Buying A Loaf of Bread

A client once told me a wise saying of her mother’s: “Don’t go to the hardware store to buy a loaf of bread.” What she meant is that you cannot expect someone to give you what they are not capable of. That expectation will ultimately cause conflict and frustration. And if we keep trying to get bread at the hardware store, we will be continually frustrated by our attempts to get something that isn’t available there. Relationships are complicated and we can’t get everything we need from just one person. No one is a “one stop” shop - people are not like Amazon. We need grocery stores and hardware stores in our lives because we all have needs that we want met and we don’t usually have one person who can meet every need. The problem is: we often expect the people we are involved with to give us just what we need, just when we need it. Human nature is such that we will keep trying to get that loaf of bread from the hardware store. For instance, if you marry someone who is reserved while you are very affectionate, you may get frustrated trying to get your partner to be as affectionate as you. Or, if you have a friend who is fun and supportive, but unreliable, you will be frustrated if you keep expecting that friend to be your “go to” person in a crisis situation. If we are fortunate to develop several relationships, we often do pretty well at finding the right store for the right purchase. But in intimate relationships, we often want our partner to be that “one stop” shop. It’s important to recognize what your *primary* needs are – the ones you can’t live without before you choose a partner. And, if we choose right, we can live with the fact that we may not be able to get the loaf of bread we need at the moment from our “hardware store” partner. However, that doesn’t mean that the hardware store doesn’t have some essential items for us. And if we can remember that, we can stop experiencing disappointment at what we *can’t get*. Instead, we can recognize that maybe we can’t get everything we need all the time, but we *can get* what we really need most of the time in the “store” that we chose.