

How To Create a Magical Relationship

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With the divorce rate in the U.S. holding steady at fifty percent, it's clear that a successful marriage doesn't just happen. But the divorce rate does seem to imply that a healthy marriage requires a great deal of work, especially if each partner isn't willing to put in an equal share of the effort.

Not necessarily, say the authors in their latest book. Married for more than twenty years, the Kanes are also relationship coaches and have written *Working on Yourself Doesn't Work: A Book About Instantaneous Transformation*. They have spent decades studying how and why people succeed or don't in personal relationships. Their premise is that there are three "Principles of Transformation" which make a difference: anything one resists persists and grows stronger; no two things can occupy the same space at the same time; and anything one allows to be exactly as it is, without trying to change or fix it, will complete itself.

However, this set of principles doesn't apply only to everyone else. The Kanes say that it takes two to start a fight, but one to end it; they urge readers to look within before trying to solve external conflicts. When someone is more accepting of self and partner, that is likely to be mirrored by the partner, who will feel the release of the pressure of criticism and anger.

The book is divided into several short chapters, followed by brief exercises designed to assimilate the chapter's meaning and also to deepen self-understanding and how it plays a role in relationships. Occasionally the authors include a brief example in the exercises. The assignments are deceptively simple, such as this one: "Notice when you use the story of your life to justify your current actions." This observation is followed by this example: "We once met a man in his thirties who rarely made his bed. He claimed the reason was that his mother never showed him how."

The Kanes do an excellent job of gently guiding readers through the difficult area of self-assessment, and their assertion that looking honestly at one's own behavior first is necessary to improve any relationships seems like common sense. The positive tone of the book, along with its easy-to-read format, makes this a strong guide for those looking for direction in their relationships.

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