

Book Review

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Big Love

Robert Lenzner, 05.08.06, 12:45 PM ET

Kathy Freston has been through the hell of an abusive, destructive relationship, and after a long and painful search for self-esteem, found her true soul mate. This just happens to be **Tom Freston**, former head of MTV and now CEO of **Viacom** and one of the potential successors to **Sumner Redstone**.

Freston had to go through a living hell and pull herself back into a healthy self. It was a tortuous but inspiring journey, and we are fortunate she has chosen to offer us her insights and hard-won lessons. And we should all take these lessons to heart and let them reverberate in our souls if we are serious about finding and holding a real partnership.

How did she do it? In her new book, *The One* (\$24, Miramax, 2006), Freston explains that, "The pain of being with someone who was cruel and untrustworthy forced me to look inside myself to see what was connecting with this man's energy. With the help of prayer, meditation and deep emotional work, I was finally able to confront and let go of a long-held belief that I was unworthy."

Freston's course in relationships is extraordinarily demanding and requires a commitment to spirituality that many will find foreign. It will certainly be unique to those who have little experience in mindfulness. Freston is a tough personal counselor. She wants us to engage in a "profound reworking of how we move through the world." And by this she doesn't mean deciding which dating Web site to use.

Expect a Miracle (St. Martin's Press, 2003) provides the formula for getting there. Its sequel, *The One*, is the formula for holding it together. To create a miracle, Freston suggests a discipline that is demanding; Using meditation, prayer, mantras and self-imposed quizzes with the goal of helping you believe in yourself. If you can get out of victim mode and shun abusive relationships, then you can attract healthier people.

"We have to make the decision to change our energy on a core level. Change the energy, and the experiences change," she wrote in *Expect a Miracle*.

This is immensely challenging and often requires the inevitable pain that accompanies or follows bliss.

"If you really want to know the bliss of soul-mate love, you have to put into place a new way of thinking, behaving and living," she writes.

Some of her wisdom is simple common sense that few follow: "In times of stress and breakdown, slow down and tap into the inner stillness," she writes. Meaning, don't try to force a relationship. Don't try to make somebody become The One by rushing the process. Instead, "Listen to your intuition and relax a little more. Practice allowing."

In short, Freston believes you have to get your head right before getting your heart right.

Listen up, and don't roll your eyes. We're talking about getting spiritual before getting physical. In *Expect a Miracle*, Freston explains that the "synergy of the integrated self is what makes us rich and attractive." A miracle is a "radical shift in consciousness." We need to give off the energetic vibrations that will attract that right person.

I really think she's onto something here. It's not money, clothing or brilliance: It's the psychic connection between two souls.

Freston, who practices as a therapist, says that, after the early period of physical excitement, many people stop working at the relationships and revert to earlier, habitual patterns. This switch to automatic pilot is deadly to relationships. You have to get in touch with yourself and work hard to move past this point, and many people can't do it. That's why plenty of love affairs end when the physical chemistry quiets down.

Freston believes that abusive partners are only expressing their own self-hatred. She wants us to forgive them for their suffering and pain and move forward with the relationship. Sounds good, but what if the self-hater keeps abusing? Here's where I part with Freston's enthusiasm for accepting other people's flaws.

The new rage in relationship counseling is to forgive your partner for their weaknesses or for character traits that you can't stand. Freston even suggests a prayer to help in reaching this place of understanding. But, as she points out, for the process to work, the other person needs to make amends. I think some people will have a hard time with some of Freston's precious, otherworldly spiritual ideals.

It's a sign of the need for spirituality that Freston recommends Partner Tonglen, which is a Tibetan Buddhist meditative practice wherein you internalize the pain and suffering of your partner as a way of getting rid of the negativity involved. "When we soften to someone's darkness, we soften to ourselves. We become less ego oriented and more in touch with our divine nature."

It might be worth trying to seek out that divine nature. Maybe it's a new route to self-empowerment. I say, why not try anything that works?

The One, as well as *Expect a Miracle* should be kept close at hand as you navigate your personal quest for making love last. I'm serious. I've probably read *Expect a Miracle* 50 times but, much to my dismay, have still ignored Freston's rules of operation.