

Building Healthy Relationships God's Way

I sat on my bed holding my iPad in my shaking hand. The orange Voxer button taunting me to reach out to group of ladies I had only recently begun chatting with regularly. My heart had wanted to open up to them and share with them about the battle I had been fighting alone, but my fear of being misunderstood or brushed aside had won out time and time again.

Truth be told, one of those girls had reached out to me many times over the past two years, but the fear I felt, and my crowded inner circle, kept her at arms' length.

But it was now or never.

Heart pounding, I punched the orange button and watched it turn green, and with a shaky voice I began to pour out to them the pain, loneliness and fear...

...and what I received in return was the balm of friendship that only comes from healthy relationships that both give and receive; that will speak truth in love – always in love but never despise; that continually believe the best and guard the doors of friendship so that the evil of jealousy and doubt have no place to enter.

I'll be honest, there have been few moments in my life when I've had close friendships. You know, the kind where you can call anytime and just pick up where you left off last time, say "Hey – there's a sale at Penny's – wanna go and burn through a few bucks?", go to coffee for no good reason.

Sadly, I have few close long-time friends. Sure, some of my childhood friends and I are friends on Facebook and occasionally "like" each others' statuses and comment here and there. But outside of Facebook, *apart* from Facebook, there is

no contact at all.

And I guess that always left me the impression that I am terribly forgettable. I am the friend whom people love when they are in front of you, but when they're gone they just aren't interesting enough to come to mind.

This impression left me lonely and hurt a lot of the time.

I would see people and their life-time besties and felt somehow shortchanged and left out.

My dad has always said that my sister brought home stray cats and I brought home "stray people". This is probably true. I have always had this deep need to reach out to people and encourage them.

I believe this has been a blessing and a curse in my life.

The blessing has been to watch people grow and blossom, and become a blessing to others. But the curse has been when people chose to take advantage of my innate need to reach out to needy people.

I suppose its my introvert side that tires quickly of casual friendship. There is this craving in my soul for deep friendship that goes beyond the shopping and girl-chatter about 80's flicks and fashion and into the murky waters of what really matters in life. You know, those topics that can make you stumble on a land that if this is a true friend, you'll somehow survive it together.

I have always been this way – from childhood, probably. I was born an old soul.

I much preferred sitting with adults and listening to them talk about important business matters than giggling with my girlfriends over Kirk Cameron's "hot" magazine cover.

And it was this craving for a deep connection that left me

both lonely and vulnerable to needy people who know well how to take, but never think to give.

It was only months before leaving the Vox message that led to a transformation in me that I was finally able to admit to myself that my inner circle was crammed with people to whom I gave much of myself, but never reciprocated. The telephone lines to my inner circle generally ran in one they needed something from me. I cared deeply for each person in my inner circle, but didn't sense that same care or concern coming from them.

To be sure, I walked the deepest valley of pain in my life with only two special ladies who messaged me daily to see how I was doing.

Neither of them were in my inner circle.

And I had to ask myself why.

Why was my inner circle so filled with takers, and yet those who were ready and willing to give were held at arms' length with reserve?

Here I sat at a crossroads:

Would I continue to feed the unhealthy friendship in my inner circle while holding those ready and willing to give to me at the time of my deepest pain, or would I choose to make room in my inner circle for those who truly cared about me...

...who didn't find me terribly forgettable?

It was at that moment that I made one of the best decisions of my life. The result of that decision has radically changed how I view friendship. It has also resulted in that deep need inside being met with people who are as ready to reach out to me as I am to them.

And for the first time in many years I am no longer lonely.

Throughout the month of May, I will be sharing what I've learned about building healthy relationships and how this important step I took last year has helped be in my recovery. Because recovery of body also means recovery of soul. An unhealthy soul and spirit will always result in an unhealthy body. God made us a three-part being and all three parts are inseparably linked together.

God created us with a need for personal relationship – a need He has divinely chosen not to meet because it is His desire that this need be met only through inner-personal relationships. Healthy relationships. Relationships that both give and take. Relationships that meet needs and allow our needs to be met.

Relationships that both see people are are seen by people – at our deepest murky depths that we are so prone to hide from others.

Are we ready to take this step?

We will never be whole if we never do.

Rosilind, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together they live in the country with their 2 active boys where she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her best-selling book *The Missional Handbook*. At *A Little R & R* she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at *Missional Call* where she shares her passion for local and global missions. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.