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The following is from an interview conducted for Black Hills Woman Magazine in April of 2016

What I'd like to know from your perspective is:

- I imagine you work with people who are "stuck" in a lot of ways -- career, relationships, etc. What are some of the steps you encourage clients to take to get unstuck in their relationships? Are there questions you tend to ask, affirmations you have them choose?

It is actually what I consider my forte, helping people get "unstuck". The biggest resource for people who are stuck in a rut is a perspective shift. This is generally my job to create an experience in which people say "I never saw it that way", and people often report that they found options that they didn't even know they had. I'll put it this way:

"When we are able to take on new perspectives, we experience options that were previously outside of our awareness. Having a choice empowers us and promotes movement in our lives."

I work a lot with metaphors and listen to peoples' language. (There are hidden messages in subconscious word choice that I am trained to hear!) The very term of being "stuck in a rut" denotes lack of movement. As people, we are often stuck in ruts because we don't have enough information. A well-known quote says "Not making a decision makes the decision," and we stay stuck where we are at. We are often concerned with making the "right" choice or moving in the "right" direction. Sometimes all that is "left" might be a better choice, or simply "moving forward."

Take a step. Any step. It is the only way we gain feedback and gather information. In my office, I take clients through a structured process where we take steps metaphorically and safely explore options in order to gain more information to make the best choices available to us in our lives.

When we create affirmations to move us from where we're at to where we want to be, there is one factor that is the most important to follow. PUT IT IN POSITIVE TERMS. *Please see next answer. I don't mean "positive" in

terms of unicorns and butterflies. I mean "positive" in terms of something that is attainable, that we can actually move towards. Try this: "Don't think of a blue and yellow striped zebra." or "Don't look out the window." What happens? We first have to look at something before we can look away. Negatives steal our attention. For example, "I don't want to feel stressed and overwhelmed." Feeling stressed and overwhelmed has our attention. Well then, what *do* you want? The affirmation becomes "I feel calm and connected." Because we are all too often aware of what we *don't* want, a big part of my job becomes helping people figure out what they *do* want. In this component, I also help people start to pay attention to their own language and rephrase what they don't want in positive terms of what they do want and can move towards.

- What should they NOT do to strengthen their love and close relationships?
(This is a big theme for the upcoming issue -- what NOT to do)

I am "A Positive Life Coach" by intentional design. What we should *not* do to strengthen love and relationships is *not* focus on what we *don't* want, or on what *not to do*. When we are very aware of what we *don't* want, it is more easily noticed. By starting to shift our focus towards outcomes that we *do* want, we become more easily able to notice the presence of what we *do* want. If we want a spouse to show more love, then we can start paying attention and actively *look* for times that we are shown more love. As a result, we get to *experience* more love because our attention is no longer tied up with a negative focus and we are available to the presence of love.

- Everyone's idea of a good relationship is different, but what are some of the key characteristics that you find?

I find that people who have a developed sense of self also experience better relationships. People with a developed sense of self are people who know who they are, are able to love and express love for themselves, and who are able to self-soothe. Therefore, people who are able to care for themselves are also equipped to care for others and nurture healthier relationships, without codependence to fulfill their own well-being and happiness.

- A lot of people tend to think they need to change their partners. How do you navigate this slippery slope with your clients?

I want people to develop life skills that they can use to be "ok" in any situation, regardless of their partners changing, getting a promotion, or any other requirement that exists outside themselves. As mentioned above, people with a developed sense of self experience better relationships, so

working with individual change and personal development is key. In my work, I diplomatically lead people to a place where they declare knowing that they can't change anyone other than themselves. That creates willingness to work with the only thing we can work with: the individual in the room.

- The article above talks about "the powerful correlation between the warmth of your relationships and your health and happiness in your later years." Can you share your interpretation of "warmth in relationships?"

I cannot interpret the meaning of "warmth in relationships" according to this article. My guess is that there were some parameters in the study such as "feeling loved" or the frequency of an embrace. To me, warmth could mean any act or way of being in a relationship that creates an inner smile.

- Any other ideas you'd like to add on the subject of what people require to live a happy life?

Yes, so many! There is a lot of current research on happiness, positive psychology, and gratitude. People can follow my "positive posts" on facebook and look to my website for further resources. To me, it is all about perspective. I can be annoyed by the cobwebs in the corner, or I can be grateful I have a corner for cobwebs to exist!

Practice positivity consistently. Practice love consistently. There is a reason there is repetition in advertising. It works. Be mindful of what you are telling yourself. Create positive affirmations, and practice them daily. Love yourself. Give gratitude.

Here are some other resources to check out:
<http://jlanaefreelance.com/5-ways-to-instantly-be-a-goddess-girlfriend/>