

Love Lessons



*Susie and Otto
Collins*

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Requests for permission or for more information should be sent to: Susie and Otto Collins, P.O. Box 1614, Chillicothe, OH 45601.

Published by Susie and Otto Collins and Passion, Inc.
P.O. Box 1614
Chillicothe, OH 45601
(740) 772-2279
Fax: (740) 772-2279
Email: webmaster@collinspartners.com

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Contents

How do you want to be loved?
Dealing with jealousy in relationships
Spiritual Partnerships
The best present to give this holiday season
Every important thing in relationships
“Put legs on your prayers”
Creating safety in relationships
Building trust in relationships
How power and vulnerability affects balance in relationships
What are your intentions for your relationships?
“Killing the monster while it’s little”
Speaking your truth in spiritual partnership
Becoming a vibrational match for the relationship of your dreams
The next logical step in relationships
How thinking outside your box can improve your relationships
Healing the past. . .In the present
The 7 spiritual keys to creating the relationship that you want
Partnership in relationship
The “care and feeding” of spiritual partnerships
Being willing. . .
Feel all your feelings deeply
The power of laughter in relationships
Focus on what’s important in your relationships and your life
“If only. . .”
Awareness—feeling your feelings
Is it lying or loving?
What happens after you find your soulmate?
Who’s driving the bus?
Being “real” in your relationships
Secrets to healing after leaving a painful relationship
What’s most important to you?
The issue of money in spiritual partnership
Power, vulnerability and money. . .
Assumptions
Listening from your heart
How moving our office is like your relationships
The importance of saying only what you mean!
Dealing with anger
Vulnerability in relationships
How to re-claim passion in your life!
How badly do you want intimacy in your relationships?
Being conscious of the differences in ourselves and others!
Commitment in relationships

How do you want to be loved?

To have a relationship that really works, loving your partner is not enough. You have to love the other person exactly how they want to be loved. Just as importantly, they have to love you how you need to be loved. That's what makes our relationship work. We've taken the time to specifically ask our spouse how the other wants to be loved.

When marriages fail, most people spend some time analyzing the reasons why. That's what we did as well. We realized our previous partners loved us, but, we just came up feeling empty inside. Our partners loved us from their frame of reference but not ours.

Otto's former wife believed in being prepared for the worst. Each winter she packed a small survival kit for the car, complete with coffee can, a candle and matches to keep him warm in an emergency. Also included would be a couple of non-perishable snack food items like cheese and peanut butter crackers so he wouldn't starve. Packing this survival kit was an act of kindness and love from her point of view. From Otto's point of view this wasn't important at all because he said repeatedly to her that "he would go for help rather than being stranded in a car for several hours or more." So, is there any fault here? No, just what was important to her wasn't important to him.

Even before we got together, we started making lists of how we wanted to be treated by a partner. One thing that was important for Susie was if we were at a party or a function with a large group of people that even if Otto was across the room, he would sporadically make eye contact with her and acknowledge her. Whereas Otto wants to be greeted with kisses and hugs when he reconnects with Susie when we've been apart.

Before you can expect your partner to love you how you want to be loved, you have to first find out yourself. Once you know how you want to be loved, the next step is to tell your partner. The key is communication is that unless you tell your partner how you want to be loved, there is no way you can expect them to love you in this manner. After all, most of us are not mind readers.

Relationships are a two way street. Both you and your partner have to love each other the way you want to be loved. When one person's needs are met and not the other's, resentments are created. We found that talking openly and honestly about our needs is vital to the relationship. We also found that, sometimes compromise is necessary to experience what Stephen Covey calls a "Win-Win" relationship.

Sometimes you simply cannot give what your partner needs. In Susie's previous relationship sailing was the most important thing to her partner but not to her.

She simply could not make sailing her passion to the exclusion of everything else. This was a core issue in their relationship. This was an issue that eventually divided them forever.

Love lesson Number 1:

- 1) We suggest that before you enter into any relationship that you first make a list of how it is you want to be loved.
- 2) Commit to sharing this list with your partner or potential partner and talk about why the things on the list are important.
- 3) Make sure you follow through and do the things that you've committed to do.

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Dealing with Jealousy in Relationships

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 fears—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 did 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.

When 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. With any issue in relationship, you have to patiently and lovingly talk through it without judgement or blame. Creating the relationship of your dreams is hard work but the rewards are ongoing and abundant.



Spiritual Partnerships

In our workshops and presentations on spiritual partnerships, we've met singles and couples who know they want more from their relationships and are trying to find the answers. We believe that creating spiritual partnerships can be a key element in having the relationships you've always wanted.

So what are spiritual partnerships? They are relationships where two people come together for their highest spiritual growth. Secondly, both partners are equals in all ways. All relationships are arenas for learning lessons and growth. The couple who commits to a spiritual partnership consciously commits to growing as a couple and also individually. Each knows that the other holds a powerful mirror to see past patterns and is supportive in the healing process.

They know that they are together to heal the pain of the past and move into a new love for self that spreads to everyone they encounter. Because the partners support each other in a non-judgmental way, safety and trust is the strong foundation of the relationship.

In Gary Zukov's Seat of the Soul, he says, "Spiritual partners bond with an understanding that they are together because it is appropriate for their souls to grow together. They recognize that their growth may take them to the end of their days in this incarnation and beyond, or it may take them to six months. They cannot say that they will be together forever. The duration of their partnership is determined by how long it is appropriate for their evolution to be together."

Tough medicine to swallow but the reason that the passion and life has been sucked out of so many relationships we see around us each day is that their souls are no longer growing together. They've moved on.

Spiritual partnerships are a lot of work but the results are passionate, powerful, positive, and joyful relationships.



The Best Present to Give This Holiday Season

The Christmas season is hectic with Christmas shopping, food preparation, parties, relatives and is a time usually filled with plenty of expectations. Why not change your approach to the chaos usually associated with this holiday season?

Instead of just "giving presents", why not make it your intention to "be fully present" with the people you'll spend time with this holiday season.

To be "fully present" means focusing your attention on the moment.

Stop all that chatter in your head. Stop thinking about what you're going to say next while the other person is talking. Instead, focus on listening to your friends and relatives. Find out something new that you did not know about them. Send them love as you are talking and listening. This is the best "present" you can give to anyone. When you are being "fully present" with another human being you are honoring them and as a result will make them feel important and loved. Forget the socks and cologne. Give the gift that keeps on giving--love!



Every Important Thing in Relationships. . .

We read an article on relationships recently in Holistic Health Journal's most recent issue that left a dramatic impact on us. It was a feature article on Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks, authors of the book Conscious Loving. In the article they said "every important thing in a relationship takes place in ten seconds or less." What this means to us is, every encounter, every word, every thought is significant. As Dan Millman has said "There are no ordinary moments."

If you doubt the validity of the Hendricks' statement, consider for a moment a couple of examples. Consider the importance of the ten second interchange that took place after Otto told his ex-wife he was leaving her. When she asked him if there was anything she could do to get him to change his mind, he said "go to counseling with me." She said, "I can't do that!" This happened in less than ten seconds and it changed the course of both of their lives forever. Consider what happened when Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of the bus. Once again, it took place in ten seconds or less and changed United States history.

Consider the first ten seconds that takes place between any two partners who haven't seen each other all day. How about the next time you see your children or your parents? Is there genuine happiness to see the other person? Is there full attention given to the other person for at least ten seconds? How do you treat each ten seconds in your relationships? Next time you have an interaction with any other person, consider the possibilities of just how important that interaction could be. Treat the other person as the beautiful soul that they really are.

Remember to choose love instead of fear. Choose gratitude instead of ambivalence. When you do, the rewards will be great.

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“Put Legs on your Prayers”

In our workshops and writings, we talk about manifesting the relationships you want. We're all looking for the keys to manifesting great relationships and James Redfield shares an important one in his latest book, The Secret of Shambhala. Outlining several lessons called "Extensions," he makes reference to the Second Extension being the ability to set "your field of energy so that it will enhance your life flow. You do this by staying ever alert and expectant."

Otto's father used to talk about how important it is to put legs on your prayers. To us, this means not only being alert and expectant but also proactive. Before this past weekend of visits by relatives and friends, we spent time visualizing the love between all of us and a positive energy flow because it was what we were wanting. We concentrated our energies on imagining having fun and not on what could go wrong or which child would have a "melt down." It was a real exercise in manifesting what we wanted rather than attracting what we didn't want by dwelling on possible disasters.

One of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People is to begin with the end in mind. Whether it's manifesting the perfect parking spot and the mall, a safe car trip in the snow and freezing rain, or the perfect relationship, take time to see what it is you want rather than letting fear dictate your future.

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Creating Safety in Relationships

We have found that in order to create the relationships of your dreams, safety and trust must be present. To have an outstanding, dynamic relationship, physical safety is a given. The type of safety we are talking about is where each partner feels safe enough in the relationship to be who they really are. When this type of safety exists, it allows for beautiful possibilities of growth for each partner in a number of different ways.

So how do you create this safety in relationships? The first step is to decide to be willing to open up to the possibility that your heart will be broken into a billion pieces. Whether you're in a relationship now or want to be, if you don't open your heart and keep it open, even with the possibility of being hurt, then it's impossible

to have the passionate, powerful and dynamic relationship that is possible between two people.

If you are unwilling to open your heart in this way, it's all because of fear--fear of getting hurt, being abandoned, failing (again). Thaddeus Golas said in The Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment, "We think fear is a signal to withdraw, when in fact it is a sign we are already withdrawing too much."

We recognize that this is a "catch 22" situation because no one can ever be sure they won't be hurt. To have a great relationship of any kind, you must have the desire to create the relationship of your dreams and develop the belief that the Universe is all loving and will allow it to happen.

We believe the key is to come together with an open heart



Building Trust in Relationships

How do you build trust in relationships? We've found the secret is constant communication, one moment at a time. We both came from dead-end relationships from a state of vulnerability but with a strong desire for a different kind of relationship--a relationship filled with passion, love, honesty, friendship and most of all, partnership.

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, we've practiced honesty and not hiding, no matter how painful the truth is. 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.

People often will trust a total stranger before trusting an intimate partner because that total stranger cannot hurt them like they imagine a partner can. Tony Robbins tells a great story about how we all trust every single day of our lives while driving our cars. The fact of the matter is--it takes a great deal of trust to drive down a road at 55 mph with another car coming the other way at 55 mph

and only one white line separating the two of you. The potential for danger is great--you don't know that other person; you don't know if they've been drinking; you don't know if they'll stay on their side of the road. That, my friend, takes a lot of trust.

The challenge is to exhibit the same amount of trust in our relationships--knowing, believing, trusting that the other person is acting from their highest good.

Two of the thought patterns that destroy 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. If you focus on "now" and what you want, you will build trust between you and your partner.

When we have these negative feelings, we talk about them--not hiding them but being honest. 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.

If you place your attention on either worrying about past relationships or question where this relationship is going in the future, you lose the opportunity to be in the moment for yourself and your partner. You also lose the opportunity to build the trust that you need between the two of you.

If you are in a relationship that has gone through some challenges, you can't heal the distance and pain between the two of you by dwelling on the past or fearing the future. You must look at where you are at the present time.

Build trust one moment at a time--remember what Dan Millman said, "There are no ordinary moments."



How Power and Vulnerability Affects Balance in Relationships

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 was. When Otto asked for help with installing the 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.

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What are Your Intentions for your Relationships?

In the "old days" when the guy would come to pick up their girlfriend for a date, often the girl's Father would ask, "What are your intentions?"

That seems pretty old fashioned, but it seems to us to be a pretty important question in relationships.

In order to have relationships that you want to have in your life, you need to be clear about your "intentions."

What is it that you want?

Is it just to be friends or are you interested in a more romantic or passionate relationship?

Is it your intention to be at peace with your co-workers or your mate or are you interested in drama?

We suggest that you make sure that you take some time to figure out what you want from all your relationships. Only after you know what it is you want from your relationships can you hope to have it.

We planned a family gathering of twelve people last weekend. We all stayed in the same house :-). Several of us are consciously on our spiritual paths and believe in the power of intention.

The week before, we made our intentions clear that the gathering would be a joyful experience.

Every time our thoughts went to what could go wrong, we raised the vibrational level by holding positive intentions, much like James Redfield describes in The Secret of Shambhala.

It worked!

None of the kids had meltdowns and we all stayed in a positive space.

If you doubt that this is possible, just try it.

It's powerful in groups but just as effective by yourself.

If you find yourself in an unpleasant situation or a relationship that is not as you would like it to be, try to focus on positive intentions for the relationship, rather than on the negative.

"Killing the Monster while it's Little"

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 take care of the small things in your life 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, doesn't listen to you or comes 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.

Speaking Your Truth in a Spiritual Partnership

One of the most important things in any relationship that works is to have the freedom and ability to be honest and be able to speak your truth straight from the heart.

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 should's 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 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.

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BECOMING A VIBRATIONAL MATCH FOR THE RELATIONSHIP OF YOUR DREAMS

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 when you are talking about attracting a mate into your life. You will draw to you a person who is vibrating at the same frequency that you are.

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. If you're not, you can take some positive steps to becoming a person who can attract the kind of mate 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. 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.

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 person that you want into your life.

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The Next Logical Step in Relationships

Did you ever take that new job, buy a new house, decide to take a chance on something and it just felt right to do it? It's the same way in relationships. How do you decide to go on a second date with someone? It just seemed like the next logical step after having a good time on the first date.

A lot of people have asked us "How do you know if the relationship you're in is right for you?" Our answer is always "How do you feel?" If you feel good then the relationship is right for you. If there's resistance and an uneasy feeling, this may be a sign telling you this relationship needs some examination and it may not be right.

If you are in a committed relationship that is going through some challenges and want the relationship to improve, the next logical step might be to tackle the issues that are underneath those uneasy feelings.

What we're getting to is, to pay attention to your feelings and allow them to guide you to your next logical step in any area of your life. You can have the relationship of your dreams if you use your feelings as guideposts. Whether it's a relationship or any decision you need to make in your life, if it's not easy and natural it may not be time or right.

Most people allow their lives and relationships to operate out of blame, guilt, judgement and "should's" instead of using their positive and negative feelings as a barometer for how they want to live their lives.

What is the next logical step in your relationships and life? Listen to the guidance from within and you can't make a mistake.

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How Thinking Outside Your Box Can Improve Your Relationships

Ever notice a small child in a play-pen? To that child, the play-pen 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 Tom and Candy. Candy told Tom 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. Tom vetoed her suggestion immediately because they had already spent a year trying to find the perfect car. Candy 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 Tom's mind, it was a simple answer. The case was closed until his friend suggested that maybe Tom could sell his truck and Candy could buy the car she needed. His friend came up with a solution that was out of both Tom and Candy's boxes.

Tom and Candy didn't take the time to get to the real reason for the positions that they both took. Tom didn't understand why Candy wanted a new vehicle and Candy didn't articulate her reasons so that Tom could understand. She backed away when she ran up against his "No" and it wasn't until a solution was given to Tom 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 Tom and Candy 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 play-pen. You just may find the answers that you seek.

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Healing the Past. . .In the Present

Has this ever happened to you? Somebody says something to you that immediately triggers negativity within you. You don't have a clue why you are so upset and you wonder just where that feeling came from.

Tony Robbins would call this a "negative anchor"-- something that is said or something that is experienced that you associate with a previous negative event. Peter Levine refers to this as trauma being held in the body. Whatever you want to call it, the event and feelings surrounding the event, rear their ugly heads again and again until you are able to heal the original situation.

This weekend, we were with Susie's extended family of 14 people, ages 1 year to 79 years. The living room was crowded as we watched the NCAA basketball game. There wasn't a chair for Otto as he stood in the doorway watching the game. Several family members offered to make room for him but he declined. As they continued to insist that he sit down, he became agitated.

It took him a few hours but he realized that his agitation came from previous situations with his ex-wife when she would say to him, "Please sit down! You're driving me crazy!" His agitation was from the trauma of the past.

The agitation from the present situation fired off a negative anchor within him that instantly took him back to a time in a previous relationship that needed to be healed. At that moment he pulled out the baggage from his previous unhealed relationship but had the awareness to realize that his present negativity had nothing to do with the people in the room and the present moment. He was able to let those old feelings go and live in the present moment, enjoying the game and the people in the room.

This situation is what Stephen Covey talks about when he says, "Old resentments never die. They just get buried alive and come up later in uglier ways." The resentments we hold which are not resolved usually manifest themselves again in other relationships which have nothing to do with the original trauma.

We suggest that the first step in healing these past resentments is to stop yourself when you first feel it and examine where the negativity is coming from. The first step to creating any change is awareness. Go back in your mind to your previous relationships--where did this feeling come from, who was there and what was the situation? It's very important to differentiate what happened in the past from what's happening now.

Ultimately, you will want to work on forgiving that person and honoring how that experience created who you are today. Only after you are able to release the past, can you experience the emotional freedom that we all desire.



The 7 Spiritual Keys To Creating the Relationship that you want

We were recently asked to do a workshop on The 7 Spiritual Keys to Manifesting Abundance. The workshop was terrific. So, we wanted to share what we've learned about manifesting as it relates to creating outstanding relationships.

So what are the 7 Spiritual Keys?

1) **Decide what you want in your Relationships**

Before we got together, we each made lists of what we wanted in a partner. If you are already in a relationship, you might want to zero in on one area that you'd like to improve, such as communication. A simple goal may be to turn the television off on Wednesday evenings and just talk to each other.

2) **Eliminate the negative beliefs that would prevent you from getting what you want in your relationships.**

The only reason we don't have the relationships that we want is that there is a belief or feeling within us that we can't have them in our lives. The trick is, to identify those beliefs and then turn them into positive ones.

3) **Focus your attention on what you want (i.e the positive instead of what you don't want).** If it's that night together with your loved one without any interruptions, then see this happening in your mind's eye.

4) **Become a vibrational match for what you want in your relationships**

The Bible reminded us that as we sow, so also shall we reap. What this means is if you are harsh, angry or judgmental in your relationships with others, then eventually, this is what will come back to you. If you are loving, kind and offer to communicate without judgment- then that is what you'll get back.

5) **Take massive action**

Taking the next logical step is key number five. There's an old Chinese proverb (or maybe it was something we read from the note in a fortune cookie) which says-Man who waits for roast duck to fly into mouth must wait very, very long time. In other words, do something. The next logical step to creating the

relationship that you want may be inviting your loved one to go on an hour's walk instead of an evening's worth of TV if that's too big of a step.

6) Trust in the Universe

Trust that, if the universe (or God) gives you a desire, it also will give you the ability somehow to carry it out. When you stumble across something that your vibration contradicts, you know it right away. You will be guided to what is best for you if you pay attention. It may not be like the proverbial burning bush. But, the signs for what you should do will be there.

7) The power of Gratitude.

Pray and hold your current situation in gratitude--current job, current relationship and your life. Find something to be grateful about right now. When you focus on what's great about your life instead of what's not so great, it's funny how positive things will continue to come your way.



Partnership in Relationship

As we travel across the country teaching people how to have more trust and passion in their relationships, we do it by teaching the concepts of partnership in relationship. Gary Zukav describes spiritual partnership in depth in "The Seat of the Soul" and we have used his work as one of our guides. A spiritual partnership is when two people come together consciously as equals, growing separately together.

They grow spiritually and personally--all within the framework of the relationship. They form a support system for each other, the foundation being safety and trust. People often ask us how to create powerful and passionate relationships and the short answer is through constant communication, one moment at a time. Openness and honesty are essential in building safety and trust which allows you to work toward being the true essence of who you are. When you allow yourself to open totally to the other person, amazing things begin to happen. You begin to grow in ways you never thought possible because the other person is there to support you. You know deep within you that your partner is your friend and will help you build on your strengths.

Otto isn't comfortable dancing. He feels clumsy and awkward. But he goes dancing anyway, because he knows that Susie loves it. He also knows, that no matter how foolish he thinks he looks, Susie just wants to have a good time and gives him total love and support. He even has fun in the process.

When one of us is facing a spiritual or personal challenge, the other person is there to listen, to love and to offer support. Whether consciously or not, it usually works out for us that the person with the least fear leads--that can change from moment to moment. This is a concept we learned from Kenny and Julia Loggins in their book "The Unimaginable Life" and we've discovered that it has also been true in our relationship.

When two people come together for their personal and spiritual growth, a great deal of synergy happens. As Stephen Covey says in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, "Synergy happens when the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. If there is true synergy in relationship, one plus one equals three or more." The Bible says that when two or more are gathered in my name, I will be there. Isn't that the essence of why we come together? To be closer to Spirit or to God?

In partnerships, we help each other to heal, to grow, and to learn. Carolyn Myss says in her tape series "Spiritual Madness" that one of our purposes in incarnating is to get to know the parts of ourselves that don't know God yet. We believe that spiritual partnerships help you to know God.

We encourage you to form spiritual partnerships in all relationships in your lives. If you do, you will find that your life will be filled with joy, passion, growth, some pain, and a great deal of love.

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The "Care and Feeding" of Spiritual Partnerships

While attempting to make sure it was okay to continue to use the term "Spiritual Partnership," we contacted Gary Zukav's office this week and were directed to information on Soul Groups at their web site www.zukav.com.

Soul Groups are study groups or schools that study The Seat of the Soul or The Dancing Wu Li Masters. We found out that anyone can start a Soul Group. Each Soul Group is a spiritual partnership--a partnership between equals for the purpose of spiritual growth. No one is an expert on spiritual growth and the heart. Soul Groups are ways to explore them together.

We were excited to know that it was no problem to continue to use the term "Spiritual Partnership" because that's what we believe all relationships are. Our definition may vary from yours or the next person's because no two relationships are the same.

Our definition is two people (Souls) coming together to learn and grow, personally and spiritually as equals.

One of the most difficult things about our beliefs about relationships is the concept of not knowing if you are going to be together forever or not. Most people would say that this belief would lessen the commitment between two people but we believe just the opposite is true. We think this belief forces you to be more conscious in the relationship (not taking the other person for granted) than if you had committed to be together--the old death do us part vow. We think this belief forces you to continuously focus on keeping the relationship on the top of your priority list and on living in the moment with no holding back.

As the old saying goes, whatever you focus on tends to get done and so it is with relationships.

Many in our parents generation stayed in the same job for 40 years and then retired with a gold watch. Many in our generation change jobs at the rate of sometimes every 2 to 3 years because the job no longer serves them. With this much change, relationships are bound to change also. We believe the new model for relationships is to grow together separately as long as it serves both spiritual and personal growth.

This does not mean that there is less commitment. In fact there is more commitment--more understanding, more of a sense of safety, trust and friendship when there is constant "care and feeding" of the relationship.

So we are glad to continue to keep using the term spiritual partnership because it has meant a great deal to us. We are not experts--just two people who have learned from the pain of the past and have learned to do it differently.

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Being Willing. . .

Wayne Dyer, in his tape series "Real Magic," suggests when you don't have what it is you want in your life that you ask yourself this question--What is it that you're unwilling to do to have it?

Otto's 10 year-old son dreams of being a pro-basketball player but even at 10, he's not doing what he needs to do to follow this path. So it is with relationships. If you don't have a passionate, powerful dynamic relationship and want one, we suggest you ask Wayne Dyer's question of yourself--What is it you are unwilling to do to have the relationship of your dreams?

When you get the answer to that question, more than likely underneath it all will be fear--fear of what your family will say or how they will react, fear of failure, fear of loneliness, fear of being hurt, fear of having your heart crushed into billion pieces.

If you want intimacy in your relationship, you have to be willing to be intimate. That may mean allowing yourself to open to another person even though you may have experienced pain in the past. Being willing to look at oneself, see past patterns, and do it differently takes courage. Being willing to consciously choose the life you want also takes courage.

Being willing also may mean discarding past ideas of who your ideal mate might be--race, age, education, socio-economic level or gender. We had to overcome the fear which came with a 16 year age difference between us. From the moment we got together, we felt comfort, passion, love and an incredible connection and were not willing to let society's "rules" about age differences in relationships dictate our happiness.

So we are saying to you that whatever you want in your life, you have to be willing to do whatever is necessary to have it. You've heard people say, "I can't have that." We're saying they aren't willing to do whatever is necessary to have it--go to school, apply for a job, join a singles group, quit their job, work 2 jobs--the list is endless.

Remember, you do not have to do this alone. Just ask God, Spirit, or the Universe for help and you will receive it in some way if you watch and listen. Love is everywhere. All we have to do is look for it, become loving to others and learn to receive it.

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Feel All Your Feelings Deeply

During this past week while on vacation in Mexico, we read 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 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 go to any lengths to hide from our own feelings of pain and separation from ourselves, our Creator, and from others in our lives.

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.

This week 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.

So take some time when those uncomfortable feelings arise within you. Sit with them and allow yourself to breathe and feel them.

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



The Power of Laughter in Relationships.

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' most recent set of 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.



Focus on What's Important in Your Relationships and Your Life

A couple of nights ago we were awakened at 2am by the thunderous footsteps overhead of what we believe to be a mouse. It was running very quickly, trying to find a way out of the suspended ceiling in our bedroom. It would run to the middle of the room, stop, and then change directions, running as fast as its little legs would go.

Isn't that what we often do in our lives? We run as fast as we can through our day, trying to make it all work. We stack commitments on top of commitments, hoping that somehow it will all balance out. The reality is that it never will balance out until you decide to focus on what's really important to you and your life.

If you want your relationships to be passionate and vibrant, you must focus on them. You must spend the time necessary to cultivate the relationship to make it grow. What isn't growing, deteriorates--nothing stands still.

Stephen Covey's Habit 3 in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is "First Things First." If you focus on the first "things" in your life—whatever you choose them to be--then those will be the most successful areas in your life.

Spend a few minutes while driving to work today and 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."

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 or talking to your friend on the phone.

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.

So we urge you to do this simple exercise before a mouse decides to wake you up in the middle of the night to get your attention and make you focus on the most important things in your life.

Marianne Williamson says, "You can come to the truth through joy or through pain. The choice is up to you."

We urge you to choose joy and focus on the things in your life that will bring you the most joy.

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"If Only. . ."

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 lives 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 Poke'mon 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 heard us say before in this newsletter about how important it is to love others in your life wherever they are and not where you'd like them to be.

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.

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 some thing 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 option is to accept your employer and your job as it is or move on.

So we suggest that tomorrow 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.

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Awareness--Feeling Your Feelings

Our daughter took our grandson to his friend's birthday party this weekend and was struck by the atypical conversation among the adults. They were discussing personality types and feelings--not your normal conversation at a party for 5 year olds or 55 year olds, for that matter. In our society it is rare for a group of people who don't know each other well to feel safe enough to have a discussion about feelings.

Most people go to great lengths to hide or deny their feelings about their lives, their work, their relationships and most things that matter to them. Psychiatrist Dr. David Viscott in his tape series "Emotional Resilience" says, "If we were to live honestly, our lives would heal themselves." He explains how he helps people heal by helping them find ways to acknowledge their true feelings about past, current or future events that trouble them.

In our relationship, when we lose our connection, it is usually because we have not taken the time to become aware of what we are feeling and then communicate those feelings to each other. We get lost in the day to day "busyness" of life and don't take the time to "tune into" ourselves and each other.

It's easy to deny your feelings, bury them, and pretend they aren't there. We all see it everyday with people we work with and our friends. They are mystified as to why their relationships lack passion and aren't working when the reality is-- these people aren't willing to look at the truth of their situations.

Barbara DeAngelis says that if you are repressing, you're repressing. In other words, it's impossible to repress your feelings in one area of your life and be passionate and open in other areas.

If you find that you have become distant and withdrawn--emotionally or physically from someone you love—we suggest that you do as we try to do. At the next possible moment that you realize the separation and disconnection with this person, we suggest that you talk about how you are feeling and what's going on in your relationship and your life.

Gay and Kathryn Hendricks, authors of the book Conscious Loving, made the commitment to each other to tell each other their feelings within 10 seconds of recognizing them. How very powerful this could be if all of us felt we could make this commitment in our relationships. Imagine how much closer we could feel to the people in our lives if we could make this kind of commitment.

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Is it Lying or Loving?

At our workshop this week, 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 not taught to speak their truth but rather hide what they were thinking 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, "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 said-- "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!

What Happens after you Find your Soulmate?

What's your perception of life with your perfect soulmate?

Joy, bliss, happiness--a life with no conflict and no major issues to work through?
Ward and June or Ozzy and Harriet with passion?

In our opinion, that just isn't the way it works. In our relationship, we are best friends--we have passion--we have joy--we are totally comfortable with each other and enjoy being together. Even with all this, we still have issues that challenge us and that "rock the boat."

We hate to burst your bubble, but we believe that soulmates come together to help each other to heal, learn and grow. It's what we and others, such as Gary Zukav, call Spiritual Partnership. Some people, such as Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks and Kenny and Julia Loggins, refer to it as "Conscious Relationship." We also believe that you can find several "soulmates" in your lifetime. Wayne Dyer said that your soulmate can be the person who you can't stand but are in your life to teach you a powerful lesson.

Carolyn Myss says in "Spiritual Madness" that we are here to heal the parts of ourselves that don't know God yet. We believe that Soulmates help us to heal those parts if we are willing to do the work and look at ourselves openly and honestly. Soulmates can trigger certain reactions in you that point the direction to what needs to be healed.

So what happens after you find your soulmate?

Remember the Zen proverb that poses the question of--What happens before enlightenment? Chop wood, carry water. What happens after enlightenment? Chop wood, carry water. We feel this is a good analogy of what happens in relationships. You still must face your personal challenges but if you're conscious and awake, you can realize that you have a powerful ally to walk beside you on your path to enlightenment.

Many of us are finding that perfect "Soulmate" and many are searching for one. We suggest that you look at the people in your life--the ones who challenge you, the ones who love you. Say of prayer of gratitude for these "teachers." When someone close to you "presses your buttons," look at what you can learn from the situation. What parts of yourself need to be healed? What feelings come up for you?

Marriane Williamson has said that every thing we do is either an act of love or a cry for help. That's what a soulmate does for you--they are there to love you AND to help you when you cry for help. They also have the ability to "press your buttons" and this is for your highest good.

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Who's Driving the Bus?

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."

As 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.



Being "Real" in Your Relationships

This week we joined the 20-something masses and attended a Dave Mathews Band concert. They played a song called, "Ants Marching" and we felt like the lyrics really told the story of a lot of relationships and lives.

In his song, Dave depicts the average life and the average relationship. "He wakes up in the morning, Does his teeth, Bite to eat and he's rolling. Never changes a thing. The week ends; the week begins. She thinks, we look at each other Wondering what the other is thinking But we never say a thing And these crimes between us grow deeper. Take these chances. Place them in a box until a quieter time. Lights down, you up and die."

What Dave's really saying in his blunt way is that most of us in our relationships aren't willing to speak our truth about our thoughts and we end up taking these thoughts, unspoken, to our graves.

The great motivational speaker Zig Ziglar talks about the tragedy of people going to their graves with their music still in them--not living their lives to the fullest.

If you want your relationships to be "real," alive and powerful, we suggest the concept of spiritual partnership. A spiritual partnership is not about religion--it's about two people coming together, using their relationship as a venue to heal, learn and grow.

How is a spiritual partnership different from other types of relationships?

In a spiritual partnership, (this can be any relationship) each partner is committed to telling the truth, and not holding back, however painful it might be. The relationship is alive, growing, and filled with passion because of constant communication and being willing to tackle issues as they arrive. Each partner can be himself or herself--with no hiding.

This concept was introduced to the masses by Gary Zukav's book Seat of the Soul. We were dramatically impacted by this concept and it has changed our lives forever.

So how often are you not living your truth in relationships? What is the underlying fear that comes up for you when you think about telling your truth? We all have relationships where we don't feel safe enough to be open and honest. Those relationships are dead and aren't going anywhere.

We've found that Steven Covey's phrase, "Old resentments never die--they just get buried alive and come up later in uglier ways," is so true. Haven't you had that happen in your life? If you just bury a hurt feeling or misunderstanding, it just comes up later in another situation or with another person as misplaced anger.

So we have found that the only way to create outstanding relationships of all kinds is to have open, honest communication at all times and by doing it in such a way that the other person can hear your truth.

This is tough. But what is tougher is having a relationship that is mired in unspoken issues. Do what Susan Jeffers suggests, "Feel the fear and do it anyway." When you do, your relationships will be more real and honest.

So we challenge you this week to choose a relationship or situation that needs to be healed and tackle just one small issue that stands in the way of a more harmonious relationship.

If you do, you'll be one step closer to forming a great spiritual partnership with that other person.

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Secrets to Healing after Leaving a Painful Relationship!

It very easy to get into a relationship. But, it's usually very difficult to get out of one that no longer serves you and begin the healing process.

It seems that everywhere you look, many long-standing relationships and /or marriages are dissolving. In this week's article we thought we'd give some suggestions to help those of you who are still going through the healing process.

Our suggestions are :

1) To never look at a relationship (or anything else) that didn't work out as a failure. Robert Schuller, the famous TV evangelist and founder of the world famous Crystal Cathedral said in his book "Success is never ending Failure is never final" --"Failure doesn't mean you're finished, it does mean you have a chance." He also said, "Failure doesn't mean God has abandoned you...it does mean God has a better idea." Often it's the seed of a current or past "failure" that fuels you to the very success that you've always dreamed of.

2) Turn from the past and look toward the future...YOUR future. As Tony Robbins says "Your past does not equal your future. Sometimes after a separation, we find ourselves dwelling in the past, our thoughts consumed with that other person. You will begin to heal when you start thinking and writing about what you want for your life.

3) Know and understand that there are no "accidents" and that everything happens in divine order. Every thought, every moment, every action, every relationship and every event that happens in your life, happens to propel you toward your next phase of learning and personal growth.

4) Acknowledge, without blame, your part in the breakup of the relationship. When it doesn't work out, then two people have to share equally in the responsibility of the breakup. No matter who appears to be at fault.

5) Learn from the patterns of the past. Stay conscious in all your relationships so that you won't repeat the same mistakes.

6) Give thanks for the lessons that you learned in that relationship. Honor that person as a teacher, here to help you on your journey.

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What's Most Important to you?

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 your life. After determining what you value most, compare these values with how you actually spend your time.

Brian Tracy says, "It's not what you say or what you intend to do but what you actually do reveals what's most important to you."

We fill our lives with so many activities and often place our priorities in alignment with what's not very important to us. As Mona Lisa Schulz says in her book, Awakening Intuition, "You can't have it all. You have to choose."

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.

We've found that your values can change and that's why constant communication is so important. Earlier in Susie's life, she placed a higher value on her job and community activities than she does now. She spent more time on those activities away from home and invested more energy in cultivating relationships with many different people. Now, she is spending more time with family and her partner Otto.

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.



The Issue of Money in Spiritual Partnership

Sex and money are two of the biggest issues that challenge couples. Today we're going to talk about money and the unique opportunities for growth in tackling these issues.

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 need 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.

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 simple problem of semantics like the one we had recently illustrates this point. Last week 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. Budgets were imposed from on high. He preferred to talk about plans. Susie's frame of reference comes from managing a library and she deals 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.



Power, Vulnerability and Money...

Marketing Guru and consultant, Jay Abraham made a statement once that changed the way we look at communication challenges, relationships and life. It's a concept he called going "one question deeper."

Jay used this idea as a way to get to the core issues that face business owners. We have adopted his "one question deeper" idea as a means to get to the core of the jugular issues that we face in relationships.

One of those issues is money!

In our judgment, when there are issues about money in our relationships, they aren't really issues about money at all. They are issues that surround power and vulnerability.

There is a woman we know who recently bought a van and two days after, the transmission blew up and had to be repaired. To make a really long story short there was a lot of name-calling and accusations flying back and forth between her and the car dealer. As she tells the story the problems were because in addition to the transmission blowing up on the van, her payments were going to be much higher than she originally thought them to be. She ended up getting so upset that she forced the car dealer to take the van back.

Now, on the surface it appeared to be a problem around a money issue. We heard another version of this story, which took it "one question deeper."

We found out that the "real" reason her payments were going to be higher was that she wanted the van to be in her name only instead of being on the title and loan with her husband. This is a woman who has made no secret that she and her husband have been having problems.

The way we see it, this whole issue was not really about her monthly car payment. It was about her needing to feel more powerful in a shaky relationship. A major traumatic experience was created for several people all because of her desire to have the van in her name only. This way she could feel more powerful.

In the type of relationship that we prescribe, a Spiritual Partnership both partners in the relationship are powerful. They can also be vulnerable. In a Spiritual Partnership the balance between power and vulnerability often changes, shifts and flows back and forth consciously. In Otto's previous marriage, the balance between power and vulnerability often around money issues changed and shifted back and forth. But, it wasn't conscious.

What we do in our relationship when any issue comes up is to take our discussion "one question deeper."

We suggest that when issues come up around money (or anything else for that matter), you begin to look beneath the perceived problem. When you look underneath the surface, we're pretty sure you'll find unresolved issues surrounding power and vulnerability.

Often just talking openly and honestly about your fears and why you feel vulnerable creates a framework for understanding. You find that the original issue was just something to get your attention and force you to tackle the hard issues.



Assumptions

We just got back from a very powerful workshop on Spiritual Partnerships with Gary Zukav, author of Seat of the Soul, and his spiritual partner Linda Francis.

The great thing about attending a weekend workshop like this is that you get to learn a lot about yourself and your partner. We got to learn about how making simple assumptions can damage relationships very quickly. Simple assumptions that we make about each other and situations can lead to resentment, distance and emotional separation if left unaddressed.

During our 12-hour drive to the workshop, Susie had an apple as a snack. She asked Otto if he wanted an apple. He looked at the apple and saw only one and assumed that that was the only apple in the food bag. Since he wasn't hungry in that moment, but knew he would be soon, he mistakenly assumed that Susie was about to have the only apple.

A short time later Otto had tortilla chips for a snack instead of the apple he would have preferred. Now he didn't resent Susie for eating the "last apple" but he silently wished there was another apple to eat instead of the chips. Susie was unaware of his assumption and desire for an apple, and it wasn't until the food bag was taken to the room and unpacked that three other apples appeared.

If Otto hadn't assumed that there was only one apple in the bag, he would have had what he really wanted to eat instead of the chips.

Isn't this what we often do in relationships?

We silently want our relationships to be more passionate, more connected, more

loving but we don't know how to communicate our needs to our partner.

We assume what we want isn't available or isn't possible, without attempting to make the connection with our partner and speak our needs in a way that they can be understood.

Sometimes we know what our needs are but don't express them because we are fearful what our partner will say or how he/she will react. So it's easier to keep silent.

In our relationship, we have learned that if we don't communicate consciously and constantly, we start to make assumptions about how the other will react in a given situation and those assumptions are usually dead wrong.

We've found that when we make assumptions, we're not living in the present moment--we are either in the past or in the future.

We suggest that you not make assumptions about how someone else is feeling or thinking in any relationship--no matter how long you've been together and how well you know that person.

We are all constantly growing and changing. If we want to grow together instead of growing apart, the most important thing you can do is to constantly communicate, one moment at a time. Decide to consciously create your lives the way you want them to be instead of allowing your lives to happen to you.

Live consciously at all times based on your intentions on how you want your life to be. The apple is there if you want it.

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Listening from your Heart...

One of the most difficult things to do in relationship is to listen--truly listen from your heart without blame, judgment or "you ought too's" and "you should's." It's also difficult to take the time to listen without allowing distractions to pull you away from what the other person is saying. It doesn't even matter if the person you are listening to is baring their soul or not, It's incredibly important to stay present, interested and focused on that person.

How many times have you been talking to someone and they reach around to tuck in a loose tag that's hanging off your shirt or pick a loose thread off your sweater right in the middle of your conversation?

This might seem like a trivial thing but what it really says is that in that moment they weren't listening to what you were saying. They were thinking about that loose tag or thread and how they could fix it.

All of us want to feel loved, respected and honored. And one way we have found to have this is to love, respect and honor someone else. We found that listening without interrupting the other shows respect and also builds trust. What a simple concept, but how hard it is to do.

Something that is even more difficult to do is to listen to someone when it's uncomfortable to do so. When there are conflicts or resentments in a relationship that haven't been dealt with yet, there is an emotional charge that is present and that makes it difficult to stay focused on the present moment. In that time you're not really focused on the other person and what he or she is saying. You are focused on your emotions or your attempts to avoid pain.

Another difficult situation is when you have preconceived prejudices and judgments of the person. Our judgments build walls even in the healthiest of relationships. When you are trying to listen to someone with whom there have been challenges, it requires you to listen with unconditional love in that moment. That doesn't mean you have to agree with everything they say. But, it does mean forgetting yourself and your issues while they are talking. We are so quick to rush in and prove we are right, that all we do is create more distance.

So, how do you really listen--without judgment or coming from your own agenda?

It's like the symphony director said when he was asked, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" He said, "practice."

Start with focusing your attention on the check-out person at the grocery store or the waiter or waitress at your favorite restaurant. Engage them in a short conversation and REALLY listen to what they have to say. When you get brave you can try a family member with whom you have some unhealed issues.

Practice by listening without needing to respond from your frame of reference. Hear what they have to say from their point of view. It's amazing what can be healed when you do this. As Stephen Covey points out in his book, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, it's important to seek first to understand, then be understood. When you do this the walls and defenses crumble and healing can take place.

Sometimes the greatest gift you can give someone is to just listen with your heart. So this week practice listening and coming from love in your relationships. When you do, we know you'll see a difference.

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How Moving Our Office is Like Your Relationships

A few weeks ago we began to consider moving our home office from upstairs to downstairs. The "upstairs" office had a lovely skylight but the down side was that we couldn't see the computer screen for at least 5 hours out of the day because of the sun.

This weekend we actually made the decision and moved the office. It took all day Saturday to do this and a lot of "heaving" and "hoeing." When we were done moving, it occurred to us that there were some incredible similarities between our office move and how most of us "do" relationships.

Here are some similarities for you to consider..

1. We were comfortable upstairs--we had air conditioning and a comfortable lounge chair, neither of which are in the new office. In relationships, we get comfortable in our patterns with our mate, family members, or co-workers and often just don't want to tackle some hard issues that need to be addressed. We know what needs to be done, but for whatever reason, we just don't want to make that "move" and challenge the situation. We may talk with a friend, co-worker or even a total stranger about the problem but are unwilling to speak to the one person with whom you have an issue.
2. We were uncertain whether this move would really be for the best--whether the pros outweighed the cons in our new office space. In relationships we'd often rather stay "stuck" in situations that are familiar to us than make changes where the outcome is uncertain. We don't know whether bringing up a certain subject or idea would really be for the best--Would it make things better or worse in our relationship?
3. Our "upstairs" office was great except for this one little part--we couldn't work on the computer for several hours during the day. We worked around this "little part" until it just had become impossible to do so. In relationships, we admit that everything is "perfect" except for this one "little part." We skirt this issue, hide it, and just don't want to face it. Whenever we say (about anything)"This is great but . . ." we are justifying or settling for something less than what we really want out of life.

After the move, we have discovered that the new office space feels really good and we're glad that we made the switch. In relationships, we have found that it's often difficult and even painful to tackle the hard issues when they come up but after we do, we feel much lighter, more energized, more honest and more loving.

To us, this isn't about dumping on your partner. This is about tearing down the walls so that you can have a healthier relationship. We've found that this works in your job situation as well in as your personal relationships. We've also found that things might appear to get worse before they get better when you tackle those jugular issues. For us, this has been the only way to create healthy relationships.

So this week, we suggest that you consider doing something that you've been thinking about doing for awhile but have been afraid to do so. It might be a project that you'd like to do or reaching out to someone who is estranged from you. But, the most important thing is to step out of your comfort zone and take your life to the next level.



The Importance of Saying only what you mean !

This weekend we read The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz and we think it's a great resource for tearing up your past belief systems and starting over with more empowering ones.

The first agreement is "be impeccable with your word." In other words, speak with integrity--saying only what you mean. We think this is really important in relationships of all kinds and especially in intimate ones.

If you aren't impeccable with your word, trust begins to erode within the relationship--and we're not just talking about the big stuff. Our belief is that there is no small stuff in relationships.

When Susie bought her new used Buick, the dealership couldn't find the remote control and an extra key. In fact they said that this model didn't come with one. A mechanic even looked at it and said that it wasn't wired for a remote. To Susie, a remote is a nice amenity but not a necessity. But--she'd had one with her previous car and this new car just didn't feel as nice because there was something missing. Trying to get to the bottom of the problem, Otto sat in the dealership and made the dealers look in the specs to see if a remote was standard equipment for this model or not. To make a long story short, Otto managed to get a remote for the car.

Because we were told that the car didn't have a remote and through persistence found out it did, we have an issue with trust with that dealership. We'll put a question mark in front of anything they say from now on.

Isn't this the way it is in relationships? It's like Steven Covey's concept of the emotional bank account in The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Good deeds, kind words and following through on your agreements build deposits in your emotional bank account with another person. False statements, not following through on agreements create withdrawals in an emotional bank account in a relationship. The idea is that you must make many more deposits than withdrawals to keep the trust level high between the two of you.

Being impeccable with your word means following through on what you say you're going to do. Susie asked Otto to use the weed eater to clear the weeds along the driveway this weekend and Otto said he would. Although this is a small matter, if he hadn't followed through and whacked the weeds when he said he would, some of the trust between them would be eroded. When we don't follow through on what we say we're going to do on the small stuff, doubt creeps in about follow through on the "big stuff" too.

Being impeccable also means being conscious of what you say and the intention behind it. Have you ever said something that you really didn't mean? As soon as it left your mouth, you wished you could capture it and destroy it before anyone could hear it?

The challenge of being impeccable is to be aware of how you are feeling, watch what triggers you, and stay in the present moment without reacting from past unhealthy patterns and old family tapes.

This week as you go through your day, be very aware of what comes out of your mouth. Be very conscious of what promises you make and what you say to someone when you are emotionally triggered. Make a new agreement, as Don Miguel Ruiz says, to be impeccable with your word.

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Dealing With Anger

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.

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 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. If this sounds like a lot of work, you're right. 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. 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.

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Vulnerability In Relationships

The paradox of vulnerability in relationship is that the path to connection is to allow yourself to be both strong and vulnerable at the same time. When you do, it allows your partner to get to see the real you with your defenses down. This means no hiding. Not from yourself, not from your partner and best of all no hiding from the truth.

Recently we had a conversation with our friend George that was quite telling about how men in this society are taught to deal with vulnerability. George told us about how he grew up on the streets of Manhattan and you just didn't show any signs of weakness there. If you did you were dead. He went on to explain that he would confide his feelings to both his male and female friends much more quickly than to his wife (if at all).

George loves his wife and there is a deep bond between them but, he doesn't want her to perceive him as being "weak". Plain and simple, George is typical of most males in our society. They are taught- don't show vulnerability. It's the sign of weakness.

Women in our society are taught to let a man lead. Women are taught to wait for a man to call them for a date, for men to open doors for them, to ask them to marry them, to wait for men to initiate sex and much more. Whether consciously or unconsciously, even the strongest woman in the corporate world can find herself allowing the man to lead in relationship.

Dotty was a very successful labor consultant. Making three times the income her husband made. Her friends were astonished when she confided in them that she would have to ask her husband if she could buy a new pair of shoes

Allowing yourself to be vulnerable in relationship is the fuel that propels the relationship to move forward and grow. If you don't allow yourself to be vulnerable what you are doing is building walls to keep others from being able to hurt you.

As life and business philosopher Jim Rohn says, "The walls we build to keep out the sadness also keeps out the joy." Mona Lisa Schultz reminds us "It's not healthy for your relationship, your emotions or your body when one partner has all the power and the other has all the vulnerability. In fact, either position can be painful. You have to learn the joys and benefits of the opposite position of being vulnerable when the occasion calls for it and seizing power when necessary."

In our relationship, we consider ourselves partners who maintain a healthy balance between power and vulnerability. Like many couples, our previous relationships were not that way. Even though we were married for many years to our previous partners, neither of us felt safe enough to truly be vulnerable with them. In Susie's case, vulnerability was met with avoidance, distance and perfunctory solutions to problems. In Otto's relationships, he never felt safe enough to express vulnerability but did whatever was necessary to just "get along" and somehow make the relationship work. This doesn't mean there wasn't love in our previous relationships. It only means there was an imbalance of power that didn't serve either partner or the relationship.

When you don't feel safe enough to tell your partner anything, fearing their reaction or what they might say or do, the passion dies and the relationship shortly thereafter.



How to Re-Claim Passion in Your Life!

If you want to create more passion in your life or reclaim passion that is currently not there in your life, this article will give you some ideas.

At some point in our lives we've all experienced total passion for life and living. We've all been involved in something that really got us excited and we couldn't wait to have a similar experience all over again soon.

The best physical example we could give you of passion in action is to have you think of any child that you know. Chances are better than excellent that the child that you thought of is full of energy about something that they are passionate about. Our son loves Poke'mon and playing his playstation. He enthusiastically gets up at 6:30 AM on the weekends to play a playstation game, but during the week he has to drag himself out of bed to go to school.

We are no different from our son or the child that you may have thought of.

Ask yourself, do you have more energy when you get up at 6AM to go to work on Monday morning or when you get up early to leave on a vacation?

We've heard football announcers and commentators on TV talk about how certain players can really "get up for the big game." What they're talking about is

that player rejuvenating his fire or passion for the sport he loves by "getting up" for the big game against their arch-rival.

There is an ease and a flow in your life when you do things that you love and when you are with people who you are passionate about.

We have found the secret to increasing passion in our lives is to follow these very simple ideas.

1) Find something that you can really get excited about.

This can be something from your past, something you do now that you want to do more of or it can be something you've been thinking about doing.

We were at a gathering yesterday and saw what it was like when someone who was deeply depressed remembered an activity that she had been passionate about in years past. She left the gathering with a renewed passion for that activity and for life, resolving to spend some time each week doing what she loved.

2) Eliminate the things in your life that you aren't passionate about.

We're not saying that you have to quit your job or leave a partner when the passion has left. But, it is important to eliminate as many things as possible in your life that don't bring you passion and joy.

In Susie's current job she used to find herself traveling all over the country, attending meetings and getting involved in association activities and events. When it ceased to be a passion for her, she decided to start eliminating those things that she no longer wanted to do.

Now we know that it's not always possible to eliminate all the unpleasant things you have to do. But, it's usually possible to think of new ways of doing those things which may bring some passion back to your work experience. The same thing could work in your personal life and relationships. If you're not excited about your life, find something to get excited about. If you're not excited about your relationships, find something about your relationships to get excited about.

3) Focus on the good and the positive aspects of your mate, your job and your life instead of focusing on the negative qualities.

What we do is focus on the good qualities about each other instead of spending a time dwelling on the negative. After we resolve conflicts with each other, we do not rehash them with friends. In our minds, we go back to the qualities we love about the other. This way we are more likely to attract more of what we want into our lives instead of what we don't want.

Susie was able to rekindle the passion for her work and work environment by focusing her thoughts each morning during her hour-long commute. She imagined the things she appreciated about each of her co-workers and focused on the activities that brought her joy during the day. This changed the atmosphere of her work environment and this positive attitude has even spread to the other employees.

So if passion is missing in your life try at least one of our suggestions and we think you'll see a difference.



How Badly Do You Want Intimacy In Your Relationships?

This week Susie was at a meeting of all women and one of the participants wistfully told them about the elk. According to this woman, the female elks live and raise their young in the company of other female elks. The male elks come around once a year, the females pick out the best males, mate, and then separate for the rest of the year.

This woman was envious of this arrangement and suggested that humans might be better off to emulate the elk's ways. Because we're students of relationships, we couldn't help but make a few observations, hopefully providing food for thought for you.

If we, as humans, emulated the elk, the people with whom we would have intimate relationships would be kept at a distance. In our opinion, emotional distance and intimacy cannot co-exist.

To us, this is not an issue of gender or sexual preference but rather an issue of intimacy within relationship. We believe that intimate relationships, whether between sexual partners, close friends or family members, are opportunities for spiritual growth and personal healing.

If we find that we are putting distance between ourselves and anyone we are 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.

Everyday we receive email messages from people who talk about being in disconnected relationships and having disconnected sex. We've learned from our own lives and from other's lives that disconnected sex does not bring intimacy. It only provides a temporary mask, which covers up the challenges within the relationship.

Do you notice the number of ads for Viagra and the number of people using it? Now, we're not being judgmental here--just pointing out that many people are searching for that connection of the heart and soul-- that intimacy that is missing or has evaporated over many years of marriage.

Intimacy is not something that you can fix with a drug. It takes two people truly interested and willing to work for a connection of the heart and soul.

Gary Zukav, author of Seat of the Soul, talks about the new species of human that is being born today. We're no longer here for physical survival as our ancestors but rather for a spiritual awakening.

We feel that this spiritual awakening is happening in great numbers because people are desiring to live more consciously and authentically in alignment with whom they really are. Intimate relationships or spiritual partnerships are helping people to do this.

Most of us spend our whole lives, consciously or unconsciously, trying to find our connection with Spirit. We believe that this is the same connection that we feel in a deep union with another person.

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.

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

Do you want distance and separation like the elk or do you want a deep spiritual connection?

The choice is up to you.

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Being Conscious of the Differences in Ourselves and Others!

When we get into intimate relationships 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. The reality is that we are each separate individuals, with different backgrounds, belief systems, and emotional patterns. In the Sept/Oct 2000 issue of "Modern Maturity" magazine, an article highlighting inter-racial, inter-generational, and inter-cultural relationships caught our attention. Since there's a 16-year difference in our ages, this article really spoke to us.

In this article, John Gottman, author of several relationship books, said, " We often expect our mate to understand and meet our expectations. If that doesn't happen, we feel he/she must not love us enough, or is intentionally being hurtful."

The point is that your mate is just coming from another point of view. He goes on to say that because "inter" couples "often enter marriage with a more conscious awareness of the cultural, age or racial differences between them, they're more likely to address these issues by talking openly about them." This openness from the beginning of the relationship helps to depersonalize the conflicts and eliminate the hurt feelings that often arise when differences surface.

People tend to believe that if they have the same spiritual beliefs, grow up in the same community, got to the same schools, have the same family background, or like bowling, golf or dancing, they will always think alike and the differences between them won't be great. The fact is that you can grow up next door to someone, be the same age, go to the same schools but have dramatically different cultural, philosophical and personal viewpoints and belief systems.

The "inter" couples in the article said that when there are apparent differences in ideology, culture, race, age, religion, those differences stand out quickly, forcing you to deal with them up front. We've all heard people say "What happened to the person I married?" The truth is that more likely than not the differences were there all the time and were just finally coming to the surface. It seems like such a shock to you that you have these differences that you start doubting the wisdom of your choice to be in a relationship with this person who is so "unlike" you.

This concept is illustrated in Steven Covey's story about the man and the optometrist. Imagine if you would sitting across from your optometrist.

You are handed his/her eyeglasses and told to try those on. When you tell your doctor that you can't see a thing, the optometrist says, "I don't know why--they've worked well for me all these years. I can see perfectly fine with them!"

Isn't that what happens when we don't accept that our intimate mate might come from another frame of reference, separate from ours, on a particular topic? You expect that someone else's lenses will work for you and when they don't, you are surprised and sometimes angry.

If you really want intimate, connected relationships, you have to understand and respect the "glasses" that your mate uses to see life, while honoring and sharing your own "pair of glasses." We've found that expecting that there will be differences, listening without interrupting, and then speaking freely without fear are key elements to working through the differences that arise between us.

The first step to healing anything in your life is through awareness, If you are feeling separation or distance from your mate or anyone in your life, try looking at the issue from the frame of reference through which the other sees life. Habit 5 of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits says, "Seek first to understand then be understood." When you do that, it's very difficult to be angry with that other person and can be the beginning of a deeper connection.

Commitment In Relationships

This week 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 "African 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, they first have 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 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 equals 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.

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Susie and Otto are relationship coaches, authors, and seminar leaders. To schedule a coaching session or workshop with them, see contact information below.

Susie and Otto Collins
P.O. Box 1614
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-772-2279 est
fax: 740-772-2279
e-mail: webmaster@collinspartners.com