

PRIDE

Often, our pride stands in the way of our asking for help. In true love there is no place for pride. To love each other means to trust each other. If you don't tell the person you love of your suffering, it means you don't love this person enough to trust her. You have to realize that this person is the best person to help you. We need to be able to get help from the person we love.

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REDISCOVERING APPRECIATION

When a loved one is suffering a lot, he or she doesn't have enough energy to embrace you and help you suffer less. So it's natural that you become disappointed. You think that the other person's presence is no longer helpful to you. You may even wonder if you love this person anymore. If you are patient and you practice taking care of yourself and the other person, you may have a chance to discover that the elements of goodness and beauty in the person you love are still there. Taking care of yourself, you can support your loved one and reestablish the joy in your relationship.

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A DEEP THIRST

Sometimes we feel empty; we feel a vacuum, a great lack of something. We don't know the cause; it's very vague, but that feeling of being empty inside is very strong. We expect and hope for something much better so we'll feel less alone, less empty. The desire to understand ourselves and to understand life is a deep thirst. There is also the deep thirst to be loved and to love. We are ready to love and be loved. It's very natural. But because we feel empty, we try to find an object of our love. Sometimes we haven't had the time to understand ourselves, yet we've already found the object of our love. When we realize that all our hopes and expectations of course can't be fulfilled by that person, we continue to feel empty. You want to find something, but you don't know what to search for. In everyone there's a continuous desire and expectation; deep inside, you still expect something better to happen. That is why you check your e-mail many times a day!

A POT IN SEARCH OF A LID

Very often we feel like a pot without a lid. We believe that our lid is somewhere in the world and that if we look very hard, we'll find the

right lid to cover our pot. The feeling of emptiness is always there inside us. When we contemplate the other person, sometimes we think we see what we feel we lack. We think we need someone else to lean on, to take refuge in, and to diminish our suffering. We want to be the object of another person's attention and contemplation. We want someone who will look at us and embrace our feeling of emptiness and suffering with his energy of mindfulness. Soon we become addicted to that kind of energy; we think that without that attention, we can't live. It helps us feel less empty and helps us forget the block of suffering inside. When we ourselves can't generate the energy to take care of ourselves, we think we need the energy of someone else. We focus on the need and the lack rather than generating the energy of mindfulness, concentration, and insight that can heal our suffering and help the other person as well.

BEFORE COMMITTING TO ANOTHER

There was a couple who were about to get married in Plum Village, the practice center where I live. They wanted to see me before the wedding ceremony, and I received them in my hut. They said, “Thầy, there are only twenty-four hours left before our wedding. What

do you think that we can do to prepare for our married life to be successful?" I said, "The most important thing for you to do is to look deeply into yourself to see if there is something that is still an obstacle for you. Is there anyone with whom you haven't reconciled? Is there anything within you that you haven't reconciled with?" Reconciliation can also be with your own self. If you don't reconcile with yourself, happiness with another person is impossible.

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