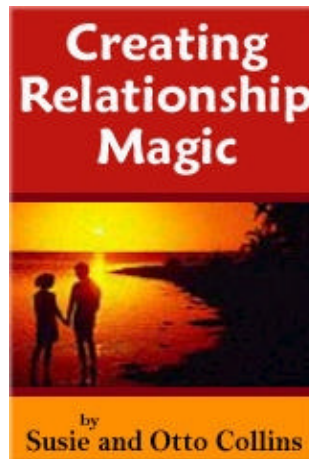


How To Create Magical, Alive, Growing, Connected Relationships of Any Kind...

(Even if you think you've failed a hundred times before!)



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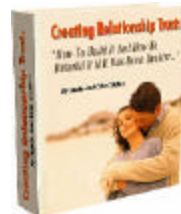
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Contents

Introduction.....	4	28 Golden rule.....	68
1 Ask for what you want.....	5	29 Gratitude.....	70
2 Assumptions.....	7	30 Healing past.....	72
3 Attitude.....	9	31 Intimacy.....	74
4 Be here now.....	11	32 Jealousy.....	76
5 Being angry.....	14	33 Killing monsters.....	79
6 Blame.....	16	34 Kindness.....	81
7 Blending.....	18	35 Laughter.....	83
8 Change.....	20	36 Lying.....	85
9 Changing someone.....	22	37 Marriage.....	87
10 Commitment.....	24	38 Meltdowns.....	89
11 Communicate.....	27	39 Money.....	91
12 Conflict (1).....	29	40 Open your heart.....	94
13 Conflict (2).....	31	41 Passion.....	96
14 Connection.....	34	42 Planning.....	98
15 Consciousness.....	36	43 Power and vulnerability...100	
16 Differences (1).....	38	44 Purpose of relationship...102	
17 Differences (2).....	40	45 Struggle.....	104
18 Disappointment.....	43	46 Think outside your box..106	
19 Fear.....	45	47 Trust and safety.....	108
20 Feeding relationships.....	47	48 Truth.....	111
21 Feeling emotions (1).....	49	49 Understanding.....	113
22 Feeling emotions (2).....	51	50 Vibrational match.....	115
23 Feeling emotions (3).....	53	51 Willingness.....	117
24 Your first things.....	56	52 Words that heal.....	119
25 Focus on positive (1).....	59	About Susie and Otto.....	121
26 Focus on positive (2).....	62		
27 Forgiveness.....	64		

Introduction

This book has 52 short chapters that are designed to help you create relationship magic. Within this book, you'll find personal stories and examples that will help you create more conscious, alive and connected relationships of all kinds, whether you are with a partner or single.

We are Susie and Otto Collins. We are soulmates, best friends, spiritual and life partners and relationship coaches who are committed to helping people, like you, take their relationships to a higher and more meaningful level. One of the main reasons we do this is because our relationship is so incredible and we want to help others to have this same experience. We write from our hearts and from our own experiences and coaching practice, giving you simple, yet powerful, ways to enhance and grow all of your relationships. We write together and sometimes use the third person voice because it enhances the flow of the material.

This book can be read in one of three ways: it can be read cover to cover as you would any book; you can choose a chapter at random to read; or since there are 52 chapters, you can read a chapter a week and use it as a one year workshop to expand your relationship. Whichever way you choose to read the book, we suggest that you answer the "Consider this" question at the end of each chapter to expand your horizons about relationships, beyond your current way of thinking.

Even though we feel we have a lot of great ideas about how to create great relationships, all the answers you need lie within you. We are here to serve as guides to uncover the answers that are already within you.

We wish you joyful, fulfilling, passionate and connected relationships. Love and Light, Susie and Otto

1 Ask for What you Want

You've heard the quotation by Henry David Thoreau that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." If this is true as Thoreau suggests, it's because most people don't identify and ask for what they want in their lives.

Maybe you're not living a "quiet life of desperation" but if your relationships aren't the way you'd like them to be, we think that asking for what you want is a great place to start. Want more help around the house? Ask for it. Want more romance in your life? Ask for it. Want more time together? Ask for it.

We've discovered that if you don't take the time to first identify what you want and then ask for what you want, you could get anything that other people want to give you in life. You are living from someone else's agenda and not your own. If you're not clear on what you want, you are an observer and not a participator in your life.

We've all bought into certain belief systems, whether from our original family values or beliefs that we've picked up along the way. Sometimes these beliefs and values serve us greatly and sometimes they don't. If we aren't conscious and aware, we can be "ruled" by these beliefs and follow someone else's agenda and not our own.

Many women have been taught to serve others first and to put their desires last, if at all and many men have been taught to be providers, above all, and to put their desires last. Some of us even feel that we don't "deserve" to get what we want out of life. We believe that we all deserve to get what we want from our lives.

The point is that you are the most important person in your life and if you don't ask for what you want, you won't get it. Now, this sounds selfish but if you are not getting what you want out of life, you are usually not happy, whether you admit it or not. The truth of it is that the people in your life can sense your anger, resentment and unhappiness.

Susie's extended family used to regularly have family get-togethers which lasted 2 1/2 days and involved 10 or more people in one location. It was her perception that she was doing the bulk of the meal preparation and cleanup. After a few weekends of feeling angry, she decided to tell the rest of the family how she felt and ask them to take a more active role in sharing the household responsibilities.

They were more than willing to help. If Susie had not said how she felt, she would have continued to be angry and resentful and miss the opportunities to connect in a loving way with the people she cared about most.

The point is that no matter what you want in life, you've got to ask to get it. In your relationships--whether you want to be told how much you matter to someone, you want to go out to dinner with someone more often, or you want more quality time with someone--it's up to you to speak up and say what you want.

The Bible says, "Ask, and it will be given you; But you first must ask!

Give yourself permission to ask for what you want in life because if you don't ask, you won't get it. If this idea feels intimidating to you, start small--but start asking today for the things you want!

Consider this: What do you need to ask for in your relationships? What would make you feel more loved or fulfilled?

2 Assumptions

A few weeks ago, Susie's daughter was in her car, sitting at a red light and a man began honking his horn and waving at her. Since she didn't know him, she assumed that he was angry and wanted her to run the red light! When they stopped at the next red light, he was in the lane beside her and he rolled down his window to talk with her. Since she was still thinking he was going to yell at her, she felt herself becoming more nervous and tense.

What he wanted to tell her was that her gas cap was on the top of her car! She had just pumped her own gas at a station and had not replaced the cap.

What she feared to be "road rage" was simply a man trying to help her.

Isn't this what we do in our relationships? We assume we know what the other person is thinking or feeling or what is important to them without stopping to ask them.

The other night, at a concert -- a friend.wonderful songwriter and performer Charley Thweatt used the analogy of dust collecting to describe what happens in relationships when you don't deal with issues as they come up. Pretty soon, dust collects and it's very difficult to have honest, open communication because of it.

One of the reasons that "dust" collects in relationships is the unexpressed assumptions that have been made by each person that may or may not be true. The reason we make assumptions is that our fears for what may happen in the relationship won't allow us to address issues as they come up.

What we try to do to avoid "dust" collecting in our relationship is to listen to each other without assuming and without being

critical. When one of our "hot buttons" has been pressed by the other person, we try not to immediately make assumptions about the other's intentions. Instead, when an issue comes up, we talk about it together as soon as we can after we realize that an "issue" has come up. We explore what each of us is feeling, thinking and find out what's going on within.

We've discovered that when you do this in relationship, you no longer make assumptions because you know that honest communication will prevent any "dust" from accumulating between you.

Consider this: Do you ever assume to know someone's intentions and thoughts instead of asking? If you do, what are some positive ways you can stop yourself from assuming?

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3 Attitude

If you're like most people, sometime or another you've found yourself irritated by the small things that others do.

These could be mannerisms or annoying habits of our loved ones or co-workers that seem to drive us crazy.

In short, we become "nit-picky." And that annoying or upsetting behavior seems to be all we can focus on.

Sometimes, it gets so bad that we expect that other person to act that way and sure enough--they do!

If you find that you are irritated or are being "nit-picky" with someone in your life, one of several things maybe going on.

It may be that you are actually looking at a mirror of your own personal challenges or issues.

It may be that by focusing your attention outwardly, you're choosing not to look at your own challenges.

It may also be that expectations, assumptions and controlling behaviors have gotten the better of you.

So, when this happens to us, we stop and look at what's going on inside us. Along with this introspective examination, we often change our focus in how we are looking at the other person.

We begin to focus on the qualities in them that we like rather than on the ones that we don't like.

When we are able to do this, we not only find what is at the bottom of our negative viewpoint, but we've also changed the dynamics between this person and ourselves for the better.

When Otto's son was 11 years old, he was driving both of us crazy. His clothes were always in the middle of the floor. We would find his dirty dishes all over the house after he was gone. In short, his irresponsible behavior became all we could focus on.

We knew we had to change the way we felt about this situation. So, after examining what was going on inside us and our part in this drama, we began focusing on the behaviors and qualities in him that we really liked.

After we changed our attitudes and focus, we immediately saw a change for the better in him. We've tried this in our work situations and have seen strained relationships improve for the better. We've also done this "mind shift" with each other.

Consider this: What situation in your life would you like to improve? How can you make a "mind shift" and change your attitude and focus about this situation for just one day?

4 Be Here Now

Remember when you were in grade school and how the teacher would call the roll. In order to let her know that you were there that day, you would have to respond by saying "present" when she called out your name.

If you want your relationships to work, you have to be "present."

Recently Otto was taking some sales training and the first step in this training process was what the trainer called--"Be here now." In sales, the idea of "Be here now" is about being fully prepared to greet customers, know the correct pricing of all items, leave all your problems at the door, and be prepared to focus totally on your customer or client.

The sales trainer gave an excellent illustration of what it means to "Be here now" in our relationships. He said that recently he was having one of those days where a million different things were going on. There were problems to solve and a dozen different pieces of paper strewn all over his desk when his wife called to tell him about a problem she was having with one of their young children.

He found himself just saying things like "uh-huh" and "sure" and "wow" and wasn't really listening to the problem she was describing to him. Midway through her explanation of this situation, she suddenly stopped and said to him--"I'm really getting angry with you because you're not listening to me at all." This got his attention. He had not really been present with her. He was not really listening to her and was focused on other things.

As you can see by this story, there are really two important aspects to the idea or concept he called "Be here now." One requires that you, the listener, clear your mind of chatter, worry

or planning what you're going to say next and focus totally on that person and what they are saying.

We believe that giving someone your full attention is one of the greatest gifts you can give someone. Whether it's the clerk at the local convenience store, your mother, your mate, or your child--give them your full attention. If you don't have time at that moment, tell them that you will give them your full attention when you finish what you are doing and then keep your word.

The other aspect is that if you are the one speaking and you notice the other person "nodding off" and not following what you are saying, it might be a good idea to do what this sales trainer's wife did and "call" them on their lack of attention.

We've learned that many communication problems result from this very issue of not being present for another person. By not being present for that person, you are not honoring and respecting them. And by not speaking up when another person is not totally with you, you risk building up resentments and mistrust.

Along this same line, W. Clement Stone, a man who made many millions of dollars during his lifetime as the founder of Combined Insurance Company and founder of Success Magazine, attributed a portion of his success to his philosophy of W.I.N .that stood for "What's Important Now."

"What's Important Now" was a mantra that Stone would repeat many times throughout his day. He used it to keep himself focused on "what's important now."

If your relationships are important to you, this is a question you need to ask yourself throughout your day--"What's Important now?"

We've discovered that the concept of "Be here now" is really important if you want relationships that are vibrant, alive and growing.

Consider this: Do you give people, especially those closest to you, your full attention when they are talking to you? What one thing can you do today to begin doing a better job of "being here now"?

5 Being Angry

Everyone gets angry. Some people show it openly and others don't. If you are one of those people who claim you don't get angry- you're either not in touch with your emotions or you are lying to yourself. Even Jesus became angry.

In relationship, Anger can be either healthy or unhealthy. Anger is just an emotion. How you process it is what determines whether it becomes a tool for growth or a source of pain and destruction.

In this society anger is perceived as a negative emotion. If you are a person who expresses anger, society would tell you that you are someone who can't control your emotions and can't control your behavior.

Most of us suppress anger and deny it exists until it rears its ugly head. In our relationship, we've found that it's always best to deal with any anger that comes up right away. In the past Otto would always let resentments build and build until they got out of control. Then he would just explode and end up saying things he would end up regretting later. In his past relationships it wasn't safe for him to express his true feelings. Susie was taught that you should always be nice and there was no place for anger. Her parents were never openly angry with one another. Angry feelings to her meant something was wrong with her. Because she repressed her feelings, she found them overwhelming and was not able to express what she was experiencing.

All emotional feelings are signals that there is something in your life that needs to be dealt with and anger is one of those emotions. When anger comes up, it is a signal that something in your life is out of balance and incongruent with how you believe your world should be. When anger comes up, it's also a sign that

someone is fearful about something –whether they are willing to admit it or not.

When anger comes up in our relationship, we want to get to the root of the problem and find out what's really going on. What we have found helpful is to open up a dialog and just allow the person who is angry to express how and why. When you are angry, you need to take responsibility for it and not project it onto someone else.

The partner's job is to listen in a detached, non-judgmental way. This process takes trust and practice but the reward is a relationship which is free of resentments.

Reacting quickly and honestly to angry emotions bypasses the tendency of periodic explosions and tends to “clear the air” much like a spring rain. When you defuse anger, you'll be able to bring back the connection and love that you've lost in that moment.

Susie has learned not to run away from angry feelings but that it is safe to express them when they appear. Otto has found that when he expresses anger, he is able to move past the anger and discover what he is really upset about that is underneath the anger.

The lesson we learned is that a foundation of safety and trust in the relationship must be present to express or listen to anger from love instead of fear.

Consider this: What did you learn about anger when you were growing up? When and with whom do you become angry? What unexpressed feelings do you find when you look underneath that anger?

6 Blame

Have you ever blamed anyone for anything for any reason? Of course! All of us have at one time or another.

Here's the problem with blaming anyone else for anything in your life--When you blame another, you sever the connection of the heart and soul between the two of you.

There are a lot of reasons why blame can happen but it always comes back to one person's need to be right. Yes, there are times when one person is "right" but we've found that if these grudges are carried for any length of time, they can destroy the relationship and can even destroy the person who's "right."

For several years after Otto's divorce from his ex-wife, Otto hung on to the need to be "right." Even though he was the one who left her, in his mind, it was important to him that she take half the responsibility for the marriage not working out. After the divorce, he was outraged because she blamed him totally for the broken relationship. He blamed her for her not taking her share of the responsibility for the relationship not working out.

Because both people had such an entrenched attachment to "being right", this presented major communication problems in issues that had to be addressed concerning their son after the divorce.

It wasn't until Otto gave up his attachment to "being right" that communication began to improve. Otto was able to let go of a lot of anger when he let go of the blame.

In our view, when you blame, you have two choices--one is to continue to act out of fear and entrench yourself as the victim,

telling all of your friends (over and over) how you were hurt and how angry you are; Or you can begin the healing process by giving up the attachment to the need to be "right" and then spend your time and energy on whatever is necessary to heal the relationship. In some cases, it may not be possible to "heal" the relationship but you will heal yourself when you let go of blame and grudges.

We know this is difficult, especially if there are emotionally charged issues involved. But here's our suggestion--If you find that you've been blaming another or even yourself for a problem in a relationship, stop the negativity. If you want to heal the relationship, spend your time focusing on the solution and how you would like the relationship to be and how you can heal it instead of the problem and how you have been wronged.

Consider this: When do you blame another person, especially someone close to you? Do you have the "need to be right"? When you are blaming someone for something that happened in a certain situation, what role did you play in creating that drama? What are some ways you can turn blame into a positive solution to the problem?

7 Blending with the people in our lives

Recently, we had a conversation with another couple who, like us, are trying to blend two families into one. As we talked about our conversation later, we realized that this is exactly what is going on in every relationship. We contend that every relationship is a "blended" family--work situations, social groups, church groups and even your weekend softball team and bridge club.

Every relationship between two people consists of two ways of looking at the world and two sets of rules for their lives--much like the blending of two different sets of children who have been raised with different standards of discipline and different ideas of their place in a family unit.

We believe that we are in relationships to learn from each other and to heal the parts of ourselves that need to be healed.

People are usually resistant to differences in another because we're more comfortable in associating with people just like us--even if we don't admit it. But the problem is--there's no growth unless we open to understanding and possibly adopting some of those different ways that we see in someone else.

The father we were talking to told us that through this sometimes rocky attempt at "blending" two families, he had grown more lenient by accepting his wife's example and she has become more consistent in her parenting by his example.

This was a wonderfully loving story that demonstrates how two people with different parenting skills could actually learn from each other.

This is what we all should do with all the people in our lives--love and accept them and whenever possible, try to learn from them.

What could the people in your life teach you if you weren't too stubborn or resistant to change?

We've heard it said that the best description of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. If you want your relationships and your life to improve, you need to be more open to what others can teach you (even if that other person irritates you).

What we are beginning to learn in our own "blended" family is unconditional love, one moment at a time and to not take things personally, as Don Miguel Ruiz author of "The Four Agreements" suggests.

So we suggest that you look at the differences of the people in your life--love and accept them and whenever possible, try to learn from them.

Consider this: What could the people in your life teach you if you weren't too stubborn or resistant to change? What life lessons could others teach you if you were open to them?

8 Change

A few years ago Susie and her sister moved their mother into an assisted living facility and sold the family home of over 50 years.

During this process of clearing out the house and putting together a garage sale, we were all struck by the transitory nature of possessions. The \$1487.57 that was collected at the garage sale was inconsequential compared to the real value of the love that was expressed during those 50 years that Susie's family spent in that home.

As Kenny Loggins said in the introduction of "The Unimaginable Life"-- "We all long for love. Whether we know it or not, everything else we do is just killing time." Most of us spend our lives rushing around--going places, doing things and accumulating possessions. We don't stop and think that what is most important is the giving and receiving of love.

Many people who we come in contact with are going through dramatic life changes--They are leaving jobs that no longer fit them; they are leaving partners who are no longer a match or partners are leaving them; they are becoming parents to their parents; they are moving to a different community.

These changes are usually very disruptive as we let go of old roles, people and things. We have found that by focusing on the love rather than the loss, change or fear of what might lie ahead, we attract more love and the path becomes easier to travel.

When Otto left his first wife, he left with less than \$300, his stereo, cd's and his clothes. He was truly starting over. The

whole purpose of his leaving was to find the love that he wanted and needed. He took a leap of faith to find love--not only for a partner but also for himself. By focusing on love and not fear, he did attract the love and partnership that he had been looking for.

Don Miguel Ruiz in his book "Beyond Fear" says "If you have eyes of love, you will see love wherever you go." And we would add "attract more love to you."

If you are experiencing change or loss in your life—if doors are closing, we suggest that you see with "eyes of love." Take some time and love yourself. Appreciate those who are in your life, giving you love and support throughout your changing circumstances.

Wherever you go, go in love. Appreciate the people who serve you food at a restaurant or the cashier at the grocery store.

These offerings of love will ease your transition through whatever changes and challenges that you are facing.

No matter what's going on in your life, we honor you and send you love.

Consider this: What changes are you or someone near you going through right now? How can you love yourself and that other person more at this time?

9 Changing Someone Else

People write to us everyday--upset that their partner or mate isn't who they want them to be.... Suggesting that "if only he or she would only do this or that, or be like this or that" then everything would be just fine. They even say, "I've tried everything to get them to change--and nothing's worked."

We agree that change is difficult and the bottom line is that you cannot change someone else. You can only change yourself.

A movie that has impacted us greatly is called "Pay it Forward." If you haven't seen it, we recommend that you rent the video or DVD.

The major premise of the film is that 11 year old Trevor wanted to change three people's lives for the better and they would in turn change three other people's lives. What he found out was that he couldn't change people the way he wanted them to change. But, he did impact their lives in ways he didn't realize.

Trevor tried to help Jerry, the vagrant drug addict, but Jerry just couldn't seem to kick the habit. Trevor thought he failed but his impact on Jerry was even greater than he thought. Because of Trevor's initial act of kindness, Jerry was able to ask for help from a person in the most unlikely of circumstances and take a step forward in healing himself.

Because of Trevor's example of unconditional love and kindness, his mother was able to extend forgiveness and unconditional love to Trevor's grandmother who was an alcoholic living on the streets. No, the grandmother didn't kick her habit but she was able to take a tiny step forward.

What we are saying is, that no matter how we want someone else to be--they may change, but not necessarily the way we want them to. This is big reason we preach the value of "unconditional love."

Now, we believe that you have to decide what want out of life and if the people in your life are ones you want to be there.

So, what do we suggest to the person who wants another to change?

We believe that people can change. But, in order for a person to make significant changes in their life, they have to want to change for their own reasons and not for you.

Let go of the need to change them and examine your motivations for wanting to change them. If you are wanting another in your life to change, then your needs for the relationship are not being met. And that's the real issue-- it's that your needs are not being met.

So, we suggest that you concentrate on what you want out of life and don't focus on the faults of the other people in your life. Those perceived "faults" will only be magnified if you do.

If you find that what you want out of life and what the other person wants out of life are so different then it may be that you can find happiness with someone else. It also may be that if the other person truly understands what your needs are that they can give you what you want.

Consider this: Are you trying to change someone else? If you are, which of your needs are not being met in this relationship?

10 Commitment

Recently we were listening to a copy of the musical performer Sting's performance on VH 1 "Storytellers." As he talked about commitment in relationships, it started us thinking.

He said that commitment is making a promise that will last and is something that men have to mature into. That men's biological nature goes against commitment. In explaining his point, he quoted Katharine Hepburn as Rose in the movie classic "Africian Queen" --"Mr.Allnut, human nature is something we're here to rise above." In other words, men have to rise above their immaturity in order to make a true commitment to another person.

We agree that commitment takes maturity but we don't agree that men are the only ones who have issues around commitment.

We think that before anyone makes a commitment to anyone else, a person first has to commit to their own happiness and to their own spiritual growth.

We believe that since we are not human beings having a spiritual experience but are really spiritual beings having a human experience, every aspect of our lives is part of our spiritual growth.

There is no separation!

So it is with commitment--When you make a commitment to yourself and your spiritual growth, you are really committing to growth in every aspect of your life, including your relationship with your partner.

When you are really committed to yourself and your spiritual growth, you are committed to telling your truth--you are committed to being real and authentic in all aspects of your life, including your relationships. You are committed to following your goals, your passions, your creativity!

In the "normal" commitment between two people there is an expectation that the two of you will be together no matter what and that you will forever be the same person you were when you got together.

Our commitment to each other has with it an expectation that we will change and that this is why we are together--to help each to heal, learn and grow, even while we're changing.

We believe like Gary Zukav in Seat of the Soul that spiritual partners come together as equal for their spiritual growth.

We believe we are together only as long as we are growing together. We are no longer willing to be in lifeless, passionless relationships.

In Gary's book "Soul Stories," he talks about commitment. He says that no matter what commitment we've made to each other, society, group, or organization, the relationship will fall away of its own volition when either person stops growing or stop growing in directions that are compatible. They may physically stay together to keep their physical commitment but they die inside.

We know that our beliefs are a departure from most people in this culture. We believe that commitment does not guarantee the passion and connection that most people want in relationships. We believe that if you have passion and connection then you will be committed to each other because you have common goals and desires.

We believe that commitment results from the passion and connection between two people and not the other way around.

Like Sting, we believe that commitment to another person takes a lot of maturity and it also takes a lot of maturity to commit to your spiritual growth as well.

Consider this: What are you committed to? What is most important to you in your life?

11 Communicating clearly

Recently a television commercial caught our eye--the one where the couple is obviously sitting together in a "counseling" session. The woman turns to her husband, makes the sounds of "static", and emotionally says, "That's what it's like, Michael--I don't understand you!"

Her husband has this dejected look on his face as he watches his wife cry Hollywood tears. The "therapist" asks if he uses a cellular phone and then shows them a particular brand of digital phone that will solve all of their communication problems.

If only improving communication was that easy!

If you feel that there's static between you and a co-worker, your child, your family member or your partner, one way to clear up this "static" is to try to understand the other person from their point of view.

Stephen Covey's habit #5 says "seek first to understand then be understood." We think this is great advice and we use it constantly in our communication with each other.

If your relationships are like ours, your issues are very different from those people who are important in your life. We all carry different experiences, beliefs and expectations into our relationships. Because of this, communication can end up sounding like static on a radio if you don't understand where the other person is coming from.

From the beginning of our relationship, we have tried to practice listening to each other with the intent to gain an understanding of where the other is coming from. This means not answering the phone or allowing our attention to wander when we are having an important conversation. It has meant asking difficult

questions of the other to clarify exactly what was said.

It's a big challenge to remain "centered" when someone important to you is talking about an emotionally charged issue. When you're trying to understand someone else, it's important to keep your emotional baggage out of the way.

A good thing also to remember is that even well-meaning advice usually comes from the frame of reference of the person giving the advice--so just listen.

If you truly understood the other person from their point of view, you could not judge them. We think this is really at the crux of many communication problems. You cannot have understanding and judgment at the same time. When you have understanding, there is a softening and empathy that bridges the space between you.

If you find yourself in the middle of a "static" conversation with another person, you might ask some of these questions. "Why is this important to you?" "How can I help you?" "Help me to understand" "What's most important in this situation?"

As always, what we are suggesting is to remain conscious, centered and focused in your relationships as much as possible. When you do, you'll be able to experience much more trust, passion and joy than when you don't.

Consider this: When can you communicate more clearly and with whom? Other than trying to truly understand another, what are some ways you can begin doing this?

12 Conflict and lost connection (part 1)

The other night we watched the movie "Castaway" with Tom Hanks. One line caught our attention--Tom's character had been marooned on a desert island for several years and the only thing that kept him alive was the thought of coming home to be with the woman he loved.

The only problem was everyone thought he was dead and even though she had loved him very much, she had married someone else in the meantime.

The line that caught our attention was how he kept his life together after this crushing blow--He said, "Keep breathing. Tomorrow the sun will rise."

While it's important in times of despair to keep breathing in order to live, we use the breath not only as a way to keep living but a way to reconnect when there is conflict or distance between us.

If there's conflict or disagreement, what we do is first remember that the other person is truly our friend and not the enemy and from that place, we can begin to heal the disagreement.

We use the power of breathing as a tool to help us to regain our lost connection in those moments. What we do is look each other in the eyes and then start breathing in unison. As silly as it sounds, if you will consciously breathe in unison with your mate or friend, you will be amazed at how you can regain your center and your connection. We are then able to talk about what has happened between us and begin to heal what created the separation.

Breathing in unison to reconnect with one another is one of the most intimate things you will ever do with another person.

It takes two people to create an outstanding relationship.

In order for this process to work, it requires both people to want to heal the relationship. It requires both people to let go of whatever fears they're holding onto and to let go of the need to be right.

This breathing exercise helps you to come into the present moment and focuses your attention on what's happening right now and not what happened with previous partners or in other relationships.

So we suggest that you take some time to share this idea with your mate or a friend. If you do, you will have another tool to use to help you to reconnect when challenges come up in your relationships.

Consider this: What are some positive ways you can deal with conflict when it comes up between you and a loved one or anyone else in your life? Talking this over beforehand gives you a plan when things start to get tense between you.

13 Conflict and lost connection (part 2)

When your partner, mate or friend flips out, becomes upset or acts irrational about something, what do you do in emotionally charged situations?

Do you act like a friend or foe to that person?

We're not talking about situations where there is a concern about physical or emotional safety. What we are talking about here is how we can help each other move through the conflicts and situations that come up from time to time in all our relationships.

Let us give you an example from our own lives-- recently, the heater on our waterbed quit working. Because Susie is working at home and has more time than Otto, she took on the project of replacing it.

It seemed like it would be an easy project but turned out to be much more involved than it first appeared.

As a result, in the middle of the project she became frustrated and angry.

When she made a statement that sounded like something that her 3 year old grandson would say, Otto was triggered by what she said and wanted to take over the project.

Here's where most people in relationship get stuck in situations like these...

They get "stuck" in blame, in judgment, in criticism and anger. What we did instead of getting "stuck" and being angry for days

like we may have done in previous relationships is to consciously decide how to heal this situation now and when similar situations occur in the future.

We both quickly realized that we needed to go deeper and discover what was triggering both of us to act and react in these unhealthy ways.

Otto helped Susie to see that this was a pattern that had happened before and she asked him for help to heal this wounded place within her.

We agreed that if Susie went into this similar pattern again, Otto would not try to "fix" the situation but ask her one simple question without reacting.

The question is--"How old are you right now?"

This question is one that Susie feels safe with and will bring her into the present moment quickly. This question isn't one that everyone would necessarily want to use. You might want to find what will work for you—it might be a touch on the arm or the other person may simply put his/her hand on their heart.

The idea is for your mate or friend to help you to break from your unhealthy pattern of the past and bring you into the present so that you can deal rationally with the current situation.

You've heard us say this many times before--but, in relationships, what's going on often isn't what's going on at all.

Here's the process that Charlotte Kasl gives on her tape series "If the Buddha were in love" that we've found to be very helpful in moving through conflict or challenges.

- 1) make an agreement to help each other during these times
- 2) own up to your unhealthy behavior and want to stop it and

3) decide what would be helpful to you to interrupt the pattern.

The whole trick to being successful in any relationship is to be conscious. This process will help you do this.

Consider this: What might be a visual, auditory or tactile cue you could use to help you to come into the present moment in times of conflict?

[How To Improve Communication and Start Creating a Closer and More Loving Relationship](#)

Discover the secrets to immediately improving communication in all your relationships and to create a lifetime of love. Click the above link to have Communication Magic in your relationship.



14 Connection

As human beings, one of our deepest desires is a connection with other people. This connection means something different to each one of us.

It doesn't matter whether you're talking about an intimate relationship or one between friends or co-workers--we all want to connect with other people.

We define a connected relationship as one where there is strong trust between two people. There is unconditional love and acceptance, even when there is disagreement.

A connection with another is created by focusing on that relationship, giving it the time, importance and energy of something that you value.

It's also created by honoring the other person, wherever they are on their path. In order to create a truly connected relationship, you have to get your ego needs out of the way. This can take the form of pursuing power over another or insisting on being "right," no matter what.

In order to have a connected relationship, we think there has to be a balance of power and vulnerability between the two people. This is why we believe that the best way to have this balance is to practice spiritual partnerships, where you come together with another as equals, for each person's personal and spiritual growth. You then can allow yourself to show vulnerability, revealing those inner-most parts of yourself that you usually hide.

In our relationship, if we have not spent as much time together as we normally do or if we have not spent time talking about our

inner-most thoughts but focus instead on daily events, our connection isn't as strong with each other.

As soon as we realize that this distance has come between us, we take the time to reconnect. The way we do this is to stop our "busyness," look at one another, hold one another, and talk about what is really in our hearts. One of the most important ways that we reconnect is to sit very close to one another and look into the other's soul through their eyes. We take our time and connect from the solar plexus and the heart.

Not only does "busyness" cause a disconnection in relationships, but also fear and apathy create separation.

If there's a person in your life that you would like to have a deeper connection with but don't at the present time, it may be because of fear.

Take some time this week and look at where the fear is coming from underneath the surface. Where is the mistrust? Where is the belief that your needs won't be met? Is it possible that what is holding you back is "old stuff" from a previous relationship?

As we've said before, if it wasn't for fear, we'd all have outstanding relationships in every corner of our lives. We recognize that it takes both people desiring to have a deeper connection in order it to really happen. But we also feel that one person can make a difference.

Consider this: What are some ways you can deeper your connection with someone in your life?

15 Consciousness

In his book, "Using Your Brain-for a Change," Richard Bandler, One of the founders of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, gives a great metaphor for what happens frequently in our lives and relationships. Bandler uses the question of "Who's driving the bus?" to suggest that we put our brains on auto pilot much of the time and we aren't consciously aware of the patterns our brains run. This is also what we often do in our relationships as well.

He says, "Most people are prisoners of their own brains. It's as if they are chained to the last seat of the bus and someone else is driving. I want you to learn to drive your own bus."

We find this to be an amazing parallel to how we get stuck in our unconscious patterns in our relationships.

In "Spiritual Partnerships" or "conscious relationships", if the purpose is to heal, learn and grow, then we need to learn to drive our own bus and be conscious at all times.

In our relationship, we find that we do a pretty good job of staying conscious when we are centered and life isn't throwing us any curves. But, when life gets stressful, we allow ourselves to slip into old unhealthy patterns of past relationships. These times give us the opportunity to see the parts of ourselves that need to be healed.

We have found that when the patterns emerge and the dramas of past relationships rear their ugly heads in our current relationships, we have gone to sleep and are not living in the present moment.

What we do when one of the two of us discovers that a pattern from the past is being played out, we immediately bring it up to

the other person and we talk about our feelings and the situation. The trick is to "kill the monster while it's little"

If we are to be creators and masters of our own lives, we need to unearth these destructive patterns and resolve them once and for all. It's sometimes painful but necessary to look at yourself openly and honestly. But, we feel the first step to making any change in our lives is awareness. It's only after becoming aware of things that need to be healed can we heal them and move forward.

Only when we become more aware and conscious in all aspects of what we want for our lives and relationships are we truly "driving our own bus" and are not just passengers in a bus that's careening out of control.

Consider this: In what ways can you be more conscious in your relationships? In what ways can you discover the things within you that need to be healed?

16 Differences (part 1)

When we get into an intimate relationship and find that "perfect soulmate," we expect that our partner will be like-minded, have similar views, like to do the same things, have the same views on raising children and the same ideas about spending money. In the first phase of this relationship, all this might seem to be true.

But the reality is that we are each separate individuals with difference backgrounds, belief systems and emotional patterns. When these differences start to emerge, we can either ask "what happened to the person I fell in love with" or we can make a conscious choice to see these differences as a strength in the relationship and not as a source of conflict.

Honoring differences means honoring each other's strengths, while honoring your own--your abilities, needs and desires. We believe that we come together in relationship for our spiritual growth. In our opinion, when we came together, we began to create something "bigger" than either of us could be individually.

Stephen Covey calls this "synergy" in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." He said, "The essence of synergy is to value differences--to respect them, to build on strengths, to compensate for weaknesses."

In our relationship, Otto is the "outside of the box" thinker--the one with "big" ideas with a lot of passion for his projects and Susie is practical, focused and goal oriented. During the early stages of our business partnership, Otto felt like he was on the "fast track" and Susie wasn't. Susie felt like Otto wasn't focused and was zinging around like a dervish! Instead of allowing our differences to work for us, we struggled against them.

What our relationship has evolved into is honoring each other's differences and strengths (not always an easy task). We are consciously helping each other to build on their strengths instead of tearing them down. We are also learning how to improve our "weak" traits by asking for help. We have consciously stopped the struggle.

Are you struggling in your relationships? Where are the "bones of contention"? Would you like your partner to be more like you in certain ways?

We believe it would dramatically improve your relationships if you would give up the struggle and the need to be right and begin to honor the differences of the people in your life.

Consider this: What are some differences that create conflict between you and your partner or other people in your life?

17 Differences (part 2)

One of the biggest mistakes we make in relationships with other people is thinking they are just like us.

The truth of the matter is that no matter how much alike two people are or how well they get along, they are two different people and there are going to be significant differences between them.

One of our favorite relationship “tools” is the Enneagram--an ancient personality inventory system with its roots in a spiritual base.

One of the aspects of the Enneagram that we've found to be particularly valuable in understanding differences is by looking at our "instinctual variance" and that of our partner's.

To very briefly summarize this concept—there are three distinctly different ways to view life no matter what your personality. These ways of prioritizing your life are called self preservation, social and passionate and are like the lenses through which you see life. No two lenses are going to be exactly the same.

Now keep in mind that the Enneagram system is multi-layered and this is only a very small piece of it.

It wasn't until we began studying the Enneagram that we realized that many of the differences between us had a lot to do with each of us being two different instinctual types

It became perfectly clear that what was once grounds for misunderstandings between us could now be easily explained.

Susie looks at the world through the eyes of someone heavily invested in self-preservation and Otto is not. In fact that's his least developed area of the three.

For example Susie places her priorities on exercise and health concerns while Otto does not. It's not to say that Otto doesn't think that they are not important but he will do other things he's passionate about before he will turn his attention to health and exercise.

An example of the differences between you and someone you are in a relationship with might be--one person likes to save money and the other likes to have a good time first and then save. One person thinks sending the kids to a private school is important and the other parent thinks the public school will give their child a more rounded education. One person likes to wash the dishes right after dinner and the other prefers to relax and talk immediately after dinner and then clean up the kitchen.

What we're really talking about is that we're different from any other person we are in relationship with. And no matter how close we are to that person, our ways of doing things and the way we look at life will be different.

If we don't honor and respect the other's differences, then over time the relationship deteriorates.

So, here's what we've found to be helpful--

First you become aware of the differences and not assume that everyone thinks just like you think and their priorities are just like yours. In fact, expect differences.

Next you must talk about these differences and share what is important to you. Remember to listen with an open heart and not judge. Just because someone likes to do something in a little different way than you doesn't mean it isn't the "right" way.

Next, be open to different ways of thinking and doing things. Look at your preconceived notions about the "right" ways to do things. Just because your mother did something a certain way doesn't mean it has to be done that way forever.

If there are conflicts about the ways in which things are done or where the priorities are placed, we recommend that you devise a new way of doing things. Perhaps a third way that might be even better than the two previous ways of looking at or doing things.

We suggest that you look at the other person, whether a family member, a co-worker or intimate partner, as the divine spirit that they are and choose to learn from that person. Choose love instead of fear and harmony instead of conflict.

For more information on the Enneagram, go to <http://www.enneagram-ohio.com>

Consider this: What are some things you can learn to do better from looking at and appreciating the differences of the people in your life?

18 Disappointment

Have you ever been disappointed in a relationship? It just wasn't the way you had hoped, wanted or thought it would be. We're not just talking about intimate relationships. We're talking about family, friends, co-workers or any relationship. Most of us have had relationships that have disappointed us in some way or another.

The question would be...Why do we have disappointment in our relationships?

Stephen Levine co-author of "Embracing the Beloved" answers this question beautifully when he said "the problem with relationships is--it's a collision of two different desire systems." When you have two different desire systems, things may not always work out the way you would like.

One of the big problems between two people is each of them assuming that the other wants what they want from the relationship.

What often happens is one or both people get angry, frustrated, disappointed or upset with one another because their desires or needs are not being met. To make matters (or the relationship) worse, not a word is said about any of this to the appropriate person.

We think that the big reason that all of this happens is that we assume that other people want the same things in relationship with us that we do with them. This is not always the case.

Susie has had the same best female friend for over 20 years. They talk every day, they exercise together, have shared

secrets and many life experiences. Susie used to be puzzled and hurt when her friend would treat her differently when they were together in social situations than when they were alone. Susie finally understood that this was just her friend's nature--to try to connect with many people, and not just one person, in a social situation. Susie likes to connect one-on-one in social settings.

They later talked about these differences of expectation in their relationship. As a result of this experience, Susie learned that you can't assume that everyone wants the same thing in relationship as you do. Susie was hurt when she felt that her best friend treated her differently in social situations until she realized that her friend meant her no harm. In fact when she let go of wanting her friend's attention and focused on interacting with other people, the issue no longer mattered. As a result of talking about Susie's feelings, her friend became more conscious of how it appeared that she was treating her.

In order to avoid being hurt, disappointed, angry or upset with the people in our lives because we aren't being treated the way we want-- we have to talk, we have to communicate, we have to listen and not make assumptions about their intent. We have to let go of the judgment and allow others to be who they are and just love them where they are.

Now, if this person violates your values, your personal safety or your agreements, or your trust, it may not be healthy for you to be in a relationship with them. It may be that you need to let that relationship go so others can come into your life.

The point is--We don't need to make anyone else wrong just because they have different desires and needs from us.

Consider this: Is there someone in your life who has disappointed or hurt you? Try talking with this person with an open heart and non-judgmental way—just say what you feel.

19 Fear

We've found that at the bottom of every relationship issue and challenge is fear. It may be fear disguised as other issues but it is fear--the fear that our needs or perceived needs will not be met.

Jim Rohn says "Let your fears be your counselor not your jailer." In other words, let your fears serve as a guide for identifying areas of your life that you need to heal. Use your fears as a tool for growth instead of keeping your frozen.

If you ask most people "what are you afraid of in your relationship," the most common response is "nothing." But as they continue to talk, their fears surface, usually in the form of complaints about their partner's behavior. The challenge is to look beneath those complaints to discover the fear that is driving the complaint.

Most of us have been taught that the emotion of fear is unacceptable and we, as humans, usually deny it, bury it or disguise it as something else. Unacknowledged fear gets in the way of having connected, alive relationships of any kind.

There are 3 ways that animals and humans deal with fear—fight, flight, or freeze. We have found that none of these ways foster a passionate, connected relationship.

What has worked for us when we feel fear in our relationship is to not be afraid to get in touch with it—to meet it and find out what's there—and to share it with the other person.

We start this process by finding our "center" by going into the silence within. Only after we find this center are we able to move

underneath the fear and discover the true reason for the discomforting emotion.

You can find this silence of your center in prayer or meditation. Meditation can take many forms--seated meditation, dance meditation, yoga, fishing, running, hiking, in the shower or even sitting on a crowded bus.

Take a moment when you start to feel overwhelmed with fear, irritation with another or any other strong emotion-- quiet your mind and feel yourself go within. Take note of what you are feeling and to what memory your mind takes you. This will give you a clue what you need to heal.

Consider this: Is there something that you are fearful of? Take a few minutes and find a way that works for you to go inside and name your fear. Talk with someone who is able to listen to what you have to say about the fear.

[How To Build \(or Rebuild\) Trust in Your Relationship](#)

Of all the qualities that makes up a good relationship, trust is undeniably the most important. It's the one quality that a relationship simply can't survive without. If you want to discover the relationship secrets for building trust and dramatically improving your relationships, this info will show you what to do.



20 Feeding Your Relationships

For Susie's birthday one year, Otto gave her a card which said, "Their love was big and fat because they fed it a lot between meals." This phrase is such a great metaphor for relationships that are passionate, alive and growing!

We feel that to have a great relationship of any kind, you have to feed it a lot. Most people usually do a great job of feeding their relationships in the beginning stages but then slack off as the relationship matures.

Most people have no problem "feeding" their relationship with a mate before having sex or before an anniversary or maybe during a vacation to the beach. But they neglect to "feed" their relationship "between meals" which we feel is even more important for creating a powerful connection between two people.

We're constantly asked by people how to keep boredom or monotony out of their relationships and we feel that the best answer we can give is to "feed" it constantly and never stop growing spiritually and personally.

In Harvey Mackay's book on networking, "Dig your well before you're thirsty," he makes the point that having a network of contacts in life isn't enough. You have to constantly feed and nurture these relationships or they'll be just names in a Rolodex and nothing more. This is true your personal relationships as well as the business world.

So we'd like to offer you a few ways to "feed" your relationships "between meals." We'd suggest that you think of even more ways that foster a connected relationship of the heart.

1. Believe that you are not guaranteed another moment with your mate, your child, your friends. Treat them with kindness and love every step of the way. As Jewel sings in her song "Hands"--"Only kindness matters in the end."
2. Keep in contact with one another. Susie was out of town visiting relatives for a few days this week and to stay in touch, she called Otto each day and they talked about the important events of the day. As a result, even though they were apart, they stayed closely connected to each other.
3. Give the people in your life your undivided attention when they are communicating with you or let them know when you can give them this attention. Many times we shortchange the people we love—especially with our time and attention because of so many demands on our life. Make your loved ones a priority.

If your relationships are important to you, you have to treat them that way. As Stephen Covey suggested in his book, "First Things First"—the things that matter most should never be at the mercy of the things that matter least.

Consider this: Relationships that are "Big and Fat" are fed a lot between meals. In what ways can you begin feeding a relationship that is important to you to make it stronger?

21 Feeling Emotions (part 1)

In our judgment, one of the biggest keys to not just relationship magic but to enjoying a full rich life is being able to identify and experience a full range of emotions every day-- in other words to be able to "feel things."

In one of our workshops, someone in the group shared that they haven't cried in over fifteen years. This is a person who has put up a lot of walls so they don't have to access and feel difficult emotions.

If you are someone who is putting up walls to avoid looking at and feeling difficult or painful situations, you are also keeping out the joy as well. As Barbara De Angelis once said, "If you're repressing, you're repressing all emotions." You can't be shut down emotionally in one area of your life and expect the other parts to be going just fine. It's impossible. You're out of balance emotionally.

Our society does not encourage you to be an individual and to feel your emotions and to express them. Men AND Women have both been taught to be strong, not express exuberance (except at sporting events) or grief. Our employers expect us to be back at work with smiles on our faces in two days after a personal tragedy.

In our lives, we are learning to acknowledge and express our emotions as they come up. By doing this, our partner doesn't have to guess how we are feeling or constantly ask us "what's wrong." We avoid the game-playing that so often goes on in relationships when people hide what they are feeling from their friend or partner. Usually this means taking some time to go "within" by getting quiet, by journaling, or by taking a walk alone in the park. As a result, we enjoy a close, connected relationship of the heart and soul.

We think anyone can enjoy the same thing if they just tear down the walls and allow themselves to feel and others to feel also.

One of the most moving speeches we've ever watched is one from the former head basketball coach of North Carolina State University and Broadcaster Jim Valvano. It was during the 1993 ESPN Espy awards and he was being honored with an award. He was dying of cancer and spoke about how he realized how precious life can be.

In this speech, he said we should do 3 things every day.

Number one is to laugh. You should laugh every day.

Number two is to think. You should spend some time in thought.

And number three is to have your emotions moved to tears, especially if they are tears of joy or happiness and for creating relationships that are filled with passion, connection and joy.

We think this is great advice for a life well lived.

Consider this: In what ways can I do a better job of feeling and expressing my emotions?

22 Feeling Emotions (part 2)

It's been our observation that most of us will do almost anything to avoid feeling negative emotions.

Resisting or hiding from unwanted feelings never pushes them away. They just get stuffed down and as Steven Covey says, "come up later in uglier ways."

This isn't the purpose of emotions--to be stuffed down, pushed away and never to be dealt with. The purpose of emotions is to serve as a barometer for whether your life is flowing and in balance or not.

Karla McLaren in her tape series "Emotional Genius" said that emotions signal imbalance. They help you move to understanding and then to resolution of a situation or problem. She went on to say that they can also be clear signals from your inner wisdom that you have lost your way.

What we are saying is-- don't be afraid of your (or anyone's) emotions. The exception of course being if you feel you are in physical danger.

If you want close, connected relationships, you have to be willing to deal consciously with both your and your partner's emotions. You can't sweep your thoughts, emotions and desires under a rug and not deal with them and then hope that everything will turn out just fine. It just isn't possible.

Remember the Jack-in-the box you had when you were a kid? You'd wind the crank over and over while the silly song played and you didn't know when Jack would burst out of the box right in your face.

When you stuff your emotions down or push them away, they act just like your old Jack-in-the-box. You know they're going to blow up in your face, but you just don't know when.

We've discovered the best way to keep emotions from blowing up in your face is to first be aware of what you are feeling and then deal with them as they come up--with grace.

When anger, for example, arises in either one of us, we have an agreement that we will get to the bottom of it as soon as possible. An important key is that we both listen and speak about the issue with open hearts.

We made that agreement when we came together and it has helped us to heal our relationship when tough issues and challenges come up.

If you want outstanding relationships, we recommend that you make this same agreement with the people in your life.

Consider this: In what ways can I use my emotions as a guide to get to the bottom of a problem I'm having?

23 Feeling Emotions (part 3)

While on vacation in Mexico, we read the book Conscious Living by Gay Hendricks. When we run across an important book, we will often read it together--taking turns reading aloud--while discussing and dissecting the main points. This is a great way to connect and to move through your lessons together.

Gay's first lesson of conscious living is to feel all your feelings deeply. He says, "Always and in every moment, embrace what is real inside yourself and focus on what is real outside yourself."

This is a tough concept for anyone to master and it's just plain hard to do because no one likes to sit with pain in their life experience. We will all go to any lengths to hide from our own feelings of pain and separation from ourselves, our Creator, and from others in our lives.

We've found that by simply "owning" the emotion and tracing it back to its roots, we are able to go a long way to heal.

On a vacation to Mexico several years ago, Otto was angry at himself for unconsciously spending \$185 on new sunglasses after spending two weeks studying about becoming more conscious with his finances and all areas of his life. He wasn't upset about spending the money for good quality sunglasses. He was upset that the purchase was not well thought out and not part of his financial plan.

When he realized that he was becoming quiet and withdrawn, he told Susie about his feelings and went inside himself to find out what was wrong. He discovered he just felt stupid and felt like he just blew it. What might have taken days or weeks of pain was resolved in a few hours. How he resolved it was to make the choice that the purchase was in the past and to let the

feelings go. He also resolved to be more "awake" when making any decision.

When you consciously decide not to carry around any baggage of unexpressed feelings for any reason, you are living life more fully and more authentically. You are also creating stronger relationships with the people around you. The side benefit is that when you are real and authentic, your self-esteem cannot help but flourish.

Karla McLaren in her tape series "Emotional Genius" says that we do many things to keep from feeling emotions that are painful. These can include over eating, over exercising, over drinking, over spending or simply reaching for that piece of chocolate when things are going wrong or crazy.

So what do you do to numb the feelings when they're too painful to deal with in the moment?

Every time you reach for that box of cookies, that glass of wine, or remote control when you are angry, sad, frustrated, or lonely, stop yourself. Sit quietly, find your center, and go to that place where it's safe enough where you don't have to hide from your feelings. Really examine what's going on inside of you.

Gay Hendricks suggests that when you do this process, you try to remember the first time that you felt that feeling. Where were you? What was going on? Who were you with? What conversation was going on? He says that by doing this you are opening your heart to all of life--the pain and the pleasure--and therefore becoming conscious in every part of your life.

The next time this happens we invite you to try something different. When things get crazy and you find yourself reaching for that chocolate chip cookie, that drink, that cigarette, or that remote control, take a moment to try to discover what unexpressed emotion needs to be dealt with.

Try to breathe, identify your feeling, acknowledge it, and give yourself permission to feel that emotion.

By acknowledging that feeling instead of stuffing it down with some substance, you will be surprised how this will help you and your relationships. By acknowledging your emotions when they come up, and by talking about them with your spouse, partner or friend, they lose their emotional charge.

Don't allow yourself to miss any part of life out of fear and unexpressed painful feelings.

Consider this: What do you do to “numb out” or to not feel your emotions? How can you change some of those habits?

24 Your "First Things"

One of the biggest issues that people ask us about and we experience ourselves is how to find the time for our families, our jobs, our community and our partner. How can we do it all? We are pulled in so many different directions!

The short answer is to determine what the "First things" are in your life and live your life according to what you have predetermined as the most important things in your life. In Stephen Covey's book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Habit 3 is "Put First Things First" and we have found that this is key to living our lives the way we want.

The first step to living our lives the way we want them is to consciously determine what is most important in all areas of our lives. After determining what you value most, compare these values with how you actually spend your time.

Ask yourself "What is most important in my life?" When you have time, write down this list. Now make a list of how you spend your time?" Do the 2 lists match? If they don't, your activities are incongruent with the things you identified as your "First things."

As Brian Tracy said on his "How to Master Your Time" tapes, "It's not what you say you will do or what you intend to do that's important. It's what you actually do that reveals the most important things to you in any given moment."

We fill our lives with so many activities and often place our priorities in alignment with what's not very important to us. If you say that a passionate, loving relationship with your mate is most important to you, then you can't spend most of your free

time on the Internet, talking to your friend on the phone or away from home attending meetings.

Sometimes you have to make hard choices. Mona Lisa Schulz in "Awakening Intuition" says that in life you can't do everything--you have to choose. What we think she's saying is that you have to focus on the things in your life that you want--that are the most important to you. No one else can tell you what's most important to you.

We think this can be a glorious, freeing experience but can also be a scary, unfamiliar place to venture. The challenge is to choose what you do and how you live--consciously.

Before we got together, we consciously determined what we wanted from our relationship--what we valued. Our values have been clear and we have tried to live and spend our time according to them.

We're not saying that everyone should adopt our values but we are saying that it is important for you to determine what your values are and to understand the most important things in your partner's life from his/her frame of reference.

We suggest that you have a family discussion about what each person values. You'll find that understanding will be fostered and resolving conflicts will be easier in the future.

A great way to determine what's most important to you in your life is to make a list from the answers to the following questions - (we're sure you can make up more)

"What's most important to me in my relationship with my partner/spouse"?

"What's most important to me in my career"?

"What's most important to me in my relationship with my kids"?

"What's most important to me in my spiritual practice"?

You get the idea--Take a few minutes this week and consciously decide what's most important in your life and your relationships. Set a family meeting and ask your family members to do the same.

As Stephen Covey says, "Things which matter most should never be at the mercy of things which matter least." Make sure you know what things matter most to you.

Consider this: What are your "first things" in your life? Are your "first things" consistent and congruent with how you actually spend your time and place your priorities?

25 Focus on the Positive (part 1)

We don't know if birds do it or if bees do it but we do know that most of the people we've come in contact with do it. What we're talking about is the mantra of the modern era--"If only...."

"If only" is what most of us tend to focus on in all of our relationships. We tend to focus on the qualities that we don't like in others rather than the qualities that we do like. "If only he/she would listen to me." "If only we had a bigger house." "If only he would pick up his clothes." "If only I had a better job." "If only there was more passion in our relationship."

One of the biggest obstacles to having great relationships is focusing on what we don't like about someone else. In fact, it's not just in our relationships that we do this. It's in most of the areas of our lives.

One of the keys to creating great relationships requires you to change the way you look at life. It requires you to focus on what you like, love and admire about the people in your life instead of what you don't like.

Otto's son Steven says he wants to improve his performance in little league baseball. The challenge with this is Steven doesn't really have the desire to improve. He would prefer to spend his time watching his favorite shows on TV, playing with his baseball cards or playing video games. What ends up happening is Otto spends a lot of time trying to help him become a better baseball player by telling him "if only you'd do it this way you'd get better." Steven and Otto both usually end up frustrated.

Every time you find yourself saying those two little "If only..."

words, this should serve as a reminder that you are wanting someone or some thing in your life to be different than it really is.

You've probably heard this before but it is important to love others in your life wherever they are and not where you'd like them to be. We don't mean that you should put up with physical, mental or emotional abuse or behavior that violates your boundaries.

We suggest that if you find yourself saying "If only..." about a person or a situation in your life, stop yourself and focus on the good things about this person or situation. Make a list of what you love about them. If you can't think of anything positive, then it's time to re-evaluate your relationship with them.

The joy in life just gets sucked out of you if spend your time dwelling on past unhappy events, things you don't like, things you can't control and futurizing about negative events that haven't happened yet.

In life and in your relationships you have a choice. You can spend your time trying to get someone else to change and be more in alignment with what you want or you can find a way to love them where they are.

If it's not possible for you to love another person where he or she is, then you have another choice that only you can make.

This is also true of a job or any situation in your life. If you spend your time at work saying to yourself (if not out loud) "If only ... then I'd like my job"-- then you are hoping for someone or something outside of your control to change or be different. In this situation, you are again faced with the same challenge. If you can affect change, do so. If you cannot, then your only

options are to accept your employer and your job as it is or move on.

So we suggest this week you pay attention to the situations where you find yourself saying or thinking, "If only..." then write down what you appreciate about that person, job or relationship.

Keep that list handy so that you can focus on the positives in your life instead of the negatives. This is gratitude in action and can change your life.

Consider this: What are the "if only's" in your life?
How can you change those "if only's" into positives?
How can you accept these situations as they really are and not how you'd like them to be?

26 Focus on the Positive (part 2)

Focus on love and you'll get more of it. Focus on negativity and you'll get more of that. Everyone knows this but are we consciously aware of what we're taking in each day? For most of us, the answer is no.

Otto loves talk radio but recently he discovered that it was negatively affecting his mood and attitude. Since making this realization, he has decided that he will consciously choose more uplifting ways of entertainment when he's on the road.

Research says that the average American watches 7 hours of television a day. As we all know, most of those 7 hours are filled with dysfunctional family interactions and fear and violence.

It's very difficult to be positive and uplifting in our relationships and in our lives when we are constantly bombarded with negativity--whether it be at work, watching tv, or with people who bring us down.

So how do we create a more positive, uplifting environment?

We decide to. It's really that simple but it's not easy to change old habits and begin making new ones.

We can begin choosing to be with people who are uplifting as opposed to those who gossip and bring us down. We can begin to show our gratitude for the people in our lives. We can begin to spend our time listening to uplifting information or music instead of negativity.

Soulmates and couples in connected relationships choose to spend time with each other rather than working late--again.

They choose to build each other up instead of looking for the faults in each other.

One of the characters in the great movie "K-PAX" was told that in order to be healed of his mental illness, his first task was to look for the blue bird of happiness.

After days of looking intently out the window for this bird, this character finally saw a blue jay. The entire floor of the mental hospital was ecstatic and he was on his way to being "cured."

One of the main themes we talk about in our books, tapes, newsletters and workshops is the importance of becoming conscious in our relationships. We think that looking for the good in others is an important ingredient to having a successful relationship of any kind.

Suggesting that you look for the "blue bird of happiness" isn't just positive thinking/mumbo jumbo. We think that looking for the good in each other is one way to consciously create powerful, connected relationships.

So this week look at the things or people in your life that may be having a negative effect on you. Try to make at least one change to bring more positive and uplifting energy to your life.

Consider this: How can I create a more positive, uplifting environment for myself?

27 Forgiveness

In every relationship you're involved in, it's inevitable that something will happen in the relationship that will cause you to be upset or angry with the other person or the other person will be upset with you. Many of us try to forget what has happened to us without really taking the time to address the issue. We believe that in most cases, you really don't forget and here's why.

Have you ever had the feeling that the harder you try to "forget" something, the more you end up focusing on it?

If someone says to you, "Don't think of the color blue" "Don't think of the color blue" "Don't think of the color blue," no matter how hard you try, you probably can't stop visualizing or thinking about the color blue.

The same thing happens when you try to "forget" a negative situation that has an emotional charge to it. No matter how hard you try, you just can't seem to do it. You think you've forgotten but it's come back up in other ways.

We believe that instead of forgetting, you have to forgive and let go.

Many people write to us wanting to know how they can forgive when they have been wronged--a spouse cheated on them; they've been abused in one way or another; or maybe their feelings have been hurt and they don't feel loved or valued.

What we have found is that the process of healing a relationship requires more than forgiveness. You must also let go.

But let go of what?

In almost all cases when you are having a difficult time forgiving someone, you are holding on to an attachment of some kind or another. The attachments most commonly manifest themselves in the need to be justified, the need to be honored, the need to be right, the need to be vindicated, the desire for revenge, and the inability to move past fear.

So when you are holding onto an attachment, what you are actually doing is holding onto a position which is serving you in some way but it is not moving you forward in healing the relationship.

Eckhart Tolle in his book "The Power of Now" talks about how to let go of negativity and we think that the same holds true for letting go of attachments—Tolle says to let go of negativity "by dropping it. How do you drop a piece of hot coal that you are holding in your hand? How do you drop some heavy and useless baggage that you are carrying? By recognizing that you don't want to suffer the pain or carry the burden anymore and then letting go of it."

Just decide to do it.

Susie and her sister moved their mother from her home of 50 years to an assisted living Alzheimer's facility. At the beginning of this process, their mother had anger, hurt, and resentment toward her daughters and her new situation.

From the time of taking their mother's car away from her, Susie and her sister began practicing letting go of their mother's anger, while allowing her to feel her feelings. They continually practiced forgiving the words of anger that were directed toward them and just sent her love.

Susie practiced a "Thirty-Nine Day Prayer of Forgiveness" given to her by Shaman Connie Parkinson to help with this situation

with her mother. She's used it before to help heal a broken relationship.

Here it is--along with an explanation--and we urge you to try it. It really works!

"Every day, for 39 days, all alone and in private, you say the following:

(Name), I thank you for all you have done to me and those I love. I ask your forgiveness for all I have done to you. Let us begin a new relationship.

(Your own name), I love you. You are an exceptionally wonderful and beautiful person and I approve of you.

This prayer is extremely simple, It's extremely hard, it's extremely effective. By thanking the one who has injured you, you are putting yourself a little bit in that person's place, and you are recognizing that everyone is driven by impulses we are not to know, and that everything that happens to you is for your growth and your good."

By asking forgiveness for yourself, you are recognizing that you had a part in the relationship. By telling yourself that you love and approve of you, you are renewing strength in the one human being in your life who can truly help you--yourself.

The 3 is for the triune spiritual effect of will, action, and manifestation. The 9 brings an ending to your grief and anger and resentment against the person. The prayer itself opens you to a new understanding of both yourself and the one who injured you. The only thing you are trying to change is yourself and your emotions. As for the relationship, wait and see. You could be surprised how you'll feel toward this person at the end of 39 days."

Consider this: Who do I need to forgive? What do I need to do to begin this process?

28 Golden Rule

When we were young, most of us were taught "The Golden Rule." We think using the golden rule as a guideline for your relationships can lead to big trouble.

The golden rule says to "do unto others as you'd have them do unto you." The problem with the "golden rule" is... No one else in the entire world is exactly like you.

No matter how close, how connected and how much you love someone else, they are not exactly like you. Because they are not exactly like you, they have different wants, needs and interests--some more important than others. They also come from a different set of life experiences and circumstances.

The truth of the matter is other people don't want to be "done unto" as you'd like to be "done unto." They want to be "done unto" the way they want to be "done unto."

When Susie was a director of a library, she and her staff took the Myers-Briggs personality inventory. The results were eye-opening when they discovered that each person had different preferred ways of doing their work.

Before taking this inventory, misunderstandings arose when it was assumed that everybody worked the same way. When the staff talked about how each best liked to do her work, this discovery led to better understanding and more mutual respect.

The same thing happens in your relationships. You mistakenly believe that everyone else in your life wants to do things and live in the same way you do.

We recommend that you tell your mate, partner or people in your life how you would like to be "done unto" instead

of allowing guesswork, assumptions and misunderstandings to ruin your relationships.

This involves taking a risk. Perhaps for some people, maybe the biggest risk of all--working through fears of not being loved if you say what you really want or how you really feel.

One of those subjects for us was gift giving to each other. We consciously decided that we would decide together what gifts we would give each other on birthdays and at Christmastime because neither one of us like surprises. It so happened that we agreed about this subject but it could very easily have escalated into trying to fulfill expectations that weren't really there.

Now we're not suggesting that everyone needs to cut surprises out of their lives, but this is what works for us. What works for you may be something entirely different.

The whole point of all this is to emphasize that we all need to live our lives in a conscious manner instead of guesswork.

So we suggest that instead of assuming, that you talk and communicate your wants, needs and interests to those in your life. This way, by communicating openly and honestly, the chances of you getting what you want in your life and your relationships are much greater than if you don't.

Consider this: What is it that I want that I'm not communicating to the people in my life?

29 Gratitude

We suggest that everyday should be a day you express your love--whether you have a "significant other" or not.

Otto's father says that he wants his flowers while he is living--which means don't wait until he's dead to tell him that you care. We think this is good advice for all of us.

People who believe you can have a great relationship without putting forth any effort are living in a fantasy world.

Here's a great story from a friend which was written by Laura Jeanne Allen about her grandparents.

Laura's grandparents were very much in love and they had this game that they played with each other. Each would take turns leaving a note around the house for the other to find. These notes might be hidden in the sugar bowl or buried in a roll of toilet paper and on them would be a single word-- Shmily.

Shmily meant "See How Much I Love You." They held hands every chance they could and they stole kisses. Before every meal they bowed their heads and gave thanks, marveling at their blessings: a wonderful family, good fortune, and each other.

This beautiful story illustrates some of ways that can keep love alive between two people long after the honeymoon is over but this principle doesn't just apply to people who are married or have a significant other.

This principle applies to your friends, your family and to co-workers who touch your life everyday. Let everyone in your life know how much you care.

We begin each day with a prayer of gratitude for each other and our lives. It sets the tone for the day and makes our bond even stronger. We suggest you take some time and let the people in your life know how you care about them.

Consider this: In what ways can you begin expressing more gratitude to the people in your life?

30 Healing the past

Have you ever been upset with something or someone and not known what it was really about until hours or days later? Well this happened to Susie.

It was a beautiful fall Sunday, the television blaring with the Cincinnati Reds playing professional baseball. Susie found herself getting angry that Otto's son Steven had been perched in front of the tv for several hours. She didn't want to hear the baseball game and it was her perception that he "needed to get some exercise" and fresh air.

Since Susie grew up in a family where anger wasn't an acceptable emotion, she has had to learn to realize when she is angry and to express it in a healthy way. So she didn't discover what was beneath her uncomfortable feelings about Otto's son until several days later.

With Otto's help, she realized that she wasn't angry with Steven or baseball. She was angry with her deceased father who had also loved to sit and watch the baseball games on other beautiful fall days. Even though she thought she had resolved her angry feelings with her father many years ago, some of those feelings had surfaced again.

She realized that she was still blaming him for the family's inactivity when she was growing up and his role as the family patriarch. She wanted to be physically active--it wasn't encouraged and it just wasn't part of their family culture. After all these years, there was a part of her that still blamed him for it.

It was a big "ah ha" when she realized what was going on.

She was very grateful for the opportunity that Steven gave her by recreating the pattern so she could heal those parts of herself that needed to be healed. She had been given another chance to let go of blame and anger.

The point of this story isn't about Susie and her anger with her father as much as it is to share with you how easy it is to get caught up in the patterns of the past and also to help you to recognize that opportunities for healing and growth come our way all of the time.

Often we're not upset about the things we think we're upset about at all. Sometimes the rules we've set up for our lives are not really our rules, but are someone else's. Many times the things that we fear are not based on our own reality but someone else's that's been instilled in us.

It's amazing how often reoccurring patterns that we are completely unconscious of show up in our lives. You might choose the same type of person over and over again to be in your life. The same issues may seem to come up again and again with a variety of people and you wonder why.

If we pay attention and are aware, we are given many chances to heal these patterns and let them go. When we do, our lives can become more joyful and fulfilling.

So we suggest that you look beyond that irritating person or issue in your life and determine what's really going on. If you can identify a pattern that doesn't serve you, then you can make a choice to take responsibility and heal.

Give thanks for the person who is showing you your pattern and give thanks for another chance to heal.

Consider this: What reoccurring patterns show up in your life? What ways can you begin to heal?

31 Intimacy

Intimacy took on a new meaning for us when we came together.

For Otto, in the beginning of our relationship, he was going through difficult issues in his life. One particular day, he was having an especially hard time and Susie said to him, "I'm just going to love you anyway." That's when he made an instantaneous judgment that this was a woman he could love and could give him the love he wanted in return. He had been open to her from the beginning of their relationship, but after that moment, he totally let down his defenses and allowed her to come in completely. He decided that no matter how great the possibility for pain may be that he was willing to go for love.

For Susie, she felt deep intimacy when she saw that Otto wasn't afraid to access his emotions and be honest, open and "real" with her. She felt like she could trust that he could and would speak his truth about what was going on within him and because of that, she could also begin opening up to who she really was and speak her truth. She realized with Otto that there would be no game playing and she felt safe enough to open to him to truly be intimate—not just sexually but emotionally and spiritually.

What opened the door for the intimacy between us was when we made the conscious decision to tackle the very issues that could destroy the relationship as soon as possible after they came up. We continue to build trust, passion and connection between us everyday because of this commitment.

The desire for intimacy is nothing more or less than the desire for connection, closeness and to love and be loved in return for who you are without judgment. In order to have this closeness, you have to not be afraid to tackle the issues as they come up.

We believe that intimacy means different things to different people and we also believe that we all want it whether we recognize it or not.

People write to us continually to say that they want more intimacy in their relationships but they continue to do things that create barriers to having the intimacy they say they want.

If you find that you are putting distance between you and someone you want to be intimate with, then one of two things may be happening: either fear of one kind or another is present or the dynamics are changing between the two of you and you begin growing in different directions, causing emotional separation.

Intimacy is a function of trust where there is an opening of the hearts of both people in the relationship—of surrendering to the “us” while staying true to the “I.”

We've found that if there is distance between two people and they want an intimate connection, there's only one way-- and that is to tackle the core issues that they fear may destroy the relationship and learn to trust each other—a day at a time.

Kenny Loggins, in his book *The Unimaginable Life*, asked the question that we'll ask you-- How badly do you want an intimate relationship?

The answer to that question will determine whether you have intimacy or not. The level of intimacy you have will be based on to what degree you are able to feel the fear and open to the possibilities of the relationship anyway.

Consider this: What kinds of things have you done in the past that have prevented you from intimacy with another?

32 Jealousy

Marianne Williamson says, "Everything we do is either an act of love or a cry for help." The Course of Miracles says there are two emotions: love and fear. Jealousy is about real or imagined fear of abandonment, fear of loss of love, fear of being dishonored in the relationship, fear of being shamed in the community.

In our relationship, one of us has had jealousy as an issue and one hasn't. The source of jealousy comes down to insecurity within the relationship, which is ultimately fear. This insecurity may not come from any action of the other partner but rather from experiences in past relationships and imagined fears about potential pain in this relationship.

Insecurities can arise from relationships that you have witnessed other than your own, such as parents, other family members, friends, neighbors, or other role models. Fears can arise from the knowledge that your partner has been unfaithful in past relationships. "If he or she did it once, then it can happen again," is the thought process even though you are in a totally different relationship.

Tony Robbins' advice that your past does not equal your future just doesn't hold water in this case. The patterns come up again and again unless both decide to work through your fears and not bury them.

Jealousy can take many forms in the relationship other than concerns of faithfulness. One can be jealous of the talents, attention, abilities, financial resources, social status and a host of other reasons.

In partnership there is no room for jealousy. Whether you sense the jealousy is your own or your partner's, it has to be addressed. For the relationship to grow and flourish, jealousy has to be exorcised like a ghost in a haunted house. If you don't, you will build walls between you and your partner, thus strangling the relationship. Philosopher Jim Rhon reminds us that the walls you build to keep out the sadness also keeps out the joy.

Jealousy can wreck a relationship. The way we have dealt with it is with total honesty about the past and our intentions of the future. This isn't always easy but when this issue comes up, we first take turns speaking our truths, going to the core to find the real issue. We stay with the process of communicating how we feel and no matter how hard it is to say or hear what's said, we don't run away. We are each other's best friends and it's always important to keep that focus during any discussion, especially one of a jugular issue like jealousy.

What has been helpful for us is for the person who is experiencing jealousy to express what the other person could do to help ease the situation. It can be something very small such as making eye contact every now and then in social situations. Approaching this with the attitude that "Here is something that I would like us to try" instead of one that is accusatory and blaming, goes a long way to build trust and safety between the partners.

What has also been helpful is for the person who is experiencing jealousy to go within and see what how she/he could best support and love herself/himself in whatever situation is presenting itself.

If jealousy issues come up in your relationship, we suggest you first take some time to determine the real issue. You may have to get clear about your feelings by yourself first and then

communicate with your partner. We use the term "staying with it" to express working through a problem until it is resolved. Journaling may help if you are feeling stuck. Just remember that what's at the bottom of the problem may not be apparent immediately.

As with any issue in relationship, you have to patiently and lovingly talk through it without judgment or blame.

Consider this: If jealousy is an issue for you or your partner, what is really going on underneath the jealous feelings? Swim underneath and see where it takes you.

[No More Jealousy](#)

A complete course including a 130-page book and 4 audios. This new course is for anyone who wants to overcome and eliminate jealousy from their relationships and their lives. This course is available in downloadable and shippable versions.



33 Killing monsters

One of the most important things you can do to have powerful, passionate, incredible, dynamic relationships is to take care of all the small problems and issues in the relationship when and as they come up. By not waiting until the small issues become big issues in your relationships, they don't become big issues.

This is the essence of what "killing the monster while it's little is all about." We took this idea from Tony Robbins who teaches to handle issues that come up when they're small so that they don't become big things and get out of hand. As Tony said, you want to kill the monster while it's little so it doesn't grow up to be big enough to eat the city. So it is in any relationship--tackle the small issues with honesty before they become so big that they tear the relationship apart.

Let's say your mate comes home much later than he or she was supposed to and you are very upset about it. Nothing is said at the time because you don't want to rock the boat. There's this quiet silence and distance that comes between you energetically even though you haven't said anything. The next time your mate doesn't take out the garbage, listen to you or come home late again, that infraction is added to the previous one and more walls are built between the two of you. What often happens next is an out-of-proportion explosion when the next small infraction happens.

We suggest that you take courage and air these issues when they come up and not wait for them to pile one on top of another.

If you tend to wait for things to fade away, they won't. As Stephen Covey says, "Old resentments never die. They just

get buried alive and come up later in uglier ways."

In relationship, there's no such thing as "small stuff." Everything is important. Make sure you take care of the issues as they come up--have courage and open up communication.

Consider this: Do you allow issues to pile up and then do you explode? How can you begin "killing monsters" while they are little?

34 Kindness

After just completing our workshop on 10 strategies for great communication, we overheard a conversation between a husband and wife who had not been part of the workshop.

She was telling him what she wanted him to do in a demeaning, "not so nice" manner. Although he was visibly upset, he got up begrudgingly and did what she asked. As he walked by, she turned to us and said, "It's okay. He's my husband and I can talk to him that way!"

Some people, like this woman, tend to treat their loved ones much worse than they would treat their friends and even total strangers. They go out of their way to impress casual acquaintances but don't bother to extend common courtesies to the most important people in their lives.

There seems to be the assumption that these people will be with their loved ones forever so they feel they have "permission" to treat them with rudeness and unkindness.

We believe that kindness, appreciation and respect matters--no matter what the relationship and especially with those you love.

We believe that we can be uplifters of those in our lives by complimenting them, thanking them, appreciating them for what they bring to us and our lives.

Instead of focusing on what you don't like about your husband, wife or partner, direct your thinking to what you appreciate about them and tell them how you appreciate them.

In our relationship, we regularly tell each other what we appreciate in the other--why the other is special to us--

and that strengthens our relationship. We do not take each other "for granted." We think that "thank you," "you're welcome" and other words and acts of kindness are important if you want to have a good relationship.

We know that this sounds very simplistic and you are probably thinking, "I know that." But we've found that very few people do it.

We all have seen the bumper sticker that encourages us to "Practice Random Acts of Kindness." We think that's a good idea and we should start with the people closest to us.

Consider this: How can I be more kind to the people in my life?

35 Laughter

We don't know how it was in your house growing up, but in our houses there was always a copy of Readers Digest in the bathroom. The best part of the magazine was "Laughter is the best medicine." Reading those stories was always fun.

Norman Cousins, author of Head First: The biology of hope discovered that sustained laughter stimulates an increased release of endorphins. We feel better when we laugh because endorphins actually diminish physical and psychological pain.

We feel that laughter is not only good for you physically and psychologically, but also is a powerful tool for creating and maintaining a connection with another human being.

So, our question for you is, who is it in your life that you laugh the most with? The answer to that question will largely reveal who you feel the strongest connection with in your life.

In past issues of this newsletter we have talked about the importance of having safety and trust in your relationships. When you are able to laugh with another person, there is a bond between you. When you feel comfortable enough with another person to laugh with them, safety and trust also exists. When there isn't genuine laughter between two people, you can be assured that there are serious safety and trust issues and the relationship needs attention.

On Tony Robbins' "Unleash The Power Within" tapes, he talked about how often you'll hear people say when they are in the middle of a difficult situation, "Someday we'll look back on this situation and laugh!"

Tony suggests that we go ahead and laugh about the situation NOW ! We think that when you laugh about something NOW

instead of waiting until the dust settles, you have the opportunity to "kill the monster while it's little."

What we're suggesting is that laughter can be a powerful tool for disarming a potentially hurtful situation in your relationship.

Also, we urge you to look at the relationships in your life and see which ones are filled with laughter and which ones are not. If you are involved in a relationship where there's not much laughter then there's probably a separation.

If you have relationships like this, we suggest that you find ways to heal the separation that exists between you.

In relationships that are alive, passionate and growing...laughter truly is the best medicine.

Consider this: How can I laugh more with the people in my life?

36 Lying

At one of our workshops, the women in the group all agreed that they grew up with the expectation that they would be "nice" and make everyone in the family feel good. They were taught, usually by watching the women in their families, to withhold speaking their truth if it was unpleasant in order to keep the peace.

Most people believe they are being loving when they withhold perceived unpleasant information from their partner, spouse or friends.

So the questions is--do you tell that other person how you feel in all situations? If you don't, is that being loving or is that lying to the other person?

Bell Hooks. in her book All About Love, would say that it's lying. She says, "Lying has become so much the accepted norm that people lie even when it would be simpler to tell the truth." She goes on to say that "In today's world we are taught to fear the truth, to believe it always hurts."

We have found that when you tell the truth, it may hurt. But when you are completely open and honest, it is ultimately freeing for both people, giving you the opportunity to deepen your connection.

Some of you may question this--but we feel that if you are in a spiritual partnership with the intention of growing together, there simply is no other way. Bell Hooks says that "it is impossible to nurture one's own or another's spiritual growth when the core of one's being and identity is shrouded in secrecy and lies."

The lies don't even have to be that big to drive a wedge in a relationship. Just not being forthcoming with your feelings is living with a lie and will ultimately create a separation.

David Viscott, in his book Risking, says "If we were to live honestly, our lives would heal themselves." Hard as this seems, we believe it's the only way to live. We've done it the other way and now we're trying to do it differently. Our experience tells us that when you communicate constantly openly and honestly, that's what builds safety and trust. That's what creates the real juice in any great relationship!

Consider this: When am I "lying" or withholding the whole truth in an attempt to be loving? Is this healthy for your relationships?

37 Marriage

One year we went to a large holiday party and part of the entertainment was a magic show. The magician was very good at playing to the crowd and getting them involved in his show.

When it came to the "slice your assistant's head off" act, he chose Susie from the audience to be his assistant.

In trying to entertain the audience, he made a few wrong assumptions about Susie and our relationship.

He first assumed that we weren't married because we'd been holding hands and sitting closer than most "normal married couples" during his act. Then he tried to get Susie to admit that things in her marriage weren't really that good and when that didn't work. He then tried to get her to admit that things weren't as good in our relationship as when we first got together.

Fortunately, Susie came away from the night with her head intact, but we came away with a deeper understanding of a common myth about relationships in our culture. This myth is that all marriages naturally deteriorate over time and this deterioration is just a natural evolution in all marriages or long term relationships.

We just don't agree with that myth. We believe that if both people are conscious in their relationship and want to grow together, they do things on a daily basis that promote a deep connection. When couples do this, their relationship can only improve with age.

What we do to keep our relationship alive, connected and strong is that we both have consciously decided that that is what we want.

We talk constantly about the things that are important to us and we head off problems before they become unmanageable and out of control.

We try to express appreciation for each other every day. We express gratitude for our relationship to each other and in our prayers each day.

We are conscious that we may never have another moment together in this lifetime and because of this, we make every moment precious.

These are not just things that we do, but are the common ingredients of every successful long term relationship we have read about or heard about.

So, we challenge you that if you are currently in an intimate relationship, to begin incorporating one or more of these ideas into your daily lives. If you are not currently in an intimate relationship and want to be, decide how you want that future relationship to be.

Relationships are just like anything else in this universe of ours. They are either getting stronger or they're getting weaker. Whether your relationships are getting stronger or getting weaker, depends on your intentions and what both of you are willing to put into the relationship.

Consider this: If you're in a marriage or with a partner, what are some things that both of you can do to create a closer connection with each other? If you're not in a marriage or with a partner, what do you want in a future relationship?

38 Meltdowns

In our family, we call them "meltdowns." We don't know what you call them, but we're sure you've had some experience with them. "Meltdowns" are when one or more family members just plain "lose it" emotionally and get out of control.

Otto's son Steven is usually with us every other weekend. One weekend when he was 11 years old, the two of them spent the entire weekend alone together because Susie was out of town. Because Steven has trouble accessing and articulating his emotions, he has "meltdowns" on a somewhat regular basis.

That weekend, yes, Steven did have one of these "meltdowns" but what happened was different from other weekends. Otto did what most of us do when caught in the middle of one of these dramas. At first, he found himself going into his emotional pattern which is to react negatively to Steven's outbursts.

What was different this time was that somewhere in the middle of all of the drama, Otto was able to go within himself and allow Steven to have whatever emotional experience he needed to have. Otto was able to not take Steven's "meltdown" personally.

This incident is a perfect example of becoming emotionally aware in the middle of a tense, emotionally charged situation. Emotional awareness is the master key to having great relationships or anything else in your life that you want.

Think about the emotionally patterns that you go through when other people in your life have varying degrees of meltdowns. These could be people at your workplace, friends, family or your intimate partner. Do you try to "fix" their problem as you see it? Do you get angry and lash back at them? Do you become emotionally distant? Do you hide? Take a few minutes and think about how you react in similar situations.

We think it is crucial that we all own our own emotions, even when we can't identify them. Sometimes we just don't know why we feel the way we do and it takes some time to figure it out. But it is important to figure it out. It's also important to allow others to feel the way they feel without also being sucked into their emotional vortex.

Steven didn't know why he was so angry at the time of his outbursts. Otto just allowed him to have those feelings without trying to fix it after he stopped himself from being part of Steven's emotional drama. Otto stopped himself from taking ownership of Steven's angst--that somehow Otto was the source of all of Steven's problems. He just allowed Steven to "own" his own emotions.

Don Miguel Ruiz in "The Four Agreements" says, "What causes you to be trapped {in other's emotional dramas} is what we call "personal importance." Personal importance, or taking things personally, is the maximum expression of selfishness because we make the assumption that everything is about "me." Nothing other people do is because of you. It is because of themselves. When we take something personally, we make the assumption that they know what is in our world, and we try to impose our world on their world."

So this week, we suggest that you "step out" of other people's emotional dramas. That doesn't mean being insensitive or unloving to others when they "lose it" but it does mean staying in your "center." The important thing is to do your own work and allow others to do theirs.

Consider this: How can you "step out" of other people's meltdowns or dramas?

39 Money

Sex and money are two of the biggest issues that challenge couples. The topic of money offers unique opportunities for growth in an intimate relationship, partnership or marriage.

So why does money drive a wedge between two people who are committed to one another? We all come from different backgrounds and carry different values and belief systems from our birth families and life experiences.

Here are some ways we see people differ on this issue:

1. Spender and Saver Combination

One person likes to spend money while the other person prefers saving over spending.

2. Never taught about money

Most people aren't taught how to deal with money with a partner. They use their parent's model.

3. Two people--different goals for their financial lives

One person's concern may be paying for a child's college education while the other person may want to save for a vacation home.

There are many more examples that we could list. The most important thing we have discovered is that when there are unresolved money issues in a relationship, there are problems with safety and trust.

In a relationship where there are safety and trust issues surrounding money, you can almost always trace it back to one person having more either real or perceived power in the relationship and the other feeling more vulnerable.

So, we have some tips on dealing with money that we've used in our spiritual partnership and they may work for you.

1. Examine your perceptions about money. Ask yourself who was your role model for your beliefs about money and then question if these beliefs still serve you. Susie's parents lived during the depression and saving money was an important part of their lives. Therefore Susie likes the security of having a financial cushion to fall back on. To Otto, saving money does not have the importance that it does to Susie. We've discovered that we were both out of balance and needed to come to the center on this issue.

2. If you decide to form a partnership, decide in advance how you are going to handle the finances. Early in our relationship, we decided to share equally the household expenses but not combine our personal finances. It has been important to us to feel like equal partners and this was one way that we could do it. This is only one model that works for us because our individual incomes are similar. This may not work in your circumstance. All we are saying is to consciously decide about finances and know that your model can change as your circumstances change.

3. Discuss what each of you values in the area of finances. What are your short-term and long-term goals? Talk about them with your partner. It's only after you know what's important to you and your partner, can you move forward toward having the needs of both met.

4. When misunderstandings arise, listen to your partner and try to understand the frame of reference he/she is coming from. A few years ago, we had a simple problem of semantics which illustrates this point. When we were discussing business finances, Otto felt tight and restricted when Susie used the word "budget". His frame of reference as 20 years in sales suggested to him that budgets were rigid and could never be changed.

According to Otto, budgets were imposed by a higher authority with no input from him. He preferred to talk about plans. Susie's frame of reference comes from managing a library where she dealt with budgets everyday. A budget does not have a negative connotation to her but is merely a business tool. It was only until after each of us understood the other's frame of reference for this word could we resolve it and move past this issue.

In your relationships, whether you're talking about money or anything else, it's important to constantly communicate, one moment at a time. It's important to understand and respect your partner's needs, their desires, their frame of reference and their values, as well as your own.

Consider this: Are there money issues between you and your partner or in your family? How can you start to resolve some of these differences?

40 Open your heart

If you're newly married and you're beginning to question whether you made the right choice in a spouse; if your love left you; if you're afraid to tell your friend that you want more than a friendship with him or her; if you have been married 3 or 4 times and just can't seem to get it right; or if your long-term relationship is growing stale----Here's something for you to think about--

Think about your baby or someone else's baby. When he or she was learning to walk, did you think to yourself that the child only had a certain number of attempts at walking and that was it—no more chances?

Of course not! The child was allowed to stumble and fall as many times as was necessary until he or she learned to walk. The baby didn't give up, even when it was hard, but kept right on trying until he/she learned to walk.

That's the best advice we have to give--If you want to create or renew the relationship that you've always wanted, you have to be willing to risk opening your heart to another. You have to take on the philosophy of "until" and keep trying rather than shutting off all hope of ever finding the love you want.

As painful as it is to be in relationships that haven't been exactly the way you want them to be, you have to keep learning and growing "until" you can do it differently.

Opening your heart to another person requires us to risk. But to have an outstanding relationship, there's just no other way. If you don't take the risk of opening your heart, you will never have a deep connection and it will stay on a superficial level.

Kenny Loggins writes in his song "Too Early for the Sun,"
"Surrender to the sun, Surrender to the Moon,
Surrender to the rain, Surrender to the stars,
Surrender to your heart, Surrender to the wind
Take a chance, open up, and learn to love again."

"Surrender" in this case means "So what if you messed it up again--you get another chance."

To us, opening your heart means honoring the other by listening and by accepting without judgment where the other is in his or her growth process. Opening your heart means honoring the other's history and being there to encourage during times of change. Opening your heart can mean any number of things to all of us.

The heart is a doorway--you can open it and allow another person to come in or you can keep the door closed and protected. Keeping it closed and protected to shield you from the pain also shuts out the joy.

No matter what the relationship--even the person sitting next to you at the ball park--if you open your heart to the other person and not pre-judge or put up walls, then infinite possibilities of connection and love are available.

As Kenny Loggins says in "The Unimaginable Life"-- "We all long for love. Whether we know it or not, everything else is just killing time."

Consider this: How can you begin to risk and open your heart to the people in your life?

41 Passion

One of the top questions people ask us is "how to keep the passion and excitement alive in their relationships." Our answer to this question may seem glib but we mean it from our hearts-- you just "decide" to.

The Latin root of the word "decide" actually means "to cut off." This means to cut off all other possibilities. This means that you've decided that passion is important in your relationship and you're not going to settle for anything less.

So, what happens when you want anything else in your life? You weigh your choices and make a "decision." What if the home or apartment you're living in doesn't meet your needs any more? You can "decide" to find a place that better suits your needs.

We think it's the same way with relationships. If both you and your partner want the passion and life to return, the only way it will happen is for both of you to make a decision for it to happen. Decide what you want from each other. If you want passion in your life, the only way to have it is to decide to in a conscious deliberate way.

So what does it mean to make a decision to have passion in your relationship? For us, it involves many daily decisions that maintain our connection of the heart. It involves taking the time to talk and to listen, perhaps letting less important things take a back seat. It might involve a decision to turn off the TV or the computer and take a walk together. You and your partner must decide what will rekindle your connection. And then do it.

We've all seen the articles in popular women's magazines

giving you 10 ways to make your relationship sizzle. Those 10 ways usually include a trip to Victoria's Secret and something involving Saran Wrap. While we're not trying to make light of the suggestions in these magazines, we believe that true passion and intimacy in a relationship only come when there's a connection of the heart. And the decision to maintain the connection is a continuous one and a conscious one that requires attention.

If passion is missing in your relationships, then one of two things is the case-- either you haven't made passion a priority or the connection of the heart isn't there.

If you haven't made passion a priority, then you can "decide" to make it one. If the connection of the heart isn't there--then you have other challenges that should be addressed.

Consider this: How can you and your partner bring more passion into your intimate relationship, if you're in one? If you aren't currently in an intimate relationship, what part do you want passion to play in a future relationship?

42 Planning

Napoleon Hill said, "Every well-built house started with a definite plan in the form of blueprints." The question is do you have a set of blueprints for how you want your relationships and your life to be?

Most of us find that we're fairly unconscious of the direction that our relationships and lives are going. We go from rushing the kids out the door in the morning, to work, to soccer game, to the grocery store, to household chores--often in a state of auto-pilot.

If you don't decide what it is you want for your life, it will be decided for you by other people.

One thing which is helping to set the direction for our relationship and our lives is the conscious setting of goals each week. We try to spend 10-15 minutes every week taking turns listing goals--ranging from simple ones (exercise goals) to more complex ones like financial goals.

It's important for us to do this process together for several reasons. By saying our goals aloud, we have the opportunity to talk about our desires and where we'd like our lives to go. We can see where the other is headed and by making our desires known, we can discover where we're headed also! We've also found that it helps us focus on what we want rather than what we don't want.

One of our favorite songs is a Bruce Springsteen song, "If I should fall behind." Bruce says, "Let's make our steps clear so the other may see." We think that goal-setting is a great way to communicate what's important to you and to see where your partner's steps may be taking them. We've found that it is a very effective communication tool and helps keep the energy flowing in your relationship.

Most of the e-mail messages that we get from people asking for help in their relationships center on communication problems with a significant other.

Now, we don't think that everyone has to do what we do to have a passionate, alive, connected relationship but it is important to find ways of communicating constantly and connecting that work for you.

So we suggest that you find some ways to communicate your plans, goals, and desires to your partner and listen to theirs. If you don't have a partner, we suggest that you do this with a friend or simply write your goals by yourself to help you see what you want for your life.

We think you'll be surprised at the good things that happen when you do.

Consider this: How can you set aside some time during the week to talk to your partner, friend or family member about your plans, goals and desires?

43 Power and Vulnerability

Everybody is always talking about having balance in their lives. We've found that in order to have balance in your relationships, you have to be willing to be both powerful and vulnerable. Often times partners play certain roles, usually learned from their parents. Being both powerful and vulnerable allows your partner to get to see the real you with your defenses down. No hiding. Not from yourself, not from your partner--not from the truth.

The dictionary meaning of vulnerability is "capable of being wounded or open to attack." We're saying that there is great strength in vulnerability and that you actually gain strength from showing true feelings even if you perceive it as weakness. Otto is not Mr. Fix-it as Susie's ex-husband and father were. When he asked for help with installing the window air conditioner, it took courage for him to be willing to be vulnerable to ask for help before he destroyed it. By asking for help, he gave Susie the opportunity to be powerful in an area where she normally hadn't been.

What vulnerability means to us is letting your partner in and not closing down and putting up barriers.

True power is internal and not external. Most people believe true power is going out accomplishing something in the world. While accomplishing things is great in the external world, it's the power that comes from within that creates outstanding relationships.

Neale Donald Walsch in Conversations with God book 3 says, "Power comes from inner strength. Inner strength does not come from raw power. In this, most of the world has it backwards. Power without inner strength is an illusion. Inner strength without unity is a lie."

Maintaining that balance within your relationship of each person allowing themselves and the other person to be both powerful and vulnerable is one of the ways that keeps the relationship and passion alive.

This week, take a look at the balance of power and vulnerability in your relationships. You might see some ways to make some positive changes in your life.

Consider this: Is there a balance of power and vulnerability with the people in your life? If there are relationships that are unbalanced, what steps can you take to create more of a balance between power and vulnerability?

44 Purpose of Relationships

Otto once had a conversation with someone that made a big impact on him. In this conversation Otto was telling this person about some challenges he was having in his life. This person told him that a wise person once counseled him that when things in your life aren't making sense and you are confused and frustrated to understand that when you get to the end of your life and look back, everything will make perfect sense.

We thought this was excellent advice for looking at one's relationships as well. Sometimes we don't understand why we are involved with someone in a particular relationship or why someone has such a hold on us. We don't understand why someone comes into our lives for a brief time and then leaves. Then there are other relationships that we might have our entire lives--some good, some not so good.

The point is that at the end of our lives, if we take a conscious look at our relationships, every one of them will have served us in our growth in some form or the other.

Some time ago Otto met a woman who had a dramatic effect on his life. He didn't realize it at the time but later completely understood the purpose of that relationship. After the relationship with this person was over, they both completely understood that her role in his life was to be a bridge.

This relationship gave Otto the vision of what was truly possible in relationship at a level that he wasn't able to experience with his first wife. Even though this relationship was very brief, had he not met this person, he would not have been ready to create the passionate, alive and connected relationship he now has with Susie.

So instead of looking at that relationship as a failure and one that didn't work, he looks at it as a blessing from God and is thankful everyday for what this woman gave him.

What we've learned is that if a relationship isn't working out, it may not be a bad thing or a failure that our society likes to label it. It just may be that you have learned what it is that you were supposed to learn by being in a relationship with that other person.

We're not suggesting that you take your relationships lightly and throw them away at the first sign of conflict--Quite the contrary.

What we are saying is that the purpose of relationships is to help us to grow--personally and spiritually. Even the relationships are most troubling to us can be gifts in learning more about ourselves. Those people who really get under our skin can be our best teachers.

So instead of looking at relationships that didn't work out the way we had hoped as failures, look at them as growth experiences and move forward consciously by learning from them.

Know that every person who comes into our lives--whether 5 minutes, 5 years or 50 years--can be a powerful teacher for you if you will only open yourself to the possibility.

Consider this: If you have relationships that have ended, what did you learn about yourself by being in a relationship with this other person? How did it help you to move forward and heal, learn and grow? How would your life have been different if you had not met this person?

45 Struggle

One of our favorite authors, Stuart Wilde, wrote a small booklet called "Life was never meant to be a struggle." On the cover is a photograph of Stuart lounging in a hammock, with a colorful, tall drink in his hand and a satisfied smile on his face.

Isn't that the way we wish our relationships could be--without struggle, peaceful and easy? We think relationships can be without continuous struggle. If you're in a relationship right now that seems to be filled with constant misunderstandings and contention, it's fear that's underneath the struggle and the belief that your needs won't be met.

We also believe that everything you struggle with is because of the fear that your needs won't be met.

If you've been in a physically or emotionally abusive relationship and haven't done anything about it, it's because of fear. If you have trouble communicating with another person, either you have nothing in common with that person or there's something within you that prevents you from thinking you can get your needs met.

So what are the fears and how do you tackle them? It has been our experience that you must decide to face whatever you fear and move through it, otherwise it holds you captive.

When Susie was the library director of a small university library, she had to tackle one of those relationships that was a struggle. One of the people she supervised made constant demands about changing her work schedule and continuously spread mistrust and unrest among other staff members. It wasn't until Susie decided to move through her fear about running the library without this person's expertise, that she was able to not cave

into unreasonable demands and let this person move on to another job. As a result, the other members of the library staff were relieved and the atmosphere dramatically improved. It meant tackling fear and it meant proactively gaining the knowledge and understanding of the job that this person had been doing for many years so the library could run smoothly.

Struggles can be with strangers as well as the people we deal with most in our lives. We can even make struggles up that don't exist. We can choose how to react to these situations—with anger and disgust or with love.

Another worker in the library was exasperated with the number of interlibrary loan requests that she received from a rather rude library patron. It wasn't until it was pointed out that this patron was a single mother with a full-time job and carrying a full load of classes that the library worker felt compassion for her and moved the requests along quickly.

The library worker's desire to be honored as a person was violated when this woman was rude and there was also fear and anger when it was perceived that the requests would create more work than she could handle. This attitude didn't change until compassion and understanding replaced the fear.

The only way to eliminate the struggle in your relationships (or any area of your life) is to tackle your fears head on.

You should also realize what you can and cannot change. Know that you can only change yourself and your attitude, not another person.

Consider this: Are you struggling in any of your relationships? If so, what fears do you need to face? What do you need to change in yourself? What do you need to accept in the other person?

46 Think outside your box

Ever notice a small child in a playpen? To that child, the playpen is his/her world during the time spent in it. So it often is with our relationships. We tend to think that everyone sees life from our frame of reference. It's very often a revelation when we discover that the other people in our lives aren't necessarily looking at the situation in the same way we are.

Take for example the situation of George and Michele. Michele told George that she'd like to buy another car since they were expecting their third child. They had just purchased a large Explorer several months ago and they had two other vehicles. George vetoed her suggestion immediately because they had already spent a year trying to find the perfect car. Michele didn't articulate her feelings that her needs had changed since this third pregnancy--that she just didn't want to heft three children under 4 years of age into a car that was so high off the ground.

In George's mind, it was a simple answer. The case was closed until his friend suggested that maybe George could sell his truck and Michele could buy the car she needed. His friend came up with a solution that was out of both George and Michele's boxes.

George and Michele didn't take the time to get to the real reason for the positions that they both took. George didn't understand why Michele wanted a new vehicle and Michele didn't articulate her reasons so that George could understand. She backed away when she ran up against his "No" and it wasn't until a solution was given to George that the lines of communication opened.

So we are urging you to step outside your box-- your frame of reference since you've incarnated. Be open to hear your partner and be willing to risk articulating your needs to your partner.

We each have our way of thinking about things but never assume that this is the way others think about them. What happened in this situation with George and Michele is that they didn't communicate their needs to each other. Distance was created and neither felt understood.

As we have said before, in relationship there is no small stuff in your life. The key to relationships is constant communication, one moment at a time.

When challenges come up in your relationships, be sure to look outside the boundaries of your own life's playpen. You just may find the answers that you seek.

Consider this: How can you “step outside your box” and consider different or new possibilities for situations in your relationships or life?

47 Trust and Safety

Safety and trust are the twin sides of the same coin--both involve risk and both form the foundation of any great relationship. Safety is the feeling you get when you have trust. Trust means not only learning to trust others but it's learning to trust yourself--especially if you've been in less than desirable relationships in the past.

From the beginning of our relationship, we agreed to be honest and not hide our feelings, no matter how painful the truth is. We've been able to create a high level of trust with each other because of this agreement.

When you've been used to "sparing" the other person or not saying something because it might hurt their feelings or "rock the boat," it's very difficult to open up and speak your truth. But we believe this is absolutely necessary to form a solid foundation of trust between two people.

Two of the thought patterns that destroy or inhibit growth of trust in relationships are dwelling on past pain (whether with this person or others) and futurizing about potential negative events that haven't happened. Every time your mind starts to make up wild stories that involve abandonment, guilt, jealousy--those old tapes that just keep running and don't seem to stop--bring yourself back to the present moment and differentiate the past and the future the present. We've found that when we acknowledge that the source of these feelings originated from past experiences, the situation is not threatening to the other person and we are able to let those negative thoughts go.

Do you trust the person you are in a relationship with? Now, the answer seems pretty obvious if you are in an intimate relationship with someone, but is it?

The truth is that you can be in a relationship with someone for years but not truly trust them—not be open to them.

We'll give you an example of this dynamic in action--In the beginning of our relationship, Otto started writing about marketing ideas. Because Susie is a much better editor than he is, he would ask for her help. He always became very defensive when Susie edited what he wrote and it would take some time to get past the "trust" issue of feeling criticized unfairly. He would take the criticism of the work personally instead of understanding that she was just trying to make the project better.

Even though we have felt like we were soulmates from the beginning of our relationship, there are issues from past relationships that creep in from time to time--and this was one of them.

Some people believe that when you enter into new relationships, you are starting fresh and you leave all of that baggage from previous relationships behind you. You always hope that's the case, but the truth is, you don't always heal everything from past relationships when you move on.

A few months later Otto began writing another marketing book and he asked Susie to edit it again. But this time, we noticed a difference in Otto's reaction to Susie's suggestions for how to make the book better.

When she made her suggestions, he still had an initial reaction but this time didn't take the criticism personally. He trusted and felt that Susie just wanted to help him to make the book better.

This is a beautiful example of healing the past and the deepening of trust in our relationship. We believe that the foundation of any relationship is emotional safety and trust. This means that

physical safety is a given and you feel emotionally safe enough to be who you really are and be able to express yourself freely.

Most people want to place the responsibility for trust in a relationship on someone else. They base their trust on how someone acts towards them.

Gary Zukav in his book "The Heart of the Soul" says, "The experience of intimacy is not related to how others act or do not act, or how they speak or do not speak. It depends upon how energy leaves your energy system (your body). When energy leaves your processing system in love and trust, the result is the experience of intimacy."

So safety and trust in a relationship doesn't start with someone else--It starts with you and how willing you are to open up and allow the other in.

If you're having trust issues in a relationship, we suggest examining your own thoughts, feelings and issues from the past that have yet to be healed first before looking outward to someone else.

How do you build trust in relationships? We've found the secret is constant, honest communication, one moment at a time.

We believe what Dan Millman said, "There are no ordinary moments." To build trust, you have to build it one moment at a time.

If you focus on "now" and what you want, you will build trust between you and your partner.

Consider this: What steps can I take to build more trust in my relationships?

48 Truth

WHAT IS SPEAKING YOUR TRUTH?

Speaking your truth is being who you really are---your authentic self. You must have enough self respect to know that what you think and feel is important.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

The truth is a personal thing. The great business philosopher, Jim Rohn says "Very few of us are authorities on the truth. About the closest that any of us can get is what we hope is the truth or what we think is the truth. That's why the best approach to truth is probably to say, "It seems to me. . ."

Sometimes it is hard to know what your truth is. When the old family tapes keep running in your mind, guilt creeps in and the "shoulds" take over. We find ourselves not knowing what our "truth" is or how we do feel. We allow other people to dictate how we should live our lives and how we should feel.

WHY IS SPEAKING YOUR TRUTH SO IMPORTANT?

It's about honoring yourself and being willing to live your own life as you would like to live it.

WHAT ABOUT SPEAKING YOUR TRUTH IN SPIRITUAL PARTNERSHIPS?

If you don't tackle problems as they arise with truth, they can easily get built into big walls.

Neale Donald Walsch tells it like it is in [Conversations with](#)

God Book 3, "The truth is relentless. It won't leave you alone. It keeps creeping up on you from every side, showing you what's really so."

We suggest that you take courage and air these issues when they come up and not wait for them to pile one on top of another.

If you tend to wait for things to fade away, they won't. As Stephen Covey says, "Old resentments never die. They just get buried alive and come up later in uglier ways."

When problems come up in our relationship, we talk and listen to each other until we both feel like we understand each other and the situation completely. We do what Stephen Covey suggests in his book The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and "seek first to understand each other and then be understood."

Sometimes this is not easy. It can be painful. But the rewards are an incredible, vibrant and passionate relationship.

We've discovered that we may need some time and maybe even space to sort what is really at the bottom of an issue. But we do not let the issue drop until there is resolution. We do not want resentment to build walls between us.

This works for us, but you have to discover what works for you.

You do that by talking about it. There just is no other way.

Consider this: If speaking your truth is difficult for you, how can you begin to move past the fear and do it anyway?

49 Understanding, not judging

One of the biggest roadblocks to making relationships work is that we all think that everyone else looks at the world the same way we do.

We have discovered that one way to bettering your relationships is through understanding the other person--by looking at the situation from their frame of reference as well as your own.

Stephen Covey's 5th habit in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People advises us to "seek first to understand, then to be understood." We've found out that it is impossible to judge another unfairly or harshly when you truly understand where they're coming from.

Otto tended to judge his parents for their lack of parenting skills until he truly understood the implication of both his father and his mother losing a parent very early in their lives. Neither of his parents had the privilege to learn parenting skills from their parents. After understanding this about parents, Otto realized that they were just doing the best they could when they parented him. He had known that his parents lost their parents at an early age but it wasn't until recently that he really understood how deep the pain and grief was within them and just what this loss meant.

If you truly understood what was going on with the person who just cut you off in traffic or was unkind to you at work, you would not be upset with them but would be compassionate.

Brian Weiss in his book Messages from the Masters says, "Just as love brings profound healing to our relationships, understanding brings a lessening of fear. Understanding opens the window through which love's breeze gently blows away our doubts and anxieties, refreshing our souls and

nurturing our relationships."

Stephen Levine talks about having mercy for each other. To us, this doesn't mean feeling sorry for someone but rather to feel compassion and understanding for the road they have had to travel.

Being conscious and respecting the other person's differences creates understanding and that creates healing. So the next time you find yourself judging another person, stop and try to understand their frame of reference. It doesn't mean that you have to agree with their lifestyle or adopt their ideas, but true healing will happen if you open yourself to understanding them.

We have found that to understand another person requires you to let down your defenses and as Don Miguel Ruiz says to not take anything personally. We also have found that listening with a loving heart is important because you can't be loving and judging at the same time. Many people want to judge and crucify first and then love later but that's their fear speaking.

Think about your interactions with people who frustrate, irritate and anger you. Have you taken the time to understand what's going on with them? There may also be something that you need to look at within yourself. There may be some pain within you that you haven't wanted to address.

Consider this: In what areas of your life do you need to understand others and show more them more compassion?

50 Vibrational Match

No matter what it is you want in your life, you have to become a “vibrational” match for it. Relationships are no different.

Remember the old saying, “Birds of a feather flock together?” This is true whether you are talking about attracting a mate into your life or making your current relationships better. You have to become a vibrational match for the type of relationship that you want.

What does this mean?

Marianne Williamson tells a great story about a woman she once counseled who wanted to attract the perfect mate and perfect relationship into her life. After the woman had gone through considerable explanations about the sterling qualities of her perfect mate, Marianne said, “Thank God he's not here because you're a mess!” Marianne then asked the woman if the type of person she was trying to attract into her life would date her at that point in time. The answer was no.

To become a vibrational match for what you want, you have to do some soul-searching and determine if you are the type of person that would attract the person you desire or the type of relationship that you want. If you're not, you can take some positive steps to becoming a person who can attract what you are wanting.

Brian Tracy has said that it's not what you say or intend to do in your life but what you do that counts.

If you want a deep friendship with a mate, try being a good friend to whomever you are with, especially if you are already with a mate. If you want kindness, be kind to everyone who you encounter.

If you want to be in a relationship with someone you can trust, be trustworthy--skip the office gossip or gossiping with your friend about your mate.

Be in gratitude everyday for the relationships in your life. Find something to be grateful for in each person who's playing a part in your life drama.

These practices and the ideas seem so simplistic but they require a lot of focus, attention, and staying awake. They can improve your current relationships and can also move you toward attracting the kind of relationship that you want into your life.

Consider this: What positive things can you do to become a vibrational match for the type of relationship that you want? How can you be kinder, more loving or more grateful? Whether you are already in a primary relationship or not, what can you do to become the kind of person that would attract the kind of relationship that you want?

51 Willingness

We were captivated by a story told on "Oprah" by a woman who was a career librarian who had never earned more than \$18,000 a year in her life. She was single and this was her only income. Amazingly enough, she was able to save, in the course of her lifetime, over \$435,000!

Oprah's guest that day was a financial advisor who gave a 10-point plan for how anyone with a modest income could achieve the same results. His points included taking your lunch to work every day, eliminate cable tv, and paying yourself first no matter what.

The woman who saved the \$435,000 described how she used aluminum foil repeatedly, how she made her own clothes, and took her lunch to work everyday.

The point of the show was to illustrate that anyone, if they followed this plan, could amass a small fortune within their lifetime by being willing to do things that a lot of us aren't willing to do.

The same exact principle applies in relationships. It's entirely possible for you to have outstanding relationships in your life if you're willing to do certain things that most people aren't willing to do.

So here's one question that you have to ask yourself if your relationships aren't what you want them to be...

It is--"What is it you're not willing to do to have great relationships in your life?"

We suggest that if you sincerely want to improve your

relationships that you spend some time answering our question because your answers will indicate where you need to start.

So take some time to consider these ideas and come up with your own as well.

- Are you willing to communicate without shutting down?
- Are you willing to give up blame, judgment and the need to be right?
- Are you willing to tackle the issues and challenges when they come up and not let them fester?
- Are you willing to take responsibility for yourself and your actions?
- Are you willing to make this relationship a priority in your life? How much time do you spend with that person?

These are just a few ideas to get you started thinking about what you want in your relationships and what's preventing you from having it. Deciding what you want from your relationships is the first step.

This exercise might help you discover where there's some resistance that's preventing you from having the type of relationship that you want.

Consider this: This is a hard one—Ask yourself “What is it I’m not willing to do to have great relationships in my life?” If you’re stuck, just start writing and the answer may reveal itself.

52 Words that Heal

One of the easiest and most powerful ways to create relationship magic is to start using words that heal instead of words that are hurtful, gossipy, and negative.

Charlotte Kasl, author of the books [If the Buddha dated](#) and [If the Buddha married](#) interviewed people in long-term, happy relationships. In her books, she talks about the glue that holds loving couples together and keeps their relationships vital and alive, even after many years.

These loving couples which we interpret to be "soulmates" above all appreciate each other, are honest with each other and build each other up with their words.

There is a loving kindness, joy and playfulness between them. We agree wholeheartedly with Charlotte.

We practice using loving words with each other and when we talk about each other to other people.

We think that this kindness in words is an important ingredient that helps pave the way for creating trust, intimacy, and passion in relationships. This is not just true of intimate relationships -- but all relationships.

One project to promote peace is called ["Words Can Heal."](#) The purpose of this campaign is "to eliminate verbal violence, curb gossip and promote the healing power of words to enhance relationships at every level."

We want to challenge you this week to choose to use kind words with the people in your life and we invite you and your loved ones to take the "Words Can Heal" pledge:

"I pledge to think more about the words I use.

I will try to see how gossip hurts people, including myself, and work to eliminate it from my life.

I will try to replace words that hurt with words that encourage, engage and enrich.

I will not become discouraged when I am unable to choose words perfectly, because making the world a better place is hard work.

And I am pledging to do that, one word at a time."

Consider this: When and with whom do you need to use words that heal instead of words that are unloving?

About Susie and Otto

We are spiritual and life partners, Relationship Coaches and authors who are committed to helping people, like you, improve your lives and relationships.

For 30 years, Susie has been a student of spirituality, energy and the life force. Her search for physical, emotional and spiritual healing has led her to the study of Polarity Therapy, cranio-sacral therapy, reflexology, Kundalini and Hatha Yoga, Carlos Castaneda's Tensegrity, Reiki, toning, Traditional Japanese Reiki, herbs, flower essences, Shamanism, the Enneagram, tarot and much more. Her formal training includes a Bachelor of Science in Education degree, a Masters degree in Library Science, and is a Registered Polarity Practitioner with the American Polarity Therapy Association. Susie is a retired teacher and university librarian with over 30 years experience teaching in the public schools and university classes. She passionately believes that life can be lived in a joyful, conscious, loving way in spiritual partnership with those in our lives and is committed to helping others to heal, learn and grow.

The son of a country preacher, Otto spent many years pondering three of life's greatest questions; Who am I, Why am I here and What's this all about? Otto turned his life's focus to bear on the practice and study of Spirituality. He is a healer. He uses his intuition, natural gifts and training in several types of energy healing to help others heal. He has formally studied Reiki, Traditional Japanese Reiki, Etheric Surgery and Shaman healing techniques. Otto has also studied the tools and techniques of the best sales, advertising and marketing minds of the past hundred years. He has spent nearly twenty years successfully creating and selling advertising. He has worked in print, radio as well as television advertising. He's made thousands of sales calls on businesses of all sizes in dozens of different industries. He's

studied and learned from the greatest salespeople and marketing minds of the last hundred years.

Since 1999, we have been teaching workshops, giving talks and writing on topics that relate to helping people create vital, alive relationships of all kinds. **We currently offer relationship and life coaching over the telephone and in face-to-face sessions.**

We are two people who have learned from some of the greatest teachers and from the pain of the past. We have an intense desire to share the lessons we've learned on the path to wellness. Just like you, we've struggled with our inner "demons"-- made mistakes in all areas of our lives but now we are learning to do it differently. The desire to be loved the way we wanted to be loved took each of us on a journey of discovery of how to create the relationship of our dreams. We believe Spirit put us together for our own personal growth and to shine the light of hope for others.

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Susie and Otto's Recommended Relationship, Personal Growth and Success Links:

[No More Jealousy](#)

A complete course including a 130-page book and 4 audios. This new course is for anyone who wants to overcome and eliminate jealousy from their relationships and their lives. This course is available in downloadable and shippable versions.



[How To Improve Communication and Start Creating a Closer and More Loving Relationship](#)

Discover the secrets to immediately improving communication in all your relationships and to create a lifetime of love. Click the above link to have Communication Magic in your relationship.



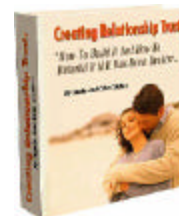
[Should You Stay or Should You Go?](#)

Susie and Otto's break-through process for helping anyone make the best decision possible about whether to stay in or leave a relationship.



[How To Build \(or Rebuild\) Trust in Your Relationship](#)

Of all the qualities that makes up a good relationship, trust is undeniably the most important. It's the one quality that a relationship simply can't survive without. If you want to discover the relationship secrets for building trust and dramatically improving your relationships, this info will show you what to do.



[Discover The Secrets To Replacing Fear, Doubt & Frustration With Confidence & Unstoppable Drive...](#)

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[The 11th Element](#)

This 5 lesson course will introduce you to The **11th Element** and show you how to tap into it to produce extraordinary results, in less time, with less effort, and much more fun in any area of your life.

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