WHEN LOVE IS BY CHOICE

INSTEAD OF CHANCE

(A Relationship Enhancing Booklet)

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SECTION TWO

When Love Is By Choice Instead Of Chance In Parent Child Relations

WHEN LOVE IS BY CHOICE...

- Foreword -

This booklet is written with the goal of giving readers insight into a subject largely taken for granted, i.e., the *difference* between loving by choice and loving by chance, as well as the development of love by chance into a responsible love by choice.

Whether we are talking about loving family, friends, companions, or even ourselves, loving by choice simply adds a more constructive and responsible nature to the relationship. It gives us the constant awareness that love is worth our effort, as opposed to us simply expecting to always be passive beneficiaries.

The Author

There is no *perfect* love. There is perfection only in the use of our potential to be predominantly happy with ourselves and someone else in a healthy relationship. Perfection is *giving* what we need to give of ourselves in effort to nurture what we want and need in a relationship. It is not a measure of the relationship itself.

When Love Is By Choice

Instead Of Chance

The belief in *falling* in love has been around for thousands of years, but it has not always been the path to love in every culture and period of history. Although many societies no longer practice it, relationships in them used to happen, primarily, through arranged marriages.

In modern industrial societies the custom of arranging marriages is just about extinct, and people are left up to their own choices and judgements in finding someone they want to be with. The words, "We fell in love," are heard more frequently than ever, yet the relationships are so brief and/or turbulent that you can't help but wonder if love ever really existed. How is it possible for two people to fall in love and then become estranged from each other so quickly? Even in relationships where marriages remain legally in tact for years, the feelings and expressions of love may have long been gone. Is love truly such a short lived, wavering, and unstable phenomenon? Not if it is love by choice instead of chance.

Love by chance, what we generally describe as *falling in love*, is not really love at all. It is a *romantically attractive, overwhelming infatuation* that people indiscriminately abandon themselves to with the illusion of endlessly perpetuating. But like all other illusions it too must eventually dissolve when challenged by the penetrating forces of reality. The first of which is that romantic infatuation doesn't last very long. Secondly, they are *two* personalities with individual preferences and values. Thirdly, one or both of them may be too egoistic, caught up in his (or her) own needs, rights, expectations, wishes, and demands; too insensitive or indifferent to the other's. This is where the truth is found. It was never love, but the attraction of one to the other because of the possibility of fulfilling a selfish need. Of course this part of it is not consciously experienced as such, for they are both convinced

through the illusion, at first, that they do love each other.

The concept of *falling* implies instability and irresponsibleness. And it is true that they can't mutually agree to be spiritually committed to the responsibility of nurturing a loving relationship, of learning to really communicate with, understand, know, and respect each other. In this regard it shows that at least one, if not both of them, is incapable of really loving, because they aren't accepting or understanding enough of themselves. And since they have come together through a *happy go lucky*, uninformed method of choosing a partner they've never *consciously* accepted any real obligation to, or responsibility for working to *build a relationship*. It's no wonder, then, that when the time to really give of one's deeper self, to accept differences with understanding, to see the partner as autonomous, and to emotionally compromise arises – someone is suddenly *falling out* of love.

There is, in modern society, too widespread a tendency for people to underestimate the great, tragic personal and social consequences of not loving themselves enough. If we do not love ourselves then we are *alienated* from our true *potential* to love others. Without self-love we will always *need* others to do for us what we have not done for ourselves, e.g., to affirm that we are acceptable, attractive, intelligent, to give us the feeling that we have meaning, etc. This need will be an endless driving force as well as an endless frustration of our desire to be happy, for others can't give us what we don't embrace as true within ourselves, or secretly feel that we are unworthy of.

What you would give to another if you imagined you really loved them, give that to yourself. The forgiveness, understanding, sympathy, compassion and encouragement. Have faith in yourself as you would have in them, and it will nurture the core of your being. It is in this way that we empower ourselves with the ability to choose to love.

The Choice Of Love

When love is by choice it is a free and willing commitment to the process of ıotional and spiritual evolution between you and your partner. It isn't a fragile branch of man emotion, wagging ever which way and easily broken by the gusty winds of life. When ve is by choice instead of chance it's like a tree... firmly planted in the desire of a man's d woman's heart. It grows *stronger* with time, while so much of the world around it ;integrates and then gives way to other things.

True love *is* an enduring phenomenon that begins with two people understanding that :y *can* love each other out of want, not unconscious need. With this understanding they ve an opportunity to accept or reject a mutual interest in loving each other. If they *choose* love each other then they are consciously accepting an obligation and responsibility to :et certain expectations in the relationship, (shown later). In this case love is – :taphorically speaking – a child born between them, and they feel honored to embrace and rture that child (love) for the duration of their lives if possible.

It is true that genuine love can fade over time, but never quickly. It's also true that nantically attractive, overwhelming infatuation can develop into love by choice. But it is a dom occurrence, as the divorce rate and irreconcilable conflict in relationships attest to.

When people enter into love by choice they are mindful that the partner has his (or :r) own personality, values, interest, etc. It is with the understanding that human beings are ɔt just individuals, but also want to be connected to someone, understood by someone, ıiritually embraced by someone. It is with the desire that, in the brightest and/or darkest ɔur of life, someone who cares more than anyone else will be there. Genuine love never ·ojects it's own end. The type of *spirituality* mentioned above is the wholehearted, self-nbracing expression of one's deepest human qualities: understanding, sympathy, justice, :ceptance, human equality, empathy, and the willingness to console others without being ɔndescending or expecting reward.

The Pretense Of Love

The *pretense* of love is usually a tactic used by one or both partners in pursuit of fulfilling a compulsive, hidden need. It is a pretense because he (or she) is incapable of loving, so must induce (artificial) feelings of love in order to justify feeling entitled to certain things from the partner. The pretense of love may be conscious or unconscious, but it is always aimed at fulfilling selfish needs. It is the selfish hidden needs that distort the meaning of love and underly unreasonable expectations in the relationship. I'm speaking here of unconscious pretenses. Not those where someone pretends to be in love for money, etc.

Here, the person pretends to be in love because the troubled relationship with his (herself), ranging from a fear of rejection to an extreme self-hatred, doesn't allow the person to genuinely give or accept love. It is a pretense of necessity because it's a natural human desire to want to be in a relationship where feelings of love, acceptance, and appreciation are believed to be mutual.

Below, I will show a number of expectations that you should have in a loving relationship:

* * *

When love is really love, (and I will venture to say that there's no such thing a unhealthy, selfish, possessive love), then you should expect:

1. To be accepted as a *free-minded* partner and unique individual with your own wants needs, and feelings that deserve to be acknowledged and respected.
2. You should expect your mate to be sensitive toward you. Willing to express his (her true feelings and emotional desires, and willing to listen to your's.
3. You should expect patience in the search for understanding, and a willingness to fairly resolve any misunderstandings or differences that may arise.

4. You should expect encouragement when life's challenges show that you need it. Help and support when necessary or when you make reasonable request.
5. When your choices, decisions, and actions do or can cause unnecessary harm to you or your partner you should expect *sensitive* correction and *constructive* criticism.
6. You should expect time together, time spent alone, and time spent with others to not be mutually exclusive, but balanced and fulfilling. And you should expect each other to share stories about these experiences.
7. You should expect to be trusted instead of doubted, etc.
8. You should expect honesty without attempts to get by with excuses or half truths.
9. You should expect a monogamous sexual relationship that doesn't stray from *fidelity*. Love by choice instead of chance is responsible and doesn't give in to temptation. It is principled and views *infidelity* as an unpardonable *dishonor* to one's self, one's partner, and the spirit of the relationship.
10. You should expect sporadic, intense romance, because genuine love sporadically arouses overwhelming feelings of appreciation for the person you find contentment with.
11. You should expect sexuality to be an extension of psychological and emotional intimacy that doesn't lose its desirability, as opposed to sexuality being a *substitute* for intimacy.
12. You should expect your mate to understand that material gifts can be a way to show affection, but are not and can not take the place of genuine affection through socializing.
13. You should expect the relationship to give you a sense of contentment and to be fulfilling, as opposed to being an interpersonal or intrapsychic strain on either of you.
14. You should expect your partner to expect these things from you, and be desirous and freely willing to give of yourself.

15. You should expect the social and, where possible, economic responsibilities of the relationship to be fairly shared.

In each relationship some of the *expectations* may usually be fulfilled, others may not. Can you imagine a relationship where most of them aren't fulfilled, but people still claim to be in love? They exist. And it only goes to show how confused people are about the difference between love and a compelling need for affection. That all human beings need love can't be disputed. That part of spirituality is the self-fulfilling desire to love others is not disputed. But what keeps a person in a relationship that truly is *not* loving and is destructive to their best interest emotionally, psychologically, physically, economically, socially, and/or numerous other ways? For this answer we have to look at the condition of the *primary relationship*. The primary relationship is the one that we have with ourself. If it is not adequately nurtured, then our souls will forever beckon for the genuine fulfillment of its natural longings. The longing to be self-accepting, loved, confident, meaningful to others because they appreciate who we are, and the longing to be happy, to name a few.

It's possible that bad relationships and experiences in our youth can convince us unconsciously, that we will never fulfill these longings. In this condition we develop compelling needs to compensate for what we lack. An insatiable need for affection compensates for love, pride compensates for confidence, sex compensates for human closeness. The list goes on.

What's important in a relationship is for us to use the opportunity for emotional and spiritual evolution. To work toward understanding, accepting, and trying to fulfill our natural longings in a *genuine* way, instead of trying to keep repressed the *irrational*, unconscious fears that we can't genuinely fulfill them. It's also important that if we recognize these fears in our mates that we try to point them out and build the confidence that the two of you can work through them together.

To love by choice instead of chance is to love with meaning and purpose. It is to understand that nothing in human relations is perfect except our *potential* for improvement wherever it is needed. It is not having the expectation that love will be a solution to everything, but the wisdom and willingness to *act on love* as we desire it to act on us. You can't give your companion self love, but you can give him (or her) the *key to understanding* and the *encouragement* that will allow the person to realize that they can give it to themselves.

In any relationship that claims to be serious, another human being can only love you to the extent that they have developed the capacity to love themselves. Otherwise you will be more of a means to an end and the relationship will quickly fade or develop destructive emotional conflicts. Such a beginning can be transformed into love by choice if the two of you are willing to embrace the process of emotional-spiritual evolution. You should examine the existing qualities, values, wants and needs of a person in comparison and relation to yourself before you enter into a relationship. If the person can't help you grow emotionally and spiritually, then why commit yourself to the whims of passion. To do so, really, isn't a commitment at all, it is a fall from wisdom, unless at some point thereafter you consciously commit yourself to loving that person with all your heart and mind.

- TWO -

Some people may get the idea that loving by *choice* and having absolute expectations deprives a relationship of spontaneity, mystery, surprise, and freedom, but this isn't the case. When love is by choice it is no different than any other conscious choices people make in life and then learn to value. It isn't deprived of spontaneity because the way each individual

experiences human interaction is different. The way each person experiences the 15 basic expectations is going to have different levels of intensity and emotion. Every personality has its own mystery and surprise, its own *unique* characteristics.

Imagine choosing to love as analogous to a sports superstar having chosen to play his particular sport. The superstar didn't start the sport with a passionate love for it, but with a sense of what the sport was about and an interest in learning more about it through practice (experience). The person had to honor certain practices and disciplines to develop a successful relationship with the sport. The more devoted the effort and commitment applied in playing the sport, then the more passionate the person become in his/her relationship with it. That passion *developed* into a positive, enduring relationship, and although the rules of the sport were always the same each game was different from the one before it. In this same way love by choice with clear expectations is not going to create a rigid, mechanical, unspontaneous relationship. Each individual in the relationship is still free to be who they are, to express themselves the way they uniquely do in their own sense of time and space.

The act of *choosing* instead of just *falling* is merely an act of being conscious of the difference between reality and illusion. It is being responsible, reasonable, and understanding. The act of choosing doesn't deny the experience of romanticism, nor does it obstruct the feeling of a spiritual connection.

Imagine the millions of people in society who are single and lonely because they have never chosen to love. And why have they not chosen? Because they are of the belief that they can only experience love if they romantically fall into it with someone with whom they are infatuated. They believe that loving relationships only begin with fire, passion. They may not acknowledge this consciously, but unconsciously they harbor the belief. It hardly occurs to this type that he/she could meet someone, gradually take an interest in the person, seek to understand the person through communication and association, then grow to love as the result of each person consciously choosing to share that interest.

Imagine the millions of people who pass or are around each other every day, yet, because they don't initially feel a romantically attractive, overwhelming infatuation, never imagine that they could learn to love each other in a genuine way. These are millions of people who could be in relationships but aren't, and its all because of what they feel and believe about the concept of love.

The Expectations:

I

To be accepted as a *free-minded* partner and unique individual with your own wants, needs, and feelings that deserve to be acknowledged and respected.

Although it's obvious that each of us has a history of personal development and experiences that have given us certain beliefs, values, likes, and dislikes, sometimes when we enter into relationships other people act insensitive to this simple fact. Some people see the world and other human beings as if they were clay needing to be molded into whatever shape or form they want or need. To this type of person you may always be the object of negative criticism because you don't meet their standards of perfection or reflect *their* ideal qualities in a mate, it doesn't matter what you feel is ideal for yourself.

If a person's selfishly demanding of you to be how and what they expect then to them your personal wants, needs, and feelings are a constant cause of conflict. You aren't perceived as a free-minded person to be communicated with, understood, and compromised

with. You are someone that needs to be changed and/or controlled to their liking.

In a genuinely healthy and loving relationship, when differences arise they are dealt with through *constructive* acceptance, compromise, or adjustment. Conflicts and differences should seldom if ever give rise to what are often called irreconcilable differences. Differences are irreconcilable only when one or both people are fixed on being unreasonable, irrational, or neurotically demanding. Human nature is flexible.

Constructive acceptance is the act, first and foremost, of acknowledging that your partner's differences are not a challenge to the meaning and value of who you are. It is looking for ways in which the differences between you can compliment each other's personality, (or that of the children if any exist). It is appreciating your partner's acceptance of you by expressing a mutual acceptance of his or her personal freedom. You can't constructively accept something if you say you accept it, but your actions exhibit a dissociation from that particular interest of your partner. Whether active or passive rejection is still rejection and it will have a dampening effect on the emotional intimacy and spirituality in the relationship.

Constructive compromise is acknowledging that people don't have to think the same to be compatible. It is understanding that compromise is a moral responsibility not a mutual license to act as though limits and reasonable boundaries don't exist. It's accepting things to a reasonable degree that you would generally be totally against. As the reader you'll have to imagine the many possibilities of things that this could be. Once again, if the compromise has lingering negative feelings or hidden attitudes it isn't constructive.

Constructive adjustment obviously involves making some changes within yourself whether minor or major because you acknowledge that the relationship is bigger than its parts. You may learn that some value or interest that your partner has that you think you don't like could be enjoyable to you once you engage yourself. Don't be someone unwilling to expand beyond your normal activities. Constructive adjustment is the openness to become a

part of, instead of blindly maintaining an attitude against. It's an adjustment that links intimacy across bridges within the boundaries of self-respect.

II

You should expect your mate to be sensitive towards you. Willing to express his (her) true feelings and emotional desires, and willing to listen to your's.

Who wants to be in a relationship that has no emotional sensitivity? A relationship where your feelings don't matter? Or at least that's how you feel, or your partner acts.

A man and woman who have a concept of genuine love *should* be able to truthfully express their feelings toward each other and experience their emotions without any cramping anxiety of being hurt or rejected.

If you're in love, then you should want your mate to believe he/she is welcome to express his/her feelings to you, and you should expect him/her to be willing to listen to your's. Both of you should be open-minded, sensitive toward each other, and willing to place emphasis on understanding. Is this a command to be perfect? No. It's an ideal to be spiritually strived for as the approximation of your ability to love.

There are a lot of relationships where love doesn't exist, but people remain together because other needs are being fulfilled to varying degrees. These needs could be few or many of several types, e.g., financial needs, control needs, prestige value, secondary affection needs, on and on. Surprising, though it may be, there are even people who need to submit themselves.

In any relationship where one or both people are primarily interested in need fulfilment as opposed to fulfilling a genuine desire for *love* there's going to be a deprivation of honest communication and emotionalism. Such relationships are invariably founded upon *pretense*, whether consciously or unconsciously, or began as love by chance and never evolved beyond that irresponsible status.

People in relationships that are supposed to be intimate need to know their feelings are cared about. They need to feel secure in expressing themselves honestly, and they need to know that they're being listened to and someone's trying to understand. They also need to experience the feeling that their partner is willing to express him or herself honestly.

You should expect patience in the search for understanding, and a willingness to fairly resolve any misunderstanding or differences that may arise.

In any healthy relationship it's reasonable for a person to expect to be understood, and to expect conflicting differences to be patiently examined. Something is wrong if one or the other person has an overbearing sense of self-righteousness and, instead of seeking a considerate resolution of conflicts, demands that the partner abandon whatever position he or she has. To openly listen to each other's feelings and to reach a mutual understanding that allows things to be constructively resolved is fairness. It's also a means of becoming more emotionally intimate in a way that opens the door to a spiritual connection.

Sometimes its much more difficult for people to accept a need to change old habits patterns, and ways of thinking than it is for them to actually change once they have accepted the need to. It's in this regard that patience should be mutually acknowledged as necessary Patience also gives you time to think about what *is* fair, and to become more comfortable with the choice or choices being made together.

IV

You should expect encouragement when life's challenges show that you need it. Help ıd support when necessary or when you make reasonable request.

To love is to nurture, therefore, when you know your mate needs an encouraging ɔost you offer it in whatever endeavor he or she faces. It's not necessary that you wait to ːar your partner say: *Push me. I can't seem to pull myself any further right now, so I feel ːe letting go.*

It's not loving for you to watch him or her become defeated by doubt or the under ⁄aluation of themselves when you, while standing on the sideline, know that your partner ɜs the inner qualities to accomplish, and you believe that a little nudge or a few encouraging ·ords will make a world of difference. There are so many people who could have ːcomplished so much more with their minds and lives if only someone had taken a little me to encourage them, or to help and support them.

I read in a writer's magazine that Stephen King's bestseller *Carrie* was thrown in the ash by him when he originally wrote it as a short story. His wife happened to see it and ulled it out. After reading it she felt it was a good story so she encouraged him to resume ɹd turn it into a novel. As we all know now, it became a bestselling book and a movie. But ːt us consider. It was a story Stephen King lost faith in and discarded in the kitchen trash. uppose his wife had simply breezed through the pages and thought, *Stephen's throwing a ood story away*, then dropped it back into the trash herself? That's what most people would ave done. But she chose to help her husband redeem his faith in *Carrie*, and encouraged him ɔ make it an even longer story.

The point is that a little encouragement often makes the difference between phenomenal success and frustrated quitting. There will be times when your partner needs encouragement and support. Be open enough to be there whether it's requested or not, and nurture your partner's dreams, even when he or she may have prematurely lost faith. Remember *Carrie.*

V

When your choices, decisions, and actions do or can cause unnecessary harm to you or your partner you should expect sensitive correction and constructive criticism.

None of us are perfect or omniscient so it's a fundamental flaw in expectations and standards to think that our partner shouldn't make less than perfect choices, decisions, or have less than perfect behavior. To be human is to be fallible. It is to be, in reality, a lifelong student of life.

In a relationship you should not expect to be insensitively criticized, ridiculed, or browbeat because you make a bad choice, or occasionally don't act as intelligently as you're capable of. There are so many people who give others no room for error that relationships can sometimes feel like straight jackets. Relationships are not principally about living up to the standards of perfection that others have, but discovering in communion *with* others the standards you can mutually agree on to create and sustain equal respect and harmony.

A person that loves you is not going to want to emotionally abuse you for any reason. You may sometimes be forced to face growing pains, but never will a malicious intent be involved that simply arises from the partner's *neurotic* need to be sadistic.

What you must learn to do is to distinguish the difference between vindictive and constructive criticism in a relationship.

Vindictive criticism is intended to hurt you emotionally for not living up to your ıartner's demands and standards. They may even be demands and standards never discussed etween you. Standards of perfection being aimed at others are often unconscious, because 're know in our conscious minds that such standards are irrational. Vindictive criticism is nly for paying you back for such things as insulting the partner's *pride* in perfection. In such relationship you are actually only perceived as an extension of him or her, therefore must be nade in their image, or criticized for being anything different.

Constructive criticism, in short, points out weaknesses and strengths and encourages :hange or progress. It is mindful and sensitive, allowing you to feel capable of building up, as)pposed to feeling as though you're being torn down.

VI

You should expect time together, time spent alone, and time spent with others to not be mutually exclusive, but balanced and fulfilling. And you should expect each other to share stories about these experiences.

Socializing is a multifaceted thing in human relations and like in all other areas of life some degree of balance needs to exist. Spending time together is ideal in any relationship, but it should not exclude other forms of human interaction such as spending time with friends and family.

A possessive partner will tend to try to exclude other people from your life, but you should be independent enough in your thinking to pursue a balance in all relations that is healthy for you, and free from artificial restrictions.

• There's a widespread tendency among men in society to be imbalanced in the sense of excluding their wives or girlfriends from their social lives. They seem to harbor the unexpressed philosophy that the woman's responsibility is to accept the part of the bacon that they bring home and be there when they are needed, primarily to fulfill sexual urges. This is a traditional pattern in many societies where women are virtually considered assets, but in a *gender equality* culture it's viewed as reactionary, as a socializing deficiency that needs to be outgrown or healed.

We can probably not begin to count the number of relationships where women committed infidelity because they were emotionally deprived in a relationship. The man may protest, *I gave you everything. How could you do this to me?* And the typical response is that he wasn't there. Some other man gave her what she *really* needed: *Social interaction, time, and affection.* Those basic essentials that give *substance* to the idea of being loved. Spending time with each other is part of a fulfilling tripod that shouldn't be neglected.

And then we come to the self-embracing need for spending time alone. Yes. Being able and willing to spend time alone is as important as the other two points. We *need* to be alone sometimes to reflect on who we are *with* others. To try to see where our emotional connections really are. We also need to be alone sometimes for self-discovery, to idle ourselves whether in a moving or motionless meditation to look at the world within us and around us.

In any healthy relationship you should expect balance to be respected, and that none of these areas dominates to the exclusion of the other two.

VII

You should expect to be trusted instead of doubted.

To trust someone simply means one thing: to *believe* in their loyalty and integrity toward you. It is very difficult to think that genuine love can exist without trust. But since we can't define love in *absolute* terms some aspects of it can only be understood by looking at subjective relations. What we assume here is that *everyone* values being trusted in any relationship that's supposed to be meaningful, and that being aware of not being trusted disturbs the well-being of a relationship.

Since love is supposed to be a constructive, positive force you should expect to be trusted instead of doubted, especially if you know the doubts are unfounded.

Love must have *living substance* to be meaningful, and knowing and feeling that someone believes in your loyalty and integrity toward them is soul-nurturing.

VIII

You should expect honesty without attempts to get by with excuses or half truths.

The more capable we are of being honest with ourselves, the more honest we are to others. In a sense this is a complimentary dynamic. We have to be able to accept our own faults and weaknesses before we are truly strong enough to accept the vulnerability of exposing them to others. (There may be exceptions, as in all cases, but here we deal with the rule).

What underlies a tendency to make excuses is some *irrational need* to avoid seeing the truth about our actions or motives. What underlies the tendency to always try to get by is the unwillingness to accept responsibility for our own lives.

If we're in a relationship that we and our partner simply fell into, never having accepted any conscious responsibility toward each other before or after the fall, then it shouldn't be hard for one or the other person to see why cheating is often excused as something that just happened. No one thought it beforehand. They just fell in bed with someone else behind their partner's back. Of course, afterwards they took responsibility for discovering ways to keep it hidden. Or they tried getting by with excuses or finding fault in the partner they were supposed to be loyal to.

In any relationship where honesty is supposed to be valued, intentionally telling a half truth is equal to telling a lie. A half truth is an attempt to get by.

Being responsible is enabling yourself to tell and accept the truth, even if you have to let someone know it's hard for you to do.

Without honesty there can be no real growth or bonding in a relationship. What will exist is the pretense of being close and open.

IX

You should expect a monogamous sexual relationship that doesn't stray from fidelity. Love by choice instead of chance is responsible and doesn't give in to temptation. It is principled and views infidelity as an unpardonable dishonor to one's self, one's partner, and the spirit of the relationship.

It has already been said that people live together, marry, and even *stay* in relationships for a lot of reasons other than love. Many people may say I'm wrong, but I sincerely believe that real love leaves no room for *surrender* to temptation. If we are *genuinely* in love with a person, then we must also be spiritually proud of the relationship. Proud of our partner for loving us and proud of ourselves for being *able* to love them. It's not an arrogant, egotistic pride, but one imbued with gratefulness. The honor one must feel to be in such a loving

elationship has to give him or her a sense of responsibility toward keeping it healthy and oyal.

A love that can't deter a man or woman from being adulterous is a love without *ubstance.* It cannot be a *living* love, and therefore cannot be genuine in the sense that we hould view love and place realistic expectations on it.

What people need within themselves and what a couple need from each other exist vithin all of our emotional, social, and spiritual essence. All we have to do in relation to ourselves and our partner is be committed to the spiritual work to bring our potential to ruition. Where there is love we do not need to go outside of a monogamous relationship if ve have been mindful of emotional and spiritual evolution.

To love by choice is to be consciously committed to the responsibility and principles of that love. It is to *always* honor the belief and trust you want your partner to have in you.

X

You should expect sporadic, intense romance, because genuine love sporadically arouses overwhelming feelings of appreciation for the person you find contentment with.

I think we are well aware that many if not actually most relationships begin with a bombardment of romantic expressions. But this phase is usually illusive and short lived. It isn't long, whether it be 6 months or 18 months after a commitment has been made, that someone is wondering why and where the romance went. What is really worth wondering about is how, after so many generations of disappointment, so many people still expect *romantic-initiations* to be a sustained high, a shot of emotional ecstasy that won't wear off.

Romantic-initiation at the beginning of a relationship is usually the artificially heightened expression of affection. It is more *tactical* than actual affection. Tactical because it is, in essense, a means to an end not a genuine expression of appreciation for who you are. That end is getting you to exclude all other possibilities and commit yourself to this sole relationship as girlfriend or wife, boyfriend or husband. The tactical-romance is the *pretense* of being able to be affectionate when, in reality, the person may be afraid if not incapable of being affectionate. In order to truly be affectionate we also have to open up to our own tender feelings, and many people are not ready to accept *vulnerability.*

In a relationship where genuine affection exists, romance is a *recurring* expression of appreciation for who you are and what you mean to your partner. It is not a tactical means that disappears when the end is achieved. Romance should never disappear from a relationship where two people are capable of *showing* love to each other. It should have sporadic recurrences that bubble up from someone who's periodically overwhelmed by feelings of appreciation for being with you.

If your partner has difficulty being romantic and showing affection then you can suggest that it be worked on between the two of you. Even conditioned tendencies to fear affection can be outgrown. One of the main points is that, in your wish for affection and romance from someone else, be honest about whether or not you're capable of giving it and of really having positive feelings toward that person yourself.

Being content with your partner doesn't mean you're in absolute harmony. It means that the two of you have a basic confidence in each other, that you can grow with each other in peace and through the frictions of life, and that each of your needs are satisfied through mutual expression of love and affection. This is your enduring romance if you see it through the eyes of your soul instead of through the lens of a *Hollywood* camera.

XI

You should expect sexuality to be an extension of psychological and emotional intimacy that doesn't lose its desirability, as opposed to sexuality being a substitute for intimacy.

Sexuality is an important part of relationships, but in many it is too significant for the wrong reasons; for example, as a compensation for the lack of social interaction, or a *substitute* for intimacy. In many relationships one or both partners doesn't have adequately developed communication skills. This lends to a diminished capacity to experience emotional intimacy. In such relations sex takes the place of communication as a symbolic gesture of *"I want to be close to you, and for us to feel good together."* The problem is that sex in this capacity doesn't act as an expression of emotional intimacy, therefore can't deepen a spiritual connection because spirituality evolves out of higher emotional development. The more we are hung up on debilitating and neurotic emotions the less spiritually connected we are to others and the world around us.

In many relationships sex is unconsciously used as a *sublimation* for the release of emotional frustrations built up from a lack of affection. A relationship based on love by chance may begin with frequent, passionate sexual encounters. But then it subsides and becomes less frequent until, in some cases, it is only engaged in as a release of *affection-deficit frustrations.* The person who uses sex in this way may never be capable of obtaining real affection because of his or her insecurities. Isn't it a tragic dilemma that we can fear a thing that is so essential to our sense of emotional well-being?

The *point* is that you should expect affection to be expressed toward you in more ways than sexual, for even sex isn't necessarily an expression of affection if it is simply a release of your partner's frustrations.

To love by choice is to love with awareness. Being aware of your partner's needs as well as yours. And being aware of the need to discuss or change one or the other's feelings and responses to needs if they aren't being met. Don't accept or allow sex to function as a substitute for mental and emotional intimacy.

XII

You should expect your mate to understand that material gifts can be a way to show affection, but are not and can not take the place of genuine affection through socializing.

Once again you have to be aware of when your partner (or maybe even yourself) is avoiding social affection and substituting it with material things. The occasional gift, but never the candlelight dinner, or movie, or walk in the park. This is the same situation as in number XI, only differing. Your responsibility to the relationship is no less important though. You have to be able to offer what your partner needs and to ask for what you need. Always patiently challenge conditions that harm the emotional-spiritual evolution of the relationship.

XIII

You should expect the relationship to give you a sense of contentment and to be fulfilling, as opposed to being an interpersonal or intrapsychic strain on either of you.

The experience of watching yourself grow closer to another human being in friction as well as peace is uplifting to the soul, and in no way takes away from your ability to feel content. You should expect to have a sense of contentment and fulfillment if you're in a loving relationship.

Constant interpersonal conflicts and mental strains within yourself are a sign that emotional reasoning is not operating as it should.

You have to take *responsibility* once again for determining whether or not you and your partner are capable of getting over the difficulties without one or the others unconstructive abandonment of self. If this isn't possible then accept the need to move on. There are a lot of people in the world who are much more compatible with you. There are already too many people in the world fixated in relationships that aren't satisfying or constructive to them.

XIV

You should expect your partner to expect things from you, and be desirous and freely willing to give of yourself.

It should not be hard to understand that everything you expect in a relationship may be expected of you. And if you feel incapable of meeting those expectations, or unwilling to, then have the courage to ask yourself why. Remember that when you love by choice you consciously accept an obligation and responsibility to be as nurturing and fulfilling to your partner as you need and expect. It is too easy for people to be oblivious to the needs of a partner if they don't enter into a relationship with a desire to give as equally as they want to be fulfilled and given to.

XV

You should expect the social and, where possible, economic responsibilities of the relationship to be fairly shared.

We are people living in a society where gender equality has considerably been approximated. Men and women aren't as relegated to gender roles as they used to be. This is not to say, however, that women in the past haven't contributed as much as men to relationships. Fair distribution of responsibility and resources in a relationship should be expected wherever possible. Each partner has to willingly embrace a responsibility toward the best interest of both.

Choosing A Partner

The desire to feel unified with someone is one of the strongest motivations in our lives. It is in the higher rankings of all *emotional-values*. Why is it then that so many people tend to be irresponsible in choosing a partner? Some people end up in relationships over and over again that are doomed before they begin. It's only a matter of time before the blinders of tactical-romance and ideal-impressionism wear off and the picture of reality looks increasingly unappealing. You think someone isn't who you thought they were, while downplaying the truth that they really aren't who you *wished* them to be. A wish so strong that you acted on it as though it was already true.

The number of people who never consciously choose a partner, but always tend to simply *drift* into relationships would probably amaze you. What influences this tendency to drift is a lack of discrimination in the search for unity.

In order to responsibly choose a partner we have to have some knowledge of who we really are and what our basic values are. Just as importantly we need to be responsible enough to find out if someone else already *has* the qualities and emotional-values we want and need to be in a partner. Entering into a relationship with the hope that someone will become your ideal mate (who is far from actually being it) is not acting wisely or responsibly. It's acting on wishes that are *equated* with reality.

Take some time to think about and write down the qualities and emotional-values in a man or woman that you know would be compatible with your own qualities and values. When you are considering a relationship be conscious of whether or not he/she is *actively* expressing these things. Why would you commit to someone, for example, who doesn't talk about the value of love and understanding and hardly expresses either of them? In fact, with few exceptions, may seem incapable of expressing them. It's good to see people first as who and what they are, and not what we want them to be. Choosing should be based on intelligence and knowledge as much as emotional-value to avoid a lack of discrimination in the search for unity. There's always time for emotionalism to become engrossing and for the spirit of love to take over... after a wise choice.



IN JUST US

The Primary Relationship

Evaluating Yourself

As stated earlier, the primary relationship is the one that we have with *ourselves*. We relate to our own selves in the same ways we relate to other people. We can be kind or cruel to ourselves, compassionate or tyrannical, patient or sadistically demanding. From the lowest to the most extreme degree accept or reject ourselves; love or hate ourselves. The primary relationship operates under the same psychic laws as all other relationships.

Before we become involved with another person in a way that may be lasting or serious we should try to first honestly evaluate how we relate to ourselves. Entering into an interpersonal relationship means three dynamics are working: (1) How we treat ourselves, (2) How we treat our partner, and (3) How our partner treats us. All three of these things effect the health and emotional-spiritual condition of our lives as they interact.

Evaluation of the primary relationship requires *responsibility* and *honesty*. We simply have to look at our lives and question the existing *reality*. Am I satisfied with how I treat myself? Do I feel like I respect myself? What is missing in the way I relate to who I am? Do the feelings and beliefs I have hold me back from achievement and happiness? We have to realize that the condition of the primary relationship is what significantly adds to and/or takes away from our ability to enjoy all other relationships before anything else effects us. Because of this it is *essential* that we work at making the primary relationship a loving one so that we can be more responsibly loving in other relationships, as well as toward ourselves. They are always interrelated, each effecting the condition of the other. The less loving you are toward yourself in the primary relationship, then the less you'll expect others to love you or treat you lovingly.

If you leave the primary relationship up to *chance* then your life is over influenced by beliefs and emotional conditions that have irrational control over you. By *choosing* to be responsible for the primary relationship you have the power to change yourself and to change

how other people relate to you.

From Chance To Choice:

Taking Responsibility For

The Relationship

Even love by chance has to become a love of responsible choice sooner or later if it's going to thrive, to grow, to spiritually evolve and involve a mutual, healthy emotional attachment. Many people don't understand the difference between chance and choice when it comes to how their lives are being directed. In this sense they unwittingly neglect taking a basic responsibility for relationships. Other people and external events act on them freely and they can end up spending a lot of energy just rationalizing and/or coping.

By moving from chance to choice you take responsibility and act on the world around you. You control how external conditions and others effect you. Maybe you can't always control the conditions you're subjected to, or how certain people treat you, but you can always control how you are effected by having the will and using your power to act on yourself and life. It is your choice. You don't have to be a passive object that circumstances and other people act on as they will. By taking responsibility you become the main actor and director of your life, and this gives you an opportunity to have equal creative power in relationships.

Taking responsibility for a relationship means developing an idea of what will make a relationship work with the person you're with. Becoming conscious of and active in fulfilling essential needs, and working on the emotional-spiritual evolution within yourself and between you and your partner.

- THREE -

The Concept of Self-Love

The condition of our relationship with ourselves as well as other people has a great deal to do with whether or not we love ourselves. Let's not confuse *egotism* and *narcissism* with self-love because they aren't expressions of self-love, but actually *symptoms* of a lack of self-love.

Self-love is basically the *fundamental* acceptance of ourselves as meaningful, worthy human beings, capable of loving and being loved by others. It involves the feeling of self-respect and a constructive interest in our growth and pursuit of happiness. This growth isn't meant in the sense of accumulated achievements or material wealth, because people who hate themselves can do both of these things. It is meant in the sense of deepening our appreciation of life, relationships, and the joy that both can give us in a way that nothing else will. Self-love has nothing to do with an inflated ego or an undervalue of other human beings. It doesn't involve an arrogant pride. I can't say that it's absolutely impossible to feel loved by others if we don't love ourselves, but *theoretically* many have held it to be true. I will say that *not* loving ourselves definitely makes it more difficult to love others.

In dealing with the concept of self-love we need to eliminate as much vagueness as possible. I refer to the *self* as an acronym symbolizing the words *spiritually evolving life force*. Each of us is, in a state of health, a unique spiritually evolving life force. And when we hear or say that someone has lost their self, we're actually stating that someone's spiritual freedom and evolution have been obstructed. Unfortunately for too many this obstruction of the SELF begins early in life because of unfavourable relationships that disturb our self-perception in the *primary* relationship, i.e., how we see, understand, feel about, and treat ourselves, as well as, how we relate to others and the world around us because of our self-perception.

Self-love is the product of our naturally unfolding psychic progression, but that progression, if disrupted before we are mature enough to develop rational emotional reasoning and intelligence, can obstruct the evolution of the self by distorting our perception of it. Instead of fundamentally seeing ourselves as lovable and constructive, for example, we develop the *illusion* of being unlovable and worthless. We lose sight of the true nature of the self. The self is like radiant sunlight set against a clear blue sky. Its warmth and life-embracing power can be blocked off or temporarily obstructed by clouds, but when the clouds pass over we see that the warmth and life-embracing power is still there, just as radiant and bright. In our minds the clouds that block the self are negative ideas, beliefs; destructive emotions and bad relationships. But when these things have dissipated or passed over like the clouds in the sky the warmth and life-embracing power of the SELF can be realized. The SELF, contrary to delusions (mistaken beliefs) created by negative thinking, low esteem, etc., remains as unharmed and lovable as it is at birth. The SELF is always pure and interested in constructive growth and relationships.

Understanding this reality can help us reconnect with instead of reject our SELF, because it is tragic, one of life's greatest tragedies, to be *alienated* from the spiritually evolving life force within us. Such a condition is the antithesis of self-acceptance and self-love.

THE PATH TO SELF-LOVE

If we do not *choose* to love ourselves then we chance the risk of never being able to. The path to self-love is the path away from self-denial; the path away from not accepting ourselves as much as we should to achieve genuine happiness. It begins with the acknowledgement, no matter how, when, or where, that you were born a lovable human being, and within you *is* a spiritually evolving life force. Any ideas, beliefs, thoughts, or

TO LOVE HUMANITY

How do we go from loving ourselves and our families and companions to loving humanity? Obviously, loving humanity is a different type of love than that involved in close personal relationships, so we need to develop a clear meaning of what it is to love humanity. In a sense, this is a type of love that transcends self-interest, and it must, because we cannot rationally expect humanity to love us back as a requirement for us to love it.

The truest example I can call to mind of a love for humanity is that expressed by Jesus. Now, the point is not whether you believe he was divine, God, a prophet, just a man, or someone who never existed. The point here is the message and lessons attributed to him in the bible. The message of Jesus was that we should love one another as he exhibited love, and that without loving one another we cannot know God. In essence, this is the message of most religions, but we have largely become alienated from true *essences* because of our preoccupation with superfluous features of ritual practice, or external characteristics that in and of themselves have little real meaning. In essence, all human beings are alike. We are not different species. And what does differ among us are characteristics that have evolved over thousands of years as a result of us having to adapt to different means and methods of survival. Cultures, as different as they are, do not make human beings different from each other in *essence.* In essence we all have similar human needs: social, psychological, physical, emotional, and spiritual. But even in knowing this, history has shown that we will not socially and philosophically acknowledge it and realize its meaning in practice until we do so as a conscious *choice.* The love of humanity simply will not develop as a product of *chance* encounters; *chance* living in close proximity to strangers, foreigners, other groups, etc. We must choose to be reasonably accepting instead of rejecting, kind instead of cruel, peaceful instead of conflicting and antagonistic, merciful instead of condemnatory, compassionate instead of indifferent and apathetic. We must choose to see others as ourselves and as having the same human essence as we do. In this sense, the love of humanity is the highest, most

deeply held ideal within each of us. But the current world of relations has humanity far from realizing it.

We live in a world today, and long have, where a large part of humanity remains divided and in conflict with others over economic issues, i.e., over the basic concerns of human survival on the one hand and pure greed on the other. In one place nearly entire nations of children are starving to death, while in another parents spend thousands of dollars a year providing their children with the *unwanted* excesses of material abundance. Toys that are examined once or twice in curiosity, then thrown into the back of the bedroom closet. Clothes that are never worn. So much food that the children are unwittingly eating themselves into absurd levels of obesity and poor health at younger and younger ages. In large part because of emotional hunger. What is even more disturbing about this is that most parents take more *pride* in being able to afford such waste in excess than they attempt to earn by helping a less fortunate or deprived child somewhere else in America or the world. Yes, there are millions of homeless and impoverished children in America, too, who are part of the body and limbs of humanity. Why are so many well-to-doers indifferent toward them? Why are they scorned as though they are somehow partly responsible for their deprivation and poverty? How many parents, wealthy beyond the measure of even future needs, have reached out in *compassion* to provide a poor child with new clothes for the school year? It is essential that in *choosing* to love humanity we think of compassionate ways to embrace it. Without an increased expression of social love and compassion toward children, we become a society more and more condemned by the development of an increasing number of indifferent, callous, and insensitive personalities. Society as a whole must see itself as responsible for all of America's children, and it must work toward the development of an *ethos* of love and compassion toward the little ones. Choose to love a child that you know is not being loved. We live in a time where we need to realize more than ever that the problem in the house next door can eventually become the nightmare of countless other people. And we as a society have witnessed this over and over again. Choosing to love humanity must begin with the

children around us; the loving and compassionate nurturing of their uncorrupted minds, before they become encrusted with resentment, anger, hatred, and indifference and insensitivity toward all others in society.

The Qualities of Humanism

Humanism is the observation and study of human affairs in order to positively promote the general well-being of individuals and society. Many people have probably only heard the word humanism in combination with the word secular, creating the term secular-humanism, meaning a humanism without concern for God or religion as its origin. So we qualify the term humanism here by calling it secular or theistic. Theistic-Humanism is believed to be derived from the will of God or religious tenets. However, in regard to worldly affairs they both have the same goal. That is to increase the good qualities of expression in individuals and society and to decrease all forms of human deprivation and suffering. This can only be accomplished through the belief in love, peace, freedom, justice, and equality, and a social or religious practice that corresponds to this belief. For beliefs without a corresponding practice are not beliefs at all, but moreso self-serving pretenses to mitigate the guilt and shame of one's conscience. Thomas Jefferson wrote that *all men are created equal and endowed with inaliable rights,* but did his exercise of presidential power correspond to those words? He also called slavery wrong and an immoral institution that he didn't believe in in principle, yet he owned over a hundred slaves throughout his lifetime and never introduced one piece of legislation to end the practice. What good are beliefs and principles if our actions completely contradict them? Is a battered woman to believe her boyfriend or husband genuinely loves her just because he *says* he does, or in some twisted logic believes he does in theory and principle?

You can contradict everything you claim to believe and stand for and still be the president. You can violate the spirit of genuine love and still be a boyfriend or husband. But

you cannot practice the opposite of secular or theistic humanism and still call yourself a humanist. In this arena your practice must have a thorough-going correspondence to the principles of humanism, and this involves mercy, compassion, and a reasonable acceptance of forgiveness in order for your humanism to have living substance. By *living* I mean a substance that flows in and through relationships as opposed to merely being a potential. Through embracing and practicing the qualities of mercy, compassion, and forgiveness we are better able to *realize* love, peace, freedom, justice, and equality – those developments that characterize a humane society and transcend the status of a society that is merely civilized. Humanization influences constructive moral, political, religious, social convictions and concern for the collective fulfillment of human needs. Unlike civilization, per se, it does not seek to stratify people by creating and sustaining artificial differences. The humanization of people generates a social compassion, empathy, morality, and identification with other human beings that transcends ethnic, cultural, and national prejudices. The true secular or theistic humanist cannot be influenced or indoctrinated to see the lives of others as less valuable than his or her own. Caring for the welfare of other human beings is an essential characteristic of both types of humanist thinking, philosophy, and practice.

Humanist Mercy, Compassion, and Forgiveness

In order to have mercy on another human being you must first have some power over that person to inflict a punishment or cruelty. We know that all parents have power over their children, so I will use the parent-child relationship to make my point. Not only does mercy imply the alternative power to inflict harm, but it also implies in its application that some wrong has been committed to elicit it. Many children do things that require punishment and/or correction. Some parents are lenient, others are cruelly authoritarian and have no mercy on their children. Their manner of responding to behavioral problems simply comes across as: "You will obey, or suffer my wrath!" On the other hand the parents who are lenient

have more empathy and therefore are less apt to try to intimidate their child with authority. But the child may not learn, change, or grow from their leniency because it lacks an essential element, which distinguishes it from humanist mercy. That essential element is a forgiving moral command, as Jesus said to the adulterous woman: "Go, and sin no more."

Judges have mercy in courtrooms all across America every day by giving defendants much less than the maximum sentences. But how many judges in addition command a defendant: "Go, and learn to never rob, steal, or kill again. Learn to love your neighbors while you serve your lenient sentence."(?)

Without forgiving moral commands the intent of mercy is undermined. Humanist mercy rests on the idea that the child acknowledges its wrong and after receiving moral correction and command, will not repeat the wrong. It is not enough *just* to have mercy. Suppose Jesus had only told the woman: "Go." Would it have implied to her that her worst wrong was getting caught? Humanist mercy is an educational mercy. It teaches that no human being is perfect, but we all can do better and be more morally responsible. It also teaches that we need not bear the burden of a debilitating shame.

A parent practicing humanist mercy doesn't simply punish a child for misbehavior, but educates and corrects the child as well through moral guidance and commands. The parent doesn't stand over the child in self-righteous arrogance, but humbles him or herself to relate to the child's need. Tell the child about some mistakes you made at their age, what you thought about how you were dealt with, and how you forgave yourself and moved forward without doing the same thing again. Tell the child you have mercy because you believe in them, and that nobody is always perfect. Then try these words: "Go, and don't do that again." Maybe you'd like to wag a finger, "And I mean it," before a hug. Humanism doesn't leave correction up to chance. It has to play some role in clarifying and morally commanding with forgiveness. It is often our lack of forgiveness that influences a person to perpetuate self-condemnation and all negative feelings subsequent to it.

Mercy, last but not least, also shows that we are aware of and willing to morally

acknowledge human frailty, and also willing to give that frailty a chance to be overcome. It was implicit in Jesus' mercy that he understood human frailty, and that he felt mercy and forgiveness were necessary along with instruction, guidance, and moral commands to uplift and humanize the soul. If all offenders continued to die for breaking the laws of Moses, then what chance would men and women have to learn the nature of mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and *redemption?* In the history of religion, Jesus came with the message that God is a Spirit of mercy, forgiveness, and love. And, therefore, God can only be truly worshiped if we are merciful, forgiving, and loving toward each other. He taught that the uncompassionate execution of the Law became an obstacle to the experience of God's love, and the humanization of society. It is with this awareness that we must all understand and learn to spiritually embrace humanity. (We are not dealing here with the extremes that may come to mind.)

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Compassion. To be compassionate is to perceive and acknowledge the suffering of others, even when they don't express it, and to try to ease their suffering, even when there's no personal reward in it.

Compassion is a spiritual emotion that draws us out of our unconscious egoism and allows us to feel oneness with the *human-being* of others. It is spiritual because it helps us to see ourselves in others beyond that of mere empathy, and it also helps us to see others in ourselves. These are transcendent experiences because they withstand the opposing tugs of cultural differences, prejudices, and even personal complexes. No emotion beside love is more transforming and humanizing than compassion. And for many, compassion even feels more intense than love. I venture to say that compassion is sympathy in motion. Sympathy being acted upon. When you are watching a show like Oprah, for example, and you begin to cry or feel pity while listening to the stories of how women are being abused and battered in other countries with no recourse for protection or retribution, you are being sympathetic. When you act on that sympathy by going to a country to help instill dignity in the women, or to educate them to human rights issues and the evils of patriarchal sexism, or when you send

money to organizations that exist to help these women, you are being compassionate. Sympathy is an identifying emotion; compassion is an act inspiring one. You contribute to the improvement of peace, justice, equality, and general uplifting of other human beings.

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Forgiveness. Forgiveness is a powerful expression. It can have a truly liberating and life altering effect on the offended person as well as the offender. As written earlier, it is often our lack of forgiveness that influences a person to perpetuate self-condemnation and all the negative feelings subsequent to it.

When people do not forgive it is because they refuse to let go of a need to administer retribution, or to receive a healing that the offender may not be able to render in some form of compensation. (Once again we are not dealing with extremes, but the typical occurrences in relationships.)

When a person knows that he or she is not forgiven, and harbors a genuine remorse, then the lack of forgiveness is experienced as not only a loss of intimacy previously valued, but also the deprival of a potential for intimacy in the present and future. And if it is someone who is supposed to be a friend or relative it is even worse, because not being forgiven means that the offender may eventually become resentful as a way of shifting blame for the rift in the relationship. People hardly consider the fact that not forgiving can make the other person resentful. This is because when you allow a person to continually feel unforgiven, then you are, in a sense, always pointing a finger, even if the finger is only a product of the other person's conscience. There is something wrong, something neurotic in operation, when a person refuses to forgive when forgiving is the appropriate thing to do, and would serve in the best interest of both individuals as well as the spirit of humanity.

But resentment is only one of the negative, spiritually oppressive emotions that can arise in one or both people when there is a lack of forgiveness. We are also dealing with bitterness, shame, unproductive guilt, and maybe even a strong potential for vindictiveness, to name a few. In our egoism we seldom think of the other feelings that can arise from conflicts that are not healed or at least patched up through forgiveness.

What exactly is meant by forgiveness? This is a valid question because obvious answers aren't always adequate answers. I speak here of forgiveness in a spiritual sense. A forgiveness that *transcends* the normal social laws of cause and effect. The normal social laws of cause and effect means that wrongs and offenses consequentially produce resentment, anger, bitterness, rejection, animosity, vindictiveness, etc. However, forgiveness says: *"No.* I do not want either of us to carry the immediate effect of this incident into the future, because our relationship, our friendship, our intimacy as human beings is greater than these things that threaten to destroy them. I will not accept anger and bitterness toward you. I will not point an invisible finger and secretly hope that you live in shame. Nor will I indirectly allow it by not telling you I have forgiven. We have a relationship to value, and as long as I am convinced that you are sorry for what you did, then the past has no potential to sustain an emotional or social conflict between us."

In the spiritual sense of the word, forgiveness is life-affirming, life-nurturing. It is a hope instilling expression that rises above the primitive impulses of emotional barbarism. To be unforgiving is a death accepting expression. It is a damn that blocks the spiritual flow of emotional and psychological energy.

The love of humanity requires a constant and committed vigilance over those feelings, as well as, behaviors that would operate against the best interest of relationships. As surely as humanity has been trained to be civilized, we must train ourselves to become more consistently humanized and spiritualized in our living and treatment of fellow human-beings. Having no forgiveness is like having no salve for an open wound. It faces the vulnerability of becoming infected from several sources. As surely as in our wisdom we would not expose the body to such threats of danger, let us in our willingness to love humanity, not expose the mind and emotions either. We have the power within ourselves to override the natural laws of cause and effect in social relationships, as surely as we have overcome and conquered other expressions of nature that once overwhelmed our ancient ancestors. Let us use the power and wisdom of *choice,* instead of allowing ourselves to be misused or misuse others by the vicissitudes of chance.

feelings that disturb your acceptance of this and obstruct the freedom and expression of your true self are *irrational*, therefore alienate you from your SELF. They subject your mind and perception to the power of illusions that only undermine your connection to the SELF.

The goal of the SELF is to evolve toward contentment and happiness. This is what many have been blocked from doing because they've become alienated from the SELF. Some basic steps in the path to reconnecting (self-love) are:

1. Acknowledgement that you are a spiritually evolving life force. You can evolve within yourself and in relation to others.
2. Identify the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that obstruct your love of SELF and keep a cloud of self-defeating illusions hovering over your mental world.
3. Understand that through consistent effort and *faith* in your spiritual power you can free your mind from self-defeating emotions, beliefs, and illusions about your SELF.
4. Have the courage to challenge and stand against whatever has made you suffer, feel unhappy, and unconstructive in the past.
5. Feel within yourself that *now* is the beginning of your path toward self-love and improved relationships. Be consistent and mindful, but work patiently with yourself.
6. Understand that negative feelings and beliefs are always profoundly emotional and that's why our subconscious is so vulnerable to them in our childhood and youth. As adults we have the power to re-examine and reinterpret the past with rational intelligence, and sometimes on the path toward self-love this is necessary. We can't change the past but we can change the *effects* of the past by reinterpreting the meaning of our experiences.

* * *

You may find it necessary to *reinterpret* past experiences in order to change the way you perceive yourself and to eradicate erroneous beliefs that may have settled in your unconscious without being filtered through reasoning, logic, and intellectual discrimination.

Learning to love ourselves is a gradual process, but it begins with a commitment to accept ourselves and to be mindful of how we have judged and criticized ourselves in the past. The principle of *reinterpretation* (understanding that we can't change the past) is that by reinterpreting the meaning of past experiences we can change our beliefs at a deep emotional level and, therefore, change the *effects* of the past. Assume, for example, that your lifelong difficulty with feeling lovable began with your misinterpretation of the *meaning* of a *primary affection deficit*. A primary affection deficit is the feeling of being unloved by one or both parents because of their lack of showing affection, therefore you develop the unconscious belief as a child that you're unlovable. This belief may persist at the base of your emotional structure until you reinterpret what their lack of affection means. By understanding that it doesn't mean you're unlovable, but that (for whatever reason) *they* were unaffectionate, you dismiss a negative belief of yourself. This empowers you in other relationships to outgrow the exaggerated and sometimes indiscriminate need for affection as a pseudo-solution to the primary affection deficit. In fact, by developing a *correct awareness* through reinterpretation the primary affection deficit gradually vanishes and you no longer suffer from an irrational, unconscious need to feel loved by them. You no longer blame yourself for not receiving affection. This is only one example of how reinterpreting the past to reach a more rational and productive understanding can change how the past *effects* us. You can examine your own life in specific areas that you need to challenge damaging beliefs. There's no doubt that the better you relate to and understand yourself the more it carries over into interpersonal relationships.

To be happy in any relationship we have to first have or develop the internal condition of being happy with ourselves. We could be in a relationship with the most beautiful and loving person in the world, but if we don't love ourselves then nothing that person does can make us feel as loved as he or she would expect us to. We may find it easy to say that we know a person loves us, but actually *feeling* the deep meaning of those words may be an entirely different story. It can't be overstated that the more open we are to self-acceptance and self-love then the more capable we are of experiencing the deeper meaning of being in love with someone else.

There's a concept in Buddhism that works very well if you are mindful of using it. That is, in regard to all negative feelings and doubts about yourself, just let go.

Acknowledge your SELF. The spiritually evolving life force within you. Accept and embrace it as worthy and lovable. There's no other rational way to live with ourselves or to relate to others than as who we truly are as a spiritual force within our own lives. Free your mind from all illusions of inferiority, unworthiness, unlovableness, etc. Simply *be* the self-loving, constructive force that constitutes your true essence and desire.

CHOOSING FULFILLMENT

There are many relationships in society that are failing right now but have a true potential to succeed. What often stands in the way of progress is a lack of psychological intimacy and a failure to express one's deeper, more basic needs to the partner. It shows, for example, in a relationship where the husband may take great pride in being able to earn a large salary and provide well. That pride in earning potential becomes an emotional value that overshadows many of his other emotional sensitivities. In other words he becomes partially blind. In his focus and endeavor to earn he looses touch with his mate's emotional

values. He fails to see that giving too much in one way takes away too much in others. His mate needs and desires intimacy, to spend time together, relaxed and loving communication, she wants to be *with* him. And if she doesn't express this need to him, then her mind attempts to repress the emotions that drive the need. Sooner or later the repressed emotions urge her to find ways to compensate for her intimacy deprivation. She may begin to eat more, or maybe even shop more, both of which involve a type of *secondary intimacy* that compensates artificially for a lack of interpersonal intimacy. The problem with these two attempts to compensate for the lack of interpersonal intimacy is that they generally become compulsive habits that lock one into a pattern of self-destruction, i.e., too much eating which leads to being overweight, or too much spending which leads to excess debt.

It has to be understood that no attempt to artificially compensate for the lack of fulfilment of a basic human need is going to genuinely fulfill that need. Without genuine fulfilment it will always exist as a basic need hunger, an *emotional fulfilment deficit*. This is why developing psychological intimacy with a partner is so vital to the spiritual growth of a relationship.

Suppose the man in the example doesn't know that his wife or girlfriend feels deprived of intimacy. He can't sense it at all because he's blinded by his pride, or he may be alienated from his own ability to express intimacy due to a fear of being vulnerable. Suppose that she is too self-effacing or too self-sacrificing to tell him that she needs *him* instead of the bigger diamond or more expensive dress this time. Or maybe she knows that he is proud of taking care of her and doesn't want to hurt his pride. Both of these are an obstruction to the potential for psychological intimacy in the relationship.

Psychological intimacy develops out of the risk that we take to understand a person's true needs and motives. It is an intimacy that says, *through questioning what you may not see about yourself, I can understand your deeper needs, and I will do what I can to fulfill them with you.* The greatest part of this understanding comes through our honest knowledge and understanding of our own basic needs and our efforts to fulfill them.

When you refuse to settle for substitution or compulsive behaviors that never really compensate for unfulfilled needs, but only lock you into self-destructive patterns, then you are *choosing* fulfillment over deprivation. You are *choosing* satisfaction over dissatisfaction. You are *choosing* life over an emotional and psychological death. You are *choosing* a sense of genuine inner freedom over the feeling of being trapped and cramped in a relationship that you feel powerless to change. If you surrender to the many forms of artificial compensation that present themselves to us when we feel deprived or unfulfilled, then *know* that you are turning your mind, soul, and body over to the uncertainties of *chance* also. Such a surrender will not lead you to the path of self-love, success in relationships, or basic psychological intimacy in an interpersonal relationship.

- FOUR -

FROM CHANCE TO CHOICE

If the number of successful relationships in society is going to increase and divorces are going to decrease, then many relationships have to evolve from this fleeting love by chance to love by choice. People have to become responsible toward the spirit of genuine love. There's nothing wrong with being romantically attracted to someone, or being infatuated with someone. But when these things are allowed to foster a *pretense of love* then something *is* wrong, as we can see throughout society.

If you think you have to love someone to be in a relationship, and that something's wrong if you simply like them, then maybe that compels you to accept the pretense of love. Ask yourself this question: Do you think you have to be in love with someone if you're going to be in a longterm relationship?

What I refer to here is an *unconscious* pretense. The desire for unity with a partner is so basic to human nature that our minds are highly capable of creating the illusion of that unity without us at first knowing it. In today's society this is generally what happens with love by chance. People tend to perceive romance and infatuation as genuine love, then the longing mind takes over and creates the unconscious pretense in effort to sustain the illusion. It is, at bottom, an irresponsible way to engage in a relationship. You may fall in love by chance, but at some point the responsibilities of love are going to arise. It's then that you have to choose to *love by choice* or the chance for lasting love with that person will not evolve. To the contrary the relationship will be characterized by emotional conflict and strife no matter how much you or your partner cling to the pretense. There will be a spiritual separation instead of a fulfillment of the basic desire for unity.

People drift into relationships all the time, lured by the love of chance. They may marry and it becomes an unhappy marriage. Sooner or later we may hear about a long *rocky* marriage coming to an end. Well, a marriage can only be long and *rocky* if one or both people (for whatever reason) never choose to take responsibility for emotional and spiritual evolution within the relationship.

People who simply drift into relationships by chance, never having made the *choice* to be responsibly committed to principles, fulfilling expectations, etc., always leave the door open for rationalizations. For example, they didn't know you would or wouldn't be a certain way, or do or not do a certain thing. So, since they didn't really choose to be with a person like you they feel justified in being however they want to be: emotionally detached, adulterous, unsupportive. The list goes on. In other words, because they drifted into the relationship by chance they never really committed to any responsibility in the first place. This is why it's so important for us to know whether or not whatever we do is the result of choice, including becoming a partner in a relationship.

It goes without saying that life is too short, and genuine love is too rare, to leave either up to chance.

There are relationships where differences simply can't be resolved, so divorce is inevitable. But for the vast majority it's always a matter of egocentrism and irresponsibility, and it is those relationships that this writing tries to illuminate and encourage people to outgrow by choosing to be responsible for emotional-spiritual evolution within their relationships and within themselves.

Learn to appreciate the profoundness of choosing to love someone. Align with your SELF if you haven't already, and fulfill your search for unity.

CHOOSING THE KEYS THAT BUILD, STRENGTHEN, AND SUSTAIN HEALTHY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

There are a number of key things to good relationships that we often hear about, but may seldom give lengthy, serious thought to. It's as though we expect them to *be* simply because they cross our minds as desirable, ideal qualities. These keys, although basic, are not *fundamental values* in many relationships. And what is meant by *fundamental values* is that even in relations where these keys are missing a lot of people attempt to get by without them. Of course, the illusion of success is never long lived. These key things are:

1. Communication
2. Honesty
3. Understanding
4. Trust
5. Timeliness in addressing problems

• Communication in any relationship is the most vital key to realizing a *potential* for intimacy, and it is only through communication that intimacy can develop. This isn't to say that communication between all couples is bound to lead to intimacy, but that without communication there will definitely be none.

Communication is a path to deepening awareness of who we are, who our partner is, and what we have to offer, can receive from, and value in each other emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. The more open and honest the communication is, then the clearer is the pathway – as long as two people are not definitely incompatible.

All of us have heard that a relationship can't work without communication, but imagine how many people let those words flow into one ear and out the other without any effective absorption into the brain or memory bank. In any relationship where there's a communication *deficit* both people need to try to acknowledge what it does to detract from intimacy and happiness, as well as be conscious of the potential between them that *is* being wasted. There are simply too many relationships where the potential for happiness is great, yet they fail to blossom because people don't *choose* to work at communication, honesty, understanding, trust, and timeliness. They don't consciously make a commitment to express themselves, as well as encourage expression from their partner. It's as though if a relationship doesn't come with everything it's supposed to have, then people tolerate it as long as they can then simply move on to the next one. Little if any work or effort is invested. In a sense many people harbor the idea that good relationships *should* come like fast food hamburgers – ready made with all the condiments. The concept of responsibly *working,* especially through *communication,* to *make* a relationship good is hardly considered. In other words, many feel that if they have to work on a relationship and better communication then it's not really meant to be. This is a very naive and narrow perspective to have toward other human beings whether it be lovers, friends, relatives, or spouses. Communication is a vital key to healthy interpersonal relations in all forms and should be actively valued.

* * *

• Honesty is *essential* to a relationship's communication being meaningful and, therefore, to the relationship being *real.* Without *honesty* the feelings and emotions existing between two people are a *pretense* on the part of one or both.

It can be very difficult to acknowledge that accepting the truth about ourselves is a prerequisite to our ability to be genuinely honest about *who we are* to others. In many relationships people are simply afraid to be completely honest. Afraid that they may expose themselves to shame, ridicule, rejection, vulnerability, etc. It could be any number of things. This is why understanding and trust are so important. Whether personal fears are rational or not, people are more willing to be honest when they anticipate being understood and have some trust in who they express themselves to. It should be understood, however, that in any relationship we are all at any given time always vulnerable to a number of possible hurts. And, it is engaging and moving forward, *despite vulnerabilities,* that actually reward us with the joys, pleasures, and gifts of being intimate. Remember that it is our ability to grow and be honest through love and friction, pleasure and pain, success and failure – that allows us to be happy and healthy human beings.

If the communication in a relationship isn't honest, then naturally the relationship isn't well-grounded and is prone to eventually face the condition(s) of turbulence and wreckage. Honesty is a key to building up a relationship's immune system, therefore to making it not vulnerable to unnecessary vulnerabilities caused by dishonesty.

Make it a conscious choice to be honest and to also help others feel confident that they can trust you with their honesty; that they can expect you to at least try to understand and vice versa. Honest communication promotes real intimacy.

* * *

• To be genuinely *understanding* of another human being is to be unselfish, non-judgemental, sympathetic, and sensitively aware of emotional needs. Without being understanding as a matter of *choice,* a relationship's potential to succeed and flourish is undermined, and trust doesn't develop as deeply as it could. When we settle for *less* communication and honesty than we need to give or receive, then it inevitably follows that we can expect less understanding to come from each other. And this translates into less trust and affection than we may personally feel we need or are entitled to. Without understanding, constructive communication always faces obstacles such as unwillingness, and being unwilling to openly and sensitively listen to a partner's communication is selfish. Being quick and repetitive at interrupting, and critical of a partner while he or she is trying to express personal feelings is being judgemental, both of which are symptomatic of having no sympathy. It's not sympathy in the *sorry* connotation of the word, but in the caring and emotionally connected sense.

Feelings and emotions, even beliefs, can be very complex in a relationship. Each new day may evoke something a partner has never felt or expressed before. Each new day could be the seed of renewal, or a higher leap in feeling connected to one another. Human beings don't function mechanically like well-oiled cogs in a machine. We are capable of experiencing an array of different feelings toward ourselves as well as others. To be *understanding* in a relationship is to know this, and to respect human character and expression within reasonable limits. Sympathy is saying within yourself toward your partner: *I know you have or may develop feelings and beliefs that I am not aware of at every given point. I know that our relationship can have positive effects on you as well as negative at times. But by being willing to listen unselfishly, and non-judgementally, and without critical interruption – I can be more sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of whatever you feel and believe, whatever you expose to me by communication. By listening with a conscious desire to understand you at every point in time, we will not suffer needlessly from the frustration of each other's feelings.*

This type of genuine understanding is the result of *choice*. It doesn't just manifest in a relationship because two people would do *better* with it. You have to want it and you have to nurture it mutually as well as unselfishly. Leave it to *chance* and you may end up being one of those people who say about a partner, "I *used* to know him/her, but now I don't understand. How could he/she change like that?"

Commit to understanding and emotional sensitivity.

* * *

• Trust is intimately linked to the quality and degree of free expression of who we are in a relationship. We have to trust people to care about us. To understand and respect us, to be honest and loyal, and to not take advantage of our weaknesses. We have to trust people to accept us for who we are, even though change may be a desirable goal. We have to trust people to be sincere about the words they use to express their feelings to us. And this is just to name a few. Trust in a relationship is much more interconnected to the wholeness of the relationship than many of us realize. It is much deeper than simply trusting someone to be honest and faithful. How free are we going to feel to openly express ourselves in a relationship if trust goes no further than honesty and faithfulness? A companion may be one hundred percent faithful, but still insensitive or psychologically sadistic. Wouldn't such an attitude then inhibit our freedom to openly express our most sensitive feelings?

Trust has nothing to do with certainty or the absence of vulnerability. It simply means that we are willing to take a chance with having *faith* in someone we believe in. Nothing is absolute about trust. That is why a deep respect for it in any relationship should always be appreciated.

When we find someone that we can trust with knowing who we really are then our quality of self-expression is more liberal. And that liberalness increases our growth and degree of intimacy in the overall relationship. Without trust and a mutual respect for it, a

genuine love cannot evolve between two people. Trust is the foundation of strength in unity. It is like the trunk of a tree that – although one – is the source of connecting many branches to nourishment, growth, and stability.

The stronger we are in our self-confidence and acknowledgement that we have something valuable to offer a partner, i.e., our true and honest selves, then the greater is our ability to be trusting and therefore to expose ourselves to the vulnerability that comes in all relationships. We truly cannot help being vulnerable, but we can help not letting vulnerableness hold us back from giving and receiving as much as possible. Be wise in your choice of a partner, reasonable in your acknowledgement of who he or she really is, and therefore able to well place your trust.

Remember... trust is a key to healthy interpersonal relations.

* * *

• Timeliness in addressing problems is a key to keeping conflicts and differences from becoming *harbored* resentments and/or repressed anger that is bound to surface sooner or later.

Choosing to avoid dealing with conflicts and differences as an expedient means of restoring peace is a *harmful* choice. We can't resolve problems by avoiding them. If, for example, our partner frequently does something that has a tendency to hurt us, we can't make the relationship better by *repressing* the hurt that we feel. Communication, honesty, understanding, and trust are necessary to our ability to be timely in addressing problems. We should always set a reasonable time to approach our partner with concerns we may have about relations. We should also try to be aware that in a relationship where adequate communication is lacking, two people may not mutually be aware that one or the other perceives something as a problem. And if someone doesn't perceive something as a problem, the partner may assume the lack of perception to be an insensitivity. How any relationships

are harmed by this error due to a lack of timely and honest communication?

These five keys: *communication, honesty, understanding, trust, and timeliness* are all interrelated and mutually dependent on each other for the success of a relationship, but they are not the *only* keys. This small booklet can't cover the scope of everything in so few pages, but it is written to encourage insight and more constructive interest in how we relate to ourselves, our partners, and other people in society. Be mindful of them and apply them in your daily relations, especially with your partner.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP

The first step in beginning to love by *choice* instead of *chance* is acknowledging that our relationships should not be neglected or taken for granted. We should not leave to precarious chance what we are perfectly capable of being responsible for.

Loving by choice means that we commit to being conscious of the needs that exist in a relationship, and that we *act* on our consciousness by being communicative, honest, trusting, receptive, understanding, etc. It means that here and now we *stop* and ask ourselves, is this a relationship I *want* to be in, or is it one I have simply drifted into by chance? The answer to this question, if honest, should lead to the deepening of a real commitment, or acknowledgement of a pretentious one. Any relationship is a complete emotional and spiritual waste if we are not sincere in it, because profound lessons aren't learned that we can carry into the future with us. Not only lessons about relating to someone else, but lessons also about who we really are.

1) Make an assessment of your relationships with as much honesty as possible. What have they given or taken away from you in the past six months to a year? Have you grown or become stressful as a result of any of them? Does a particular relationship enliven you, or seem to drain you of mental peace?

2) On a percentage scale, what percent of positive attitude, behavior, and responsiveness do you give of yourself in relationships? Could you do better if your percentage is lower than sixty or seventy, and how would things change if you did?

3) Do you believe that relationships can be what you make them? Or that they are experiences that you should let take their own course?

4) Does your partner bring positive energy to the relationship? Does he or she show a meaningful interest in practicing the keys to a healthy relationship? Is he or she willing to do better if needed?

5) Are you willing to wake up a year from now realizing that neither of you chose to give or receive more of what you needed to be happy?

In today's society increasing numbers of couples in relationships never work on the qualities that promote intimacy and spiritual growth. More and more relationships end up being no more than short lived, turbulent, or carefree flings. We can all do much better in relationships if we take responsibility by being honest, genuine, and constructive. When love is by choice instead of chance our relationships have a much stronger foundation to stand on.

MAKING AN ASSESSMENT

A relationship can have many different types of effects in our lives. Certain people may inspire or encourage us. May influence us to feel happy or sad. May energize or drain us. May enliven or depress us. May comfort or anger us. May help us appreciate or regret knowing them.

Have you assessed any of your relationships lately to acknowledge their meaning, effect, or value in your life? Or do you feel that just because you're in a relationship, you're *in* it, with little hope of changing its effects through self-determination, or getting out of it?

On the other hand, have you assessed yourself lately to see how you are effecting someone else? Are you an inspiration or psychic drain on anyone? Be honest with yourself about you as well as others about the condition of a relationship, because only through honesty can we free ourselves from debilitating emotional shackles and/or illusions. We need most of all to be honest about our own beliefs and attitudes, because if our thoughts don't reflect who we truly are, then we can't really expect to absorb a perception of who others truly are. Even if their reflection is genuine we may absorb it through distorted filters on our own minds, or they may do the same. Relationships don't have to be viewed during an assessment as perfect or imperfect. What we need them to be is positive and sustaining.

RATING YOURSELF

On a percentage scale of ten to one hundred where would you rate yourself in the following areas:

1) Positive attitude and behavior in a relationship?

2) Listening and appropriate responsiveness to your partner, children, other people?

3) Honesty in what you say, meaning that it corresponds to what you really feel?

4) Taking conscious responsibility for creating the best conditions in a relationship?

5) Being solution oriented, instead of an idle blamer or unconstructive arguer?

6) Being a maker of conscious decisions to give of yourself, that is, acting instead of simply being acted on or pulled in any direction by the unpredictable currents in life?

If you rate yourself at fifty percent than you can and should do better. Why wake up years from now telling yourself that things would have been much better if you had given more, when you can say things have always been good because you gave what you could?

SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is essentially creating a relationship by the work of your own hands, i.e., the hands of your partner as well. The conditions in any relationship, even with ourselves, are the product of what we either make them, or, *allow* them to be. Either we believe that relationships are what we make them, or we believe that they are created by chance or fate. If the latter is true, then you most likely think that you should let your relationships take their own course. How responsible is such a belief?

If you have a disagreement or argument with someone, for example, letting things take their own course is like saying you want the person to go on about his or her business feeling hurt, separated, angry, or whatever, and that whatever happens just happens. Come what may.

Would it not be wiser and/or more responsible to let the person know that when their hurt or anger subsides you are still interested in a positive friendship/relationship? Thereby, you allow the two of you to maintain a sense of control in determining how the relationship

will be effected, as opposed to letting the wrong thoughts and feelings take their own course and unproductively influence the relationship.

Imagine all the people in society who go months or even years without speaking to each other because a disagreement or argument was left to take its own course, instead of one or both of them using self-determination over how long and how much certain feelings would effect their relationship. All the time while they are not speaking to each other, in their hearts they wish they were.

We should always remember that when we fail to take responsibility on our own, sometimes feelings can take on a life of their own. In such a case we may find ourselves as passengers in a back seat wondering where we'll end up, instead of feeling like we're behind the steering wheel.

Relationships, for the most part, should be a product of people's self-determination. Of course everything isn't controlled, nor should everything be. A lot of things in relationships developed as a reward or result of other conditions. This is why we are always capable of experiencing spiritual evolution or spontaneity.

YOUR PARTNER'S INPUT

This isn't an area centered on vulgar material benefits, but moreso on psychological, emotional, and spiritual qualities. What does your partner give or take away from you in these areas? Have you actually thought about that? Or once again – have you just been in a relationship *because* you're *in* it?

Just as you should work to honestly assess yourself and reflect who you are, you need also to honestly assess your partner and allow yourself to absorb the truth about him or her.

Is your partner an encouraging or discouraging influence in your life. Does relating to him or her weaken you? Or does it build and sustain positive qualities in you?

These are not questions that you should ask yourself every day or week. But they are questions that you should periodically examine. And wherever you find weaknesses, discuss with your partner his or her willingness to work at improvement. Your partner's input or output is half of what a relationship is or isn't, will or won't be. Discussing the keys to a healthy partnership is both of your responsibility. Practicing those keys is both your obligation to the relationship, as well as your personal, individual selves.

If your partner is greatly lacking in expression of the healthy keys, and shows no inclination to improve, then you can hardly expect him or her to be a part of opening your door to happiness.

A YEAR FROM NOW

A year from now you will inevitably be looking back in judgement at the choices, lack of choices, and decisions that came to pass. How do you expect to judge yourself and your relationships then? How will your partner judge you and vice versa? Here and now is the time to start creating part of that answer by living and loving by choice instead of chance.

The last step, when we reach that point, should be looking back over our lives and being able to tell ourselves that we gave more than average to help our relationships work. That we gave from the heart what we deeply wanted others to give to us. And that was our choice.

Like anything else in life, the people who are good at loving and nurturing themselves and others are the people who work at it. Not those who simply think it is all a gift of chance. I hope this short book is of lasting benefit to many people. Take care, the loving way.

The Author

Part Two

WHEN LOVE IS BY CHOICE

INSTEAD OF CHANCE

IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

C. Anthony Taylor

WHEN LOVE IS BY CHOICE

INSTEAD OF CHANCE

IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

In order for parenthood to be effective as a constructively influential and nurturing role the parent(s) must choose to be responsible and *spiritually* conscious of a child's *fundamental* emotional, social, psychological, and spiritual needs. The assumption of being a constructive and nurturing parent should not be left up to *chance.* Chance as an approach to child-rearing makes parents unconsciously negligent and over-assuming in regard to the effects of sociological influences, conditions, and experiences.

There is in America a pervasive tendency to neglect the most vital needs of children, with the general exception of physiological needs. Because of this, millions of children unfortunately grow to hate and despise themselves before they even reach teenhood. This condition alone can and does greatly diminish their capacity to develop constructive personality traits, self-determination, and healthy, loving relationships. It becomes almost inevitable, then, that unproductive living in one form or another is bound to follow.

In the world of human relations the parent-child relationship is the most obligatory and sensitive, because of its dualistic requirements. In this relationship, for example, the parents have to be controlling and compromising, whereas in an adult relationship the need to be controlling would not be considered healthy. The parent(s) also have to be loving but firm, guiding and promoting of self-determination, socially flexible, but also morally exemplary, protective but also trusting where societal risk are involved, to name a few. And in either dynamic where a *rigid* or *harmful imbalance* occurs the relationship and the child's fragile personality can suffer mild or severe detriment.

According to Karen Horney, M.D. (1885-1952) in Self-Analysis p. 42: "Under *all* conditions a child will be influenced by his environment. What counts is whether this influence stunts or furthers growth. And which development will occur depends largely on the kind of relationship established between the child and his parents or others around him, including other children in the family..."

She goes on to explain that: "if the spirit at home is one of warmth, mutual respect and consideration, the child can grow unimpeded.

Unfortunately, in our civilization there are many environmental factors *adverse* to a child's development." Karen Horney.

In our witnessing of so many children and youth today having troubled, even violent lives – we frequently overlook the *adverse* conditions and *early* relationships that stunted their healthy growth. One of the most damaging yet overlooked problems in society when it comes to children is emotional and spiritual neglect. Too many parents take for granted that taking care of material (physiological) needs is the essence of being a good parent. Well, that is hardly the reality. There

are a group of basic needs that have to be comprehensively understood, addressed, and nurtured. Abraham H. Maslow categorized these needs as a Hierarchy of Basic Needs:

1. Physiological
2. Safety
3. Belongingness and Love
4. Self-esteem
5. Self-actualization

This is a good point for parents to understand and start from in *choosing* to love their children, as opposed to taking for granted and leaving to *chance* that these needs are adequately met in their child's life. We can evaluate number one through superficial observation. The others to be determined and measured require an actively involved, emotional and psychological relatedness to the child. This, unfortunately is lacking in too many parent-child relationships, too.

Tens of millions of parents simply focus almost exclusively on the material (physiological) needs. They therefore harbor the feeling: "I put food on the table, clothes on your back, and a warm roof over your head. That's my job and I do it well, so you (the child) *should* have no complaints or reasons to rebel or be problematic, or feel neglected."

I think any child, given that physiological needs are met adequately, would go a longer distance on the road to health and happiness if the scale weighed heavier on the side of *association, affection, love, encouragement,* and *guidance,* than it did on the excesses of *vulgar materialism.* If a child's physiological needs are over-abundantly fulfilled, but all the others in the hierarchy are neglected the child may *never* develop a healthy, constructive sense of identity, self-determination, or sense of optimism toward life. However, if need #1 is *basically* met and two and three are sufficiently satisfied the child will still, more likely than not, develop a strong sense of identity, constructive self-interest, and personal power to face life through his or her own fulfillment of basic needs four and five in the hierarchy.

Parents must be conscious of the fact that the lack of fulfillment of needs 2-5 can result in a poverty of the child's personality. And the poverty of personality is much more devastating than economic poverty or a lack of material excess. The poverty of personality robs the spirit in a pervasive way, making it much more difficult to transcend than material deprivation. Parents have to *choose* to be conscious of balancing these need fulfillments, otherwise there is a good chance the child will be negatively effected.

Let's take the second need, for example, the need for *safety*. We all know that it is a compelling need. And when a child first interacts with the social world it becomes his or her primary concern. If this need isn't satisfied then the child's psychic energy *automatically* becomes absorbed by a struggle to create defensive tactics and strategies to cope with the environment and people who cause anxiety, intimidate, or threaten the child's feeling of safety. It may be the parents themselves without even being aware, other adults, or other children. In any event it's true that once the child's energies *are* directed toward sustaining a defensive structure, other areas of psychic, emotional-spiritual growth are stagnated.

Because a child doesn't feel safe, he or she can't develop a sense of belonging and acceptance. If belonging and acceptance aren't there, then how can self-esteem properly develop? And, if self-esteem is debilitated or not given a chance to develop, then it must somehow interfere with self-actualization (developing and exercising one's potential to grow and to love). Let us never leave out the factor of love.

It is so important that parents be mindful of these needs. By ensuring that the first two or three are adequately fulfilled the child will be psychically *free* and secure enough within his or herself to develop a healthy expression of the other two.

Most often, though, it is the case that most parents are oblivious to a *disturbance* in these need fulfillments. And what makes so many oblivious is the fact that they are emotionally and psychically *alienated* from their own childhoods. They are still repressing emotions connected to unfulfilled needs during their own childhoods, therefore, are unknowingly *estranged* from their children's emotional-psychic needs and sensibilities.

When Love Is By Choice Instead Of Chance in the parent-child relationship, the parents *choose* to not pass on to their children the relationship inadequacies that their parents or environment passed on through inadequate and disturbed human relations.

What Parents Must Choose In Order To Enhance The Healthy *Development Of Their Children*

1. Parents must choose to be informed about the *basic* psychic needs of human development.

2. Parents must chose to be an intimate part of their child's socialization, not just a virtually disconnected provider.

3. Parents must choose to be conscious of the nature of their child's relationships outside the home. How is he or she effected by peers in school? Teachers? Children or adults in the community? As a result of social interaction has the child developed character trends that didn't exist earlier? Hyper-sensitivity, timidness, withdrawal? If, yes, the parents need to examine when and why or the trend may develop into a rigid personality trait.

4. Parents must *choose* to be conscious and *honest* about the effects of their own attitude on their child's personality.

Quoting Karen Horney, M.D. again, in terms of parental attitudes: "In simple words, they may be dominating, overprotective, intimidating, irritable, overexacting, overindulgent, erratic, partial to other siblings, hypocritical, indifferent, etc. It is never a matter of just a single factor, but always the whole constellation that exerts the untoward influence on a child's growth.

As a result, the child does not develop a feeling of belonging, of *we*, but instead a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness, for which I use the term *basic anxiety*. It is his (or her) feeling of being isolated and helpless in a world conceived as potentially hostile." Horney.

She expresses that: "a child in the above situation can't relate to people with the spontaneity of his/her *real* feelings, but must find a way to *cope* with people that allays the basic anxiety." Horney.

We don't need to stretch our imaginations very far in order to picture the extent to which millions of children are subjected to hostile and non-nurturing environments and relationships in society. This is *why* it is so important for parents to choose to be conscious instead of taking for granted that they are. Neglect of psychic needs is usually *unconscious.*

Many parents who happen to be excellent providers are thoroughly convinced in their minds that they are *great* parents, that they are *ideal.* And based on superficial material observation social workers would classify them as having a good, loving home. The unfortunate reality is that just because parents are good providers doesn't mean they're good parents. Not if they aren't providing the psychic, emotional, spiritual necessities also.

Understand this: It *hurts* to feel unloved, unwanted, neglected. Therefore, when children develop the belief that their basic needs won't be fulfilled, they repress their consciousness of the need(s) in order to evade the pain of absence, (unfulfillment). Many would answer, yes, if you ask them if their parents love them. But in reality they do not *feel* loved. To say, yes, is only to mitigate the feelings so the pain stays repressed.

Across America there are thousands of institutionalized, delinquent children whom if you ask will tell you their parents love them. But the fact of the matter is that many do not know their parents. They were given away or abandoned as babies. They lie because to acknowledge that they were unwanted or given away would be a painfully crushing blow to their self-esteem, which they have little or none of already, because no one else in their lives has stepped in and made them feel meaningful and lovable.

Likewise in cases where these families are said to be happy and loving homes, people are repressing the truth and living a lie.

If neither the parent nor the child eventually acknowledges the basic needs *fulfillment-deprivation*, then it will be passed down as a *family-relations deficit* to the next generation.

Either the parent or the child has to bring acknowledgement of the need to the surface as a matter of *choice*, or the need will remain repressed by the pain of absence and, therefore, continue to have an unhappy effect.

The difficulty that parents frequently have with being *honest* about their own attitudes is rooted in their own desperate attempts to keep pain repressed from earlier in life. Attitudes serve as defense mechanisms. *Domination, Self-Righteousness, Indifference.* In parent-child relationships parents need to examine how their own attitudes would effect them if they were children. This takes a conscious willingness, because you may very well end up having to think to yourself: *It's true. I'm hurting my child. I'm destroying his or her self-esteem.*

Because you acknowledge this doesn't mean your attitude is going to change. You still have to make a loving choice to change your relations with your child, hopefully before the child's *coping* mechanisms have become so ingrained that they take on the character of long-term or permanent personality trends.

*

The basic needs in Maslow's hierarchy are indispensible needs. *Compelling* needs, with the exception of number five which is possible to fulfill by achievement of the other four. Being able to be in a loving relationship with deep emotional bonds and spiritual connectedness can be viewed as self-actualization. You don't have to become a great artist, singer, sports superstar, or mystic in harmony with the universe.

But in regard to the first four needs, we either fulfill them healthily or we eventually end up trying to *compensate* for their lack of fulfillment in one form or another.

Let us take, for example, the need for belongingness and love in the child. We are basically talking about *affection*. Affection is one of the most vital needs in the human psyche. So what happens when children receive none, or an amount so small that it may as well be none?

Children look to their parents, first and foremost, for affection. And when it isn't forthcoming over an extended period of time, the child begins to develop a *primary affection-deficit,* i.e., the unconscious feeling of being unlovable because one or both parents show no affection, or not enough. This unconscious feeling, if it lingers, eventually becomes a compulsive need for affection, for belongingness, to be accepted. The problem is that – as long as the person feels unlovable at bottom because of the primary affection-deficit, then the basic need can not be fulfilled. Once again, the problem must be identified as the parent's attitude, not the child's inherent being or personality. All children are lovable, and all parents should *choose* to accept the responsibility of letting them know. How much different would it make the society we live in? How much more productive the attitudes of children?

The effect that non-affectionate parents can have on a child's personality can be more serious in terms of *conscience* and social violence than most of us would want to imagine.

Many children stop receiving affection as soon as they are able to walk. Depending on the child's *temperament* this has different effects. Some children may receive it from elsewhere to make up for the parents' indifference, aunts, older siblings, etc. But when a child has nowhere else to turn, he or she suffers emotionally until the mind *represses* this sensitive need and replaces it with an emotional hardening or resentment so the child doesn't have to feel its pain. Now imagine, if a child is forced to be insensitive to its own pain, how much easier it is to develop an insensitivity to the pain of others. This means that if conditions and relations persist that force the child to employ repression to evade emotional pain, then the proper development of a sense of *conscience* can be obstructed at an early age. We are talking about between the ages of two and ten, for example, because a significant part of having a healthy conscious is being sensitive to the pain and

suffering that may be caused by our own words and actions.

There are hundreds of thousands of children across America whose emotional and psychological difficulties can be traced directly back to early *primary affection-deficits.* Many of these children are violent and unruly because instead of being given affection when they first began to exhibit symptoms of a lack of receiving it, the parents became disciplinarian, punitive, etc. which is the opposite of what the child needs. In response to the parents yelling, screaming, punishments, frustration, etc. the child develops deeper resentment, more aggressive and disobedient behavior. And what is the parent's response? More yelling, screaming, frustration, and disciplinary effort to control. We see here a pathetic *cycle* that, though seemingly obvious, the parent is completely incapable of comprehending. On the other hand the child, being a child, is not verbally capable of saying: *I need some time with you. I need some affection. I need love through interaction.* The child is only capable of knowing what he or she needs through inherent emotional longings, and when these inherent emotional longings are neglected an emotional disturbance begins. It may not manifest itself immediately and in most cases it *won't* become the seed of sociopathology, but the *primary affection-deficit,* if left completely unabated or compensated for in other relationships, becomes a serious problem in emotional development and relationships throughout life. Parents need to be aware of this. And they need to deal with their own *primary affection-deficit* so that it isn't unconsciously passed down to their children as a social trait in parent-child relations. As expressed earlier, parents may think they are doing a perfect job while all the while the most basic necessities of healthy childhood development are being neglected.

When you make a conscious choice to love your child instead of leaving to chance that you will, then that *choice* alone influences you to be more cognizant of your child's overall needs, as well as, what nurtures or disturbs the relationship between you. It encourages you to accept responsibility instead of unconsciously being irresponsible.

Remember that physiological (material) needs are only twenty percent of a child's basic developmental needs.

Love by choice instead of chance leads to a more productive and healthy relationship, therefore, a more productive and healthy personality development for your child.

C. Anthony Taylor

I heard the comment once that "the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference." Many may not agree, even I have to ponder the validity of the statement. But one thing is certain, and that is that indifference can and frequently does have a profoundly negative emotional effect on the development of a child. How many children in America, or the world for that matter, have felt the emotional hunger pangs of feeling unloved or unwanted in their private thoughts because of what they perceive as parental indifference? We can not even begin to estimate the number.

The statement that indifference makes to a child is that: "I don't care. You're not *worth* my time, my concern, my attention." And many children directly perceive this expression from indifference. How it effects a certain child depends on their given temperament. One child may harden his or her feelings toward the parent(s) and by early teenhood begin to express indifference toward the parent(s) wishes or authority when guidance in life is most important. Another child, in response to indifference, may make an extra effort to show his/her parent(s): "Look, I can do things. I'm good at school. I won the contest, etc." And this effort to prove him or herself worthy of the parent(s) time, concern, attention, and love may go on for months, even years. Yet, if the parent(s) remain indifferent the child may end up giving itself the stamp of finality: "I'll never be worth mama and/or daddy's time, love, etc." It then becomes questionable as to whether or not the child's self-esteem and self-confidence will develop in healthy, constructive proportions.

On the other side of the coin, the parent(s) may be totally oblivious to their indifference and the profound effect it is having on their child's personality. If the parent(s) are oblivious, then the one child's effort to win their affection, attention, etc, may be viewed as no more than an excessive need for attention. The other child's hardening of his or her feelings may be considered as a toughness to face life. In any event, the child develops an unconscious resentment over time.

These types of occurrences would be more unlikely if the parent(s) were loving by choice instead of chance, and therefore, were more sensitive to their child's nonverbal and acute behavioral language. There are many adults in society who are uncertain about their own value of the careers, etc. they have ended up in or chosen, because as children none of their achievements seemed to earn recognition from their parents. Of course we can say "get over it and grow up!" But the fact of the matter is that the hangup does exist, and more parents have to avoid being indifferent if we want a population of growing children whose lives are less effected by it. Loving by choice is the difference between being conscious and unconscious of whether we are being perceived as lovable at all. Language is expressed in many ways. Let us always try to be sure we are communicating to children what we *intend* to express. Otherwise, their lives may be misled by the wrong interpretations.

A Final Word

A healthy, loving relationship is the product of two people *choosing* to enjoy and grow with each other. It therefore is the medium through which this ideal is accomplished. If one or both people uses the partner as a means to a selfish end, whether it be material or immaterial, then the relationship is resting – at least partially – on a pretense. The potential, therefore, for genuine love and intimacy to grow is obstructed by a dam of hidden motives. And only if these motives are mutually recognized and challenged once they materialize to awareness – can the relationship have a chance to grow.

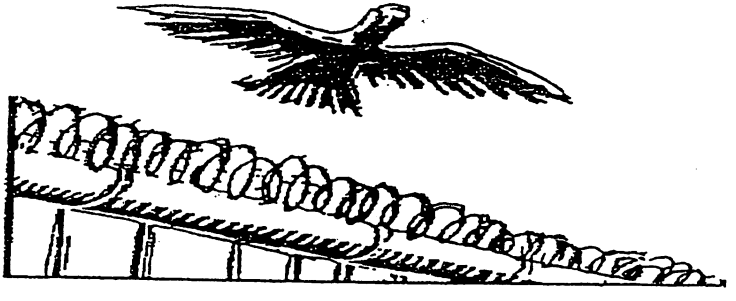
We are all capable of loving genuinely when we are free to genuinely be and express ourselves in a relationship. And as far as the pretenses of love that exist so pervasively in society – they too can be outgrown if we choose to love by choice instead of chance, and refuse to believe that old patterns of thought and experience are meant to be the only reality for us.

Title Pages from Other Works by C. Anthony Taylor

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(Talib) C. Anthony Taylor

C. Anthony Taylor Freedom Campaign

This beautifully written, insightful and enormously meaningful publication was written by Clarence Anthony Taylor (Talib Rashid) who is one of the very few prisoners who has been able to overcome self-hate and completely rebuild himself, psychologically. He is an expert in the Karen Horney school of psychoanalysis and has adapted her teachings to explain modern day social and political reality. It's really quite remarkable, as he is *still* incarcerated in the hideous Indiana gulag system and has been for the last 25 years on an open-ended sentence for a robbery with an injury which he committed when he was an angry nineteen year old.

Like the "C" number prisoners in Illinois, his and several other Indiana prisoners' fate is up to a parole board, who only rule on such cases. So, to grant them parole, would basically put them out of a job. It's a built-in ongoing injustice. They completely ignore his incredible growth and what he can offer, not only to his community, but to the entire world. At his last parole hearing in the spring of 2002, they claimed he had "de nons." Frankly, they fear his intellect and revert to malvolent repression in dealing with his righteous case for freedom.

Chicago ABC has taken the responsibility to spearhead his Freedom Campaign and we are trying to raise funds for legal fees, a competent lawyer and to attain his much deserved freedom. His case was replete with instances where the prosecution ignored their own laws, as is what often happens to prisoners. His freedom *can* and *must* be won! He's the most impressive person in prison that I have worked with.

Talib has written a complete analysis of his case which is titled ***"An Appeal to Reason."*** which is available. He has also written several complete and wonderful novels, which we do not yet have the means to publish. This man, in my opinion, is truly among the world's most important and relevant thinkers as far as understanding modern day reality and how to become fully human amidst such a sick society. He offers *genuine* rehabilitation, hope and applicable solutions!

So, we are asking for $5.00 for this publication, which will go into a fund intent on his release. For $10.00, we can send you all of his present publications, including: ***The Final Release, The Anti-Recidivist Booklet for the 21st Century, The Politics of Crime and the Crime of Politics, Racism as a Defense Against Self-Hate and Spiritual Humanism.*** Donations are, of course, most welcome. Please send cash or a check made out to Anthony Rayson with C. Anthony Taylor Freedom Campaign written on the memo line. Thankyou! Free the Truth!

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Published on June 14th, 2002
South Chicago ABC Zine Distro
P.O. Box 721, Homewood, IL 60430