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## Conversations with self-9

### Living together in harmony

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Don't blame yourself for things that go wrong in a relationship; it takes two to make anything work

Every time you have an argument, most often with a friend, a relative or even an acquaintance, you blame yourself for the wretchedness it evokes in you and the feeling of de-valuation that you encounter. Yet, you do not for a moment, realise that it is not only you who is the cause of the fracture — it is actually a shared responsibility. As the old adage says, “It takes two to tango”. Thus, to fault yourself is not necessarily correct.

There is a popular concept, now making the rounds in management education, called ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ — this tells us that life is co-created. No relationship, be it even with the self, exists in isolation. Just as there is no dance form that exists alone, for even when an artist is performing alone on stage, he or she creates for the audience the illusion of another character.

So also, all relationships, even by its very definition, require two. Thus, when we encounter an argument with someone, we must step back and ask ourselves how much responsibility each one of us holds for the outcome. If we truly enquire, sooner than later, we learn that both of us have a part to play, thus lessening the impact of the feeling of letting ourselves down.

Be tolerant to differences

Similarly, we must also recognise that life is like a poem, with each person reading different meanings into and from it. If we are willing to allow people their experiences and believe them to be as important as our own, we will be tolerant to the differences that each brings to a conversation; in fact, we will even be celebrative.

Thirdly, the age-old saying, “What you believe, you see.” If we believe that people are good, we will look for signs to validate this belief. However, if we believe they are bad, then we will only seek confirmation from their utterances and actions.

A man once reared a dog that had the unique ability to walk on water. Excited by his dog's prowess, he decided to show off his dog to friends. One day, he invited several friends to a lake and took his dog along. When the friends had assembled, the man threw a bone far into the lake and encouraged the dog to fetch it. The dog promptly walked on the water and retrieved the bone. The proud man asked his friends if they had noticed something strange. There was silence for a while and then a friend quipped — “You know! Come to think of it, your dog cannot swim”. Such is what we do when we look at what is wrong.

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