
Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by minou on Sun 28 Oct 2007 11:24 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hello Al,

Not too sure if this is the way to ask a question about this article: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay. In any case, here is my question, as I feel challenged by this concept.

At the end of your article, you give a quick fix: to confuse that lizard. I think I understand the goal of this: to make one feel safe with your partner, so your Lizard won't react so much in a panic mode as the chances are it's reacting passionately to the 95% history part of that person. If you find yourself with a partner with whom you have not felt safe for many reasons such as being lied to or manipulated over and over by that partner (yes, I do understand that this partner may lie because he does not feel safe himself to tell the truth), isn't it kind of dangerous to confuse your own lizard should you be in a relationship with a partner who chooses to be manipulative? That partner may do a lot of these caring behaviours so your lizard do get confused and then does not become aware when there is danger/unsafe situation? Isn't it training your lizard to not go in panic mode when it should?

I probably did not understand the concept fully. Please explain. Thank you.
Minou

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by Al Turtle on Sun 28 Oct 2007 06:44 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Darn glad you are engaging with this topic. Let's see if I can clarify. The way I see it, the Lizard is all about survival, even when survival is not at stake. The Lizard's reactions (Flee, Freeze, Submit, Fight) are frequently crude, panicky, frenzied, and often not the best "thing to do." I like the idea that we want to set aside "Reaction" and become more "Reflective" about how to solve a situation.

I think the Lizard gives us crude and immediate clues in a situation it thinks is dangerous and which may be. I think one should never ignore one's Lizard. But I prefer to a) hear its warning and b) choose a wise way of dealing with the situation I am facing.

When I speak of "fooling" the Lizard, I am referring to getting a bit of reflective time - time to come up with a healthy and long-term solution to the situation.

I once worked with a member of the U.S. Special Forces who had been trained to kill extremely quickly. His Lizard was on edge most of the time and his hands were quite lethal. He told me that "My first reaction, the one that comes on me in the first 4 seconds, usually involves quite a bit of destruction." We talked about inserting a bit of pause into his reactions, settling his Lizard down.

I think the goal is to train your cortex into taking care of your Lizard, rather than letting your Lizard rule your cortex.

I think if you find your partner is telling lies, or you think they are manipulating you, that should "never" be ignored. Get to work on it, but the wise response is probably not Fleeing, Freezing, Submitting or Fighting. Go to work on fixing the problem.

Good luck.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by minou on Sun 28 Oct 2007 11:23 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Thank you for replying to me.

OK. I like that "But I prefer to a) hear its warning and b) choose a wise way of dealing with the situation I am facing." The way I understand this is instead of fleeing, freezing, submitting or fighting, is to train the Lizard to take more time in assessing if I am in life-death situation or not, time to think things through, when my life is not in danger, because I would know if it was. Am I on the right path to understand your idea? I completely agree with you that one should never ignore his-her Lizard, it is what kept us alive since the evolution. My problem is to recognise and trust myself enough to know that 1) I will be ok 2) I will recognise that my boundaries have been crossed and 3) I will know what to do about it to fix it. My reflex reaction for the 3) above is to leave the relationship. That is a very strong reaction in me. But even when I have left relationships, I sure find someone to give me the opportunity to deal with the same problem all over again.

When I think of this: "to train your cortex into taking care of your Lizard, rather than letting your Lizard rule your cortex", I see a huge amount of work to retrain myself, my reactions, to whatever I find violates my boundaries, which I must say are very weak. I love your writing about boundaries, which has always been an issue for me. I am used to let people cross my boundaries and do nothing about it at the moment, to keep silent about it, then to just flee or completely swept things under the carpet and let resentment built. I think I must have shut down a part of me that was telling me to keep safe, instead, I ignored it. I think I know where it comes from. I have a lot of work ahead of me. Yes, I have to work on fixing that lie-manipulation problem, without getting stuck into strong old patterns. What a challenge! A great positive one!
Thank you.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by [Al Turtle](#) on Mon 29 Oct 2007 01:27 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

My reply is in the following article.

[Click here.](#)

[Reply](#)

Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by [EyesOnThePrize](#) on Wed 19 Mar 2008 11:25 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Al,

An issue arose last night where I think your input will be useful to me. I was at the airport with my ex-wife (long story) and she was attempting to get seats on a new flight as some weather delays had caused her to miss a connection. Since I believe my tendency in the past was to not hold her capable and since I am working on respecting her boundaries, I kept my distance and let her handle things herself. Well, there was some guy there behind her at the counter (drunk, according to her) whom she believed was looking over her shoulder and crowding her and being rude. She says to me "feeling unsafe!" and later when we talked about it and I recall her saying "You want me to feel safe, and yet you let this guy crowd me." This is somewhat paraphrased, and that was how I recall the gist of it.

Here's where my confusion arises. My understanding of "being a source of safety to her lizard" is that it applies to her feeling safe in my presence and not having her lizard into one of the 4 resistance modes. My understanding is that it does not mean I become her bodyguard. Now, I have not gone over the whole concept of the lizard with her, as to date I believe she has shown resistance to my efforts to explain some of the work I'm doing to her, and it is entirely possible that she sees the "source of safety" as a "source of physical safety." In fact, the way I look at it, the fact that she expressed that she wanted me to keep this person out of her space may actually be her lizard feeling safety with me, or at the least, showing more safety with me than this stranger. I believe her question made sense to her, and I think I get her sense. Where I'd like input is on whether my interpretation of "source of safety" is in line with your concept, or if my concept is narrower and that the physical presence and keeping her physically safe (or at least the appearance thereof) would be included with your concept. In addition, I had part of point 4 of "what do to when he/she leaves" (minimal availability) in my mind when I chose to give her some distance.

Earlier in the day, when we were speaking by phone, she was feeling not safe, and when I asked her what I could do that might help her feel safer, I recall her saying "don't use such a stern tone with me." For me, that was a much more clearly delineated line, and although I may have invalidated a bit ("I didn't think it was a stern tone"), I did shift my tone immediately.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 20 Mar 2008 09:57 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Eyes,

You write so well, and share enough details of your journey to make responding pretty attractive to me. There is no way I could respond to everyone out there in this detail, but hopefully this will helpful to you and others as well.

Also I have a pleasant feeling of "being buddies" with you. While I wrote all my articles, I also would apply them (doing it well or poorly) in my life with my wife, my friends, etc. I would learn from finding

"what worked." It was a joy each time I would grasp onto something solid!

In summary, I think you are on the "right track," and I imagine you feel that way too. Now let me share some specific comments related to you piece.

I define [Safety](#) as signalled by the presence of Safe behaviors and the absence of Not Safe behaviors. Your partner is Safe when displaying Play, Mate, Nurturing, Creative Work behaviors. Your partner is Not Safe when she is displaying Fleeing, Freezing, Submitting or Fighting behaviors. That makes for a fairly simple definition of Safety.

I define [Being a Source of Safety](#) as "coming across as a place to go, a presence to be in when someone feels unsafe."

The issue for me is not a) whether that "drunken guy" was a threat to her ([a "fact"](#) and [MasterTalk](#)), but b) whether she felt unsafe and at that time chose to move toward you or wanted you to be there. If she showed that she wanted your presence, even telling you about her wish later, then I would think you came across as a Source of Safety to her in that situation. Hooray!

I do think in many ways we become each other's bodyguards, but in a refined and accurate sense of the word. You see, sometimes standing up to "those guys" may scare her more. Sometimes not standing up may scare her more. I'd like to redefine the word bodyguard to be "Safety Assistant." The goal is to be conscious of seeking to assist her needs for safety, and to come across that way. A simple method to achieve this is to dialogue with your partner, often, about "what can I do that would tend to make you feel more safe and relaxed." [While you listen to their thoughts](#), remember that you cannot "be magical," but you can mirror any magical request she may make. Also remember that when you do thing that she suggests would take care of her lizard, you need to simultaneously be taking care of yours.

Be aware that often, in relationship, people think/talk MAGICALLY. The most common form is they think you can read their minds. Oh my gosh, how often that happens! Your story shows that both of you can use some practice at learning to be more realistic about communication. Lots of [Mirroring](#) helps, I find. In your story she expressed distress that you "let this guy crowd me" when there was no way for you to have that data - without being a mind reader. In your analysis you share your idea that ""being a source of safety to her lizard is that it applies to her feeling safe in my presence." Its as if you think you can magically make her lizard safe. Nope! Can't! All you can do is show that you want to help, be a good bodyguard and you cannot read her mind. But you can read her behavior (seeing Flee, Freeze, Submit, Fighting) enough to ask, "What can I do to help you feel safer?"

Oh, that old problem [sharing what you have learned about the Lizard with her!](#) I found that is tricky, too. Unfortunately sharing these things may come across like teaching and preachy and "I know better than you." Also, given that she has been moving away, you probably have a reputation in her head of talking too much. That is part of why I think it works better for a couple when I share my "theories" with both of them, rather than I share with one then they share it with their partner. Good luck in trying to "teach her." :)

And that last bit about "the stern tone." I think you will learn better over time. That seems [a MasterTalk situation](#). It is such a habit in our culture. Yup, I think your response to her was "stupid." But how you gonna learn without making mistakes?

In summary, I think you are doing great! And she sounds like "a keeper."

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by EyesOnThePrize on Thu 20 Mar 2008 10:58 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Al,

Me? Talking too much? I don't know how I might have ever given that impression. :) Thanks, as always, for the feedback. I see her continuing to move away in some ways, as her plan is to move out of state in May and she has started a new relationship. Both of these make sense to her, and I think I have a good idea of her sense in both cases. I'm actually okay with both things. I believe that the work that I am doing for myself has been impaired by my reactions to her presence and I believe that some distance will help with that. In addition, my hunch is that this new relationship crashes and burns within six months and my belief is that it could be a valuable learning lesson for her, if she chooses to learn from it.

I am amazed, and somewhat frustrated, by the number of people who don't know her well (or at all) who tell me that I should forget about her, move on, find someone new. Does she have flaws? In my opinion, yes she does. And I also believe that I and every other person on this planet has

flaws. However, I believe that what is at her core is amazing, and I am very attracted to it. To me, she is a "keeper." However, in order to "keep her" (hmmm...that sounds awfully possessive to me), I think my best course is to let her go. I do believe in my heart that our paths will bring us back together in the future.

As for the "stern tone", I recall that I was more attempting to come across as "caring, but not making her the center of my world" and, the background noise was making it difficult for me to hear her and she said it was making it difficult for her to hear me, so I may have raised my voice, which she may have perceived as a stern. That being said, I can choose to learn from the experience, or choose to stay where I am. However, I believe I want to grow up, so I think change and learning are good for me.

Well, I've blown through my 200 word limit, and for that I apologize, and as I believe you know, I find your feedback very helpful to me. Also, phrasing things without MasterTalk takes a lot more words for me. Finally, thank you for what I take as the kind words about me and our relationship in your first post.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by EyesOnThePrize on Wed 26 Mar 2008 10:18 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

I had another argument with my ex yesterday, which I think didn't have to go down the way it did. However, at one point the conversation turned to something which made my lizard uncomfortable and it jumped right into fight and her lizard seemed only too happy to follow. I believe I was very invalidating of her, and I believe she invalidated me several times. In fact, I recall that the statement that set my lizard into Fight was when she said something close to "I was calling to get some understanding. I guess I'm not going to get it here." As soon as I calmed down I sent her a text message apologizing for the invalidation and asking if we could do the conversation over later as a dialog and saying that I would call TimeOuts if I thought she was going into argument, and that she could do the same with me.

I also wrote her a long e-mail last night, again apologizing for the invalidation and explaining more about the lizard and TimeOuts and how I interpreted some of the many posters I have on my bathroom mirror (thanks, Al!). She hasn't responded, and I really don't expect a response. In my mind, as long as she read it, that's enough. If she wants to ask questions, she will. I will not push the issue. In fact, I imagine that she may even see the e-mail itself as pushing. I am concerned that she will interpret my attempts to tell her about the work I am doing as pushing or as attempting to disrupt her new relationship. I recognize that these would be her choices, though, and I am doing what makes sense to me.

I have also found that learning things about her new boyfriend and attempting to find out things are not good for my lizard. For instance, this morning I looked at her MySpace page and it now has as a header "[Ex-wife has a cute boyfriend" which triggered me feeling nauseated. Only afterwards did I ask myself "Why did I do that to myself?" I know that she is with him now, and I believe they are in the early, giddy stages of their relationship (although interestingly, I recall her repeatedly telling me that she doesn't know if she's in love with him, that she's just happy) , and I don't think that trying to find out the details is good for me. I believe that it is a Clinger tendency which I believe is not serving me well now. I believe in my heart that this relationship will crash and burn in time (3 months, 6 months, maybe a bit longer) and I want to use that time to work on myself. As I stated in an earlier post, I do believe she is "a keeper." I want to use this time to become a source of safety to her lizard, so that when she is ready again, she will hopefully come to where it is safe. I want her to be a source of safety to my lizard, too, and I'll cross that bridge when we get there.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by Al Turtle on Wed 26 Mar 2008 04:49 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear EyesOnThePrize,

Wouldn't it be nice if it were easy. Ah. I feel for you. I was thinking of how many other people are going through exactly what you are, though you and I are not in contact with them. Probably, oh, 20,000, I'd guess, in the US alone. I am sure that would not make your experience easier. But there it is.

As I read your post, I thought how I am a guy who really hates not knowing what is going on. While my personal experiences are different than yours, they were really ugly! Out of that I eventually discovered and wrote my [Map of Relationships](#), as a guide to

understanding, to stopping the confusion, and to pointing toward what to do. After 8 years, I think it still holds up as an excellent study. I commend it to you. I think more than enough answers to your puzzles are in it.

And try not to blame yourself too much. Lots of the "foolish" things you may have done were taught to you by a couple of other "foolish," well-meaning people. They didn't know any better.

God Bless.

Al

[Reply](#)

Re: Safety and The Lizard: Great Questions

by [Al Turtle](#) on Sun 23 Mar 2008 07:26 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

I have been directed to your site and have lurked around reading your stuff - find it thought provoking. I especially relate to the 'lizard' brain - mine's pretty big and dominating I think.

Here is my dilemma - I want to heal myself and recognize within myself a tendency to withdraw and not engage in relationship. My serious relationships are few (5 total) and apart from the 2 marriages only lasted around 6 months. I grew up in single parent family and did not get healthy emotional input in all sorts of ways. I have been in personal therapy twice in the last about 10 years - but don't seem to have managed to change much. Right now I am figuring the most damaging and painful episode from my childhood is being in hospital at around 18mths/2-ish for a bad impetigo infection. My mother was told to not visit me because it would upset me too much, and so I was there for maybe a week or so - I've read the Bowlby stuff and realize that potentially that was very damaging. My mother remembers me being totally withdrawn with her - refusing to go to her for several days and then being very clinging for many weeks so I think it hit me badly although I have no conscious memory.

At 21 I married the boy I had dated from aged 19 - and about the 3rd boy I had dated for more than a few weeks. Various difficulties (not a fulfilling marriage for either of us) and finally I left when my kids got to their teens.

8 years later re-marry a man who seems to really adore me and quickly discover I'm in trouble. 3yrs in I find masses of sadistic pornography, membership of a swinger site. I panic, I get obsessional checking up on him and I research stuff. I get us to a therapist who is also a psychologist.

We undergo an assessment because I highlight concerns about some sort of cognitive dysfunction - I suspected some sort of autism. I am told my husband has narcissistic personality disorder. We attended some therapy sessions - what I learned from those and from doing internet research was extremely discouraging so I chose to leave and get a divorce. This all sounds cold and factual - actually at the time I am extreme emotional turmoil.

Here is my problem - was leaving really the only sensible thing to do? I still get little pangs of hope that maybe he could change. A lot of this is around my own feelings of inadequacy - goes in 2 directions. Could I have done more or been more effective in the relationship? And on the other hand - how come I picked someone so damaged and damaging? Just how screwed up am I that I made such a bad choice 2nd time around? Would staying have given me an opportunity to heal myself at the same time as helping him get more real? I know he is in pain himself and sometimes I can see it.

I am now 60 years old and on my own again. I feel so discouraged and lonely with very little sense of a possible future as part of a couple.

I chose to marry #2 not because I was madly in love but because he seemed to really adore me and I thought it was my chance to build a relationship on solid foundations of common interests and values. This is long enough already - what is your opinion of relationships with some-one who has a personality disorder - is getting out the healthiest response? and what about the person who has gotten involved - where can I learn about relating healthily if I am on my own.

I do have three grown kids - very loving but I wonder how badly I screwed them up and they maybe aren't the best people to practice healthy relating on.

I'd seriously value your opinion.

A Friend

Al Responds

Dear Friend,

A great letter, and thanks for sharing so much. Sounds like a lot of pain there, for you, for a long time. Also sounds to me as if you have had lots of confusion, conflicting advice, for a long time. And congratulations for "surviving" to 60. I am 66 this year and sometimes just stop and shake my own hand for having had the courage/stubbornness/wisdom to keep going. Therefore, my hat is off to you.

Now, let's look at the problems. I can only speak for myself and share my thoughts. I hope they will be useful to you.

You give me some clues about yourself and those I wanna grasp. I believe that the place to start out is with "who we have become," and then we learn to add on to ourselves missing pieces, missing skills we missed. This also forms my beliefs about how to be nurturing to our children - the ones we have brought into the world and all who are looking up to us.

You picked up that Lizard piece well, I think. I found it useful. One thought is when you say it is "pretty big," I respond, "thank God, or you might not have survived." I love the idea that the Lizard (my lizard) is boss of my life. If it feels taken care of, it sleeps, and I can live peacefully. If it feels threatened, it takes over.

Now, one big mistake about dealing with our Lizards seems to come from our childhood. As kids, we "expect" that our parents will keep us safe. That is their job. I think nature's plan for us, over time, is to take on the responsibility (from our parents) of keeping our Lizard relaxed.

However, many of us were not made safe by our parents. They could not do it. And so, rather than having time to learn how to keep our own Lizards calm, we continue in adulthood to seek "others" who will take care of us and our Lizards. But in this way we become dependent and "victim" to their clumsiness, their human foibles, their stupidity, even their cruelty. We believe we are safe if we find someone to take care of us.

I don't think this works and I believe our Lizards really don't like us trying it. Our Lizards want their closest neighbor, our cortexes, to be sources of safety. That way, they, our Lizards feel safe no matter what the outside world is doing, and no matter what memories of past terror comes up.

So the trick is to train/educate your cortex to take care of your Lizard on a 24/7 basis and not be dependent on others. For me this started with me learning about Boundaries - really a thinking person's guide to taking care of your Lizard. Good boundary skills mean a relaxed Lizard. I suggest you become an expert in Boundaries. (See my paper on [Boundaries for the Individual](#)).

From the vantage point of being a "Boundary expert," I believe you will be much more able, especially if you have assistance, to look back on your history (the source of lots of wisdom), find your mistakes, learn from them, apply new skills and share them with your kids and others.

From that vantage point also, I think you will reconsider the "labels" that some have given you and your partner(s), labels you collected over the years of confusion, trying to find out how to get "better." I am used to the idea that you settle down with someone equally dysfunctional, and so I am used to thinking that if my partner has a "psychiatric label," I wonder what is mine. I believe those labels are only useful to point toward the "way out of the problem(s)." I bet if I took an average person and looked carefully at their life, I would "justify" every label in the psychiatric book for them, at some time or other. I am also used to the idea that everyone always has at least one personality disorder. :)

"How come I picked someone so damaged and damaging?" Tis a great question and I believe the answer is something like, "Well, that is normal. [It is what the Imago is all about](#). One always picks one's worst nightmare - someone as bad as me."

Was it the sensible thing to do?" Wow. What a great question! I wonder what mountain I could climb, what holy place I could visit, what state I could get into that would let me answer that question. I'm sorry to share that "I don't know the truth." I experience that decisions, like yours, can only rationally be evaluated by YOU some years after you've made them. And even then, the evaluation can only be a) how glad I am (a scale of -10 to +10) that I made that decision, and b) what did I learn from that decision? I can never know whether it was "right." (See [Master/Slave](#))

Therefore, I ask how glad are you to have made that decision and what did you learn from it?

I suggest you keep burrowing around in my website. Here are the papers in order I think you might want to have read, after you have read them.

[Boundaries for Individuals: The Essay](#) good starting place.

[Map of Relationships: The Essay](#) - general framework

[MASTER/SLAVE, Two World Problem: The Essay](#) - clarify the issues of "truth" and "reality"

[The Power of Passivity](#) which may end up being your favorite guide in getting out of where you have come to be.

Good luck and God Bless.

Al

[Reply](#)

Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by Suzana on Sun 22 Jun 2008 11:56 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi dear Al,

I am so glad I found your site, I have been reading it intensely for almost a week now, and have learnt a great deal from it. But, honestly, the information has started to overwhelm me. So I would appreciate if I could get some more specific advice, no matter how short, from you about my issue:

Namely, I am 27 years old and in a relationship of 8 years. I leave with my boyfriend but we have serious problems with power and Master/Slave attitudes. We are both very dominant characters - i more passively so, only when being stepped on, while he seems to be curing some past frustrations from a dominant mother/older sister.

I tended to victimize myself for too long making him the bad person, although, apparently i still was quite a significant positive influence on him. Currently, i am very bitter and in the opposite role - finding my self faulty for all the troubles we have.

My main problem seems to be the uncertainty of my emotions to this guy. I still don't know whether i love him, and whether he is worth spending my life with? He is very dismissive and critical, opposite to what i expect from people generally. But, since we spent so much time together, I gathered all this frustration and resentment from all his dismissals (I would buy a new insignificant stuff (clothes, make up) and when he would see my childish rejoycing he would comment sarcastically or just frown; or i would go out with my friends and he would provide further bitter comments of the type: nice, don't come back). I understand this was all expression of his lack of esteem, or safety in my love towards him (safety in general, to refer to the Lizard). However, in all this frustration on his part, i could see the deep affection and felt safe by it. I was also quite ill at the time we met, and he provided the safety to frightened and lonely Lizard.

But, he recently got a new job, and completely transformed - all the frustrations and cinicism he exhibited with me, and with all other people, no less, are no turned off - especially towards his male and female colleagues. I found this deeply hurting, as i interpreted it as a betrayal. As he had been acting the tough guy all along, and now after i am completely traumatized by him, he is all fixed and ready to move on. This resulted in me with certain physical manifestations (resembling severe fear or panic probably of being left alone - cold and shivering body, fast breathing, increased heart beat), and eventually started acting his act - become severely jealous (usually not my trait - it was just a pay back for all his jealous attacks for which i stopped hanging with most of my male friends), and started phoning him all the time, controlling him, fighting (a lot - also not my trait since very early childhood) and crying a lot. Bascially acting completely irrational.

Whew....

This was a lot of text... Appologies for that. But my interest now lies in this: what do you think i should work on first - resentment, or detecting my inner lizard fears? I have been trying to identify the childhood trauma memories i connect with him, but my child hood was seriously normal - with the exception that as i had two working parents, i had to become independent at 6 already (come back from school alone, etc). My parents are completely opposite of him - they are both educators , and i cannot recall a time when i was criticized by them... So i am guessing that my lizard is scared from these recent trauma memories connected to him - the agonizing criticizms, and the boundaries he has set for me. At some moments i get these thoughts which seem particularly lucid and brutally realistic to me - the only way to heal the resentment he has caused is to leave him :(but the lizard fear of loneliness jumps right back. I am financially independent, so it is only emotional safety that i require.

I am not a bitter person, and I so dread of turning into one, that i again fight him.....
Appologies for the long talk, and thank you for writing this site.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Safety and The Lizard: The Essay

by [Al Turtle](#) on Mon 23 Jun 2008 12:38 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Suzana,

Please don't turn into a bitter person. That is a choice and I think we have entirely too many bitter people in this tired world.

And I don't think you are ambivalent but probably more amtrivalent - three different choices in front of you. This is a tough place to be. My suggestion is you get clear with my papers on the Map of Relationships to understand this. Door #1 or #2 or #3. Either you a) sink into giving up, you b) quit the relationship and go find another, or c) you start doggedly learning and lead your partner along with you.

Where should you start? You already have, by writing your thoughts out (kind of like using a diary), reading my stuff, and actually reaching out.

For me the problem is that usually when people decide they "gotta change," there is no single first step. They gotta move in several directions at the same time. Kind of like discovering you are pretty whacked, not ready for being a parent, and noticing that you have kids hanging onto you. Might be better to get straightened out before having those kids, but that's not a choice. Gotta work on all of it at the same time.

My suggestion is that you find an elder, a counselor, a trainer who knows what to do, has done it, and who can help you - both of you if possible. Doing this kind of growing is very tricky when you are alone. (Might try an Imago Therapists www.imagotherapy.com or <http://gettingtheloveyouwant.com>)

There is so much more to respond to in your letter. I only have a little time.

I think that being strong and firm and gentle is really cool. Being dominant... not so much. You end up living alone. Check out all the stuff on Autonomy and Master/Slave.

Critical? Check out my stuff on "Are you a Controller".

Him pulling away? Check out the stuff on Reliable Membership.

Understanding childhood damage, yours and his? I think of this as something to look at later, as you become better able to communicate and work with each other. Be aware it is there, but clear up the more "in your face" issues first.

I call the relationship growth stage the University of Life cuz it takes so long - years. To pursue it, I believe you need to have a level of Panic (that things still stink) and commitment (that you are gonna fix it). Dominant people tend to be stubborn and I think "stubbornness" coupled with "learning" is really the way to go.

Financially independent. Hell, pay for me to come to a workshop you put on for all your friends. People who like my website often like chewing things over with me. :) Hope you live in a nice part of the world.

Best wishes, Al

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