"Coming Around the Corner"
By Valerie J. Shinbaum, MS, LPC, NCC, MAC

That's what my mom used to say all the time when I lamented to her about being single and being old and being single and being older and being single and why wasn't the right man coming along to marry me? At one point or another during our endless conversations about this topic, my mom would say, "You never know who might be coming around the corner." It was her way of letting me know that the right man would present himself when that was meant to happen, and it would probably be when I least expected it, in the most unlikely place, and when I wasn't really paying attention to "finding" someone with whom to have a permanent romantic partnership.

My mom tells a story about the circumstances under which she and my father met. They were introduced on a blind date, or a "fix-up" by a mutual acquaintance. But just prior to that eventful meeting (which led to a 45 year long marriage, by the way), one of my mother's friends convinced her to go along on a visit to a gypsy fortune-teller. Though skeptical, my mother agreed to this adventure. The fortune-teller told my mother that she would soon meet a man in uniform. My mother's first thought was "What policemen do I know?" Ironically, at the time of my parents' initial meeting, my father was in the Marine Corps! It just once again proves her point - you never know who might be coming around the corner.

More important than learning to let go of trying to find someone is the reality that regardless of our marital status, we all need to learn to be in an ongoing permanent partnership with ourselves. I know, it sounds like I'm saying to go out on dates with myself, right? Sure, I can see me in a candle-lit restaurant, "Table for one, please." But that's not the point.

In order to appreciate or even to recognize who that right partner for each of us is, we need to first own the reality that the first right partner each of us has is ourselves! So what does that mean? For myself, it meant that instead of spending those hours of time on the phone with my mom or my friends or anyone who would listen, it was going on with my life according to the course I was meant to follow for myself. So I went to graduate school to become a psychotherapist, I changed jobs and gained clinical expertise/experience, I decided to be self-employed, I bought my own home, I learned to ski, I took cycling vacations in the US and abroad, I belonged to a cooking group for twelve years, I taught aerobics for fifteen years, I went out to dancing evenings or movies or took vacations by myself. I know now that my life was happening to me anyway. I was going along and doing my own thing, taking my own journey in spite of myself.

Of course along the way there have been romantic involvements, but none of them were lasting for various reasons. At the end of each relationship, of course there was sadness and sometimes anger too. But somewhere deep inside me I know that none of those prior relationships was meant to be permanent, because I knew that I wasn't accepted for who I was and for what I wanted for myself.

When I teach my students or talk to my clients or have dialogue with my radio guests, the themes are the same. I think of lasting permanent romantic partnership in terms of the following words: acceptance, admiration, understanding, respect, regard, love, affection, support, validation, value. There are so many other words to use, no doubt, but these are the ones that resonate with me.

If we use all of these words when we think of what we want for ourselves, again it starts with us. So let me ask you a question. Do you use these words when you think of yourself and your life and your accomplishments? If the answer is yes, then why would you settle for anything less from anyone else? Once we have that concept really cemented in our minds, then it's easy to keep moving forward, and it's even easier to keep focused on ourselves, and the easiest of all is that it's right around that moment when that much righter someone does just happen to "come around the corner."