

ON CUPIDS AND SOUL MATES

BY DARCY SIMONSON AND SHEILA SORNSIN,
THE GRATEFUL GODDESS

During the month of February, one can hardly leave their doorstep without seeing images of hearts swollen beyond the capacity of even the most voluptuous chests, or mischievous cupids with bows drawn, ready to inflict unsuspecting singles with love potion arrows. Along with these pervasive images, comes hope for some that one day true love or a lifelong mate, will waltz into their worlds and sweep them off their feet; but not just any mate, a soul mate.

The idea of soul mates is attractive. Who wouldn't want to spend the rest of their lives with a divinely suited counterpart, one who "completes" the other, as Jerry McGuire would say? It is reasonable to want a partner who understands

you; who is your best friend and confidant; who shares your vision, sense of adventure, or interests. This said, does the often idealized soul mate image create impossible criteria for anyone to fill? Won't unrealistic expectations lead to real disappointment?

Not all interpretations of 'soul mate' are idealized, however, and it seems there are as many ideas about what a soul mate is as there are souls. While we admit to having been a bit starry-eyed while young and single, with dreamy expectations of predestined love, over the years we've determined that all sorts of soul connections are made throughout lifetimes and that these soul mates move in and out of our lives as we navigate through karma, love and lessons. We believe these soul mates appear in many forms, including friends, lovers, and adversaries. It's our opinion that even the most difficult relationships can be a soul mate experience, with one person holding up a mirror for the other to look into. Often what that mirror reflects are the deepest (and sometimes darkest) aspects of ourselves and once we recognize them, internal change and growth is possible. Whether the soul mate experience is positive or negative, long or short-term, all leave a gift behind, if we choose to see it.

Not surprisingly, as business partners, longtime friends and likely soul mates, we share the same perspective on the topic. We are seldom satisfied by only one perspective however, so we asked some of our community's most interesting and influential people to share theirs:

According to Dr. Val Farmer, Psychologist and Columnist, "You don't find a soul mate but you become soul mates. You do this through cultivating a loving marriage filled with daily acts of love, teamwork, deep emotional intimacy, fun companion-

ship and shared purpose. If you are not soul mates, it is because you aren't doing enough. Some couples have euphoric beginnings but that is all it is, a beginning."

Chris Linnares, Brazilian Psychologist, Author, Speaker and Founder of Diva Dance, says, "I do believe in soul mates. I believe that when you find your soul mate, together you have a mission to become stronger and give more back to humanity and show even more light to the world."

First Lady of North Dakota, Mikey Hoeven, states, "I'm not sure I agree with the notion of "soul mates". Regardless of whom your "mate" is I believe the secret to having a successful relationship is by working at it every single day. Anything worth having is worth the investment of time, nurturing and hard work."



artwork by Darcy Simonson

Troy Parkinson, Medium and Filmmaker says, "I believe that soul mates do exist and I know I'm married to mine, but I don't think you only have one, and you don't have to have a sexual connection to be soul mates. Some of my strongest soul connections are with my best friends from high school, four guys who I know are my soul mates as well."

Randy Wimmer of Wimmer's Diamonds, whose work entails helping committed couples select the perfect symbol of union, reflects, "Very often I find myself eternally grateful for the foundation of my life - family, friends and inspirational acquaintances (folks I may not know, but I've been blessed with a chance to cross their path). Among them are many, many soul mates."

Pastor Shawntea Monroe, formerly of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Moorhead shares, "I don't believe in soul mates in the "today I marry my friend" sort of way. Rarely have I married a couple that I thought was uniquely or perfectly suited to one another. Usually, they have a good start - common interests and values, sparks of sexual chemistry, an ability to communicate effectively on a range of topics, and a real desire to make the other person happy. Getting married is easy. Staying married is hard work. But I do believe there are connections that are made between people that are soul connections - and my experience tells me this often happens outside of marriage, within friendships. There is something profound and holy about these relationships and they are easily misunderstood."

Seeking these opinions was a fun exercise for us and though they are both varied and alike, they offer a glimpse into the unique ways people view the topic. Still, no matter what you think of romantic relationships or soul mates, not everyone appreciates Valentines Day. As Juliet Trnka, yoga instructor and Ayurvedic Practitioner, states,



"This stems from a very narrow concept of love in our society where romantic love is seen as the pinnacle of achievement. Why not take a different view? If you are alone on this holiday you have a wonderful opportunity to begin the work of the Self: fall in love with YOU and all the other doors of love open effortlessly."

Whether you are alone, seeking, or already in a committed relationship, when cupid peers down upon you and your grocery cart from a flotilla above, don't think of it as an affront to your status, or a reminder of the effort involved in relationships, but appreciate it for what it represents: a reminder to love and to accept love. When you do, Cupid's dart might just find your heart.

Darcy Simonson and Sheila Sornsin are the creators of The Grateful Goddess

www.thegratefulgoddess.com

Poem by Ed Schafer, former Governor of North Dakota, US Secretary of Agriculture written to his soul mate, Nancy Schafer, for their 15th anniversary. Ed creates poetry each year to express his love and appreciation.

Soul Mate (sol mat) n. [Colloq.]

1. a person, esp. of the opposite sex, with whom one has a deeply personal relationship
2. Nancy Schafer

*I love to watch her sleep, but she's tossing tonight
As we move back together again
The elbows, knees and sharp angles of the day melt away
And her curves smooth out my rough hollows
My heart aches for her
I want her to sleep comfortably; to be at peace*

*I lay awake dreaming
Recounting the blessings of fifteen years together
That first exciting, passionate and happy love
Now deeper, warmer, more enduring
I love how she comforts me with her presence
My biggest supporter, I smile—my biggest critic too*

*She holds me when I cry and skips with me when I rejoice
The prism for my colors and the key for my music
I know she fell asleep praying for me
That gives me peace
And now, for her, it is my turn to pray
Her hand is warm as I slip mine beneath hers*

It fits perfectly