














Practical Reality

I think there is nothing practical about love		My partner is so unrealistic, I don't know what to say		
I like to dream - I just don't like reality		My partner pushes too far and gets exhausted and injured		
		I can do anything if I put my mind to it		Neither of us is a planner - it just seems so restricting
People say I am not practical - so Who's practical?	My partner is way too practical - they always burst my balloon		We get frustrated that we always run out of time or money	

Practical Reality

Consider “Practical Reality”

Oh, I hate those words. Someone always says them to me at the most unfortunate time. It almost seems cruel (except I know they are right). “Realistic” and “Practical” are so often our stumbling blocks if we are dreamers.

But, the small study of Zen I have done has taught me that, “Reality is our friend.” So, I have determined in my mind to befriend it – and I have discovered that Reality’s lessons are worthy.

If we befriend reality, we will understand the things that will help us avoid many frustrations and dead ends. If we befriend it, we are more likely to reach our goals and not be thwarted. So, on that note I have assembled some lessons that my ‘friend’ reality has shared with me. Your lessons may be different, but these can be a launching point for your own study in the classroom of practical home renovation...and life.

Here are some realities to know & to establish a friendly relationship:

Our energy

Most of us tend to be unrealistic about what we can accomplish. We may drive ourselves past the natural limits of endurance to get it all done. Frequently what suffers in this process is our thinking, our good nature, and our enjoyment of the moment. While occasional spurts of boundless enthusiasm and altruistic sacrifice are good for the character and spirit, planning for it on a regular basis, on top of daily family duties, can be a recipe for disaster.

Our body

How many weekend warriors do stretching and exercise during the week? Ask yourself if you are ready for the pallet of 40-pound bags of cement in the yard. Injuries and crankiness can be the fallout from overestimating your own strength and fitness. Don’t be proud. Stretch. Get helpers. And be healthy as a result, to enjoy the benefits of the project you toil on.

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Our finances

No one likes these limits. Yet some corners just have to be cut. The motto, “Spend the money you save” will do just that. If you spend the remainder, you won’t be very far ahead for all the work you have put into the job. Many folks spend all of their budgets on the high-quality item, and then still have to find money to purchase the accessories and prep materials. The answer – listen to the checkbook. Really. You will find its voice your conscience, or this truth will echo in your partner’s words as you are swept up in the allure of the item you are ready to buy. Inside, you will be torn, but you really need to heed the voice of reason. Sorry. So, take a rest; sit down with a soda at the store, even go get an ice cream – all are cheaper than that big purchase that you almost just made. For more on confronting money and the lessons it can bring, read the chapter on Budgeting.

Our limitations of skill, or ability, or personality

Our message growing up was, “You can do anything if you put your mind to it.” Yet in actuality we each

have a unique intelligence and special ways of doing things. Some folks just should not wrap a birthday present. Some can’t stack wood. Some folks must have order. Some cannot sustain order.



It may be wiser to “know thyself” as you enter the projects ahead, and to seek help for the areas in which you do not have skills. So, welcome the input from others when they indicate that you might not be suited for the particular tasks on the horizon.

Our available time

We often overestimate the time needed to do things and even the time we have in life. And since we know very little about some projects, our estimates for time will likely be off. Let’s not get too wrapped up in making exact time estimates, but notice how timing goes during the task. Instead of jamming to a deadline, we can be open to others’ observations, and even provide information to the family so the rest of them can pick up the slack in the schedule and move things along – either for the project or the family’s regular functions. Try some new approaches; check out the tips in the chapters on Time Frames and Schedules.

Seasons of our lives – and the lessons they provide

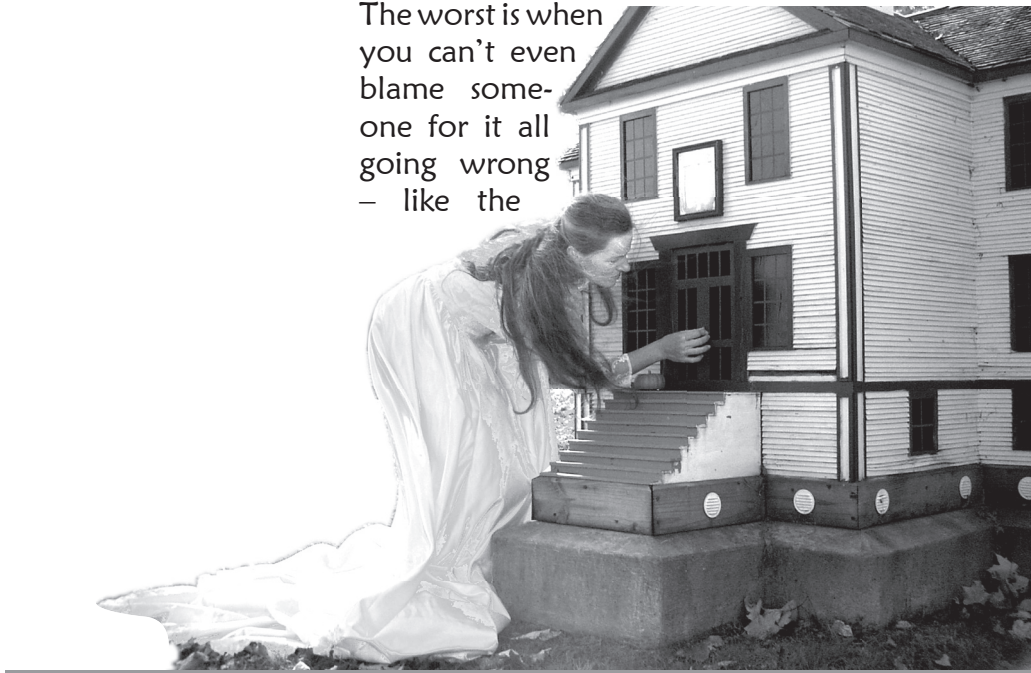
It is true that each decade brings new adventures and changing abilities. As we age, some things are easier – usually those things involving quality of life; some things are harder – mostly the physical realm. Yet together, these changes make us newer each year. Planning for a long-term home environment will take an awareness of the different levels of change that come with the decades. With care, the process can be graceful and enable you to remain at home and happy for a very long time, gently helped along by the adaptations that allow you to function well at any age. Read more about this in the family Life Stages chapter.

**Befriending these aspects of our existence
will mature us.**

We have often heard the word ‘mature’ in the reverse – our lack of maturity - a negative light – perhaps as an insult, as something missing from our character. But how much effort and discomfort would we endure to attain ‘maturity’? Likely we have overlooked it, and only face it as the consolation prize when we do not get our way. But, would you go out of your way to strive for maturity? Yeah, thought so. If you are among the many honest people who said they would skirt it if they could, I suggest you reconsider. (And if you are one who would seek maturity, you will understand what I mean.)

Maturing comes from the inner gymnastics of seeking peace with the world the way it is and not the way we would have it. It can be torturous sometimes, since we put so much effort into moving ahead towards our goals, while they are sometimes thwarted by unforeseen circumstances.

The worst is when
you can’t even
blame some-
one for it all
going wrong
– like the



transmission seizing up, or rain on the picnic, or when you can't rent the right equipment because the union is on strike. All of these things can turn our plans on their heads and put us way behind schedule.

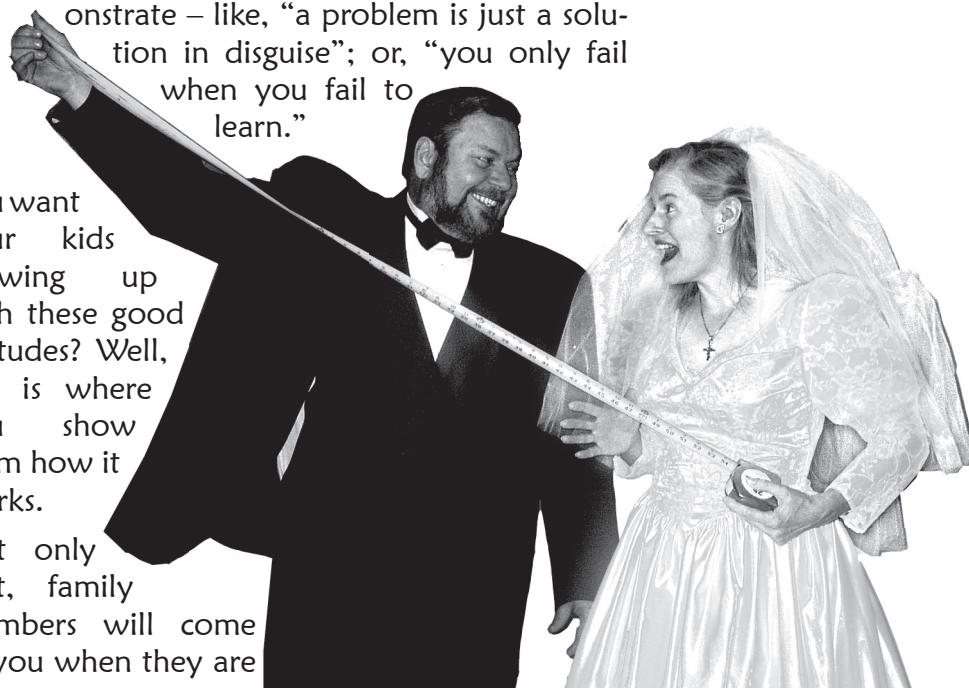
So what is there to gain from such delays and frustrations? Plenty! The Gains: You can learn all sorts of patience, find unknown support, use parts of your brain that were all but rusted-up; and you can learn to stop and think and look around when you are in a mess. You will ask for input, sketch out options, think ahead, evaluate alternatives, and even breathe; and you will look to see what lessons present themselves to you.

Sharing our friendship-with-reality will widen the family's resources.

The presence of good thinking when things do not go your way is a great asset to you, to your marriage, and to your family. Others will learn from your lead and copy the attitudes you demonstrate – like, “a problem is just a solution in disguise”; or, “you only fail when you fail to learn.”

Do you want your kids growing up with these good attitudes? Well, this is where you show them how it works.

Not only that, family members will come to you when they are



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in a mess, and want your help in finding options to solve problems. That doesn't mean you solve their problems, just help them think it through. The family will feel more confident, even when things go wrong, because you show them that solutions are within reach – even under dire circumstances. When you withstand the impulses to run and scream and give up, and instead you sigh and sit and think, they will catch on to the methods you show. They will see your tenacity in the face of disappointment, your faith in good outcomes, your confidence in finding a way, your consideration of others. Do you want your family to draw on those reserves? You bet.

**Sharing your ease-with-reality with
your partner will deepen
your Loving Acceptance to a new level.**
God bless you.

When you accept that you cannot control the universe (and that you do not know everything), and reveal this humble aspect of yourself to your partner, you will gain their respect. (Maybe surprise too, that you admitted it.) People who love each other often find it hardest to let their partner know they are weak and have limitations. But gosh – you haven't fooled this person; they already know you are not perfect! Their love for you is not on the line; they already know all about your imperfections, and love you anyway. You are likely the last one to catch on to this fact. But when you do, there will be loving agreement: you are not perfect, in control, or know everything – yet they love you. They will be joyful that you get it – you don't have to be all of those things for them to love you! Love becomes more honest and deeper this way. Enjoy the grace of such love.

Notes from Practical Reality

OK - a little quiz - but no grades though

For yourself, click off where you think you are on these aspects of reality. There is no grading here or judging - just be honest.	
Assign a mark for each of you to use (like tic tac toe, just pick X or O) : X = (name) _____ (it is ok to have both an O = (name) _____ X & O in a box)	
Time - clocks - time constraints - deadlines - due dates	
<input type="checkbox"/> I often can use more time to finish	<input type="checkbox"/> Always have time on my side
Energy - activity - physical endurance - fatigue	
<input type="checkbox"/> I do run out of energy somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> I always gauge my energy just right for all I do
Injury - bones and joints -	
<input type="checkbox"/> I get some aching parts after working	<input type="checkbox"/> Never injure or strain myself
Money - finances - budgets - credit - constraints	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sure, the money does not measure up to the dream	<input type="checkbox"/> Always plan for money's limits and I stick with it
Skills - project expertise - technique - experience	
<input type="checkbox"/> Could use improved skills for this project	<input type="checkbox"/> I know all I need to do this perfectly
Emotional ease - stress - stress on others around you	
<input type="checkbox"/> I get irritable and can be difficult on occasion	<input type="checkbox"/> I am always polite, easy to live with, no matter what my stresses
Life stage - in transition - changes in physical or mental abilities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Comparing myself to when I was younger - I think changes are coming or are here	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely - stronger now than ever - just get better and better
X# ____ O# ____	<--Totals for each column --> X# ____ O# ____
Just add how many Xs and Os in each column	
If your total in the left column is more than the right, you are like most people.	
Talk together about these items and notice how you can adapt together to make them go smoother and assist the team in facing its collective limitations.	

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