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# SANE & SEXY

R E L A T I O N S H I P S

Love Guide for Couples

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# CHILDHOOD ROOTS OF ADULT LOVE

**"The type of human being we prefer  
reveals the contours of our heart."**

**~Ortega Y Gasset**



## NEUROSCIENCE OF ATTACHMENT

How we bond with our primary caregiver influences the way we respond and interact in adulthood relationships. A healthy child/caregiver bond allows us to grow up feeling safe and trusting of the world. A child who has painful experiences early in life will likely grow up feeling isolated or may lack proper boundaries in relationships.

### **Secure attachment**

When mom was there for us, and her love was consistent and dependable. We grow up to have overall confidence that our partners will be there for us, and reciprocate love.

### **Insecure attachment**

**Anxious Ambivalent** - Unpredictable love from mom, child feels ambivalent, more aggressive behaviors in an effort to get attention. These people may be viewed as "clingy" or "needy," often requiring much validation and reassurance.

**Avoidant** - Mom was absent emotionally or physically. Child isn't sure if needs are going to be met, so they avoid or withdraw from feelings, denying need for connection. Common for men. This person shuns intimacy and has many difficulties reaching for others in times of need.

**Disorganized Traumatic** - Results from "helpless" mothers who fail to respond to the child or take initiative when the child is distressed. Often a product of trauma and results in reactive response and inability to regulate mood.

### **Sudden Reaction Syndrome**

Has this ever happened to you? You're having a normal conversation with your partner, and suddenly you become triggered by something he says. Your entire mood escalates into rage or complete shutdown.

Sudden reactions often have their roots in past traumatic experiences. When something traumatic happens to a person (especially a child), it gets trapped in a hyper-sensitive memory compartment. To change the nature of vicious reaction cycles, you need to understand trauma.

### **HOW TO CALM THE INNER CHILD IN YOUR PARTNER**

- Use the three non-verbal love languages: touch, tone, expression to calm the emotional brain.
- Whoever has a little more awareness in the moment initiates non-verbal language to calm partners fear of rejection and abandonment. Logic does not penetrate brain when someone is upset. The amygdala does not get language, it's in fight or flight mode, so you need to use more primal skills to access partner.
- Create or define a security code, words to reset and bring each other back into a safe place.
- Expose and challenge your inner critic with your partner. Identify the root of certain beliefs and begin to construct a new narrative.

# STAGES OF ATTACHMENT

## HOW STRONG ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS?

Psychologist Gordon Neufeld describes six stages of attachment that are critical to enjoying healthy relationships with our parents, peers, children, and adulthood partners. Take a look at the six stages below. How might you rate each category on a scale of 1 to 10? 1 being the least connected 10 being the most connected.

	Partner	_____	_____	_____
<b>Proximity</b>				
<b>Sameness</b>				
<b>Belonging/Loyalty</b>				
<b>Significance</b>				
<b>Love</b>				
<b>Being Known</b>				

- 1) **Proximity.** Also known as physical touch and affection. This is the first and most primary need that begins in infancy. The feeling of being close, touched, and in contact starts the foundation for attachment.
- 2) **Sameness.** The next important stage is having something in common. For example, children often want to be like their parents because this "sameness" fuels attachment and security, thus they naturally seek out ways to be like us. In romantic relationships, we often want to share in the interests of our partners for deeper connection.
- 3) **Belonging or Loyalty.** This third stage of Attachment strengthens the relationship bond by demonstrating that we've got their "back". If children feel that their parents are in their corner, ready to support and guide them, they will feel more securely attached. It's also feeling like your partner can be trusted and relied upon.
- 4) **Significance.** Unconditional love is the greatest gift we can give our children and our partners. It is to be loved through words and actions, for the unique person that we are (faults and all), which deepens a relationship. When you feel secure in your love-relationships (parent-child, spousal, friendships etc.) you feel this love even when you're not around this person.
- 5) **Love.** There is a progression to these stages and with each stage comes more depth. The fifth stage of love in a deeply connected relationship is not the same as "love at first sight". This is the kind of love that can be conveyed through a hug, a squeeze on the shoulder, a smile and a wink. Again, if a child/teenager does not feel this kind of love from his/her parents he/she will look to friends to fill this void, and often these peers are not the ones who have demonstrated the previous four stages.
- 6) **Being Known** is the final and deepest stage of attachment. To share oneself at this level requires deep trust to be open and vulnerable. This level of attachment requires the previous five stages of attachment to be demonstrated on a regular and consistent basis. Being known requires the willingness to be vulnerable.

## UNCONSCIOUS VS. CONSCIOUS LOVE



### OLD BRAIN

Fight/Flight

**Brain Stem** - reproduction, survival, blood circulation, etc.

**Limbic System** - amygdala, emotion center

**Motive** - Nurture, Sex, Safety, Protect, Submit to, Attack

**Argument Style** - Projection, Transference, Denial, Repetition  
Compulsion, Reactive

**Love** - Fuses the image of their partners with the image of their caretaker. Love feels like reunion of mother and child. Illusion of safety and security.

**Communication** - Partner should know what I need just as my caretaker should.

**External Locus of Control** - The belief that events in one's life, whether good or bad, are caused by uncontrollable factors such as the environment or other people. Wholeness is found in other people. Co-dependency.

**A Good Marriage is about** - Finding the right partner



### NEW BRAIN

Growth/Wholeness

**Cerebral Cortex** - cognitive function, logical, alert

**Motive** - Organization, Order, Causality, Resolution, Wholeness, Spiritual Growth

**Argument Style** - Non-defensive, Paraphrasing, Joining, Non-reactive,

**Love** - Welcomes the responsibility to hold space for your partner's childhood wounds. See and love your partner for who they really are.

**Communication** - Takes responsibility for communicating needs to partner.

**Internal Locus of Control** - believes that he or she can influence events and outcomes in their relationships. Wholeness is found within. Responsible for own happiness.

**A Good Marriage is about** - Being the right partner

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# DISGUISES OF RAGE

According to life coach and speaker Ruth King, rage is an oppressed child emotion housed deep within our bodies, minds, and spirits. We all have an inner Rage Child, often born of trauma, shame, the burden of denied histories, and emotional pain. Few of us are truly aware of how much rage we have, especially because it often expresses itself in a disguised form.

To determine your Disguises of Rage, circle the top 10 statement numbers below that most commonly represent your life pattern or instinctive response to the world. Avoid selecting statements that may reflect actions you have taken on occasion and choose instead those that are your typical life pattern, thought, or tendency even if you do them less and less. Read through all of the statements before making your selections. Circle up to 10 statement numbers that would indicate: Yes, this has been a life long belief or tendency.

## Self Assessment

1. I am vindictive towards others who cross me.
2. I become speechless or feel small in the face of disapproval or anger.
3. I only do what is required and resent additional expectations others have of me.
- 4 I do everything I can to keep others from becoming upset.
5. I overindulge and live beyond my means.
6. I am unaware of being afraid.
7. I become angry with others when I feel hurt, disappointed, or need time to myself.
8. I doubt myself and hope others will take care of my emotional and financial needs.
9. I often feel emotionally heavy, hopeless, and cynical.
10. I feel intense frustration when I can't do anything to pull someone out of sadness or depression.
11. I find it difficult to rest, be still, be quiet, or do nothing.
12. Others accuse me of being bossy, insensitive, self-righteous and selfish.
13. I believe that most powers that be are inadequate and fall short of my expectations, and must pay for what they have done or not done.
14. I expect that exceptions will be made for my hard luck.
15. I isolate or distance from others to avoid having to engage in day to day life.
16. I must take care of others first, and if there is time left over, I will care for myself. I feel like I must sneak time to care for myself.
17. I generally feel hungry for more [time, money, fun, knowledge, sleep, chocolates, etc.].
18. I must take charge of people, places and situations or else things will get screwed up.
19. I believe that most rules restrict my life.
20. I feel confused and find it difficult to know what I want.
21. I feel unable to exert energy toward my health and well being.
22. I give so that others will not be upset. If others are upset it is because of something I've done or not done.
23. I over work, spend, drink, drug, eat, sex, TV, etc.



## DISGUISES OF RAGE

24. I generally feel justified in expressing my anger toward others.
25. I feel I must fight to protect myself or others will take advantage of me.
26. I often feel inadequate and unqualified.
27. I routinely question the purpose or point of my life.
28. I have difficulty setting boundaries and asking for what I want.
29. I put myself at financial risk by gambling, spending, rushing, or not knowing.
30. When challenged or confronted, I become demanding, critical and judgmental.
31. I have a quick temper.
32. I have a history of financial insufficiency or instability.
33. I worry or over identify with my pain, illness and despair.
34. I pretend to be fine and positive no matter what is happening.
35. I take on more than I can handle then resent the weight of my responsibilities.
36. When others disappoint me, I can appear cold and unaffected, and will often distance or leave [the job, relationship, friendship, etc.].

Typically we have one, maybe two, predominant disguises of rage that we established in childhood with overlapping traits from the other disguises. To determine your primary disguises of rage, use the matrix below to **record only the 10 statement numbers you circled above**. The higher number of circles in a given category will most likely represent your disguises of rage.

If you circled...	You are a...	Your Disguise is...
1, 7, 13, 19, 25, 31	Fight Type	Defiance
6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36	Fight Type	Dominance
5, 11, 17, 23, 29, 35	Flight Type	Distraction
4, 10, 16, 22, 28, 34	Flight Type	Devotion
3, 9, 15, 21, 27, 33	Shrink Type	Depression
2, 8, 14, 20, 26, 32	Shrink Type	Dependence

## DISGUISES OF RAGE

Disguise	Description	Shadow	Wisdom
<b>Dominance</b>	You control to avoid being controlled. You distance from others and/or abuse power to manage your terror of tenderness.	<b>Dependence</b>	Poised Discerning Thoughtful Focused Visionary
<b>Defiance</b>	You use anger to divert your need to be loved, often by your perceived enemy.	<b>Devotion</b>	Perceptive Clear Brave Enthusiastic Truthful
<b>Distraction</b>	You avoid intolerable feelings of emptiness by filling yourself with self-defeating diversions.	<b>Depression</b>	Spontaneous Warm Hearted Generous Free Spirited Inspiring
<b>Devotion</b>	You take care of others. You sacrifice your own well being to avoid knowing and receiving what you deeply need.	<b>Defiance</b>	Harmonious Compassionate Patient Considerate Generous
<b>Dependence</b>	You tend to stay financially insecure and emotionally dependent. You deny your personal power out of your fear of losing love and/or affiliation.	<b>Dominance</b>	Original Resourceful Imaginative Adaptable Playful
<b>Depression</b>	You withdrawn to avoid disappointing others and yourself. You become emotionally heavy to shut down denied feelings of grief.	<b>Distraction</b>	Present Open Minded Sensitive Empathic Insightful

*Distraction Rule #1: Don't expect me to sit still and relax!*

*Distraction Rule #2: Don't expect me to be emotionally vulnerable!*

*Distraction Rule #3: Don't tell me I'm not perfect!*

*Distraction Rule #4: Don't expect me to waste time being upset or depressed!*

*Distraction Rule #5: Don't expect me to have enough of anything!*

*Dominance Rule #1: Don't challenge or disobey me!*

*Dominance Rule #2: Don't try to change me!*

*Dominance Rule #3: Don't accuse me of being incompetent, needy, or helpless!*

*Dominance Rule #4: Don't expect me to regard you as higher or better than me in any way!*

*Dominance Rule #5: Don't expect me to explain or apologize for what I do!*

*Defiance Rule #1: Don't blame, threaten, or inconvenience me!*

*Defiance Rule #2: Don't place demands or expectations on me!*

*Defiance Rule #3: Don't expect me to forgive you!*

*Defiance Rule #4: Don't make a mistake! You won't get away with it!*

*Defiance Rule #5: Don't expect me to follow the rules!*

*Dependence Rule #1: Don't expect me to know or do what's best for me!*

*Dependence Rule #2: Don't expect me to get angry, confront conflict, or take a risk!*

*Dependence Rule #3: Don't expect me to be more confident than those I admire!*

*Dependence Rule #4: Don't expect me to grow up and stop needing you!*

*Dependence Rule #5: Don't ignore me or stop taking care of me!*



## UPROOTING RAGE INHERITANCE

The process of uprooting our rage inheritance involves four parts [for the full exercise please reference the book *Healing Rage: Women Making Inner Peace Possible*]:

**I. Imagining** - Because the spirits of our parents and ancestors live inside our bones and in our hearts, we first turn within ourselves and visualize separate conversations with our parents, guardians, and ancestors, to imagine their lives and their rage inheritances.

In this stage you will begin by envisioning yourself asking questions of your parents and ancestors, utilizing the Rage Inheritance Questionnaire. This visualization can be insightful even if you already know the details of your parent's childhoods, but especially if you don't. You may find that your mind knows their histories but has never paused long enough for your heart to feel them.

Ex. questions

- 1) Do you know the circumstances surrounding your birth?
- 2) What is your sweetest memory as a child?

**II. Conversations with Parents and Elders** - Once you have completed the Imagining visualization, you may want to take the next step and speak directly with your parents, if they are alive and willing to participate. It is natural for many of us to feel uncomfortable with this more intimate query. You can proceed with the interviews, noting your fears but not allowing them to deny your opportunity to heal. Or, if you truly don't believe you can do it without being frightened, hurt, or provoked, delay it to a more suitable time.

**III. Discerning the Gifts of our Rage Inheritance** - Discerning your rage inheritance is the act of identifying the pattern or theme that has been passed down to you to heal. In looking at the responses to the Imagining, Rage Inheritance Questionnaire, and Conversations with Parents and Elders exercise, consider the following questions:

- 1) How does knowing more about your parents and ancestors affect you?
- 2) What is noteworthy about your parent's journeys? Your elders' journeys? Your ancestors' journeys?
- 3) What disguises of rage did or do your parents wear in their adult lives?

**IV. Amending the Soil of Rage** - Once we have uprooted our inheritance, we can begin to amend our rage soil by adding nutrients that will begin to heal us. This ritual invites us to clearly state our intentions to break the pain patterns of our past. Fundamentally, we want to understand and honor the spirits of our parents and ancestors enough not to repeat and pass on their suffering.

Bring to your rage alter pictures, letters, artifacts and mementos of the spirits you are choosing to honor and heal. All items you place on your rage alter should be placed mindfully with loving intention.

# COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PARTNER

**"The man who desires to see the living God face-to-face does not seek God in the empty firmament of his mind, but in human love."**

**~Fyoder Dostoyevsky**



## RELATIONSHIP TUNE-UP

According to relationship expert Alison Armstrong, the most common causes of conflict in relationships are:

- 1) Not communicating your needs until it's too late
- 2) Being a peacemaker instead of looking at the cost of not getting what you need
- 3) Not allowing ample time, mental, and physical space to hash out disagreements

The questions below are critical to maintaining love, admiration, and respect in your relationship. These are difficult questions so prepare yourself by considering the following:

**Remember why you loved this person.** Try to see the person behind the crime.

**Be clear with yourself on what you need** and be flexible on how you'll get those needs met. You can't tell someone both what you need AND how to provide it.

**Pick a time of day when you are at your best.** Maybe after work isn't the best time. You want to be fresh, alert, and present.

**Avoid attacking the obstacles** that get in the way of your needs being met as well as awfulizing statements like "You never..." or "You always..."

**Represent YOURself,** YOUR needs, and what that would provide for YOU. In other words, stick with the classic "I" statements.

**Let the person know they're not in trouble.** This will break down any defenses. Physical touch is a great way to disarm your partner. Also try sitting side by side or going on a walk.

### Here We Go...

1) Is there anything that I need that I've given up on getting?

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2) Is there anything that I need that's too hard to get?

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3) How long am I willing to go without it?

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4) If I was getting it what would it look like, and what would it provide?

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5) If I had it all my way, how would the relationship be different?

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## 4 COMMUNICATION HABITS THAT CAN KILL YOUR RELATIONSHIP

John Gottman, one of the leading experts on relationships, found these four communication styles to be highly toxic in relationships.

How do the following communication habits show up in your relationship?

### CRITICISM

When you criticize your partner you are basically implying that there is something wrong with them. You have taken a problem between you and put it inside your partner's body. Using the words: "You always" or "you never" are common ways to criticize. Your partner is most likely to feel under attack and to respond defensively. This is a dangerous pattern to get into because neither person feels heard and both may begin to feel bad about themselves in the presence of the other.

**Solution:** The antidote to criticism is to make a direct complaint that is not a global attack on your partner's personality.

### DEFENSIVENESS

When you attempt to defend yourself from a perceived attack with a counter complaint you are being defensive. Another way to be defensive is to whine like an innocent victim. Unfortunately, defensiveness keeps partners from taking responsibility for problems and escalates negative communication.

**Solution:** The antidote to defensiveness is to try to hear your partner's complaint and to take some responsibility for the problem.

### CONTEMPT

Contempt is any statement or nonverbal behavior that puts yourself on a higher ground than your partner. Mocking your partner, calling them names, rolling your eyes and sneering in disgust are all examples of contempt. Of all the horsemen, contempt is the most serious. Couples have to realize that these types of put downs will destroy the fondness and admiration between them.

**Solution:** The antidote to contempt is to lower your tolerance for contemptuous statements and behaviors and to actively work on building a culture of appreciation in the relationship.

### STONEWALLING

Stonewalling happens when the listener withdraws from the conversation. The Stonewaller might actually physically leave or they might just stop tracking the conversation and appear to shut down. The Stonewaller may look like he doesn't care (80% are men) but that usually isn't the case. Typically they are overwhelmed and are trying to calm themselves.

**Solution:** The antidote is to learn to identify the signs that you or your partner is starting to feel emotionally overwhelmed and to agree together to take a break. If the problem still needs to be discussed then pick it up when you are calmer.



## COMMUNICATION HABITS THAT CAN BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Arguments are just as significant to a healthy relationship as love and romance. Conflict serves as a portal into greater intimacy and excitement in a relationship. The key is to argue in a loving manner. Try the following strategies:

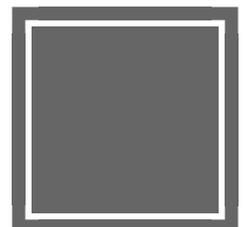
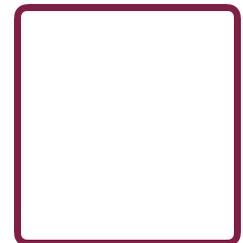
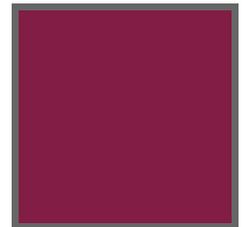
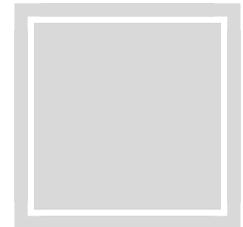
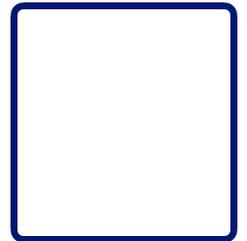
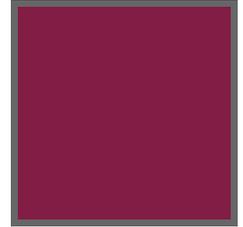
- **Take two:** Start the interaction all over again but from a place of love and friendship. "Can we talk as friends?"
- Subtle **touch** on hand or cheek to break an argument pattern and diffuse negative energy.
- Use a **code word** to stop the discussion. Then take a 15-minute writing break, and answer these questions:
  - 1) What is most frustrating about this conversation?
  - 2) What is a possible resolution?
  - 3) What I appreciate most about my partner is...
- **Soulmate Listening:** One person gets to talk for 10 minutes while the other person sits in stillness and appreciation. Set a kitchen timer or stopwatch.

Without talking about "your relationship" you can ask your partner the following questions:

- 1) What frustrates you?
- 2) What embarrasses you?
- 3) What do you fear most?
- 4) What are you most proud of?

“ If your relationship starts off as a dream come true than rapidly evolves into your worse nightmare, that's how you know you're with the right person. ”

~ Harville Hendrix





## SEDONA METHOD LETTING GO OF PETTY PAIN

In relationships, 97% of the things we fight about are petty. Only 3% are the deal-breaker issues we may not be able to live with. It is possible to put an end to petty arguments in our relationships by simply choosing to let go. As Carrie Fisher once said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die." Forgiveness is the ultimate act of self-love.

1. Reflect on the last week. What were some of the topics that you and your partner argued about? Break them down into the following two categories:

### 97% Petty Issues

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### 3% Deal-Breaker issues

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2. What are your 3 percent deal-breaker issues? These are considered big deal violations of trust or behaviors that may lead to potential separation or cause you to lose respect and admiration for your partner.

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3. Looking at your 97 percent list, ask yourself these three questions:

- a) Could I let go of (insert feeling/issue)?
- b) Am I willing to let go of (insert feeling/issue)?
- c) When will I let go of (insert feeling/issue)?



# RELATIONSHIP VISION

## OUR LOVE MANIFESTO

- 1) Take out two sheets of paper. Working separately write a series of short sentences that describe your personal vision of a deeply satisfying love relationship. Include qualities you already have that you want to keep and qualities you wish you had. Write each sentence in the present tense, as if it were already happening: "We have great sex." "We are loving parents." "We don't fight."
- 2) Share your sentences. Note the items you have in common and underline them. If your partner has written sentences that you agree with but did not think of yourself, add them to your list. For the moment, ignore items that are not shared.
- 3) Now take a look at your own list and rank each sentence, including ones that aren't shared with a number of 1 to 5 according to its importance to you. 1 is very important 5 is not important.
- 4) Circle the two items that are most important to you.
- 5) Put a checkmark next to those items you think would be most difficult for the two of you to achieve.
- 6) Now work together to design a mutual relationship vision. Start with the items that you both agree are most important. Put a check mark by those items that you both agree would be difficult to achieve. At the bottom of the list write items that are relatively unimportant
- 7) Post this list where you can visibly see it.

Partner 1

Our Relationship Vision

Partner 2

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E.x. We have fun together

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# SEX & INTIMACY

**"Eroticism resides in the ambiguous space between anxiety and fascination. We remain interested in our partners; they delight us, and we're drawn to them. But for many of us, renouncing the illusion of safety, and accepting the reality of our fundamental insecurity, proves to be a difficult step."**

**~ Esther Perel**

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## CLOSING EXITS

An **"exit"**, according to Harville Hendrix, is acting out one's feelings rather than putting them into language. Catastrophic exits are things like affairs or attempted suicide. Non-catastrophic exits are more subtle like watching TV, making business calls on the weekends, coming home late for dinner. These exits are avoidant behaviors in a relationship that often get in the way of intimacy. We avoid intimacy in relationships because of fear and anger. We're afraid of rejection or feel undeserving of deeper love.

The following exercise will help you identify and close exits in your relationship. Sex and intimacy in a marriage can not be restored until both partners are willing to commit 100% to staying in the game.

1. Imagine your relationship is represented by a rectangle with perforated sides. The open spaces are your "exits," all the inappropriate ways you see safety and drain the energy away from your relationship. Each of the four corners is a catastrophic exit - suicide, divorce, murder, and insanity. Examine your thoughts and feelings to see if you are contemplating leaving the relationship through any of these four corner exits. If so, make a decision to close them for the period of time that you are working on your relationship.



2. Now take out four sheets of paper, two for each of you. On your first sheet of paper, make a list of your ordinary exits. Things like overeating, staying late at work, etc. On the second sheet make a list of what you perceive to be your partners exits.

3. Share your lists with each other, using affirmative listening and mirroring techniques with your partner. e.g "You are saying that..." "Did I hear you correctly?"

4. Add anything to your list that your partner mentioned. Looking at your final lists, put a check next to exits that you're willing to eliminate or reduce. Put an x next to those that will be difficult to change.

5. Write out the following promise with your partner: "Starting this week (insert date) I agree to reserve more time and energy to our relationship. Specifically I agree to reduce the following exits..."

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# RESTORING ROMANCE

The following exercises will help to restore romance in your relationship. For the expanded version please reference your copy of *Getting the Love You Want* by Harville Hendrix.

## **Caring Behavior**

- 1) Identify what your partner is already doing that pleases you. On a piece of paper complete this sentence in as many ways as possible, focusing on items that happen with regularity: "I feel loved and cared about when you..."
- 2) Recall the romantic stage of your relationship. Are there any caring behaviors that you used to do for each other that you're no longer doing? On a piece of paper list the following: "I used to feel loved and cared about when you..."
- 3) Now think about some caring and loving behaviors that you have always wanted but never asked for. These may come from your vision of a perfect mate, or prior experience. On a piece of paper write out the following, "I would really love it if you..."
- 4) Now combine all three lists and indicate how important each caring behavior is to you by writing a number 1 to 5 beside each one.
- 5) Exchange lists with your partner. Put an "X" next to items you are not willing to do at this time. All of the other behaviors should be conflict-free. Starting tomorrow, do at least two of the nonconflicted behaviors each day for the next two months, starting with the easiest ones. When your partner does a caring behavior for you, acknowledge it with an appreciative comment.

## **The Surprise List**

The purpose of this exercise is to augment the caring behaviors exercise. Make a list of things you can do for your partner that would be especially pleasing. Don't guess. Remember things that have pleased your partner in the past or hints or comments your partner has made. Select one item and surprise your partner with one this week.

## **The Fun List**

Make a list of fun and exciting activities you would like to do with your partner. These should include face-to-face experiences and any body contact that is physically pleasurable. Things like tennis, dancing, sex, massage. Share and combine your lists. Pick one activity from the list each week.

**Random Reinforcement** - Habit and routine are the biggest romance traps. Integrating surprise and fun, or "random reinforcements", into your relationship will help to sustain the romance over time.



## THE SECRET TO EROTICISM

Many couples go through periods when sexual and romantic droughts - when they are estranged from each other, or immersed in their own projects and in their own lives. When erotic intensity waxes and wanes there is no need to panic. Given sufficient attention, couples can bring eroticism back. Below are a few ways of doing so:

**Cultivating Play** - Sex is not the same as eroticism. Eroticism is sexuality transformed by the imagination. You don't even need sex, rather it thrives on excitement and a purposeful quest for pleasure. It is when we fixate on sex as a transactional part of a marriage that erotic play is lost. Erotic play in a relationship allows for fantasy, risk-taking, and experimentation. Think about your capacity for play as a child. You didn't worry about outcome or fear of judgment, you were care-free. Cultivate play in your relationship by changing up routines - engage in a game of role-play at a party where you pretend not to know one another, instead of going home, find a look-out point and engage in foreplay with your partner. Read poetry or listen to music together in bed.

**Planning for Sex** - Let's face it. Most couples today, especially one's with kids, are far too busy for spontaneous sex. No need to waste time reminiscing about the way things used to be. If you're going to have a healthy sex life, you will need to plan for it. It's about re-prioritizing errands and chores, and committing to the ongoing seduction of your partner. Planning a 1 x weekly evening out with dinner, music, followed by sex creates anticipation and longing in a relationship. If childcare is an issue, try swapping with a friend.

**The Shadow of the Third** - At the boundary of every couple lives the third. He's the high school sweetheart whose hands you still remember, the pretty cashier, the handsome teacher at your son's school. The stripper, the porn star, etc. He is the one a woman fantasizes about when she makes love to her husband. Real or imagined, the third is the manifestation of our desire for what lies outside of the fence. It is the forbidden.

Many couples refuse to acknowledge the third. They hold to the idea of oneness, which insists that there is no need for others. Fantasies are often interpreted as threats, because they reflect our partner's freedom and separateness. If our partner can think about someone else that means they can love someone else and where does that leave you?

When the "third" is exiled, and we tighten up boundaries and freedom in a relationship, our partners are more susceptible to "acts of defiance." Consider the following question: Is it possible to invite the fantasy of the "third" into our relationship, allowing it to add excitement and freedom of expression without threat?

**Fantasy Letter** - A client came in once terrified to share his sexual fantasies. He worried that his partner would become upset and leave him. Sexual excitement requires the capacity not to worry about hurting your partner, and the pursuit of pleasure demands a degree of selfishness. On a piece of paper, write the details of your secret fantasies and set aside a special time to share them with your partner.

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## 3 INGREDIENTS OF LASTING LOVE

When we look at what we want from our partner, sometimes we need to look within. What might I not be giving? Is there something that I'm doing that might have an impact on how my partner is acting? If you transform yourself, your relationship automatically transforms. Use yourself and personal growth to create excitement in relationship. Try building on these positive behaviors in your relationship.

### **Trust**

The breaking of daily trust can be a dangerous affair. Regular small missteps, such as missing an anniversary or not following through with a commitment, can chip away a relationship's trust. Instead make sure your actions show that you can be trusted. If something is important to your partner, make sure you show that it's important to you too.

### **Appreciation**

The more time you spend with someone, that initial response -- the butterflies or excitement -- begins to decrease. This change, known as habituation, can make it easy to take the other person for granted. To avoid this, try to imagine your life without your partner? What made you attracted to your partner in the beginning? How does your partner make your life better?

### **Quality Time & Communication**

When you set aside time dedicated to your partner, it allows both of you to open up with one another. With frequent walks and talks, you can create calm and unguarded communication. This allows you to address worries and concerns in a constructive manner. When discussing relationship issues and pitfalls, it's important to lead with the positive. Remind your partner that you love him or her and why. Avoid awfulizing statements, such as "You never ever..." or "You always..." Instead try, "I would really love it if you..."

Reflect on your behavior in your relationship. Which aspects do you struggle with the most? In which areas can you give more?

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## RELATIONSHIPS 101 RECAP

### Primary Job as a Soulmate

- 1) You're a stand for your partner's transformation into magnificence
- 2) You take full responsibility for ensuring that your partner maintains a healthy relationship with their parents. This is typically the source of major inner conflict in your partner.

### The Role Conflict Plays

Conflict and aggression serve a lot of purposes. True love is the perfect balance of attraction force with the repulsion force. Holds us perfectly together, but also pushes us apart that we can remain individuals.

Attraction pulls us towards our partner, and aggression pulls away. True love is like a dual orbit, like stars. Love is the only force powerful enough to keep you in the game and get you to look at your stuff.

### The Good in Fighting

- Fighting is about love. It's a portal to increase intimacy and an opportunity to learn about your partners needs and wants.
- It's a container in which all of your darkest shadows come up. All the parts that you're ashamed of surface.
- Takes a lot of work to pull up your sleeves and commit to maturing through the conflict.
- Fighting means you're trying to work something out. You're committed to doing the transformational work because you are committed to your partner.

### How you stay in communication during the fight is key

- You want to find intimacy even in the conflict. Make physical contact if possible. Whoever has the maturity in the moment, reach out and touch your partner. This lets your partner's animal nervous system know that they're safe. The child in them needs to know "I love you...I'm right here for you and your safe."
- Instead of standing opposed, imagine you and your partner arm in arm facing a third entity, which is a misunderstanding. If you approach conflict with your weapons down, you can assess the situation in a more neutral way.
- Try to take away exits (relationship threats) in the relationship
- Ask your partner: "When you get upset, when you're angry or frustrated and I've kinda lost you, what do you need me to do?" Get to know the process each person needs and come up with a soothing mantra.
- Take a time out. When you're triggered and no longer thinking with higher executive functioning, that's a red alert. You ideally want to go for one trigger at a time. If your partner gets triggered, one person has to identify the escalation and be willing to hold down the fort. That person may have to initiate a timeout.

# EQUAL PARENTING

**"The main source of children's emotional well being comes from relationships - from their deepest attachments to mother, father, grandparents, and a few cherished other."  
~ Children's Wellbeing Manifesto**

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# THE 4 PARENTING STYLES

## WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

### Authoritarian Parenting

- You believe kids should be seen and not heard.
- When it comes to rules, you believe it's "my way or the highway."
- You don't take your child's feelings into consideration
- They also don't allow kids to get involved in problem-solving challenges or obstacles. Instead, they make the rules and enforce the consequences with little regard for a child's opinion.
- Authoritarian parents are famous for saying, "Because I said so," when a child questions the reasons behind a rule. They are not interested in negotiating and their focus is on obedience.
- Authoritarian parents may use punishments instead of discipline. So rather than teaching a child how to make better choices, they're often focused on making a child suffer for his mistakes.
- Children who grow up with strict authoritarian parents tend to follow rules much of the time. But, they may develop self-esteem problems
- Children of authoritarian parents may become hostile or aggressive. Studies show they may also become good liars, as they may grow conditioned to lie to avoid punishment.

### Authoritative Parenting

- You put a lot of effort into ensuring you have a positive relationship with your child.
- You explain the reasons behind your rules.
- You enforce rules and give consequences, but you take your child's feelings into consideration.
- authoritative parents establish clear rules. But, they allow for reasonable exceptions to the rules.
- Authoritative parents often use logical consequences that teach life lessons. They also use positive discipline to prevent behavior problems and to reinforce good behavior. So they may be more likely to create reward systems and praise good behavior.
- Children raised with authoritative discipline tend to be happy and successful. They're also more likely to be good at making decisions and evaluating safety risks on their own. Researchers have found kids who have authoritative parents are most likely to become responsible adults who feel comfortable expressing their opinions.

### Permissive Parenting

- You set rules but rarely enforce them and rarely give out consequences.
- You think your child will learn best with little interference from you. You only step in when there's a serious problem.
- They're quite forgiving and they adopt an attitude of "kids will be kids." When they do use consequences, they often give in if a child begs or promises to be good.
- Permissive parents usually take on more of a friend role than a parent role. They often encourage their children to talk with them about their problems, but they usually don't put much effort into discouraging poor choices or bad behavior.
- Kids who grow up with permissive parents tend to struggle academically.
- They may exhibit more behavioral problems as they don't appreciate authority and rules. They often have low self-esteem and may report a lot of sadness.
- They're also at a higher risk for health problems, like obesity, because permissive parents struggle to limit junk food intake. They are even more likely to have dental cavities because permissive parents often don't enforce good habits.

### Uninvolved Parenting

- You don't ask your child about school or homework and you rarely know where your child is or who she's with.
- You don't spend much time with your child.
- Uninvolved parents basically expect children to raise themselves. They usually don't devote much time or energy into meeting children's basic needs.
- Uninvolved parents are often neglectful. But sometimes, it's not intentional. A parent with mental health issues or substance abuse problems, for example, may not be able to care for a child's physical or emotional needs on a consistent basis.
- When parents are uninvolved, children struggle with self-esteem issues. They tend to perform poorly in school. They also exhibit frequent behavior problems and rank low in happiness.



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## 3-YEAR VISION

Annie Dillard once said, "how we spend our days, is how we spend our lives." One day of living with bottled up thoughts and emotions often turns into a lifetime of resentment. The key to clearing out old habits in your life, especially in relationships, is asking key questions that will bring more joy and clarity into your life.

The following exercise is an invitation to plan your life with intention. How do you want to feel in your professional and personal life? What are you saying YES and NO to? The process of visualization is powerful. How we think significantly shapes our reality. As you jump into these questions, think BIG!

### **BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL**

- What do you see and hear when you walk into your place of work?
- Where in the world ARE you? What is the physical setting?
- Describe the people you've surrounded yourself with. What do they look like, talk about, care about?
- Who are you customers? Who are you serving? What are they saying about you? How do you communicate and connect with them?
- What programs, products, services, experiences, events, books etc. do you offer?
- What does the public think about you? What is your reputation in the field?
- What does the media (online and traditional) say about you?
- What does your visual brand look like? From your website to the interior design of your company or home office?
- How is the company running day to day? Who's your main operations person?
- Describe your dream team and how they support the company vision and you. Do you lead team retreats and workshops? If so where?
- What do you DO everyday? What are the tasks, strategies, meetings and activities? How do you show up as a leader?
- What does your company's financial picture look like?
- How big are you how much bigger are you going to get? What's your company culture and spirit?
- How is your painted picture and core values being lived by every person in your organization? What's your BIG why?

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# Three-Year Vision

## PERSONAL

- Where are you living?
- What time do you wake up? What are your thoughts when you first wake up?
- Who do you wake up next to?
- What do you do when you wake up? What is your morning routine?
- What do you look forward to the most in the morning?
- How do you spend the first half of your day?
- How is your health? How are you moving and fueling your body?
- What are some ways you reconnect with yourself?
- How is your mind? What are you learning?
- What touches your heart?
- What habits and rituals are you practicing?
  
- What do you feel throughout your day?
- What part of your day do you enjoy the most?
- What are three things or people that you are grateful for?
- What are you most proud of?
- What do you look forward to every night?
- What do you have for dinner? Where do you eat? Who do you eat with? What do you talk about?
- What are your thoughts before bed?
- How often do you unplug, think, dream, rest, reset, and realign?
- What do you need to let go of daily, in order to live the life you imagine?

## RELATIONSHIPS

- What do your personal relationships look like? How do you spend time with the most important people in your life? How are you nurturing those relationships?
- What does your relationship look like with your partner or spouse?
- What does your relationship look like with your children (if applicable)?
- What does your relationship look like with your family members?
- What does your relationship look like with your friends?
- In what ways are you giving to the people you love?
- In what ways are you receiving from the people you love?
- What people will you start saying NO to? What people will you start saying YES to?
- Who do you need to forgive? Or let go of?
- Who holds you accountable to deliver on your professional and personal promises?



## Recommended Booklist

### GROWTH & INSPIRATION

Mans Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl  
Daring Greatly by Brene Brown  
Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Towards Self-Realization by Karen Horney  
The Gifts of Imperfection by Brene Brown  
Surviving Survival: The Art and Science of Resilience by Laurence Gonzales  
The Drama of the Gifted Child by Alice Miller  
Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain  
If You Meet the Buddha on The Road: Kill Him: The Pilgrimage of Psychotherapy by Sheldon Kopp  
Self-Parenting: The Complete Guide to Your Inner Conversations by John Pollard  
My Stroke of Insight by Jill Bolte Taylor  
Homecoming: Reclaiming and Healing Your Inner Child by John Bradshaw  
Healing the Shame that Binds You by John Bradshaw  
Boundaries: When to Say Yes How to Say No by Henry Cloud  
Women, Food, and God by Geenan Roth  
Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am? by John Powell  
Aging Well: Surprising Guideposts to a Happier Life by George Valliant  
The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz  
Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment by Tal Ben-Shahar  
Healing Your Emotional Self by Beverly Engel  
The Road Less Traveled by M. Scott Peck  
Self Observation: The Awakening of Conscience by Red Hawl  
A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles by Marianne Williamson  
The Red Book by Carl Jung  
The Gift of Therapy by Yalom  
The Now Effect: How a Mindful Moment Can Change the Rest of Your Life by Elisha Goldstein  
The Artists Way: Recovering your Creative Self by Julia Cameron

### RELATIONSHIPS

Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love by Sue Johnson  
Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help you Find and Keep Love by Amir  
Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions by Roberta Gilbert  
The 7 Principles for Making Marriage Work by John Gottman  
Lost Art of Listening: How Learning to Listen can Improve Relationships by Michael Nichols  
The Dance of Intimacy: A Woman's Guide to Courageous Acts of Change in Key Relationships by Harriet  
Love Sense: The Revolutionary New Science of Romatic Relationships by Sue Johnson  
The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts by Gary Chapman  
Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love Alive and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships by David Schnarch  
Rewire your Brain for Love: Creating Vibrant Relationships Using the Science of Mindfulness by Marsha Lucas  
Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay: A Guide to Help You Decide Whether to Stay in or Get Out by Mira Kirshenbaum  
Living with a Passive Aggressive Man: Coping with Hidden Aggression from the Bedroom to the Boardroom by Scott Wetzler  
Screamfree Marriage: Calming Down, Growing Up, and Getting Closer by Hal Edward Runkel  
Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples by Harville Hendrix  
The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships by Harriet Lerner  
Keeping the Love you Find: A Personal Guide by Harville Hendrix  
Divorce Busting: A Step by Step Approach to Making Your Marrlage Loving Again by Michele Weiner-Davis  
Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence by Esther Perel