

MATTMCWILLIAMS

Live with Passion. Lead with Purpose. Leave a Legacy.

How to Get More Out of Every Relationship

From the moment I met my wife, Tara, I gave her an impossible task. I gave her the responsibility of making me happy. The result was disappointment for me, frustration for her, and a relationship that neither of us expected or wanted.

I'd love to write a redemption story here and tell you that Tara and I have the model marriage today, but the reality is that like any marriage, ours is messy, often broken, and too often unfulfilling. And the reason is very simple:

I gave her the responsibility of making me happy rather than living to make her happy. Rather than living to serve her, I placed an unfair burden on her that no human being can live up to...and I didn't even tell her.

Have you ever done that with a relationship? Entrusted someone else with your own happiness? If he or she is disappointed in you, it feels like the end of the world. If the other person is in a bad mood, it puts you in a bad mood. It's a vicious and seemingly never-ending cycle, until you either end the relationship or you lift that burden from the other person.

When you are dependent on someone else for your happiness, whether it be your spouse, your friends, your parents, or your boss, you are setting yourself up for disaster.

If You Want More

If you feel unfulfilled in any relationship, if you feel like you are not getting enough out of it, then you are not putting enough into it.

If you want more out of your marriage, put more into it.

If you want more out of your friendships, put more into them.

If you want more out of your job, put more into it.

If you want more out of your school, put more into it.

If you want more out of your team at work, put more into them.

No one is responsible for your happiness. No one is responsible for your fulfillment or your joy. Only you.

Unrealistic Expectations

Tara and I got engaged, like many do, at the height of our feelings for each other. We were in love. I was writing poetry, waiting at her house for her to get home, and I even played guitar for her. I was always thinking of ways to make her happy. I was investing in the relationship. I was putting more into it.

As a result, I was getting a lot out of it.

My feelings powered me. I spent our time apart longing to be with her again. I was caught up in the emotions and investing in the relationship was easy.

But I had unrealistic expectations. I assumed it would always be like that. That my emotions would always carry me. That Tara would always think I was perfect and that somehow I could be.

I thought that the *feeling* of love would continue to be present 24/7/365 and that this marriage thing we were about to embark on would be easy. But it's not. It's hard work sometimes...a lot of the time. It is *so* worth it, but it is the hardest thing I've ever done. Harder than starting businesses, harder than losing 60 pounds in 12 weeks, harder than watching my dad die. But like anything worth fighting for, the reward is worth it.

The unrealistic expectations set me up for failure. They set me up so that the first time things didn't go according to plan, my world was shattered and a vicious cycle was born.

The Problem with Feelings

The problem with these feelings is that they are only that - feelings. That is all.

The feeling you had your first day at your dream job - "I can't believe I actually get to work here" - is eventually replaced with the monotony of "another day at work." But will you make a choice to continue to invest in your job? In your boss? In your team? In your own improvement as a leader? In getting better at your craft?

When you first started your business, you said, "I'm going to change the world...wow, this is so much fun." Over time, those feelings are replaced with worries about how to make payroll. The day-to-day operations have drained your passion and consume your time. Will you choose to remember the reason you started it in the first place? Will you choose to put more into it? Into your products? Into your customers?

When you first got married, your feelings overpowered the doubts, silenced the naysayers, and told you this would be easy. But it's not. When the doubts do creep in and the naysayers' voices get louder and it's harder than you think you can handle, will you choose to put more into your spouse? Will you choose to serve? Will you choose to commit? Will you choose to free him or her from the responsibility of making you happy?

If you want more out of a relationship, put more into it. It's hard, but more than worth it.

What relationship do you need to put more into? How will you invest in that person today?