



Obstacles to belonging

Once we see clearly what our particular pattern is, it no longer has power over us. From here we can learn to experience more belonging than ever before.

by Gayane Kulikyan

I haven't felt at home since becoming a refugee at the age of nine. I searched for years for a place I could call my own. Every time my family moved – which was every two to three years – I thought to myself, “maybe THIS place will be where I'll finally arrive”.

Unfortunately, it wasn't so.

When I became old enough to travel on my own, I boarded a plane with anticipation of finding a perfect city and country that would stir in me a sense of belonging and home. Although I thoroughly enjoyed travelling, I also felt disappointed, and the longing for ‘home’ still nagged at me.

My journey to find my home has been deeply healing, challenging, and at times exhilarating. Along the way, I met my soul friends, discovered my purpose, and found my spiritual teacher and a community that is closely linked to my soul's calling. In addition to that, the intimacy with myself and within my relationships is continuing to deepen with time.

If you feel rejected, you might have a hard time creating relationships and friendships in which you feel secure, held and loved.

Based on my own inner work, observations, and numerous courses I've engaged in, I have observed emerging themes that have blocked me, and others, from experiencing belonging. Here are some of them:

Shame

Often, when we feel shame we have a tendency to hide our authentic self from others. This creates two layers of identity within us. Typically, we then communicate with others from the top layer, losing access to the deeper layer

which, when tapped into, can allow genuine connection to emerge.

Feeling rejected

This feeling could become part of an identity as early as birth. For example, if you felt rejected by your mum or dad, this feeling could have started straight away. Or, if you moved around the world or grew up in different countries, it's highly likely that you didn't feel like you were a part of any particular culture. If you feel rejected, you might have a hard time creating relationships and friendships in which you feel secure, held and loved.

Lack of attunement

If, as you were growing up, nobody around you mirrored your feelings, needs, and desires back to you, then you might feel lost in the sea of your inner experiences. Lack of attunement can also lead to a sense of disconnectedness from yourself as well as people around you.

Loneliness

Feeling lonely can create a barrier between you and the world. A friend of mine described this with an image: she is standing behind a glass wall and she is looking at all these people on the other side but she can't join them. Or as the English/Irish poet David Whyte eloquently wrote: "loneliness can be a prison, a place from which we look out at a world we cannot inhabit..."

Fear

A contraction in the physical and emotional bodies can be described as experiencing fear. Many humans have a tendency to withdraw or pull away when we feel afraid. When you unconsciously engage in this habit, it might be difficult for others to find access to you. If you pull away, you usually cut off connection with others and with the external environment. You might even avoid intimacy, which can contribute to a sense of separation that could already exist.

Once we learn to see clearly what our particular pattern is, it no longer has power over us.

Surprisingly, some of us might even be afraid of belonging. We might be so used to being different, to standing apart and feeling like we don't belong, that to allow ourselves to experience belonging feels uncomfortable and awkward. We might even develop a strong resistance to closeness with another human being. To feel like we have quite a lot in common with others might feel threatening to our already established identity, of being 'not like everyone else'.

Even though numerous blocks to love and belonging exist, it doesn't mean that they are insurmountable. Once we learn to see clearly what our particular pattern

is, it no longer has power over us. From here we can learn to experience more belonging than ever before. ■

References:

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Gayane Kulikyan, MA is a coach specialising in helping women who feel like they don't belong anywhere and long to find their true home.

She grew up in four countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia and the US.

Gayane holds a master's degree in spiritual psychology. She feels passionate about bridging cultures through the hearts and souls of individuals.

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