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Learning *(from page 1)*

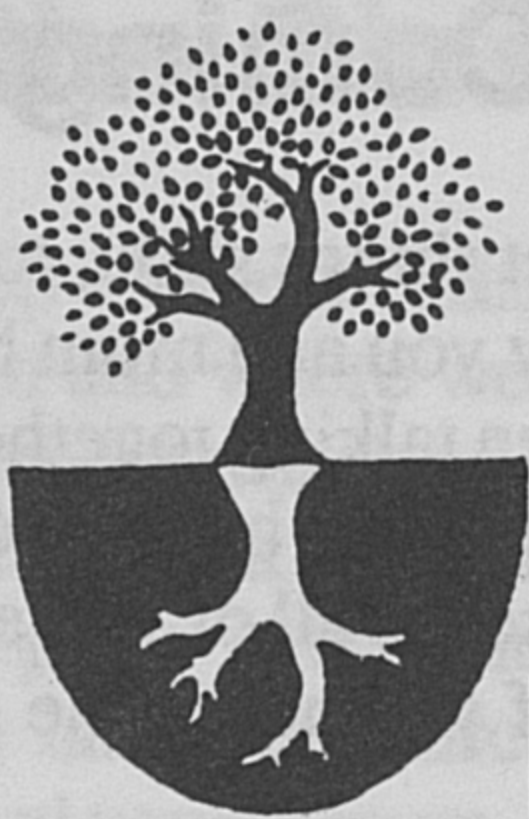
I have not been in a committed monogamous relationship since 1982. I've been too scared. Being non-monogamous has allowed me to love, but not too much. It's allowed me to explore my sexual self without making myself too emotionally vulnerable. I didn't have a lot of expectations. I didn't allow a lot of expectations from my lovers. I kept that tender place within my heart well protected.

I've learned a multitude of lessons over the years. I've learned that I am an incest survivor. Consequently a lot of my insecurities, fears and fucked-up behaviors stem from past traumas, and don't necessarily have anything to do with what's happening now. I have got to be careful not to respond to current situations based on left over shit from the past.

I've learned not to "act out" when I'm feeling jealous. I acknowledge my jealousy and deal with it myself unless I need to talk about it. I've learned that honesty and trust go hand in hand. If I don't trust someone enough to truthfully share my feelings with them, then the deep bond of friendship/lovership will not form. I've learned to allow myself to be scared and to take responsibility for my actions when I make mistakes. I've learned that one woman will never satisfy all of my needs. It's unfair to have this expectation of anyone. Friends are just as important to my life as lovers are.

I've learned that the direction of a relationship cannot be figured out in my head. Everything we put every into gives us something back, but it may not be exactly what we wanted. I may not always get what I want but I usually get what I need even if I don't realize it until after the fact. I've learned to give and accept love completely, removing the protective shield from my heart. I only protect my heart from people I sense are out of balance with themselves. If she doesn't love herself, she certainly is not gonna be able to love me positively. I've learned that I'm ready to work towards being in a monogamous relationship.

So this is where I'm at in my thirty-third year. I'll probably be in a different place, with different lessons learned, ten years from now. That's the joy of getting older. Learning, growing and changing. As long as I continue to be myself, trust myself, love myself, I can't and won't go wrong.



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