

# Articulating the Importance of our Closest Relationships

Celebrating Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year this weekend was a very different experience this year. Covid 19 prevented many people attending synagogue services and participating in the familiar customs. The rule of six made it difficult for families to celebrate all together and partake in festive meals.

This period is the start of the window of opportunity called the 10 days of repentance where every living person's fate is determined by God and then sealed for the year ahead with a 24- hour fast day called the Day of Atonement

However despite so many of these vital festive customs missing this year, synagogue communities have worked tirelessly to make sure even if we are going to be staying at home, we could still participate by zooming into synagogue services and reading explanatory guides and compilations of stories and essays annotated with discussion points put forward by learned rabbis and teachers.

Having this specific time of year to press the reset button and clarify what life is really about feels even more relevant this year than previously. It made me think about seeing this as an opportunity to dream of who we can be and understand our responsibility to become that person.

This is a time for self-introspection to think how to better our lives and realign our values. It's a time to be mindful of ourselves, of each other and life itself. By doing this we can work out how we got here and what it is we need to continue to work on.

It was Rabbi Jason Kleiman's article on Articulating the Importance of our Closest Relationships that resonated with me. He suggests that Birthdays and Anniversaries are annual opportunities to focus for those celebrating as well as for families and friends to take stock of the importance of relationships, and how these have developed. These occasions prompt people to express in words and gestures their love and appreciation for each other, through cards and gifts and the spoken word. So it is with the New Year being a birthday marking the creation of life and an anniversary marking the beginning of our relationship with God.

It is this relationship with each other that requires a specific annual appraisal during these ten days. At this time we need to ask ourselves the following question: **Have we expressed our love to those who are most important in our world?**

It was Shakespeare who said, "**They do not love that do not show their love.**"

Rosh Hashana is the perfect opportunity to tell those who are most important to us of our love for them and to do it on a regular basis not on just high holidays and celebrations.

For each of us to make the coming year what it should be, we need to pay close attention to and take time to examine the trajectory of our relationship.

- Do we feel that we are on the right path? Do we need to correct our course?
- How much do we focus on our partners' behaviours rather than focus on our own?
- If you are struggling in the relationship have the courage to share what isn't working for you in a calm caring way that can open up a conversation and bring a deeper connection.
- Don't assume you know your partner, check things out. It's normal in long relationships to realise we need different things from our partners.
- Don't make assumptions that your partner will never change. Give each other the opportunity to understand each other's experience.
- Pay closer attention to our own needs. Some of us don't take time out to think about our own needs – but unfairly expect our partners to know.
- How much time and energy do you put into understanding what your partner is feeling? Do you make assumptions based on years of the same behaviour but never bother to question or be curious?
- More importantly we need to ask ourselves some important questions that may help us to understand our partners better:
  - Why am I behaving in this way?
  - Why do I have so little time and energy for my partner?
  - What part to I play in the loss of our sexual connection

With thoughts on the difficulties of the past six months and as we face the enormous uncertainty going forward, this new year, 5781 points to a powerful perspective from which to reflect and consider our lives and the parts we play and how we would like them to be going forward.

In the words of **John F Kennedy** "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them".

If you would like to discuss things further or to make an appointment, you can call me on **07976 403741** or (020) 8959 9528. Alternatively, you can contact me by email: [dawnkaffel@couplescounselling.com](mailto:dawnkaffel@couplescounselling.com). **Dawn Kaffel**