



Heart & soul

Cate Mackenzie, our resident love coach, helps readers open their hearts to relationships they never thought possible

Make yourself heard

This month, Cate shows you how to ensure that your needs are met

In a healthy relationship, you can usually say 'no' when you need to and 'yes' when you want to. If the balance isn't right, you might find yourself putting your own needs and wants second, which can lead to trouble.

If you feel you're not being heard in your relationship, you can start snapping at your partner and withdrawing, which can darken the atmosphere. Your partner may then withdraw in turn, and before you know it, you're at an impasse. The key is for you both to reconnect and take responsibility for your emotional and physical needs.

One woman I know – let's call her Denise – had been married for many years and had a traditional kind of relationship where she was a mum and housewife and her

husband went out to work. He felt he was fully responsible for everything, and it suited her to let him be in charge. But over time she stopped expressing her needs and wants, and put on more and more weight as she comfort ate. All Denise had ever wanted was to be a wife and mother, but now she felt trapped by domesticity.

Denise came along to one of my Open Your Heart workshops, and through connecting to her inner self, she realised that there had to be more to her life.

Determined to take action, Denise did some volunteering as an admin assistant, to rebuild her confidence in a work environment. Her husband helped her with the cleaning. She went to exercise classes, changed her diet and soon began losing weight.

Denise also decided that she wanted her family to stay over at her home more often, but her

husband said he wasn't keen, as he felt it would 'restrict' him in his own domain. At this point, she had a breakthrough.

Having rediscovered her voice and confidence, Denise told him very clearly what she wanted and that he didn't have to be around her family when they were staying. Not long afterwards, Denise found herself a job with a salary.

After years in an unbalanced relationship, they had heard each other. Denise's husband learned to let go more, and she learned to speak up and take her place in the relationship. They learned how to respect themselves and each other and still have the love.

Now their relationship is better than ever and Denise is the person she was always meant to be, while her husband loves the renewed, sparky and ambitious wife that she has become. He has discovered that he can share the

responsibility for the marriage, which has taken the pressure off him, and brought him more opportunities to relax.

Sex and marriage therapist Dr David Schnarch says that being in a relationship is the biggest form of personal growth we can engage in. He believes that it's only your partner who will really challenge you to fully grow in yourself as a human being. Wise words, I say!

How to restore the balance

Express your feelings. Allow yourself to feel vulnerable and to admit you feel embarrassed, sad, tired, overwhelmed or can't do something. This isn't a case of offloading your troubles on to the other person, but expressing how you feel in that moment so you can share the emotional burden and work through it together.

Don't lose your cool. Learn how to calm yourself and feel a sense of inner peace. You can do this however you like, whether it's meditation or a walk in the woods. This allows you to step away from a heated situation and wait for the right moment to bring things up with your partner. And when you do, do it gently.

Communication is key. Disagreements and discussions aren't always easy, but they are forms of communication, and can help both of you to develop and grow together. ■



There are plenty of different ways to restore balance

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE? Cate Mackenzie is a love coach and couples counsellor with more than 20 years' experience. For more information about her work, visit catemackenzie.com