Am I Worth Loving?

THE QUESTION BENEATH THE QUESTION

> *Some don't ask, are you there for me?*
> *They ask something harder: would you stay, if you knew me?*

There is a second question hiding under the famous one. “Are you there for me?” is about your partner. But many of us are answering an earlier question about ourselves: am I the kind of person someone stays for? For anyone carrying old shame (a harsh home, old failures, a cruel ex), the whispered answer is: not if they really knew you.

That whisper sabotages love from the inside. It edits what you share, putting a lovable version on display while the real you waits in storage. It hears criticism at triple volume, because criticism confirms the verdict. It deflects tenderness, so compliments bounce and comfort slides off, because love aimed at the display never reaches the person in storage. Worst of all, it can push away the very closeness it aches for, ending the suspense before the feared abandonment can.

Shame makes one demand: stay hidden. So its cure is the one thing it forbids. Not self-esteem exercises in the mirror, but this: showing a hidden piece to the person who matters, and being received. Every time your partner meets the unedited you with warmth, the whisper loses an argument it has been winning for decades. You can't talk yourself into worthiness. But you can let yourself be loved into it, one shown piece at a time.

ONE PIECE OUT OF STORAGE

1. Privately, name something you keep off display. A fear, a failure, a part you've decided is too much or not enough.
2. Choose the smallest true piece of it. You don't owe anyone the whole archive tonight.
3. Say it plainly: “This is something I usually hide, because part of me believes it makes me less lovable.”
4. Partner: receive it like something precious. Warmth first. No fixing, no minimizing. “Thank you for trusting me with that.”
5. Afterward, the one who shared says what it was like to be seen and kept. Let the new evidence count.

WHEN IT’S HARD

If being received well feels worse at first, exposed, undeserving, braced for the other shoe, that is shame defending its territory, not proof you made a mistake. Stay one extra breath in the warmth. The discomfort of being loved accurately fades. The hiding never does.

TO SIT WITH

What do you believe your partner would think less of you for? What evidence do you actually have?

When your partner deflects your love, what might they be protecting? How might you aim past the display?

OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

Dr. Mark Gregory Karris