called flagellates. They walked around town whipping themselves for their sins. It was not necessary. Instead, I want you to take a risk on you. Let’s head towards the mirror. Well-meaning people ask us to confess our sins. Who wants to tell others our deepest mistakes or fears? Instead, let’s begin with a frank discussion with ourselves in the mirror.

What do you like in yourself? What do you want in life? Are you heading in that direction? What direction? The best direction for you. One of the best things to talk about is your

hopes and dreams. Have you laid a path towards them? Is it possible the best spouse and best friends are on that path? Will you find yourself on someone else's path? The answer, of course, is no. Your good path or good direction begins in the mirror.

Let's go over what I think is relationship 101 material. In a marriage course they talk about these things, yet we were not listening. My wife has a form of cancer. She went to the doctor's office and heard him tell her the truth. Then at home, she forgot all he said. So, she went back to listen better. She needed to go back. Sometimes in failed relationships we need to go back and review. Why? Because in heartbreak, now were listening.

Maybe in a marriage course we need to go back and review what we committed to before we said I do? People get so wrapped up in the feelings and love thing. In my first marriage, I was not listening to the pastor talk about 1 Corinthians that I quoted above. It took me 12 years to remember. After my split-up, I went back and read it again. I get it now that I'm hurt. In my second marriage I thought the marriage course worked well. Yet, in time, there were things that I missed. I went back and re-read the book. Both of our answers were what I call high ideals. They were noble and lofty goals. Yet, those answers were not who we really are.

Reality means I did not take enough time to know me. To know me well enough to know what I am and what I can live with. I can live with my second wife. The path from dating to today has not been without speed bumps. Bumps we both could have avoided if we had been honest in the beginning. Possibly willing to risk revealing who we really are.

What comes first the chick or the egg? It's the ultimate question. Being a good relationship means we need to know how we work. It also means we also need to know how relationships work best. What makes good relationship building material? Unfortunately, failure helps. We

gain experience watching our parents. We learn along the way. I have often wondered if learning to do relationships right begins by winging it. To avoid bad people first we must know bad people. To learn how to have good relationships we must experience bad choices and terrible relationships. Sometimes it looks like learning and other times it looks like we're winging it.

It's a little of all of those things in my mind. It's like the Song Mambo #5 by Lou Baga. He says he needs a little of each girl. Maybe, to make a great relationship we need a little of everything? We need family training. There is a splash of tolerance, compromise, and enduring. How about a dash of pain and heartbreak? I'm sure that understanding our part in a relationship must be mixed in. A lot goes on in to making a good relationship.

I would even say that a bad relationship is it a lot like the grieving process? There is denial, acceptance, anger, bargaining, and depression. Just like the Mambo song, we get a little of each. To see the other person for who they really are takes time. People are not that easy to read. On the outside of failed relationships is hindsight. Don't let that slip away without studying it. Messed up relationships make for a great study.

Many things influence our relationships. There is a quote in the show called "In-between" that I like. The lead character recounts that there are two wolves inside us. One is happy and one is angry. Which one are you? It's the one you feed. All your life experience is feeding which wolf? The wolf that drives you will most certainly affect your relationships. Let's break down a few things we encounter that influence a relationship.

### Heartbreak

We need just enough heartbreak to know what pain is. A parent saying no. A teacher drawing the line. Maybe a mate leaves you. Each piece, is pain and tolerance having a tug of war with

your heart. Hard to love without losing love first. Family and school are great places to find pain and disappointment. A good relationship can come from two hearts that are battle tested.

Unfortunately, that's how it works.

Almost everything we have read or watched is driven by pain. A tragic tale. Love stories. There are self help books. Your reading me: a prodigy of pain. Even children's stories like the Lion King or Sleeping Beauty. I could go further to include alcohol, drugs, and bad relationships. Everything has roots in pain from heartbreak.

Hot mess

Oh, we need some hot sauce sometimes to pep up our food. Just imagine a relationship that never fought. They never disagreed. It's not so much that they have too. Yet, they have to. A marriage that does not grind just a little is full of unfulfilled desires. It's like this. Someone always wants more. Give it all to them and they will still always want more. Offer nothing to a relationship creates what? Unfulfilled dreams and wants. A hot mess is created when desires are not taken into account. It drives people mad.

A real relationship is double edged. It seeks the others desires, yet it guards their own too. That's the bite. Why? It's about ignoring your desires and goals in life. It's about ignoring the desires of the other too. Our happiness meter must be high. A hot mess is running around pleasing everything but themselves. Sometimes it's just pleasing themselves and nobody else. A hot mess has not given enough credence to priority. So, when the chips fall (and they will). You will be left with a hot mess that does not know what to do.

Of course, a hot mess is fun. Yet, living on the edge of destruction is chaotic. I wonder if it shaves years off our lives living that way. It's the tiger by the tail thing. How long can you

hold on? We need spice. We need adventure. Yet, ignoring our desires and the desires of others will only ruin our relationships. A messy life is full of experience. It's full of spice. What part of it do you need to tame? What part of it can you take into a relationship? Those are good questions.

### Recklessness

People tend to peg the hot mess all wrong. We think it's crazy. I think it's more that the ducks are in the wrong order. It's the same with a reckless life. People think it's bad. Yet, it's the spice in the sauce. We need adventure. We need to risk. Were born to strive. Yes, even recklessly towards life. I know it's not that simple about recklessness. Yet, Benjamin Franklin played with lightning to get answers. That's reckless. The owner of the Titanic went too fast to prove a point. I know that was reckless, but we are bred to try.

One spouse needs to push another: recklessly at times. People need to embrace the baggage and crud in their lives. We should recklessly abandon bad relationships and search feverously for good ones. Sometimes that means going on a personal trek. Other times it's patience's, loneliness, and just working on our own character. The norm of human relationships is a bad track record. Reckless might be bucking the trend.

It's an interesting experiment with my wife's cancer. It is hard on a body. There is depression and fatigue. The doctors plead with the patient to keep on living. Sometimes she seems to just be surviving life. After my divorce I went out of my way to live through trouble, not just survive it. The wife and I have had some tense discussions on survival vs living. Am I being reckless wanting to live more than just survive?

### Attraction



What attracts us to others? What if it was their crud and baggage? Maybe we love a hot mess to tackle? Human kind is always trying to tame the final frontier. Is that a hot mess and reckless individual? Sometimes I wonder. Who finds someone who has it all together? I think knowing how much crud you can handle is a good start. Put a little whoa-horse on attraction. Yeah, they are hot, but what's underneath? I like what they do, but is it a mask? Attraction is just part of the relationship puzzle.

Attraction most certainly has its place. In being frank, who wants someone you're not attracted to? I went hiking with a large girl who did not like hiking. I had a friend chastise me for leading her down a path that was not good for them or me. I liked her, but we were not attracted in the right way. Knowing yourself will help your view on attraction. Knowing what you really want will help too. Why create false hope when dating?

As crazy as this seems try mixing a little heartbreak, attraction, hot mess, and recklessness all together in your soul. You just might be a more well-rounded mate. You can then define your limits. Find your toleration on a potential mate's limits. Once you put all that together, two people in a relationship could become limitless, so to speak. It begins with a healthy understanding of you. It's being able to see if others are healthy enough.

You won't know by just sleeping with them. It could be by serving, working, and do life with potential mates as friends first. Compromise, toleration, and enduring are only good in small doses. Nobody should have to compromise, endure, and tolerate someone just to be their friend or mate.

So, that's it really. We have talked at great length about how relationships intertwine. How they tick. Our past is part of our future. We do affect those around us. Our kids will be the

sum of our parts. Their friends will change them for better and worse. We will take this person that God has crafted into a relationship. How it fairs depends on the work done before hand.

It's a shame that people are tagging themselves as liberal, gay, or black. It's part of the answer, but only part. A female is more than just female. They are smart, talented, and many other things. A female boxer has little in common with a female painter. Yet, they are both women. Why they box or paint is the question. Is it family? Friends? Even though they are young at the time, school has shaped them. Work has influenced them. A woman does not become a woman by one aspect of her being. Don't put yourself in a box with social tags.

Being relationships is all about practice. It's about understanding. Equally, it's about the desire to grow good relationships. I know people have relationships with a dog or bottle of wine. Yet, how we do in that relationship is dependent on knowing our limits and character. I do think we are more like the habits we pick and the relationships we gain. People need to take the time to study themselves.

A drunk is not a drunk by dumb luck. An owner of a rottweiler is different than an owner of a poodle. A multiple divorcee says something about the person. A professional athlete is different than a librarian. They just are. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of understanding. Maybe we should fear relationships. Fear them enough to get it right. What if we chose good ones? We choose? I know we have talked about dumb luck and fate. Yet, we prefer certain paths. So, choose paths wisely.

Enough is enough. I've said enough. Relationships are the undiscovered country. They have been around a very long time. People make relationships in vastly different ways. Yet, there is work to do. Many relationships are broken or compromised. We can work on that. To make

life better. I would love to know you. Further to that, do you want to really know you. It's risky, but well worth it in the end. It's time to go where no man or woman has gone much before. Deep into the space between your eyes. Risking it all to know "you" better. That's the beginning place for great relationships in the future.