

# Harriet Lerner Quotes

*People, Self, Apology, Anger, Believe, Mother, Long, Anxiety, Feelings, Want,  
Heart, Sex, Children, Thinking, Husband, Two, Responsibility, Women,  
Patterns, Honor*

Although it's not useful to drown in despair, it's also not useful to keep a 'positive attitude' when this means concealing or denying real emotions.

~Harriet Lerner

We will be in tune with our bodies only if we truly love and honor them.  
We can't be in good communication with the enemy.

~Harriet Lerner

Those of us who are locked into ineffective expressions of anger suffer as deeply as those of us who dare not get angry at all.

~Harriet Lerner

We cannot make another person change his or her steps to an old dance, but if we change our own steps, the dance no longer can continue in the same predictable pattern.

~Harriet Lerner

Only through our connectedness to others can we really know and enhance the self. And only through working on the self can we begin to enhance our connectedness to others.

~Harriet Lerner

If we only listened with the same passion that we feel about being heard.

~Harriet Lerner

Anger is a tool for change when it challenges us to become more of an expert on the self and less of an expert on others.

~Harriet Lerner

An intimate relationship is one in which neither party silences, sacrifices, or betrays the self and each party expresses strength and vulnerability, weakness and competence in a balanced way.

~Harriet Lerner

Whole-hearted listening is the greatest spiritual gift you can give to the other person.

~Harriet Lerner

In long-term relationships ... we are called upon to navigate that delicate balance between separateness and connectedness ... we confront the challenge of sustaining both--without losing either.

~Harriet Lerner

If you want a recipe for relationship failure, just wait for the other person to change first.

~Harriet Lerner

Differences don't just threaten and divide us. They also inform, enrich, and enliven us.

~Harriet Lerner

The miracle is that your children will love you with all your imperfections if you can do the same for them.

~Harriet Lerner

Love alone is never a good enough reason to marry.

~Harriet Lerner

Anxiety is extremely contagious, but so is calm.

~Harriet Lerner

Anger is a signal, and one worth listening to.

~Harriet Lerner

We need to hear the sound of our voice for what we think and need.

~Harriet Lerner

Silence can pose a greater threat than the difficult truth.

~Harriet Lerner

Although the connections are not always obvious, personal change is inseparable from social and political change.

~Harriet Lerner

We'll always be disappointed if we believe that we can plan for a peak experience and make it happen. True joy can't be anticipated or planned. It just strikes.

~Harriet Lerner

It's a cliché, but also a deep truth (as clichés tend to be), that you can't love another person very well if you don't love yourself.

~Harriet Lerner

The bolder and more courageous you are, the more you will learn about yourself.

~Harriet Lerner

When you can't see yourself objectively, you won't see anyone else objectively, either.

~Harriet Lerner

Pretending can be a bold form of experimentation and inventiveness. In pretending joy or happiness, we may discover or enhance our capacity for it.

~Harriet Lerner

Intimate relationships cannot substitute for a life plan. But to have any meaning or viability at all, a life plan must include intimate relationships.

~Harriet Lerner

Don't count on the power of your love or your nagging to create something that wasn't there to begin with.

~Harriet Lerner

Sometimes the most helpful thing you can do is to stop trying to be helpful.

~Harriet Lerner

Wherever you find a wife and mother-in-law slugging it out, you'll find a son who's not speaking up to either his mother or his wife.

~Harriet Lerner

Many of our problems with anger occur when we choose between having a relationship and having a self.

~Harriet Lerner

The first world we find ourselves in is a family that is not of our choosing.

~Harriet Lerner

Feeling inadequate is an occupational hazard of motherhood.

~Harriet Lerner

The more we seek exclusivity in friendship, the more it becomes obligatory and the less likely it is to fulfill the wonderful vision of what true friendship can be.

~Harriet Lerner

Fear is a message - sometimes helpful, sometimes not - but often conveying critical information about our beliefs, our needs, and our relationship to the world around us.

~Harriet Lerner

If what we are doing with our anger is not achieving the desired result, it

would seem logical to try something different.

~Harriet Lerner

What initially attracts us and what later becomes 'the problem' are usually one and the same.

~Harriet Lerner

We all fear change, even as we seek it.

~Harriet Lerner

Intensity is not the same as intimacy, although we tend to confuse these two words.

~Harriet Lerner

Feeling essentially superior to other people is as sure a sign of poor self-esteem as feeling essentially inferior.

~Harriet Lerner

People marry with a deep longing that their partner will tend to their wounds, not throw salt in them. Honor your partner's vulnerability.

~Harriet Lerner

It is an act of courage to acknowledge our own uncertainty and sit with it for a while.

~Harriet Lerner

The strongest relationships are between two people who can live without each other but don't want to.

~Harriet Lerner

The happiest people are focused on living their own life (not someone else's) as well as possible.

~Harriet Lerner

Telling a true story about personal experience is not just a matter of being oneself, or even of finding oneself. It is also a matter of choosing oneself.

~Harriet Lerner

Your children are not little mirrors reflecting back the good or bad job you've done.

~Harriet Lerner

You can't evaluate a prospective partner if you insulate your relationship from your family and friends--and his.

~Harriet Lerner

Self-help books for women are part of a multibillion-dollar industry, sensitively attuned to our insecurities and our purses.

~Harriet Lerner

Whatever your sex fantasy is with your partner, consider it normal.

~Harriet Lerner

Judging people for whom they love (a same sex partner) rather than by whom they harm, should in itself merit a psychiatric diagnosis.

~Harriet Lerner

As long as we can feel hope, there is hope.

~Harriet Lerner

Men are often (though not always) the pursuers for sex, just like women are often (though not always) the pursuers for conversation.

~Harriet Lerner

deception and 'con games' are a way of life in all species and throughout nature. Organisms that do not improve their ability to deceive - and to detect deception - are less apt to survive.

~Harriet Lerner

When anxiety disrupts functioning, it's psychiatric illness.

~Harriet Lerner

Fear has never helped anybody make good choices. It leads to clinging when we should be walking.

~Harriet Lerner

We commonly confuse closeness with sameness and view intimacy as the merging of two separate I's into one worldview.

~Harriet Lerner

As many have observed, it is easy to tell a lie, but it is almost impossible to tell only one.

~Harriet Lerner

Kids want nothing more than for all the important adults in their life to get along.

~Harriet Lerner

It's remarkable how many couples can precisely describe their particular pattern of painful fighting, and claim to be helpless to change it.

~Harriet Lerner

Believing that all women should want to be mothers makes about as much sense as believing that all men should want to be engineers.

~Harriet Lerner

Being in touch with our bodies, or more accurately, being our bodies, is how we know what is true. Harriet

~Harriet Lerner



Nothing you say can ensure that the other person will get it, or respond the way you want. You may never exceed his threshold of deafness.

~Harriet Lerner

No book or expert can protect us from the range of painful emotions that make us human.

~Harriet Lerner

the body, seeking truth, sends a signal. But decoding it, interpreting its meaning, and knowing how to proceed from there is another matter entirely.

~Harriet Lerner

Underground issues from one relationship or context invariably fuel our fires in another.

~Harriet Lerner

If you pursue a distancer, he or she will distance more. Consider it a fundamental law of physics.

~Harriet Lerner

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