

A PLEASURE MANIFESTO

In my early days of dating, like many women, I thought my job was to look for “the one,” so I could possess him and he could return the favor. Meanwhile, slowly but surely, my innate human desire for pleasure and creative expression got shackled in the lock-down. This resulted in conflict and angst: good fodder for my poetry, not so much for a happy life.

As I’ve evolved, I’ve learned through various personal growth techniques, that hands down, my highest life value is freedom. But is it possible to be truly free when both pleasure and the creative drive are repressed?

Eastern religions teach the concept of impermanence. That is, all feelings, situations, etc. are transitory as life is transitory. Bliss is achieved by being fully in-the-moment and letting each moment ebb and flow over oneself. Grasping and holding is what causes suffering. This applies to anything – holding onto an emotion, holding onto an outcome instead of surrendering into it, holding onto life.

Love and romance, like everything else in life, are transitory – moments flowing by sweetly, elusive, rising and falling. They cycle back only when the soil is rich for them to grow and reproduce.

When love and romance feel so good, one wants more, more, more. The institution of marriage comes from this grasping need. Two people joining together by default instead of from elevated consciousness only propagate suffering with the passage of time as they create a breeding ground for repression and misunderstanding. Long-term, this type of what I call “default monogamy” creates the dead, lifeless marriages rampant in society. Love and romance may die quickly and they may die slowly, but they eventually die. We kill the things we want the most.

As I have meditated on these concepts, I have begun to question love itself. My romance isn't gone; it's fighting to be set free from the cage this system has placed it in. In truth, it is my hopelessly romantic nature that withers under a system born of repression, unconscious communication and lack of pleasure.

Ultimately, these things are at the heart of what plagues our society. People are angry and listless and this out-pictures in dysfunctional family dynamics, addiction, domestic abuse, war and genocide. By focusing on one's own pleasure and allowing that for others, expansion and freedom result. It takes nothing away from one pleased person to allow freedom and pleasure for another.

The institution of marriage is a major life goal for most of the population. So many people think that marriage is the ultimate achievement, the vehicle for lifelong happiness. Based on my research however, it appears that when two people commit to each other for life, eventually one or the other, or both, stop striving to grow and expand - a stagnation that goes against our innate human nature because humans are growth-seeking beings. Lifelong monogamy appears to stifle this growth. For some this shows up as caring less about their appearance. For others it shows up as losing passion for life and new adventures because of the comforts of domesticity.

"Default monogamy" is my term for when two people unwittingly choose an exclusive relationship based on governmental and societal standards. The state supports this choice. However, placing one's relationship under a state-mandated model goes against creative expression. When an infidelity occurs and divorce is the result, the law is often used as a medieval torture implement to bludgeon the offending party with the government's blessing.

What is really happening is that one person chose to be out of integrity with an agreement of exclusivity.

At this point, the couple has an opportunity to say, “Clearly pleasure is lacking here. Do we want to repair this union and move forward with a new definition of monogamy and exclusivity, or do we want to dissolve this union?” Instead, we talk about “cheating” as if monogamy was an exam.

Using the term “cheating” automatically places someone in a victim role. This serves no one. As growth-seeking beings we always have a choice about where we want to be and how we want to grow and expand. By blaming, accusing and torturing another because they “cheated,” we place our healing and the fulfillment of our inner needs and growth outside of ourselves. Instead of looking within to see why the lack of integrity occurred, we have the state and society-supported right to blame and torture.

Life could be lived much more expansively if everyone took responsibility for their own happiness and pleasure and ceased to rely on someone else or the government to dictate to them what their marriage, life, romance or sense of self should be.

We also miss the most important point of all: if a relationship is not right for one person, it is not right for the other. From this point of view, each person can take responsibility for his or her own feelings, emotions, growth and expansion.

The way to change the current relationship model is to replace default monogamy with a conscious relationship. This is where two partners recognize that they have come together to be mirrors for each other’s growth and spiritual awakening. In this sense, it is easier to be alone than in a relationship because nothing brings up your “stuff” faster than being in a committed relationship.

In a conscious relationship, communication comes from love and with compassion and there is no room for denial. Old wounds from the past and from childhood can be released as the partners hold a sacred space for this awakening process, thus leading to higher evolution for both.

This is the only way that a monogamous, lifetime commitment makes sense and the only way it can be truly fulfilling. Relating consciously unifies the animal drives with the higher conscious drives, uniting all chakras in the complete human energy system, thereby creating individual wholeness. An individual committed to his or her own wholeness and healing has the best chance of being happy in any relationship, especially a monogamous romantic relationship.

In order to change the current cultural model and create a truly liberated, conscious society, this model must be cracked open. Repression, unconscious communication and lack of pleasure are far too deeply entrenched for them to be removed without destroying the base upon which society stands.

The specific themes I will discuss are:

1. Freedom
2. Marriage / possession
3. Pleasure in all areas of life
4. The nuclear family
5. Grief

1. FREEDOM

We are taught that our purpose is to do the best we can here on earth so that someday we will be accepted into the realm of the divine. We are taught to suppress our “baser” human

desires in the pursuit of communion with God. In fact, we have it backwards. We are divine beings on this planet to have a human experience, replete with grief, pain, joy, pleasure, growth, freedom and bliss.

Oppressive regimes, censorship and extreme cultural and religious laws all seek to suppress and remove freedoms, rather than to uplift and expand. Because we live on a three-dimensional planet and not in the infinite astral realm, some containment is inherent in this existence, no matter how high the level of freedom achieved. Therefore, it is impossible to live in a society and have all of one's needs for freedom addressed completely.

Is complete freedom the same as anarchy? Perhaps. We would have to be brave enough to experiment in order to find out. Nevertheless, since human consciousness needs freedom to expand itself, logically, our job is to question whether our decisions will bring us more freedom or less. By consistently asking this question, we serve our humanity as well as our divinity.

2. MARRIAGE / POSSESSION

Common belief is that there is a fifty percent divorce rate in the United States. During my research I learned that this oft-quoted number is not necessarily correct, depending on how the numbers are skewed. The number, according to sociologists, is closer to forty-one percent. In any case, if marriage were a corporation that had a forty-one to fifty percent return and/or cancellation rate, it would be out of business. Still, we spend our years out of childhood pursuing a lifelong marriage partner. Generally, women do this more than men, but this pursuit is driven by a need for possession, not from a place of freedom or growth-seeking expansion.

Can one grow with a life partner, within a monogamous relationship? Of course. Within a monogamous relationship, one can build a family and a history of experiences together. There is

comfort knowing that someone is there to love you warts and all on your good days and bad. It is a miracle to see two elderly people who have survived a long life and marriage together, living in a happy way, but this is the exception, not the rule. In most cases, a long marriage is not necessarily created by two people working on elevating their consciousness.

Human sexuality does not easily support the current model for a lifelong, monogamous arrangement. Somewhere along the line, society has confused our desire to merge and procreate with our need to possess. Animals are driven to possess, but generally during the mating season. Few animals mate for life.

As Voltaire, the 18th century philosopher said, “God made sex, priests made marriage.” Marriage is a state institution and it is here that we put the cart before the horse. Marriage does not grow out of basic human sexuality, it is a cage placed upon it.

Everyone knows that men think about sex all the time, but few people discuss that most women consistently desire sexual connection as well. Women’s desires have been made wrong because a woman satisfying her expansive desires, sexual or not, does not fit nicely into the framework of traditional marriage. Because of this, women often fear their sexuality. If they surrender into it, will it swallow them whole? They then pass this fear onto their daughters, creating the oppressive cycle anew.

In this patriarchal society, sharing, cooperation, sensitivity and nurturance, considered feminine expressions, are undervalued. We do a disservice to both men and women when we suppress these values. Men, women and relationships can flourish under a society with more feminine values at its core.

And yet, our modern society expects far too much from men. They don’t know whether they’re supposed to be strong or sensitive, aggressive or passive. Men need cycles to complete

and they feel emasculated when their work, their cycles, no matter how big or small, are interrupted, criticized or undervalued. Women have so much repressed frustration against the patriarchy that we take it out on our men, consciously and unconsciously.

I have stopped counting the number of times in a week I hear women say, “Men are dogs,” or “He is such an idiot, I can’t believe he did that,” or, “God, I can’t leave him with the kids. He’s so clueless, he doesn’t know where anything is in the house.” Through our energy, thoughts and actions, we women let men know that they are not good enough, we don’t need them and we can do anything ourselves, and better than they can.

How does a powerful feminine psyche co-exist with the male need to dominate and complete cycles? Very carefully...

A good model is: women desire and men produce. Women can be passionate about their desires and lovingly and happily let men know. Men love to please women and when a man makes a woman happy, he completes the best of all cycles. Everyone wins - except for when it doesn’t work, which unfortunately, is most of the time because we have forgotten how to honor the differences between men and women.

A dyed-in-the-wool feminist would say that she doesn’t need a man – she can do anything he can do, probably faster and better. But this is selling everyone short. I don’t label myself a feminist because that label creates an imbalance with male energy and I believe we soar to greater heights when we merge all the best of yang and yin and move those cycles concurrently.

3. PLEASURE IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE

As I said, it takes nothing away from one person to allow freedom and pleasure for another. By focusing on pleasure first, the need to repress another is decreased. In a pleased society, women can be their authentic feminine selves without fear of repression and men can settle comfortably into the roles that serve them best, some of which are to produce work and to please women. Female energy inspires male energy to action.

It is true that sexual energy is creation energy, but there are many outlets for creative energy outside of sex. Creative energy is free and women are vortices of creation. What would happen if we let them keep the knowing that they are born with, that the sexual/creative life force, when released through its natural expression – pleasure of any sort – is divine? Imagine the works of art that could be created as we soared through the boundless atmosphere of life pleasure.

Most women are raised to put finding a life partner well ahead of satisfying their pleasure for life. Women who drive their existence by pleasure first, partnership second are a small minority and this lack of pleasure is the downfall of women, and therefore of society.

There is an epidemic right now of women in their 30's and beyond, who suffer from hormonal imbalances. These imbalances result in symptoms such as poor sex drive, hair loss, fatigue, weakened adrenals and suppression of the endocrine system overall. In effect, the life force of these women is diminished, beginning at a relatively young age.

The anti-aging and bio-identical hormone industries are big business, getting bigger all the time, but here again, we put the cart before the horse. Women are burned out, exhausted, and sexless as they age because they have spent a lifetime denying their innate human/divine desire

for pleasure, joy and freedom. Products and supplements can improve conditions, but they don't cure the underlying cause.

By forcing ourselves to go against biology and stay in unsatisfying lifelong default monogamous relationships and proscribing outlets for exploring pleasure, sexual fantasy and fulfillment because they are “wrong” or “not important enough,” we die inside. When we are dead inside, of course we are fatigued and sexless. A weakened endocrine system is a symptom of this lack of pleasure, not the cause of it.

Where a generation ago in this country, women were expected to be at home, caring for a nuclear family when finances allowed for it, now women are expected to be the primary caregivers of children, plus have a career and look good while doing it. It's simply too much to ask and rarely blossoms from the pursuit and fulfillment of pleasure first.

Men are not left out of this equation. They are expected to be masculine, yet sensitive, but not too sensitive. They are expected to be breadwinners and support their woman to do the same. They are expected to participate in domestic chores and do them “right” while suppressing their drive to ogle and/or mate with every woman they see.

Men are visual. They look, they visualize, they fantasize and they act. Yet, when a man acts on his sexuality, it is often met with derision from women. (I am not talking about sexual assault here – those violent acts are not part of this discussion.)

Strip clubs, pornography, ogling and whistling at women or otherwise showing their appreciation of women in a public way are all outlets for men to express their sexuality, yet women are taught to think of these outlets as wrong. This creates shame around pornography, strip clubs, etc., which is why people react negatively to them. It is not the exchange of female

energy for a price (which is the same dynamic that plays out in a traditional marriage), but the shame attached to it that breeds ugliness and negativity around that exchange.

If men and women set their priorities toward living a pleasurable life, our entire society would turn around. Imagine if everyone chose a profession that they enjoyed and were good at instead of one they did because they (or someone else) thought they should? Satisfaction at work would create a space for being personally fulfilled and vice versa. If every person felt pleased, it would be an easy choice to stay in a partnership and be sexually satisfied with another who lived in the same way.

4. THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

The question about children remains. No matter our best intentions and conscientious use of birth control, if every person on the planet focused on their pleasure, there would be children to nurture and raise because procreation is the highest human drive. I suspect this is why the institution of marriage was created in the first place.

One of the worst plagues ever visited upon society is the concept of the nuclear family in a single-family dwelling. I do not personally know a woman who can honestly, truthfully state that she is completely fulfilled, body, mind and soul, by caring for her children alone during the day, being a homemaker and spending her time servicing her family's needs. Do these saintly women exist? I am certain of it. I have simply never met one. I learned the hard way that not every woman is good at caring for small children in a nuclear family setting. I would rather gnaw off my own arm than play with my child at the park.

Does this mean that I don't love him or that there is something wrong with me? I thought so for a long time because I didn't have a construct to help me accept the possibility that I

couldn't do what my mother did. Like most women, I saw my choices as either being a stay-at-home mom or being like a lot of the stressed-out women I worked with in the corporate world, losing themselves while juggling work and family. Between the choices, giving my child my full attention, as my mother and ex-mother-in-law did, seemed like the best choice. It turned out to be the wrong choice for me. As I am learning, many women also know it is the wrong choice for them and so they work outside the home by choice, not necessity. They choose the lesser of two evils and deal with the stressful consequences.

However, there are scores of people whose lives are immeasurably fulfilled by playing with, teaching and caring for children. In a pleased society, people with these qualities would naturally gravitate to this work. Devastating mother-guilt would be all but eradicated from our society.

If one woman is responsible for the care and feeding of many in her home, what happens when she breaks down from grief or illness? In a best-case scenario, a community would be there to support her, but this is often not the case, which means she must suppress her need for self-care for the greater good of the family. No one wins this way.

When a woman in this situation suppresses her expression of grief or puts her health on the back burner and allows her life force to diminish, it leads to the weakening of her entire human energy system. Who can feel alive, juicy and vibrant when their basic human needs and health are suppressed? As the saying goes, "If mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy."

5. GRIEF

In this society, aside from the funeral, there are no rituals to process and honor death and grieving. When a loved one dies, one is expected to re-enter society after a short bereavement

leave - usually less than a week. After those few days off, one must return to business as usual. Grief doesn't work like that.

Moving through grief can be a debilitating experience. Grief is not linear, but moves in cycles, affecting the human energy system on multiple levels. It ebbs and flows, rages and releases and takes *its own time* to run its course. But time is a human construct - there is nothing but now, this moment. When one is allowed to fully grieve in the now, in the ever-unfolding series of nows, for as long as it takes, one has the opportunity to be healed by the experience, move on and grow from it.

There are wounded, angry and sick people walking the planet who could be completely healed if given the opportunity to feel, express and move through their grief instead of being pressured to push it down, push it away, hold back the tears and the wailing and get on with their life. That suppressed energy goes somewhere - usually pushed out harshly at others or turned within. This is particularly true of women who have had abortions, miscarriages and stillborn babies - those whose losses are not well recognized by society.

I doubt these issues will be solved in my lifetime, but here are my suggestions:

1. Make pleasure a top priority. This includes but is not limited to physical pleasure, intellectual pleasure (work), and spiritual pleasure.

One must make the pursuit of pleasure an unfolding experience and journey. It will change depending upon the immediacy of life situations and logistics, but it must always remain of the highest priority.

In order to achieve this goal, ask the following three questions throughout the day and follow through with the answer you get:

- 1) What would bring me the most pleasure right now? This could be anything from having a cup of hot tea or lying on your back cloud-watching to caressing yourself or someone else.
- 2) Look at the tasks you need to complete for the day, add several to do just for pleasure and *do as many of those as possible first*. This is where it gets scary. Don't give in to the temptation to deny your pleasure, because this is where your life will truly begin to open up. The world is your oyster. Be the pearl.
- 3) When confronted with a less than pleasurable task, ask yourself, "What can I do to make this (fill in the blank) as pleasurable as possible?" This could be anything from listening to music while doing it, to floating a gardenia in some water nearby, to doing it naked.

Living in this way takes courage, intention, commitment and discipline, but it is worth it.

Take the plunge.

2. Be safe and use contraception to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies.

3. Have mandatory conscious relationship training start in high school or earlier.

Obviously, conscious relationships are not easy or we'd all have them. Teachers of conscious relationship are few and far between. Making this teaching mandatory beginning in

high school or elementary school would create a huge demand for conscious relationships teachers.

When people grow up knowing how to manage conscious relationships, dysfunctional family dynamics will be eliminated or greatly reduced. These dysfunctional family dynamics would no longer be passed down through the generations. This change alone would save taxpayers, government and hospitals billions of dollars by decreasing addictions, depression, domestic abuse and other types of violence.

4. Create three-to-seven year, renewable partnership contracts as opposed to lifetime marriage commitments. This should all but eliminate divorce and would support the care of women and children during the vulnerable years of pregnancy and early childhood. Childcare and support agreements would be necessary, but my guess is there would be far less acrimony and resistance around child support if two people entered into a partnership agreement with the express purpose of having and caring for children, knowing their agreement does not have to be lifelong unless they consciously and repeatedly choose to make it so.

5. Make financial management training mandatory beginning in elementary school. Part of the reason many people feel trapped in marriage is because they often do not have control of or know how to manage their own finances. If a woman chooses not to work outside the home as she raises her children, she is automatically in a powerless position with regards to finances.

Also, since money is the number one topic married couples fight about, understanding how to manage finances would go a long way in solving the insecurity and angst that comes with being in a vulnerable financial position.

6. Create communal living situations. Communal living can be a natural outflow of people doing the work that brings them the most pleasure. In a community, people have an opportunity to look out for each other and share the good times and the bad. Humans are tribal creatures and this type of living situation fulfills our innate needs for togetherness, creating a more pleasurable life for all concerned.

If parents with small children choose not to renew their partnership agreement, single parenthood would be a non-issue because the primary caregiver would be part of a greater commune supporting itself and children would be together with childcare professionals in a community location.

Communal living would also go far to help the elderly. Many elderly people decline as they age because they feel they no longer have a place in society. This would not be the case in a communal society where everyone is doing work that they love. The elderly can gravitate toward community service of their choosing after retirement and only those who enjoy caring for the elderly would do so.

7. Institute grief counseling in every community. Teach people about the grief process, how to honor and express their grief and help them teach others to do so. Create meaningful rituals around death that go beyond the funeral and extend into day-to-day life. Give long-term bereavement leave, allowing for a part-time schedule for at least the first thirty to ninety days after a loss.

In the end, our society will be much stronger because of these rituals. The walking wounded with suppressed grief can once again be pleased mothers, brothers, sisters, fathers,

etc. They can then make a greater contribution to their communities as people with lives made richer from a completed cycle of grief.

Our societal system is broken and we are crying out for happiness. The bloated rate at which anti-depressant drugs are prescribed reflects this. People are overeating, under living and spending far too much of their time in front of the TV set – a poor substitute for true pleasure.

What would result from people the world over allowing themselves the freedom to place their pleasure priority first, front and center? If women were free to choose, always, how to live, work and create without socialized stigmas and dogmas, how different would men be? How different would society be? How different would the world be?

Would anarchy be the result? Perhaps, initially. Governments might fall, schools might be shut down, our interlocking-gear world might move from linear time to multiple cycles revolving concurrently. The fabric of society might crumble and need to be born again into something new.

I say, *let it burn*.

T.S. Valenzuela February 2011

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