

How Did I Make That OK? An Answer to Self Defeating Relationship Patterns

By Suzi Elton

Have you ever found yourself in a repetitive and negative pattern of behavior in relationships? Have you consistently gotten unhappy results, but felt clueless as to how you got them? Have you believed that “they” were tricking or deceiving you? Have you suffered and been unhappy every time you’ve repeated the cycle? Do you wonder how to break free? There is a way.

The first thing to do is to realize that there is one common factor among all those experiences—you. Even though, seemingly, you made great efforts in your selections so as not to make the “same mistake” again, you got the same results. Even though you took great care to behave differently this time, it turned out the same—you were upset and unhappy. How could it be that, no matter what you did differently, you still ended up miserable?

There can be only one explanation. YOU are the common factor in all these relationships. You must be doing something—albeit consciously—that produces what you’re getting.

Take care here; however, this is not a reason to be mean to yourself. It’s not about being self abusive or calling yourself names. Don’t spiral down into the black hole of self hatred. This is simply a “light bulb” moment of realization—“I am the common factor, it must be a pattern of mine which is outside my conscious understanding at this time.” Period!

It is nothing more, nothing less. I must be doing something repetitively—that I’m not aware of—that ends up negatively. This is not about making “them” wrong either. Most likely, it involves two people with unconscious patterns. It’s not about looking to blame anyone. There is no power in playing victim games. From this place, you can start to unravel the issue and begin to figure out what new behaviors you want to put into place.

The question to ask yourself is, “How did I Make That OK?” The purpose is to uncover the pattern of rationalizations you use to permit and allow unacceptable behavior.

An example might be that a woman with a pattern of allowing herself to be abused might have these rationalizations, “But he was so sorry, I’m sure he won’t do it again.” or “He treated her that way, but he’s so madly in love with me. I’m sure he wouldn’t do that to me.”

In this example, what new behaviors would make sense for this woman? How about, “I decide to no longer continue a relationship with a man at the first sign of abuse of me or others.” or “I am choosing to spend time with men who are gentle and kind to others as their way of being. I choose to notice when “gentle” men become angry and rage about minor matters.”

Another instance might be the man who consistently finds himself in a pattern of rescuing women. Asking, “How did I make that OK?” might bring him some answers like, “But she seems so helpless she needs me!” or “I can feel like a real hero by rescuing her and it’s hardly any effort to me.” The potential new patterns here might be, “I choose to be aware when I’m picking up ‘I’m helpless. Rescue me.’ Signals.”, or “I decide that my friends are self reliant without ‘helpless’ patterns.”

Making a point of asking yourself, “How did I make that OK?” can uncover a wealth of information about your unconscious rationalizations. Looking at these justifications can help you discover the

absurdity of your choices, undo your self defeating patterns, and put self supportive new habits into place.

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