



NOW YOU SEE ME – OR DO YOU?

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Sometimes it's not the argument, the offense or the personality difference that ruins a relationship. Those problems deserve careful attention, but often there's something deeper at the root. It's the way partners see each other.

We construct mental pictures of our partners from collections of experiences we've had with them. Those collections can grow so large we believe we know *all* about our partner; we've heard, seen, done it all. We close our minds to new insights, new possibilities.

That can kill a relationship, because:

- Humans are too complex and fluid to contain in any collection of experiences, however large. When we're reacting to a mental picture, we're not relating to a whole person.
- We tend to spin our memories. Our brains automatically scan for threats, paying special attention to bad experiences and constructing pictures of our partners that evoke fear, resentment, or even contempt.

You *could* be with a toxic person who won't change. But before you conclude that, consider the possibility that your partner ...

- Makes sense when you see the world through his/her eyes
- Is doing the best he/she knows to meet legitimate needs
- Consists of desirable and undesirable traits – just like you
- May display more desirable traits as you learn to appreciate each other

When you were falling in love, you marveled at the unfolding mystery that was your loved one. If you can open your mind again to that mystery, you may rekindle the joy of exploring the person who won your heart.