

JENEV CADDELL

# YOUR BEST LOVE

The Couple's Workbook and Guide to  
Their Best Relationship

*How to use the breakthrough  
new science of love to create the  
relationship of your dreams*





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# *Your Best Love:*

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***The Couple's Workbook and Guide  
to Their Best Relationship***

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# Introduction

Welcome to your workbook and guide to your best relationship. Thank you for including me on your journey toward each other.

While achieving your best relationship is a very unique and individualized process—which no manual can guarantee—it is my hope that this book and its accompanying workbook help you take practical action steps with your partner to create your best relationship together.

I'm so excited that you've taken on this most important task to create your best life by achieving your best relationship.

***“For one human being to love one another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is preparation.”***

***—Rainer Maria Rilke***

## **Why the New Science of Love: My Path Here**

I became a psychologist because I have been forever interested in human potential and personal growth. Sadly, what I learned in graduate school was mostly about what's wrong with us and that we're all a bit more screwed up than we think.

My career and life was then transformed in 2008 when I first met Dr. Susan Johnson, the person who taught my brain about the tremendous importance of love and who helped open my heart to it.

Until recently, psychologists and family therapists had no theory of love. Couples therapy was generally practiced sort of like how I play darts, which

involves a combination of luck and a less-than-complete understanding of the rules.

Sue Johnson and her research changed all that and basically revolutionized how we perceived love and how couples therapy worked. I learned firsthand from her at the first externship in Emotionally Focused Therapy that she offered in New York City several years back about this new science of love and how to help couples leverage it to create their best relationships.

As a couples therapist, I was suddenly given a map to help couples out of distress. I was told that there is nothing more important than relationships in our lives, and I learned how they went wrong and how to get them back on track. I learned a theory of love that was backed by the latest science: the New Science of Love.

As a psychologist, I was thankfully reassured that my work did not have to be all about what's wrong with people. Sweet relief! I was finally among people who believed in our resilience and who weren't obsessed with how much everyone's mothers messed everything up; rather, I was reminded how no mother is perfect and how even the ones who do the worst jobs ever still have children who gravitate toward growth and wellness.

I also learned that love is the single most important ingredient for success, health, and happiness.

As a woman in her late twenties in love, I was given permission to fall deeply. I was told that I did not have to be staunchly independent, purely career-driven, or fine by myself, even when there was someone right there who had my back no matter what. I was encouraged to say "yes" when he asked and I did only a few months after meeting Sue briefly in the bathroom during that training.

I know I can speak for a huge and growing community of therapists and couples when I express my limitless gratitude to Sue Johnson for her groundbreaking work on love and relationships.

On hers and others' shoulders, I stand to bring you this program. From the simplicity of Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness and the genius of Dan Siegel's interpersonal neurobiology to the sheer passion and brilliance of Danielle LaPorte's work on desire, among the wisdom of many other great scientists, thinkers, and feelers, my influences are many.

I am so grateful to you for having come on board for the journey.

**This book is for:**

- Couples who are happy in their relationships but are interested in learning more about how to deepen and improve their relationships.
- Couples who are unhappy in their relationships but are interested in making their relationships work and are seeking guidance and advice on how to improve their connections to their partners.
- Couples who are suffering from the aftermath of infidelity as long as the affair has ended. While good therapy should be the first place to turn for help in the aftermath of infidelity, this book and workbook can serve as a supplement or something to read together after therapy has ended.

It should be noted that in no way is this program designed specifically for couples who have suffered from infidelity. We do not discuss infidelity. Even so, this program can help with your relationship foundation and help you understand what may have caused one of you to stray. It is, however, important for me to be clear that we do not specifically address infidelity. In no way does this program replace couples therapy, particularly if you are living in the aftermath of this trauma.

- Any couple, happy or not, looking to improve their relationship. This stuff applies to you if you are gay, straight, bisexual, religious or not. Gender pronouns are used at times but should be considered interchangeable. If you are human, this stuff applies to you, regardless of where you come from, what you believe in, or the gender or sex of the person with whom you share a life.

If you fall into any of the above categories, then read on!

**This book is *not* for:**

- Singles who are currently not in a relationship. This is designed for partnered individuals and couples.
- Couples and individuals who are in physically abusive relationships. Intimate partner violence is a seriously underreported and underestimated problem that can lead to serious trauma and even death. If you think you may be a victim of intimate partner violence, I would recommend holding off on reading this workbook and getting immediate, confidential professional help, such as calling Safe Horizon's 24-hour hotline at (800) 621-HOPE.

- Couples whose relationship is presently affected by infidelity. If you are cheating on your partner, and have an interest in saving your relationship, you must stop cheating before taking efforts to repair your relationship. Stop cheating if you want to fix your relationship. Then get stable together, and this program may be for you.

If your partner is cheating on you and you are aware of this, realize that your relationship needs to take priority; and if your partner will not stop cheating, your relationship is most likely not a priority. I know this is obvious, but I want to point that out: it takes two to tango, and you can't save your relationship all by yourself.

If your relationship has been affected by infidelity and you are both presently committed to working on your relationship, in the absence of any current affairs, then read on. This book could be helpful for you, though I would also recommend couples therapy as infidelity can be so painful and difficult.

Had I not become a psychologist or therapist, I probably would never have learned about this amazing New Science of Love. I certainly wouldn't have learned about Sue Johnson and her work, and I probably wouldn't have cared that much about relationships.

I am hoping to help spread the word through this program and my practice to people who are not couples therapists or psychologists, for those who are not in dire enough straits to make it to couples therapy, for those who are in dire straits but even so would never go see a therapist, and for those who do get couples therapy but it's not Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and/or therapy doesn't help them.

It is my belief that the understanding and application of the New Science of Love to our primary relationships is what we need to do to heal the world. Happier couples mean happier families, well adjusted children, more empathic and connected adults, and a more peaceful world.

We need to scream about what the New Science of Love is from the mountaintops. More importantly, we need to help people learn how to apply it to create their best relationships. This book is a reflection of some of my efforts to do that.

## **What We Will Cover**

In this book we will cover the basics about The New Science of Love and will discuss ways that you can use it to create the relationship of your dreams.

In Part I, we will learn about what this New Science of Love actually is. We will discuss how we have gotten a lot about love all wrong and how the New Science of Love turns what we know on its head.

We will discuss the New Science of Love and how it applies directly to you and your relationships. We will take a look at where our understanding of love comes from, what your unique blueprint for love is, and whether it needs fixing. Rest assured, we will help you fix it if needed.

We will also discuss some of the basic science behind the New Science of Love so that you can understand it a little more in depth. We'll teach you how to use the science behind the New Science of Love to help you in life's more difficult times. We will also review the basic chemistry behind the New Science of Love.

In Part II, we will prepare you to use the New Science of Love in your life. We will set the stage for your best relationship by helping you get clear on your desires, backing them up with the New Science of Love, and helping you achieve a better understanding of yourself and your life at all times. We will also take an in depth look at emotions and why they are your best friends when cultivating your best relationship.

In Part III, we will reveal seven steps to creating your best relationship. If your relationship is in distress, these seven steps will help you understand it from a different perspective so that you can change up your negative pattern to reconnect with your partner and create a stronger bond. From putting everything together to identifying the pattern of your relationship and knowing your role and your partner's role within it, carefully applying these steps with your partner will help you reorganize your relationship as you know it so that you can reach each other in whole new ways.

Part IV will offer a few steps on how to maintain your bond. So many people have amazing relationships but let them go because they take their relationships for granted and because other aspects of life get in the way. We want to ensure that this doesn't happen to you after you create your best relationship, so in this section of the book, we look at several ways to keep your relationship at its best.

I'm so excited to share this information with you and thrilled that you are using this program to help create your best relationship.

While we will discuss the science behind the science of love and some of this information will be for you to learn and absorb, it is crucial to complete the exercises in the workbook in order to get the most out of this material and to create growth in your relationship. Take your time and do the exercises to really make the most of this experience.

It's not easy. I can't guarantee it will save your relationship, but I'm pretty confident this program will help you learn a great deal about yourself, your partner, and your relationship. I am also confident that it will help you both a great deal together in your relationship and as individuals.

So let's dive in! It's time to learn about the New Science of Love so that you can use it to create your best relationship.

*Please note: Some client examples are used for illustration purposes. These characters are fictional. Their experience is similar to clients with whom I have worked, but to protect these individuals' identities, the characters in the examples are made up.*

**PART**



**The New Science of Love**

# CHAPTER

# 1

## About The New Science Of Love

### **What Is the New Science of Love?**

It sounds so intriguing and perhaps innovative, but you were born with it in your bones. It's been around at least as long as we have been a species.

The New Science of Love, developed over the last few decades with careful research implementing the latest technology, tells us something we all know on one level or another:

We are born to connect.

We are social animals and we need each other.

We know this on an innate and deeply emotional level but maybe not consciously or intellectually. Many individualistic nations, such as the United States, privilege autonomy and independence as important values, and, as a result of this, we don't recognize the importance of relying on each other.

### **How we've gotten love all wrong**

The New Science of Love tells us that we are by far healthier, happier, and more successful when we have a safe other upon whom we can rely and depend.

Many of us, however, grow up with values such as autonomy and independence, and we are implicitly taught that it's bad to rely and depend too much on others.



The truth is that's how we're biologically wired: to need each other.

As a psychology student, I was taught words like "individuation" as a task we all need to accomplish in order to separate and become individuals. Those unable to "individuate" are considered "fused" or "enmeshed".

A common word we also like to throw around is "co-dependent" and we criticize people for being too "needy". To be fully actualized humans, we should embody traits like autonomy, independence, and we shouldn't have to rely on anyone.

Right?

Wrong.

The New Science of Love teaches us that everything we thought about the glories of independence was off, and we are growing more and more stressed, depressed, and physically sick because of these beliefs and our tendency to isolate ourselves from each other and our own needs.

Further, "love" was only really understood recently, with scientists in psychology and neurobiology only recently catching up to poets and artists who have always known of its greatness.

Once, love was hard to define, but now the New Science of Love teaches us that it is ultimately about true and safe emotional connections with others.

# CHAPTER

# 2

## The New Science of Love and You

We are now going to discuss what the New Science of Love has to do with you and your relationship. We'll be discussing your beliefs around dependency, what you need to do first before achieving your best relationship, and a bit on your blueprint for love and how to fix it if it needs fixing.

### The D-Word and Your Relationship

Before learning more about the New Science of Love, it's important to know your own belief system around the D-Word: Dependency.

If you are like I once was, and most people I know, you may believe that to be strong, you must be fully self-sufficient. You may believe that it is a weakness to rely on others. Further, you may hold these beliefs to be "reality" because they are so widely accepted by so many and have never been called into question.

I'm going to ask you to call these beliefs into question now.

Do you believe, as many do, that depending on others is a weakness?

Where do you think these beliefs came from?

Your beliefs may have risen generally from your culture of origin. Every culture has its own average set point or ideology around how acceptable it is to lean on others and how "normal" interdependency is.

Individualistic countries, such as the U.S., value autonomy and independence as if we can all go through life alone and be fine. Collectivist countries,

such as China, are more likely to recognize the interdependence of people and do not value individualism in the same way.

That being said, we all know your culture of origin doesn't necessarily define you or your beliefs. It is important to also look at your own family and what you learned from them, explicitly or implicitly.

Your comfort level around relying on others has a lot to do with your early experiences as a child. Was someone there for you when you were a kid and you really needed them to be there?

Most likely, none of us can answer that question with a resounding "yes" or "no" 100 percent of the time; however, you probably have an answer for the majority of times. The answer to that question may have a lot to do with your comfort level around depending on others.

If someone was mostly there for you when needed, you probably feel more safe relying on others in your life than you would if that same person was missing, absent, or unavailable when you needed him or her.

The question then becomes, from an early age and from your own experiences, did you learn that people were generally there for you when you needed them to be?

The answer to this question likely dictates how safe you feel relying on others. It may have a lot to do with determining the general reliability of partners you attract and how likely you are to actually depend on them.

To look a bit deeper at this issue, check out Exercise #1 in the workbook, "The D-Word and Your Relationship".

You may know this already, but, even if you do, it is worth repeating:

Unless you've done extensive work on yourself or have had extreme experiences with others (good or bad) in later years, your early relationships have a lot to do with how you relate to others today and whether you generally see people as reliable, dependable, and trustworthy.

## **Effective Dependence for Successful Independence**

The New Science of Love teaches us that we are stronger, more secure, and more successfully independent only when effectively dependent on another.

The New Science of Love urges us to realize this: we no longer need to pretend that we are okay or need to be okay with being completely alone.

Clients of mine who have struggled in relationships tell me, “We are born alone, we die alone: life is ultimately an isolated experience.”

Folks who feel that way often had childhoods in which their emotional needs were not always met. A lot of people think that because their physical needs were generally taken care of as a kid and they were never abused, their childhoods were fine. It’s important to realize that kids also have enormous emotional needs that are often not completely taken care of.

Your emotional needs easily may have been partially unmet. Of course this doesn’t mean you’re screwed up. Let’s face it, no one’s every need is ever really met all of the time. If you’re a parent yourself, I’m sure you know that.

But it’s important to realize that even if you always had food and parents that generally seemed to care about you, some of your more subtle needs may have gone unmet. As a result of that, you still may be carrying some of those unmet needs into your relationships as an adult.

An example of this that frequently comes up in my practice is when adults look back at their childhoods and realize that in some ways, their existence seemed to be about making sure their primary care giver was happy. Their mother, for example, may have been depressed, and so all of the kid’s energy became about making Mom happy.

See, a kid’s universe is largely built around being certain that their parents are okay. Because kids believe that they are the center of the universe, they take on the responsibility of making sure their parents are okay if for whatever reason it seems like they’re not.

Kids’ parents or primary care givers are really their connections to life itself—without them, they wouldn’t survive. And kids’ brains aren’t developed enough to understand that they aren’t the center of the universe. Further, like many of us, they strongly resist seeing the world as a place that can be entirely out of control or unfair. That would just be too much to handle.

To maintain some sense of control, their parents’ wellbeing becomes their responsibility. If their parents aren’t okay and they can’t make them happy, they see this as their fault.

That's why so many kids feel like it's their fault when their parents get divorced. To understand it any other way would mean they live in a world that can be totally out of control. Even as adults, we don't like to face that!

It's really up to a child's parents to anticipate their needs, but often, as we illustrated above, it works the other way around. And when that happens, many people grow up with the idea that they can't rely on anyone to take care of them but themselves.

There are many other scenarios in which people grow up and are conditioned to think that life is ultimately an experience best done solo. Let's take kids who are somehow abused, for example. In these situations, kids feel like they are bad, and that's why they're abused.

Why else would their parents, who are assumed to be perfectly decent people, beat them up? To a child, a parent is always right and good, since parents are responsible for their survival. So it only makes sense that bad things are their fault; hence, the belief "we are born alone, we die alone. Life is ultimately lived alone."

This statement couldn't be further from the truth.

We are born helpless and dependent and need care and comfort to grow healthily as much as we need food. We take these needs with us to our dying days.

When we can safely and securely know that another has our back and that we can breathe a sigh of relief into the arms of our loved one at the end of a difficult day, we are strengthened to face another day and become stronger as a result. We can only be successfully independent when we are effectively dependent on at least one other person.

## **What You Must Do to Achieve Anything You Want, Including Your Best Relationship**

***"If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up some place else."***  
**-Yogi Berra**

We usually only seek out and achieve what we think we need or want. The clearer the picture we have of our goal, the more likely it is that we will reach it.

This is so important to realize: you must have a clear vision of what you want in order to get it. Of course, a vision is not all that you need, but it is an important step that many people miss in their lives. Be crystal clear and you will be more likely to achieve that goal.

Entire books and courses have been written on this topic alone.

You need a strong and clear vision of what you'd like in your life in order to achieve it.

***“First comes thought; then organization of that thought into ideas and plans; then transportation of those ideas into reality. The beginning, as you will observe, is your imagination.”***  
—Napoleon Hill

Did you know that your brain doesn't know the difference between what you imagine and what's really out there in the world? If I tell you to imagine a pink elephant, the same circuitry in your brain will light up as if you actually saw a pink elephant in real life.

One study, for example, involving weightlifters demonstrated that the brain patterns that were activated when people lifted hundreds of pounds of weights were also activated when they simply imagined lifting the weights<sup>1</sup>.

Another psychologist from Australia, Alan Richardson, conducted an experiment that involved three groups of basketball players and tested their ability to make free throws. The first group would practice for twenty minutes every day. The second group would not physically practice, but would visualize themselves making successful free throws. The third and final group would not do anything.

The results? Both the first and the second groups made significant improvements over the third group which did nothing. Further, the group which only visualized successful shots almost did as well as the group which actually practiced. These results have been replicated in a variety of studies on the power of visualization.

***So what does this have to do with your relationship, you may be asking?***

Everything.

You need to have an image of your best relationship before you can achieve it. And if you have never been exposed to an ideal relationship, it would be difficult to imagine one.

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<sup>1</sup> Ranganathan VK, Siemionow V, Liu JZ, Sahgal V, Yue GH. From mental power to muscle power—gaining strength by using the mind. *Neuropsychologia*, 1994, vol. 42, pp. 944-56.

We miss this step in all aspects of life and many people go on auto-pilot accepting what they've got and plugging away, not realizing that there could be so much more. This is especially true with relationships.

That's where the New Science of Love comes in to offer a new template of what a great relationship can really look like. As we've discussed, few actually realize that it is a legitimate human and biological *need* to actually have someone in their life who's got their back.

We are not taught this explicitly; rather, we get the message that we shouldn't need each other. Our blueprint for love is all wrong, and we are completely out of touch with what we need.

Whether it's a reflection of the New Science of Love or not, you have your own version of what a relationship should look like in your mind. Before deciding whether you'd like to replace that image with a New Science of Love relationship, let's check out what that image is.

## **Know Your Blueprint for Love**

We all walk around with ideas about the world and our lives that we take for granted and assume as reality. These ideas are mostly subconscious and we don't really think about them.

This is especially true for a template in your brain of what a relationship should look like. Whatever it is, you may not be totally aware of it and you may hold it as just the way things are.

We're going to call this your blueprint for love. It's really important to identify what that is if you haven't already.

Exercise #2 in the workbook will help, but here are a few thoughts to get you started in identifying your blueprint for love. Think about the primary relationships of those around you (for example, your parents). What was that relationship like? Were there other role models in your life who were in relationships with each other, and what did those look like?

Many people never see a healthy relationship. What we're exposed to from the media is mostly about divorces and love not really working out. Check in with yourself and ask yourself what your blueprint for love is. Check out Exercise #2 in the workbook "Know Your Blueprint for Love" to go a little deeper.

## Fix Your Blueprint for Love

Now that you know what it is, ask yourself if your blueprint for love needs a little TLC. (Hint: most people answer “yes” to this question.) Not only do you need a solid blueprint for love that reflects the New Science of Love, but you *need to believe in it*.

You need to realize that you need at least one safe and secure person in your life on whom you can depend. And it’s important to realize that this is achievable for all of us. We are all entitled and need to be safely “attached” to someone. This is something that was only recently understood.

Let me give you some background on this whole issue of “attachment” so that you can understand a little more.

If you are a parent, you have probably heard of “attachment parenting”. Basically, that’s a style of parenting that tries hard to meet a child’s needs by focusing on being a safe and secure person for your child. Of course, there are varieties and a wide range of styles within this general umbrella of “attachment parenting”, but you get the gist.

A child’s “attachment needs” were not always understood by the field of psychology. Awhile back, for example, parents faced much greater restrictions on when and how they could visit their child if he or she was sick in the hospital. Fortunately, thanks to studies demonstrating the healing power of relationships particularly for kids and parents, those days are over and parents have much more freedom in terms of visitation.

It turns out that adults have the same kinds of “attachment needs” as kids. This was not understood until much more recently in the field of psychology and is still not as widely accepted as it should be. The New Science of Love emphasizes that these needs for secure others are just as important for adults as they are for children.

Psychologists talk about different “attachment styles” that people have when connecting to loved ones. I won’t get too much into this now, but it’s important to know some background on this.

If your needs weren’t met as a child, you may connect or attach to important others in your life in a particular way that is not necessarily trusting or open. You may feel especially anxious or try to not feel anything to protect yourself from being disappointed and feeling rejected, whether you realize it or not.



This only makes sense if, while growing up, important others weren't there for you, since it really wasn't safe to rely on anyone.

When you are an adult, you may still feel unable to rely on someone, even if they are actually reliable. This clearly can cause problems in relationships. Someone who doesn't generally feel safe to connect to others is said to have an insecure style of attachment. Someone who grew up in a traumatic household, for example, would likely have a hard time feeling safe and securely attached to others unless they really worked at it.

It is really hard going through life with an insecure style of attachment.

At one point, it was believed that these attachment styles were fixed, sort of like one's height and that there wasn't anything you could do about it.

The good news that was recently discovered is that these attachment styles can change. This is a huge relief for individuals striving to create their best relationships and for couples therapists all over.

So, if right now, you cannot safely connect with your partner and have never experienced a "secure attachment" in your life, all hope is not lost. If you are someone who tends to become very anxious in relationships no matter what, and if you think that you have an insecure attachment style, that can change.

I'm telling you all of this so that you have some motivation to fix your blueprint for love if it needs fixing, and to give you some hope if you've never had what you'd call a "healthy" relationship. Proof exists to show that you can not only fix that blueprint in your mind, but actually realize it in your life and have a safe and secure attachment.

I work hard with couples to teach them that they need each other, and that's okay. People can only start to build the relationships of their dreams when they understand and accept these wired-in needs and learn to express them while also being attuned to their partners. It sounds simple, and it is—but this is impossible without the proper blueprint for love.

Take a few minutes to go to the workbook and get clear on your new blueprint for what your best relationship should look like that is backed by the New Science of Love. Go now and complete Exercise #3: Fix Your Blueprint for Love.

# CHAPTER

# 3

## The Science Behind the New Science of Love

### Experiments

In recent years, scientists have been taking love into the lab to study what it's all about. Because of new technology that allows us to see into people's brains, scientists have been able to identify what actually happens inside of our brains when we are in love or with loved ones.

Some questions that have been asked follow:

What kinds of effects does the laughter of our partner have on us? What happens when we hold hands with a loved one? Does true love really last?

For the purposes of our project here, we will just begin to scratch the surface of the science behind The New Science of Love. So we don't have to go into excruciating detail about every study; take my word for it that there is a ton of research out there that demonstrates that we are healthier, happier, less stressed, and can even heal faster with secure and close relationships.

Science also backs up that love lasts on a neurological level. Brain scans of happily married couples who say they are as passionately in love as when they first met resemble new couples in love. Who says that true love can't last?!

Here's a bit more about one famous study that was done:

James Coan, Hillary Schaefer, and Richard Davidson, in 2006, wanted to find out what kind of effect, if any, connections to others had on the way we deal with fear and pain. They did this by watching what happens to the

brains of happily married women when they are put into a functional magnetic resonance imagery (fMRI) machine and told they will be receiving a shock on their foot when they saw an “x” on the screen before them.

While going through the experiment, the women held hands of their partner, a stranger, or no hand at all. The fMRI machine was able to detect how much of their fear centers lit up in their brains when they saw the “x” and how much pain was perceived.

The results?

First, holding the hand of a stranger helped lessen the fear and pain.

Women who held the hands of strangers reported slightly less discomfort than those women who held no hands, and their brain scans matched this explanation. Similarly, their fear centers lit up but not as much as those women who had no hand to hold.

Women who held the hands of their partners, however, showed less fear, reported that they felt much less pain and their brain scans demonstrated they experienced less pain. A secure connection with a loved other can mediate our pain response!

Ready for something even more impressive?

Sue Johnson, the founder of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy, recreated Coan’s experiment by testing women in distressed marriages. These women’s brains lit up in fear and with pain when they had no hands to hold, much like the women in happy relationships who had no hands to hold. Additionally, when these women held the hand of a stranger, their fear and pain centers still lit up but a little bit less.

When the women held the hands of their partners with whom they were in distressed relationships with, their brains lit up again with fear and pain. A distressed relationship is coded as dangerous in our brains and does not protect us from fear and distress but rather heightens our fear and distress.

This in and of itself is not all that surprising after learning about Coan’s study, but it gets better.

Sue Johnson and her colleagues in Ottawa, Canada, took these couples and gave them twenty sessions of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), with

hopes to help their relationships move away from a place of distress, and then did the experiment again.

The brains of these women lit up with fear and pain when they had no hand to hold, just as before, and when they held the hands of a stranger, they still lit up with fear and pain but to a lesser extent, just as before.

After these couples engaged in a course of EFT, they were likely less distressed and more happy in their relationships as a result. The women then went back into the fMRI machines, showing the same results when they either held no hand or the hands of a partner. When these women held the hands of their partners after going through EFT, *their brains did not even register fear or pain.*

They didn't even have to *cope* with any amount of fear or pain because it wasn't even registered in their brains!

This shows us that a safe relationship—and cues of safety from our loved one—literally changes the way our brains perceive the world.

*Safe and secure relationships protect us from fear and literally change the way we perceive pain!*

Can you relate to this in your life? Has your partner been there for you when shit hit the fan in your life? Check out the Exercise #4 in the workbook, “Your Relationship and Your Fear, Pain and Distress”, to take this a bit deeper.

## **Your Love Allies**

If, after completing the exercise in the workbook, you were discouraged that your partner has not been there for you in the way that you have needed to help you cope with difficulties in your life, fear not. Remember, a safe and secure relationship is possible even for those who have never had one.

If you cannot depend on your partner the way you need to now, work through the exercises together throughout the rest of this guide and workbook and try to strengthen your relationship as a team. If you need more help, consult a couples therapist or relationship coach, preferably one trained in Emotionally Focused Therapy.

But for now, it's still important to get in touch with your love allies.

Your love allies are the people in your life who have loved you and believed in you no matter what. If you are lucky, you will have one of these people in your life. If you are extremely lucky, you may have more than one.

And if you are the luckiest of all, your number one love ally is your partner.

If you can't easily think of one, try to get in touch with an image of someone from your past who was really there for you. This doesn't have to be your mother, father, or someone close to you like a grandparent, but can be someone from the distant past like a former coach or teacher.

***“Emotional attachment is probably the primary protection against feelings of helplessness and meaninglessness.”***

***— A.McFarlane, B. van der Kolk & L. Weisaeth***

Some people will rack their brains and still not come up with anyone. If this is you, the thought of being in a healthy relationship in which you can really depend on someone may seem like it's totally impossible.

It's not. But get help—seek out a therapist to help you feel safe with someone and so that you can have someone in your corner.

Go to the workbook now and complete the Exercise #5, “Your Love Allies”.

## **How to Use the New Science of Love to Help When You're Hurt**

Knowing now about the tremendous impact that a loved one can have on the brain's response to pain, it's time to learn how to put what you know to action.

If you have an operation coming up or find yourself physically hurt somehow, call upon your love allies. If your relationship with your partner is where you need it to be, call upon the image of each other.

Hopefully, you can physically be there for each other and hold each other's hands, but if you can't, imagine your partner and how they'd want to be there for you.

If your relationship is not yet where you want and need it to be, call upon the image of another love ally. It may not make the pain go away, but it will help.

## ***Sticks and Stones can Break Your Bones – and Names Can Hurt Too: The Brain and Social Pain***

We now know that social ties can have a mediating effect on the way the brain perceives pain, but what about the other way around? Can social snubs cause the brain to hurt?

Yes. The old saying goes, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” Turns out, that’s totally not true. Social pain is real pain and registers physically.

Researchers have actually determined that social pain is coded in the same way as physical pain is in the brain. When our feelings are “hurt”, our brains are literally registering pain. The brain basically registers social rejection in the same way it might register a knife wound, in an area called the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex.

This has everything to do with why some people cut or hurt themselves to relieve emotional pain. You may be familiar with the phenomenon of “cutting”, particularly among adolescent girls.

These girls are most often not trying to kill themselves or even get the attention that a suicide attempt might call for. Rather, the physical pain is described as a relief from the tension of the emotional pain for many. Cutting then becomes a habit that can be difficult to break.

Eisenberger, Lieberman and Williams published an article in the journal *Science* in 2003 which demonstrates this, entitled *Does Rejection Hurt? An fMRI Study of Social Exclusion*. In this article, consistent with *The New Science of Love*, the authors propose that social pain is coded as physical pain to promote the goal of human connectedness, in turn, ensuring our survival.

This study, among others, highlights the severe effects of social pain and rejection. In turn, it speaks to the importance of having safe and supportive connections with others. Your significant other is the ideal person with whom to cultivate a safe and supportive relationship.

Have you ever felt so bad it physically hurt? Perhaps you’ve lost a loved one and it felt like you were ran over by a train? The mind and the body are totally interconnected, and feelings do sometimes literally hurt.

## The Chemistry behind the New Science of Love

There are a number of chemicals associated with love. We won't get into too many details here as I'm no chemist, but a basic understanding is helpful for all of us.

One of these chemicals that you may have heard of includes the hormone "oxytocin", also known as "the cuddle hormone", that is released in huge quantities when lovers are together and when mothers give birth. Even just thinking of loved ones in times of stress triggers the release of oxytocin, which helps deliver a sense of being content and calms nerves.

If you or your partner have ever had a baby and the doctors were trying to move things along, or induce you, you may have heard about Pitocin. Pitocin is actually a synthetic form of oxytocin that, when administered, speeds up the process of labor.

Another neurotransmitter you may have heard of is dopamine, which is also known as the "pleasure chemical", and is also associated with addictive behaviors (think *it feels so good, I can't stop doing it*). Dopamine is released when people first meet each other and are in the throes of passion. I imagine you can see the parallels between the feelings one has when falling in love with someone and falling addicted to cocaine? That's dopamine.

Other chemicals are involved with love as well, such as vasopressin and endorphins, and researchers continue to learn more. It's important to note that these chemicals don't just make us *feel* good, they help us stay healthy. The New Science of Love is really a science.

Oxytocin, for example, clearly can decrease stress. The more stress one has, the more likely one is to develop various illnesses. Oxytocin may simplistically be considered a huge protector against illness.

Let's actually discuss oxytocin a bit more because it really is a central molecule in the New Science of Love.

### Why You Need More O in Your Relationship

And by "O" I don't mean orgasm or even Oprah, though of course those two don't hurt.

The "O" I am referring to is oxytocin, the hormone that Paul Zak, PhD, refers to in his aptly titled book as *The Moral Molecule*.

Not only does oxytocin help reduce stress levels, improve cardiovascular health, and increase immunity, it helps you feel accepted, loved, and respected. Who doesn't want that? Isn't that what we're all after as humans, anyway?

Higher oxytocin levels are associated with increased optimism and improved self-esteem. It is associated with an increased sense of trust between people, and increased generosity.

Women who had high levels of oxytocin postpartum were also found less likely to be depressed than those who had lower levels of oxytocin. In fact, researchers were able to predict which mothers would be depressed postpartum based on levels of oxytocin. We might conclude then that oxytocin has anti-depressant effects as well.

So how do you get more O in your relationship? Make it your best relationship, and oxytocin will return the favor.

Here are just a few activities that have been shown to help boost oxytocin:

- Increased physical contact—whether you make an effort to hold hands, link arms, or just hug more often, all of these activities will increase levels of oxytocin. Don't be afraid to be physically affectionate!
- Seeing a powerful movie—good movies really get us in the minds and hearts of the characters. We empathize with the characters, and when we are pulled into an emotionally compelling movie, our oxytocin levels rise.
- Dancing and singing with others—it's all about the connection.
- Getting physical with others—like exercising together. You'll have a happier workout and the moderate physical stress will deepen your bond with the person with whom you are working out.
- Do something scary with someone—this will strengthen your connection through the release of oxytocin.
- Treat someone to dinner—this feels good and will help the oxytocin flow.
- Daydream about your partner—there has been research that shows oxytocin is released when we just think about our partners when we have a good relationship. What could be easier than that?



- Snuggle up with your pet—dogs and cats help us with oxytocin too!
- Have some sex—good sex never hurts a relationship, and it releases oxytocin as well.

These are just a few examples of how to increase your oxytocin. Now, take a look at Exercise #6, “Getting More “O” in Your Relationship”, to put these ideas into practice.

### ***Conclusion to Part I***

Now you know a bit more about the New Science of Love. You’ve learned how we’ve gotten love all wrong and many of us have been implicitly or explicitly getting the wrong message about our basic needs to connect.

We took a look at your ideas around dependency as well as your blueprint for love and where all of this may have come from. Additionally, we’ve tweaked your blueprint for love to leave room for the New Science of Love so that you can integrate this into your ideal relationship.

Lastly, we took a bit of a look into some chemistry and science behind the New Science of Love. You’ve learned about love’s effects on our brains and how love can help or hurt us in our response to pain, and we discussed a bit about oxytocin and why you need more of it.

We’ll now move onto Part II where you will learn to set the stage for your best relationship.



**PART**



**2**

**Preparation – Setting the Stage for  
Your Best Relationship**



## Introduction to Part II

Now it's time to set the stage so that you and your partner can get ready to create your best relationship with each other. Congratulations for making it this far.

You've learned about the New Science of Love and the science behind it, as well as why it's important to get clear on your belief systems around love and dependability.

Now it's time to get ready to welcome your best relationship into your life.

In Part II, we will discuss three steps to get ready to create your best relationship, which will include a review on the New Science of Love, getting clear on your desires, and the importance of being present in your life and relationship. We will also discuss the importance of your emotions—more specifically, why they are your best friends.

## CHAPTER

# 4

## Three Steps to Get Ready to Create Your Best Relationship

We are about to discuss the three steps to prepare yourself for your best relationship.

First, we'll review the basic information that you need to know in your bones about the New Science of Love. Then, we'll help you get clear on your desires. And third, we'll discuss a huge topic in itself known as mindfulness, and we will help you use this amazing tool to know thyself and cultivate presence.

### **Preparation Step 1: Know and Understand the New Science of Love**

To prepare for your best relationship, it's important that you recognize, understand, and believe in the New Science of Love.

You must recognize that we are born to have someone to look out for us, and we are born to have someone to watch our backs; it is wired into us to have those needs.

It's great to know and understand this on a cognitive level, but it's also important that you deeply understand this for yourself in your heart as well.

You must be okay with needing your partner.

Your partner should also know this and should accept that they also need you!

Because you know and understand the New Science of Love, you can recognize that if your relationship is not abusive or exploitative, it can be one

of the best cures you have against sickness, depression, and anxiety. The more secure that your relationship is, the more it will serve you. Nurture this relationship, embrace it, and don't take it for granted.

You and your partner should acknowledge that your relationship can be a powerhouse to help you both soar in your personal and professional lives, together and separate.

Check out Exercise #7, "Know and Understand the New Science of Love", in the workbook to really underscore the importance of understanding the New Science of Love and how it applies to your relationship.

## **Preparation Step 2: Get Clear on Your Desires**

***"When you have a sense of your own identity and a vision of where you want to go in your life, you then have the basis for reaching out to the world and going after your dream for a better life."***

**—Stedman Graham**

Earlier we spoke about the importance of knowing where you'd like to go in order to get there. We discussed the importance of having a clear vision of your desired future in order to achieve that.

Let's take a look at what your desires are when it comes to your relationship.

The New Science of Love tells us that a relationship in which you and your partner are accessible, responsive, and compassionate toward and engaged with each other is crucial.

You should feel important, valued, and cared for, and you should feel the same about your partner. Perhaps you'd like to feel like a priority or that you can reach your partner in times of distress.

It's important for you and your partner to be able to discuss how you'd like things to be different and how you'd like things to be better.

How would you like to feel in your best relationship? What would your best relationship look like to each of you?

Danielle LaPorte, in her amazing program "The Desire Map", revolutionizes the pursuit of goals. Her work is entirely relevant when it comes to creating your best relationship. She basically states that in trying to achieve certain things, what we're really going after is a feeling.

If your goal is, say, to get a promotion, she would ask you what the underlying *feeling* is that you think a promotion will bring. Do you wish to feel recognized? Secure? Understood?

LaPorte states that it's really the feeling, often unacknowledged or subconscious, that we're hoping to attain through the achievement of some goal. She therefore suggests that we short circuit the whole process of goal attainment by focusing first on the desired feeling. Of course we still have to put some work in, but we don't necessarily have to strive or fight so hard, as we often do.

It's critical that you consciously apply this idea around your desired feelings to your relationship, because subconsciously, you're doing it anyway. This will help provide a faster and more direct path to that way of feeling.

Check out Exercise #8, "Get Clear on Your Desires", in the workbook to get clear on your desires together so that you know what you both want from your best relationship.

To go even further with this, check out LaPorte's "The Desire Map".

As you're doing Exercise #8, remember the first step in preparing yourself for your best relationship: know and understand the New Science of Love. Make sure to integrate keys from the New Science of Love into your ideal relationship. They are so very important.

### **Preparation Step 3: Know Thyself and Cultivate Presence**

This third step to setting the stage for your best relationship is the subject matter of entire lifetimes and books in and of itself. It's the simplest thing in the world, yet it can also be the most difficult thing to do: namely, being present.

So many of us have lost touch with not only our partners, but with ourselves. The world is so fast paced, technology is incredible, and we're all hooked into our machines and phones.

It's really easy to forget about what's going on within us—how we feel at a very basic level. We often go through the world on autopilot and unaware, just trying to get through to the next day.

Our culture encourages this sort of detachment. There is so much to keep up with and be distracted by; it is hard to get a handle on what's going on within.



Alternatively, we may ruminate and feel stuck on what's going on within, whether we're depressed or anxious or spinning in our minds with some kind of problem that we can't solve.

Either way, when we're not being present, it's like we operate with blindfolds on and lose touch with our very essence.

To be able to take a step back from everything and *just notice what's going on within* and be *present* with yourself and/or your partner is truly a gift.

Dan Siegel, MD, a renowned expert in the field of interpersonal neurobiology, talks about this a lot when describing his concept of mindsight: "Our human capacity to perceive the mind of ourselves and others".

When we're not able to do this—observe ourselves or our partners, essentially—we can get lost.

A crucial step in setting the stage for your best relationship is learning how to be aware and present, first, for yourself, and then for your partner. When we are out of sync with ourselves and operate without awareness, we are setting ourselves up for trouble.

To be able to just notice whatever we are feeling—and not get lost in it—is a skill worth honing. It is basic "mindfulness", which Jon Kabat-Zinn describes as "paying attention in a particular way". Mindfulness is basically a state of mind with a moment-to-moment nonjudgmental awareness of your experience.

When we are able to be mindful, we are no longer at the mercy of our emotions or thoughts, and we're able to take a step back. We are also able to experience ourselves on all levels, not just on those surface levels that we tend to be aware of.

The practice of mindfulness meditation, which is essentially just being present and observing, has been shown to have all kinds of positive effects on one's health, both mentally and physically. There has been a great deal of research on the subject, especially in recent years.

Mindfulness has been shown, for example, to be greatly beneficial for stress reduction. In 2010, a few researchers looked at almost forty studies that had been done on mindfulness and its effect on stress. They concluded that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, which is an approach to teaching mindfulness, is useful for stress reduction and changing emotional and

cognitive processes that may contribute to clinical disorders that people experience<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, research on mindfulness has been shown to result in decreased rumination, with less depression and negative emotions in people who practiced mindfulness meditation on a ten-day retreat. These subjects also had increased attention spans after the retreat<sup>3</sup>.

I could go on and on citing research that has been done on the many benefits of mindfulness, but I will spare you from that, since you're probably eager to learn how to use this ancient practice to set the stage for your best relationship.

Please believe me, or do more research for yourself if you don't: mindfulness can keep us whole when the world around us is trying to tear us apart.

In the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the most respected Zen masters in the world:

*"Mindfulness is like that—it is the miracle which can call back in a flash our dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each minute of life."*

Mindfulness is a tool that will help you know yourself on all levels.

You don't need to check into an ashram for weeks on end to reap the benefits of this practice. You don't need to be a Zen monk or even an aspiring one.

You just need to be able to take a step back and notice what's going on.

Take a deep breath and notice how your body feels. Are you tense? Do you have a knot in your stomach? What are you unaware of that you can figure out just by checking in?

And even though mindfulness is about being aware, it's not just that. It's about being accepting and open to your experience. It's about not judging

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<sup>2</sup> Hoffman, S. G., Sawyer, A. T., Witt, A. A., & Oh, D. The effect of mindfulness-based therapy on anxiety and depression: A metaanalytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 2010, vol. 78, pp. 169–183.

<sup>3</sup> Chambers, R., Lo, B. C. Y., & Allen, N. B. The impact of intensive mindfulness training on attentional control, cognitive style, and affect. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 2008, vol. 32, pp. 303–322.

your experience. It's about being aware of it on all levels and not getting entangled in it.

You know when you're worried about something and it's all consuming? You know when you can't do anything because you are just a ball of worry?

Mindfulness is about taking a step back from that and saying, "Hello, worry, nice to see you—I am curious about you. You aren't going to overtake me. I know that because I am not you, but I am watching you. I'm not threatened by you, but I'm interested in you. I notice you make me feel pretty uncomfortable at times!"

Being mindful can be empowering.

Because mindfulness is so important to set the stage not only for your best relationship but for your best life, I have included several exercises to practice in the workbook that can help you get started right away.

Please check out Exercises #9, 10 and 11 in the workbook to try on some mindfulness for size before taking the next steps, and keep up with this practice, even if for only a few minutes a day.

# CHAPTER

# 5

## Why Emotions Are Your Best Friends

***“If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.”***

**—Saint Thomas**

“Emotion”, like “dependence”, has been somewhat of a dirty word in our culture. Our culture has long been dominated by the notion that our cognition is king and we are told to “control our feelings”.

Perhaps you’ve heard about the excommunication of emotion from our experience:

- “Don’t wear your heart on your sleeve.”
- “You shouldn’t let your feelings get involved.”
- “Never make emotional decisions.”

Danielle LaPorte points this out beautifully in her program “The Desire Map”. Likewise, Sue Johnson places emotion front and center in her groundbreaking Emotionally Focused Therapy.

In the great big world outside of folks like LaPorte and Johnson, we are taught to distrust our emotions and that they are irrational. Moreover, it is widely assumed that they are inferior to the almighty frontal cortex of our brains, the part of our brain responsible for thought.

People think that they can overpower or control their emotions. We are taught on some level that we *should* control our emotions. And people successfully

get out of touch with their emotions as a result. This is especially true for men, as it's generally less culturally acceptable for men to be in touch with their feelings.

It is hard for some people to even know what emotions they are having. In therapy, I might ask someone "what does that feel like?" and they answer what they think. I check in with them again to get a sense of the emotion they are experiencing, and they have no vocabulary to describe their experience.

They are so divorced from an integral part of their experience, and it's causing them all kinds of trouble in their relationships. It's not their fault. It's a result of a familial and/or cultural experience that does not value emotions.

Some people have described "emotions" to me as a luxury to which they were never allowed to attend to in their lives, because life in their families was all about surviving and making sure they were able to eat and make it to the next day. Their emotional experiences went neglected as children, and as a result, they struggle to be in touch with their emotions as adults.

This split between our emotional experience and our lived experience is a big problem.

We are out of touch with our feelings. And many people believe they can think away an emotion or control their feelings somehow, and that's simply not true.

*You can't outsmart your emotions.*

All of our attempts to cut ourselves off or control our emotions have led us to be out of touch with ourselves, with each other, and with our world.

Perhaps this is why in the U.S. we not only see such high rates of divorce, but also such baffling amounts of depression and anxiety. We rarely give our feelings any breathing room—and so they fester and become pathological.

The root of the word "emotion" essentially means "to move". Emotions move us—and when we resist the movement, we run into problems. Similarly, an emotion's nature is to move and change itself.

*Emotions are fluid.*

When we make room for our emotional experience, and accept it for what it is, as in mindful awareness, our emotions will move and change. So you won't be stuck with that pain you're trying to avoid forever.

But so much of our energy is wrapped up in avoiding painful feelings or difficult emotions. We want to medicate away our grief, drink away our anxiety, and numb out when things get tough by pouring ourselves into work or some other form of distraction.

Even in the field of psychology and family therapy, the importance of emotions has only recently come on the scene. The groundbreaking work of Dr. Sue Johnson and her colleagues developing and researching Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) has revolutionized the way therapists help couples and families connect with each other.

EFT has had incredible success rates in couples counseling, an area within psychotherapy which previously could not demonstrate such an impressive track record in actually helping people. EFT works so well for couples and families largely because it's the first therapy of its kind to recognize the importance of emotions and privilege them.

*It's all about the feelings.*

Danielle LaPorte, in her amazing program “The Desire Map” refers to emotions as the GPS of our soul. Listen to your emotions, and you will be that much closer to your soul. When you're closer to your soul, you are much more able to have deep and meaningful relationships.

***“My willingness to be intimate with my own deep feelings creates the space for intimacy with another.”***  
—**Shatki Gawain**

Our emotions are actually critical to our survival as a species. Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist and author of *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, states that we are about as able to stop emotions as we are able to stop ourselves from sneezing. If you think you can stop or control your emotions, you are probably just not aware of them.

Just to clarify: When I say you cannot “control emotion”, I mean that you have little say over what kinds of emotions you will have, and you can't necessarily stop yourself from feeling a certain way.

Sure, there are people who chronically have negative thoughts and suffer from depression as a result of such thoughts, and changing habitual negative thought patterns can help manage negative feelings.

In other words, if you think negatively all the time, you will most likely start to feel crappy, and if you change your thoughts you'll probably start to feel better. This is how cognitive therapists help people overcome depression, and for many people, it works. But at the end of the day, we're all going to experience feelings like "fear" and "sadness", whether we like it or not.

Our emotions have hung around for over tens of thousands of years of evolution because they are keys to our survival as animals. Feelings like fear and anxiety are intrinsically linked to biological systems that mobilize us to run fast, fight hard, and have superhuman strength in times of need. Just think about the mother who can lift up a car to save her child from getting crushed underneath it.

We'll talk more about this later, but, for now, please recognize this:

Our emotions speak faster to us than more recently developed structures of our brain, and in times of danger, our bodies often know that we are in trouble sooner than we can cognitively realize.

*Emotions are lightning fast.*

Emotions are not only keys to our survival, but they are also major communication signals that we are constantly emitting, especially to our partners. In fact, our partners become experts on reading our emotional cues.

I have worked with some couples in which a partner will pick up on how the other is feeling before the other even realizes herself. It may be surprising to you that this is not uncommon. This is because of what Dr. Alan Schore calls "right brain to right brain communication". In other words, you and your partner's emotional brains are communicating with each other faster than you can cognitively realize.

So is cognition king after all? I think not.

When we get into trouble with our partners, chances are there is something emotionally that is getting lost or not fully expressed. Our emotions are like icebergs: we often only see the tips of them. We don't realize there is a whole lot more stuff underneath the surface, whether they are our own or another's emotions.

So if your emotional experience is sort of like a layer cake, sometimes you're just in touch with the frosting.

When there are painful and raw emotions within you somewhere – think fear, loneliness, sadness—you may try to avoid experiencing them. We rarely enjoy negative experiences, so this would make sense.

These painful feelings aren't going anywhere and are still within you underneath somewhere, but to manage them you might feel and express something on the surface that might feel a bit safer, say for example, anger.

The raw and vulnerable emotions underneath the anger may be threatening because they are so painful. So you float up to the surface experience of anger, and that's all your partner sees. This is when you start to get into trouble because you and your partner start fighting based on each other's frosting, not your deeper, more authentic experiences.

We describe the frosting as “secondary emotions” and the real cake as “primary emotions”. Secondary emotions are not only just on the surface, they are actually reactions to primary emotions. So when we feel fear on a primary level, we may react with anger as a secondary emotion.

We'll go more into depth about primary and secondary emotions when we get into the seven steps to creating your best relationship. For now, it's important to know the difference and how secondary emotions can mask what's really going on and get us into trouble.

Underneath the frosting lies the bottom of the cake and the larger part of the iceberg. Herein lies your primary emotional experience: the much richer, deeper, and stronger feelings. Up top, there are these defensive and safe feelings that keep your true experience locked up away from your partner because it feels too unsafe to experience them yourself, much less share them.

So you get into fights based on one dimension of a multidimensional experience. Couples rant and rave at each other when really they want the same thing. It hardly seems fair.

This is where the mindfulness comes in.

When you stop, settle down, breathe, and just sit with yourself, you are able to pay attention. You can look at your thoughts and maybe look at your feelings and get a sense of where you are.

We rush around and don't pay attention to ourselves enough. On some level, are we afraid that we will drown in a sea of painful emotion? Perhaps, but emotions will move if we just give them the space they need. Instead, we



avoid, and as a result, the emotions build up and go uncared for. Sometimes they turn into depression or full fledged anxiety disorders.

*Your emotions are your best friends because they exist to serve and guide you.*

They are keys to our survival as a species, hardwired biological signals that are integral to our well being. But we need to befriend them.

If you did feel sad or hurt or scared underneath some anger you experienced with your partner, what if you were to share that? Wouldn't your partner be more likely to feel warmth toward you if you let him or her know you were feeling vulnerable?

Hopefully.

If your partner isn't getting yelled at by you, but, instead, you are crying, he or she is much more likely to feel compelled to comfort you and be there for you (unless your relationship pattern is so entrenched in a negative pattern that your partner still does not feel safe with you *or* is a sociopath!).

When people are in touch with their total emotional experience and are able to share this with each other, they are much less likely to get into blood boiling fights and impossible patterns of disconnection.

So, take a few minutes now to get more in touch with your emotions, both in general and when you and your partner get into it. Exercise #12 in the workbook will help.

## **Conclusion**

You've made it to the end of Part II and hopefully you have now set the stage for your best relationship. You have solidified the New Science of Love in your brain and are now pretty clear about what your best relationship should look like.

You have learned a great deal about mindful awareness, which is a tool that can radically change your life. I hope that you use it regularly and practice often.

Lastly, we discussed a bit about emotions and their importance. You've learned why your emotions are your best friends and are not to be dismissed.

At this point, you should be ready to learn and apply the seven steps to creating your best relationship.

Let's dive into Part III!



**PART**



**Seven Steps to Your Best Relationship**



## Introduction to Part III

In Part III, we will discuss the seven steps to creating your best relationship. These seven steps do not exist in a vacuum but are built upon all that has been already discussed.

The seven steps are as follows: putting it all together; put your relationship to the test; identifying your pattern; put yourself to the test: know your role; know your partner's role; teaming up and breaking the pattern; and connecting in a whole new way.

These seven steps are important for all couples to learn about, be they happy, sad, frustrated, or hopeless, so that they can prevent negative patterns from taking over their relationships. If you and your partner are already pulled apart by these negative patterns, read these steps and try out these exercises. It is my hope that these seven steps will help you come back together again and achieve your best relationship.

If your relationship's negative cycle is particularly bad, these seven steps are best worked through with a couples therapist or relationship coach, especially one trained in Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFT). These steps have their basis in EFT.

With or without a couples therapist or relationship coach, these steps should help shed light on what's got you stuck and how to achieve a closer relationship.

It can be very difficult work to go through these steps as a couple without outside help if your relationship is in a particularly bad place. The good news, however, is that couples who go through the process of Emotionally Focused Therapy demonstrate excellent results and improve their relationship, *regardless of the level of distress that they started with.*

More specifically, a study of couples who participated in EFT demonstrated that 90 percent made some improvements in their relationships, with 70 percent of couples totally improving their relationships.

I think it is worth repeating that couples of all levels of distress were able to achieve these rates of improvement. So that means that if you and your partner go through these seven steps together but still struggle together because you are so distressed, seeing an EFT therapist has a good shot of taking you those extra steps you need to create your best relationship.

With or without couples therapy or coaching by a skilled relationship coach, these seven steps will definitely help your foundation.

Let's get started!

# CHAPTER

# 6

## Step 1: Putting It All Together

Now you understand the New Science of Love and have set the stage to welcome in your best relationship. It's time for you and your partner to apply the seven steps to your relationship in order to make it your best.

The first step is essentially to review everything we've discussed with your partner. Together, you should begin to apply the New Science of Love to your relationship.

The New Science of Love demonstrates that it is crucial to have safe and secure connections with our loved ones, particularly our partners. If you don't feel safe turning to your partner in times of need, if you are insecure that he or she will be there for you, or if you don't feel comfortable relying on your partner, your relationship has room to grow. These steps will help you create the space that you need to grow.

One key to making these seven steps work is the understanding of mindful awareness, which was discussed earlier in Part II. Partners get into trouble with each other and with themselves when they are out of touch with certain aspects of their experiences, particularly emotional ones. Further, being present for each other emotionally is an important key for any relationship to work.

In the last section, we reviewed the importance of emotions. Mindfulness can help you access all aspects of your experience so that you can bring your full self to your relationship. This is crucial for your best relationship.

It might make sense to review the exercises on mindfulness in the workbook and perhaps do them from time to time to review. We can never practice too much mindfulness.

Together with your partner, go to Exercise #13 in the workbook, “Putting it all Together”, to put everything together about the New Science of Love. The following steps toward creating your best relationship will be easier to go through together if you have fully integrated what we have already discussed.



# CHAPTER

# 7

## Step 2: Put Your Relationship to the Test

Are you living your best relationship?

This section is about putting your relationship to the test. We will discuss qualities of a relationship that are necessary in order for it to be your best.

In Exercise #14 of the workbook, “Putting Your Relationship to the Test”, you can put your relationship to the test to see whether these characteristics are present in your relationship.

Dr. Sue Johnson, the main psychologist responsible for the groundbreaking Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), has brought the New Science of Love to tens of thousands of couples across the globe through EFT. She discusses necessary characteristics of any good relationship. When these characteristics are lacking, couples get into trouble.

In order to have a relationship in accordance with the New Science of Love, Johnson offers three qualities that partners should feel are present in their relationships. She uses the acronym “ARE” to summarize these qualities.

First, each partner should feel the other is *Accessible* to them. When you want to reach your partner, do you feel like he or she is there for you? Do you feel like you can easily access your partner and turn to them easily? Or, instead, do you have doubts about whether they will be able to hear you or be there for you and instead turn away?

Second, you should also feel that your partner is *Responsive* to you. When you do turn to them, does your partner respond? Do you feel that they care

enough to act on your behalf? Or, when you reach out to your partner, are you frequently let down that they don't respond?

And lastly, you should feel that your partner is *Emotionally Engaged* with you. Do you feel connected? Do you feel involved? Or, do you feel like there is a separation between the two of you?

These three qualities, Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Emotional Engagement are critical to a relationship at its best. If either you or your partner don't feel that the other is either fully or close to fully accessible, responsive, or emotionally engaged, your relationship is missing out.

The New Science of Love teaches us having a secure connection to our partners is a critical task we have as humans. The qualities of accessibility, responsiveness, and emotional engagement are a few by which we can measure the strength of our relationships.

Put your relationship to the test. Check out Exercise #14 in the workbook and take the quiz adapted by Dr. Johnson's "ARE" questionnaire from her cutting edge book about the New Science of Love, *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*.

Hopefully, you'll be able to use this exercise as a springboard to increase your accessibility, responsiveness, and emotional engagement with each other.

# CHAPTER

# 8

## Step 3: Identify Your Pattern

Couples in trouble often question if maybe they made the wrong decision in committing to their partner. They wonder if they were never really compatible or if they will ever be able to have the same style of communication.

Is this you?

More likely than not, these couples and perhaps you find yourselves at the mercy of a destructive pattern in your relationship. Such patterns spin out of control and pull you apart. In reality, the problem isn't really you, and it isn't really your partner, but it's this terrible cycle that's taken over your relationship.

One way that Emotionally Focused Therapy fixes relationships is by helping couples identify these destructive negative cycles. Even though these patterns can have a life of their own and be very difficult to get a grip on, the good news is that there are only a handful of such cycle "types".

Perhaps you'll find it reassuring that countless couples get caught in these patterns—you aren't the only ones.

In her book *Hold Me Tight, Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love* Sue Johnson titles these patterns as "find the bad guy", "the protest polka", and "freeze and flee". We will use Dr. Johnson's apt names of these patterns to describe them for our purposes.

Let's take a look at each of them.

*Find the bad guy*

This is a common pattern early on in relationships when they start to become distressed. The name says it all: you and your partner are basically pointing fingers at each other (and going nowhere, while you're at it). A common response to feeling bad or upset is to lash out, and this is what you're doing with each other. So, if you and your partner do a lot of name-calling and yell back and forth at each other, then "find the bad guy" is your pattern. You're both engaged in the argument and are likely saying hurtful things to each other.

You may not feel heard, seen, or validated by your partner, and, of course, this is very frustrating. So you lash out. And when you lash out, your partner feels the same: unheard, invisible, and invalidated. Your partner becomes frustrated and lashes out now at you, perhaps in a slightly escalated manner. And this triggers you.

Around and around you go.

Unless you can easily repair such fights, your hurtful attacks on each other aren't doing you any good. The good news is that the "find the bad guy" pattern is an initial pattern that takes hold of relationships and doesn't necessarily last long.

If it goes unaddressed, "find the bad guy" can dissolve into a more difficult and entrenched pattern that we will discuss below. But there are ways to get out of this cycle before it's too late. The rest of this program will certainly help, but, for now, here is a starting point to try to stop this cycle before it gets more serious.

First, check in with each other to see if you agree that you're in this cycle. If so, I would imagine that you both hate the yelling. You'd both probably much rather just get along. Can you agree on that?

Once you've agreed on that, decide to team up against this "find the bad guy" pattern, because, let's face it, it doesn't get either of you anywhere. We'll go a bit deeper with this later, but, for now, it makes sense to agree on a simple goal to quit pointing fingers at each other.

When you're caught up in this pattern, your blood is boiling and your emotions are running hot. You are actually having a physiological experience that slows down your mental processing and makes it close to impossible to be flexible or think creatively. It's going to be difficult to "agree" on whatever you're arguing about or have a productive conversation of any kind, so, at this point, it makes the most sense to just call a time out and calm down.

Decide now, when you're not in a tailspin and you are reading this together, on a signal for such a time out. Whenever one of you starts to feel the "find the bad guy" pattern starting up, throw up your signal which essentially means "I'm in the pattern and my blood is boiling. In my current state, we will not get anywhere. I need a time out!"

If your partner throws up the signal, honor it! Otherwise, this whole plan is moot. In fact, according to John Gottman, psychologist and relationship expert, being able to make successful "repairs" when not getting along is a secret weapon in every happy couple's arsenal.

For extra kicks, try to make this signal funny. Couples who can diffuse tense situations with humor tend to do better than those who cannot. Gottman wrote about one couple who mock their young daughter after fights by sticking their tongues out at each other and putting their hands on their hips. They both laugh in response to this gesture.

In the heat of an argument, it's nice to be able to remind yourself of the lighter things in life and laugh it off. Perhaps easier said than done, but if you can make it happen, your relationship will be *that* much stronger for it.

### *The Protest Polka*

"The Protest Polka" is the second pattern that Dr. Johnson writes about and is perhaps the most common among couples. Johnson's name for this pattern sounds playful, but the "Protest Polka" can be terribly destructive and difficult to stop.

Dr. Gottman found that married couples who get into this pattern early in their relationship are more likely to divorce within five years.

Perhaps you can identify it: when you have a problem with your partner, he seems to numb out, shut you out, or doesn't seem to care. You don't know what's going on with him and he seems to be moving further and farther away ever time you try to get closer. It gets you all the more agitated, frustrated, and questioning whether he even cares.

The more you approach, the more he pulls away. Or vice versa: You feel constantly cut down, criticized, and attacked by your partner, and you just want to shut down, withdraw, and avoid the hostility.

Around and around you go.

One of you (the pursuer) pushes and the other (the withdrawer) pulls away. Other psychologists have named this classic pattern the “pursue-withdraw” pattern. There is no beginning or end, but the pattern seems to define your relationship, and it is awful.

The good news is that it might not be as bad as you think, and it’s actually pretty common.

When I meet with a “pursuer”, they tell me that their biggest fear is that their partner, the “withdrawer”, doesn’t care. They feel neglected and invisible. They often become hostile, angry, and critical. Underneath, they are feeling lonely and sad.

Most often, even though the “withdrawer” seems to not care, they are actually distressed as well. A common fear of withdrawers is that their partners think lowly of them. They often feel hopeless, like they can never get it right. They are being frequently criticized and deal with this by pulling away.

It’s not that people who withdraw don’t care. Actually, they care more than anything; they just don’t know what else to do but to distance themselves from what seems like an impossible situation.

Withdrawers back off and try to protect themselves and the relationship. They fear that if they participate in the fight, it would be an all-out blowout, and nothing is more distressing than that for them.

So, if you are a pursuer, know that your withdrawing partner might just be scared of you and feeling like he can never get it right. If you are a withdrawer, it’s not that your pursuing partner loathes you and thinks you are the scum of the earth, as you may fear, but she may be feeling neglected and just wants to be closer to you.

### *Freeze and Flee*

The third and final pattern that Dr. Johnson discusses is called “freeze and flee”. A “freeze and flee” pattern in your relationship is when you both run away from each other. You probably don’t fight a lot—which may seem great—but, the thing is, you don’t really connect at all.

“Freeze and flee” can be the result of a partnership in which you both tend to avoid conflict and generally don’t get into confrontations with each other. When you have a problem with the other person, you tend to turn away

instead of trying to work it out. This is one possibility of how “freeze and flee” comes about in a relationship.

More commonly, however, the “freeze and flee” pattern takes hold of a relationship after a “protest polka” has run its course on a relationship. A protester in the protest polka can only protest for so long before getting tired and giving up. The protester then turns away from the partner that typically withdraws, and both partners are frozen and fleeing away from each other.

Suzie and Dan, for example, were in a protest polka for several years. Suzie felt invisible and neglected in the relationship and would get angry and critical toward Dan. She would beg for his attention, but, in a way that gave him the message that no matter what he could do, he wouldn't be able to please her. She would ask him to do small things, he'd inevitably do them in a way that just wasn't up to snuff or he'd forget about them altogether, and she'd relentlessly remind him of how he was constantly disappointing her.

Dan would withdraw and shut down because it was all too overwhelming for him and he figured he'd never be able to make her happy anyway. This then reinforced her idea that he just didn't care. He really did care, though, more than she could realize. He was just scared of her and felt hopeless that he'd never measure up for her.

Dan and Suzie's case was a classic protest polka, and around and around they went until Suzie got tired—so tired that she felt like she couldn't keep bothering. Essentially, she stopped getting hostile, stopped yelling, and was just quietly resentful and bitter. She'd start turning away from Dan and started to seem like she was withdrawing herself.

When “protest polkas” turn into “freeze and flee”, like in the above example with Suzie and Dan, emotions don't run all over the place and things may not look as volatile, but the relationship can be more in trouble than ever. This is when protesters can start a process of detaching, which can be very dangerous to the life of the relationship.

If this is your pattern, there is likely a great deal of distance in your relationship, and it is now more important to connect with each other than ever.

In fact, many couples wind up in therapy with a “freeze and flee” pattern because they start to get really scared that things are really ending between them. John Gottman found that couples wait an average of six years of

distress before seeking help. Often couples have already sunk into a “freeze and flee” pattern by the time they finally get help.

In these cases, their relationship is icy cold and they don't know how to connect with each other. It's important to be able to be emotionally vulnerable with your partner, but in those couples with “freeze and flee” patterns, there is no such thing as vulnerability. Both parties are protecting themselves and keeping their emotions locked away.

A “freeze and flee” relationship fails to get your needs met. You need to be able to safely turn to someone who you know will respond to you and be there for you. It is crucial that you learn to stop this pattern and start slowly turning toward one another in order to salvage your relationship.

Each relationship has its own unique twist, of course. Most relationships in trouble, however, fall into one of the three above patterns.

Do you see your pattern in any of the above types of cycles?

What's your relationship's pattern? Go to Exercise #15 in the workbook, “Identify Your Pattern”, and figure out together which pattern is yours.



## CHAPTER

# 9

## Step 4: Put Yourself to the Test: Know Your Role

In your relationship pattern, there is no beginning and there is no end. Both you and your partner are caught in the cycle and you each take steps that tend to reinforce that pattern. In coming sections, I will ask you to hold off on pointing fingers at your partner and at yourself about who's to blame. The truth of the matter is that the dynamic between you that you have co-created *is* the problem, not either of you.

That being said, you have a role in the cycle. In the fourth step, we will take a closer look at what goes on for each of you when the pattern starts and what your role is. This step is unique in that you will do this separately, and share with each other what you've discovered in step five.

### **Stress**

First, we are going to discuss stress a little bit, because it's important to have a good idea about stress and what it's all about.

We all face stressors on a daily basis. No one I know can tell me they have never experienced anxiety to one degree or another. And especially in relationships, stress is a salient topic.

Evolutionarily, we have survived because of our physiological ability to respond effectively to stressors in the environment. If a tiger chases us, our body will activate systems required to fight, flee, or freeze. We talk most about "fight or flight", but there's also a "freeze" response that takes over

as well. In the freeze response, we become less threatening to whatever dangerous being is out there because it looks like we are dead.

Here's a quick review of some basic biology. Your autonomic nervous system regulates your body's basic functions. The autonomic nervous system is divided into two main parts: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. These different systems work in a complementary way, with the sympathetic nervous system heating you up and preparing you to be active and the parasympathetic nervous system cooling you down and preparing you to relax.

In other words, your sympathetic nervous system tells you "it's go time" and your parasympathetic nervous system tells you "all clear" and enables you to let your guard down.

When we're talking about stress, we're dealing with the sympathetic nervous system. A stressor, regardless of whether it's perceived solely in your mind or it's really out there, will activate the sympathetic nervous system.

What does it look like physiologically when your sympathetic nervous system gets turned on?

Think of the last time you felt anxiety. Perhaps your heart rate increases, you sweat, you get hot, your pupils dilate, you may have some difficulty breathing, you are suddenly alert and awake, your digestion comes to a halt, and you may not have an appetite.

When your sympathetic nervous system gets activated, you are essentially mobilized physiologically to do whatever you need to do to escape or attack the danger. Given that you are alive and reading this, your lineage has survived because your ancestors' sympathetic nervous systems worked, and they were able to reap the benefits from this stress response.

Congratulations.

The problem is now that much of our stress comes from problems that might not necessarily require physical mobilization as escaping the jaws of a tiger once did. Yes, there are still many dangerous elements out there in the world, but few of them require such physical prowess as we are designed to execute.

If this stress goes unmanaged, we get ulcers, develop back problems, start having panic attacks, and experience a range of other problems. You probably know that stress is connected with many health problems.

How it might manifest for each of us when it goes unchecked can be unique.

## **Stress and your relationship**

Now, think of the last time you and your partner had a bad fight. Which do you think came on the scene—your parasympathetic nervous system or your sympathetic nervous system? Hint: This shouldn't be difficult to answer if you read the last few paragraphs.

When you and your partner get into a really bad fight, especially if you don't have a solid foundation to begin with, your sympathetic nervous system goes haywire. Biologically you become deregulated, you surge with cortisol (the hormone associated with stress), and you might as well be in the jungle with the tiger. Can you relate?

It doesn't sound good. But this explanation gives us permission to feel as horrible and out of control as we actually do when we fight with our partners. It is part of our human condition. The New Science of Love backs it up: our connection to our safe loved one is paramount to our survival.

When we are in a fight with our partners or when we don't feel connected, a primal panic response goes off within us, and it's like we are facing life or death. This phenomenon has been studied extensively by neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp, who has written on the neuroevolutionary origins of our emotions<sup>4</sup>.

Sue Johnson aptly points out that when couples discuss their relationship problems, they use life and death metaphors. People feel like they are in free fall, that they are overtaken by a tidal wave, or that they are hanging from a cliff. Couples in my practice have used these metaphors and other similar ones to discuss how traumatic it is when they are disconnected from their partners.

If you experience this primal panic when things go wrong in your relationship, I want to reassure you that it's not because you are too needy, too attached,

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<sup>4</sup> Panksepp, Jaak. (1998) *Affective Neuroscience: The foundations of human and animal emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

too dependent, or just overall crazy. It's because you are human. Yes, we all have a different range of the extent to which we feel this way when things go wrong, but it is ultimately part of our human condition.

## Your role

When you feel like you cannot reach out and connect with your partner, your relationship is facing serious stress. If connecting with your partner doesn't happen, there are only a few ways to cope with this.

Our strategies for dealing with a felt inability to connect with our partners are as follows: We either turn up our needs and become louder—demanding a response from our partner—or we turn down our needs and become quieter and hide from our partner.

Let's look at each of these strategies separately.

In times of disconnect, when our strategy is to turn up our needs, we typically get louder and can become critical of our partner. We feel angry. Things heat up. We feel like we cannot reach our partner, so we become more demanding and hostile at times. We feel frustrated that we can't connect and have no problem letting that be known.

When our strategy is the opposite, namely to turn down our needs, we become quieter. We shrink away and distance ourselves. We turn away from our partner and essentially say, "I will not let you hurt me. I will not care." We try to convince ourselves that we don't care and we turn down our needs to connect and try to act as if they don't exist. Essentially, we try to numb out.

In many relationships, each partner gets set in their ways and has their preferred strategy in moments of disconnect. Some people alternate between turning things up and turning things down, but most people have a preferred way of coping with an inability to reach their partner.

It's important for you to know your role in your relationship. What is your preferred strategy? Check out Exercise #16 in the workbook, "Know Your Role", to help figure this out.

### *What's going on underneath—a deeper look*

You have now determined whether you tend to turn the dial up or down when you feel like you cannot connect with your partner. Equally, if not more

important, is an understanding of what is going on for you on all levels when you are faced with these moments.

As you go through these exercises, I want you to think of your human experience as multilayered.

Remember in the previous section when we discussed the frosting and the cake? We'll be discussing that a bit more.

We are going to discuss your experiences on a behavioral level (what you do), a cognitive level (what you think), and an emotional level (what you feel). Sometimes these levels have multiple layers. We are far from two dimensional.

### *Your Behavior*

Let's first look behaviorally at what is happening when you feel like you can't reach your partner. We have already addressed this to some extent. Simply put, you either approach your partner and become louder and more demanding or you back off and distance yourself. This is what you do and what your partner observes.

### *Your Thoughts*

Cognitively, what is going on for you when you feel like you can't connect to your partner? What are you thinking about? If you turn things up and get louder, you may be thinking, "If I get loud enough then he will finally start to pay attention to me," or "I can't believe I can't reach my partner right now." If you turn things down, you may be telling yourself, "I can't let her hurt me like this. I'm just not going to care," or "this doesn't matter."

What do you think?

### *Your Emotions*

Emotionally things can be a little more complex and multilayered. Because of what we know from the New Science of Love, it's clear that emotions have everything to do with our experiences in relationships. Emotions are so much richer and more important than they have historically been given credit for.

Emotions are not nearly as simple as behavior or even as thoughts to detect. Sometimes we ourselves don't even know what we're feeling on all levels.

Using the language used in Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), we are going to discuss two types of emotions that we have already mentioned: primary emotions and secondary emotions.

### *Primary Emotions*

A primary emotion is an immediate emotional response to something in the moment. Primary emotions are critical to our survival as humans because they tell us what we need to do.

Primary emotions can feel anywhere from really good to really bad. Joy, surprise, anger, fear, disgust, and sadness are all primary emotions. There can be others as well: contentment, fulfillment, peace, shame—you get the drift.

All emotions have action tendencies associated with them. When one feels sad, a common action tendency is to seek support. When one feels angry, an understandable action tendency is to assert oneself. So if I see that tiger in the distance and I see that she notices me, I'm going to feel the primary emotion of fear, and my action tendency will be to run like hell.

Being in touch with our primary emotions is critical to our survival because they help guide our thoughts and actions.

We are often much more readily in touch with positive primary emotions than with negative ones. Even though it can be more difficult, it is just as important for us to be aware of more painful primary emotions.

In fact, we get into deep trouble when we are cut off from our experience of primary emotions, whether they are positive or negative. When this happens, we are essentially cut off from ourselves.

Couples get into trouble here big time because when partners lose the experience of their primary emotions, they lose themselves and then lose each other.

### *Secondary emotions*

Secondary emotions are the emotions we have in reaction to primary emotions. They're the frosting on the cake.

It's really quite easy to confuse secondary emotions for primary emotions and I see it happen every day in my office and sometimes in my own experience! (Even with this awareness, we still sometimes fall into the same traps.)

Secondary emotions are sort of like the tip of an iceberg with the primary emotion underneath accounting for most of the experience. Secondary emotions arise when we don't allow, accept, or experience our primary emotions.

Let me review: Although many might argue this point, we simply cannot outthink an emotion. So if someone does not like the emotion they are experiencing and tries to deny it somehow, a secondary emotion might emerge as a result.

Secondary emotions are dangerous because they hide our actual primary experience. Remember, primary emotions are crucial to our survival. Secondary emotions can be insidious and dangerous in relationships because they hide how we really feel.

Our softer, more primary and raw emotions become masked by secondary, defended and self-protective emotions. As a result, to our partners it looks like we are feeling much less vulnerable than we may be actually feeling, and this often has the result of creating distance.

Remember when we discussed how emotions have action tendencies? If, as a result of something our partner does, our primary emotion is feeling scared that our partner will leave, an action tendency could be to seek comfort from our partner. That might understandably draw our partner closer.

However, if we don't like feeling scared or don't want to acknowledge that primary emotion, we might experience a secondary emotion, like frustration, which would more likely push our partner away.

Let me give you an example to illustrate this and what this might look like in a relationship.

*Primary and Secondary Emotions: Julia and John*

Julia and John are in a relationship and Julia feels like no matter what she does, she cannot reach John. She asks him to do the littlest things, and he doesn't come through. He doesn't come home on time, he seems non-responsive when she tries to talk to him, and he messes up the simplest tasks. Further, he doesn't take her out like he used to, he doesn't compliment her at all, and he seems to just want to get away from her.

Let's look at Julia's emotional experience. What we see is that she is angry and hostile toward John. She is constantly criticizing him and telling him how

he continues to let her down. Legitimately, she is angry and upset. Of course she is, as it feels to her like she is the only one in the relationship. Julia is the pursuer in the relationship and tends to turn the volume up when she feels disconnected from John.

Julia knows she's angry, and John certainly knows she's angry. Anyone looking in on their lives can see that she's angry. And if I were to ask Julia how she feels about this situation, she'd tell me she's angry.

That anger is real, but there's more than just anger going on, as the anger is a secondary emotion to a much more raw and vulnerable primary emotion. If I spent some time with Julia and asked her to take a deep breath and check in with herself about what else is going on—what's going on underneath the anger—she'd tell me that she was scared. Terrified, in fact.

The message that she continues to get from John is that she's not important to him, she doesn't matter, she feels invisible, and she's scared that he will never see her or acknowledge her again. A deep primal fear that she is not important to her most important other is, therefore, her primary emotion.

When Julia experiences this fear in the room with John and me, she indicates that it feels like she is falling through the air with no safety net to catch her. She is terrified. And it is much easier to be angry and frustrated, both secondary emotions, than be in touch with that terror all the time.

The problem is not the primary emotion itself but when it becomes lost. It does not go away or transform into something else; it just gets buried. And Julia loses touch with this fear and only experiences and communicates anger.

Her fear is actually indicative of the importance that John has for her. She is so scared that she is not important to him. All the while, John just gets the message that everything he does is wrong and that she will never be happy with him. She is scary to him since she is always so snappy toward him, and he has no idea she is afraid herself.

If that primary emotion of fear was a little more apparent to both Julia and John, there might not be such a problem. John would be able to let Julia know that even though he makes mistakes and might not always get everything right, he cares for her more than she realizes. He would be able to tell her how important she is to him, and the distance between them would begin to narrow.



In the words of Anthony Robbins, “Self-awareness is one of the rarest human commodities.”

Knowing your role in your relationship on all levels and having that self-awareness is crucial not only to achieve your best relationship, but to be your best self in all aspects of your life.

Behaviorally, it is fairly easy to know what’s going on.

Cognitively, you just need to sort of stop and ask yourself what you are thinking.

Emotionally, your secondary emotions are probably very apparent and are easier to access.

The main question then becomes what’s really going on underneath for you? What is the primary emotion that you are experiencing particularly at times of disconnect between you and your partner?

Exercise #17 in workbook, “Know Your Role on all Levels”, will help you get a better sense of your experience at every layer.

By the end of step 4, you should know whether you tend to turn up your needs or turn them down. You identify more with either someone who becomes loud and pursues in the relationship or someone who gets quiet and withdraws.

You should also have a richer understanding of your experience on a behavioral, cognitive, and multilayered emotional level when you and your partner get into your fights or when you experience distance.

Armed with the resource of mindful self-awareness discussed in Part II, you will be better able to sink more deeply into your primary emotion to know what’s really going on for you on a primary level, both when you’re experiencing distance in your relationship and during other times of life as well.

## CHAPTER

# 10

## Step 5: Know Your Partner's Role

At this point, you and your partner have each gone through step four, have hopefully completed the workbook exercises, and have a better understanding of your role in the relationship and your experience on all levels when you feel like you can't connect to your partner.

You also know whether your style is generally to pursue or to withdraw when you feel like you can't reach your partner. Now it's important to understand what your partner's role is.

Does your partner heat things up or cool things down? Does your partner tend to lash out at you, or back off and take space? Do they pursue you, or withdraw from you? What do you imagine that your partner is thinking and feeling on all levels when you are not connected?

You and your partner should now each take some time to complete Exercise #18 in the workbook, "Know Your Partner's Role", to see if you have the right ideas about each other's experience.

Once you've completed this exercise, discuss it with each other. Talk about what ideas you have about your partner's experiences and whether they're right or off the mark.

Use your own insights gleaned from Step 4 to help your partner really understand what's going on for you.

When hearing from your partner, try to take a step outside of your own experience and really hear and appreciate what your partner is saying. Try not to get defensive or reactive and just accept his or her experience for what it is, with the understanding that your partner will try to do the same for you.

# CHAPTER

# 11

## Step 6: Team Up and Break the Pattern

By now, you should not only be able to identify the pattern that occurs between you and your partner during times of distress, but you should also have a good understanding of your role in that pattern as well as your partner's. In addition to knowing what you actually do in the pattern, you know what you tend to think and feel on both a secondary and primary level.

In step 5, you were able to hopefully share this in-depth look at your experience with your partner in a way that they understood, and you were able to understand your partner in a whole new way by hearing about their experience on all of these levels.

Now that you have this rich understanding of your experiences within the pattern, it is up to you and your partner to unite and call war on this pattern.

It is crucial that you team up together and recognize that it's not one or the other of you who is always at fault. Actually, it's this pattern that takes hold of both of you that is the problem. Yes, you both may have a role in it, but it becomes self-perpetuating and pulls you further into your roles that pull you apart from each other.

### *Externalizing the pattern*

I learned about a technique called "externalizing" in graduate school when I was studying a form of psychotherapy called "Narrative Therapy," created by the late Michael White and David Epston. Externalizing is essentially when you extract something thought to be contained within a person and place it outside of them.

For example, if a child was said to be depressed and was seeing a narrative therapist, the therapist would “externalize the problem” with the child. They would give the depression a name, an identity, and would discuss it as something outside of the child. This helps the child get distance from the problem, and they work together to lessen the power that the problem has.

I have seen Narrative Therapy work wonders.

To really conquer this negative pattern you’re in, you and your partner need to externalize it. Look at it as this evil third force in your relationship that casts its spell over you both and causes you to act in ways that are not good for the relationship.

To really externalize it, I encourage you to give it a name. One couple I worked with named it “John”, just because anthropomorphizing it was pretty funny to them. Another couple called it “the tornado”. Discuss the cycle together and decide on a name for it that feels right and that you both agree upon.

Make it funny if you can, even though there’s nothing funny about it.

Exercise #19 in the workbook, “Externalize the Pattern”, should help you choose a fitting name.

### *Stopping the pattern*

It is crucial that you are able to stop the pattern together.

Be forewarned: This is a process that doesn’t change automatically overnight because you want it to, unfortunately. The process has ups and downs. It can take time and a lot of effort. You may miraculously come together and stop the pattern brilliantly one day and find yourselves at its mercy the next. Be patient and continue to work on it.

Just because you understand what’s going on in an intellectual way does not mean you can easily overcome this pattern. It is tricky and sneaky, and it fires you up emotionally, so it’s hard to get distance from it. That’s why it’s so important to externalize it together when you aren’t feeling under siege by it.

On a day-to-day level, start with your own self-awareness. Be mindful. Be present.

Start with your first warning signs. How do you know when you start to get caught in the pattern? What do you start feeling, thinking, then doing? Use

your mindfulness skills to know your own warning signs that you're entering that territory.

Become a sleuth in catching these symptoms of the pattern and try to call yourself out on it.

Agree with your partner that you will try your best to be supportive of each other as you try to disarm the pattern. Go slow and listen to each other. If your partner says, "I think we're getting in it," or "I think the tornado is starting," try to back up and give them credit for picking up on it.

This can be hard.

This *is* hard.

Hopefully you will be able to do this with each other, but many cannot, especially at first. The pattern can be so entrenched that it has really taken over and emotionally it's next to impossible to slow down and step out of it.

This takes work.

An Emotionally Focused Couples Therapist or skilled relationship coach will help you if you cannot go it alone.

Check out Exercise #20 in the workbook, "Stopping the Pattern", to help you tackle this together.

Over time, you will hopefully be able to catch your pattern before it starts and you will be able to stop it dead in its tracks if you stick with the process and seek additional help if necessary.

## CHAPTER

# 12

## Step 7: Connect In a Whole New Way

By the time you have reached step 7, you hopefully have not only a rich understanding of your destructive pattern intellectually, but you also know your role in it on all levels and have had the experience of being able to team up against it together and overcome it.

If this is the case, congratulations!

You may be experiencing relief from years of circular endless arguments and silly squabbles that have had more to do with how important you are to each other than whatever you thought you were arguing about.

By now, putting together The New Science of Love and your own relationship issues, I am hopeful that you understand your true significance to each other. Truly knowing how important you are to each other is a strong foundation of any relationship.

You may still be feeling that something is missing, however. You may not be arguing as much or experiencing the vast distance that was once there when the cycle was in full swing. You may be able to stop what were once devastating arguments before they start. That is super impressive in itself. But perhaps you are still yearning for something deeper with your partner.

In Step 7, we will discuss how to connect in a whole new way. Now that the pattern has stopped, walls are broken down and you can reach each other more. You probably feel more connected with each other, but now it's time to take risks and get real close.

This is perhaps the most important and most difficult step toward creating your best relationship. Many people have fears about really embracing their relationships. The old way of thinking before the New Science of Love came on the scene dissuades us from becoming too attached or dependent on others.

Even if you now know intellectually that we are stronger together than we are alone, emotionally it still might be difficult to really fully connect to each other. Many people fear they will become too attached or dependent upon their partners and prevent themselves from experiencing something so great.

Maybe one or both of you have held back in relationships because you know that people leave and people die—it's a fact of life. Perhaps if people have left or died on you, you are more hesitant to get close to someone else.

The good news is that studies have demonstrated that the more connected and secure a relationship is between partners, the better the widowed person does following the loss.

So get close: it really is better to have loved and lost.

*A bit on trauma:*

If you are a survivor of trauma or have had significant people in your life abandon you, even if in subtle ways, it is likely to be very difficult for you to get close to someone, even the most supportive partner in the world.

If your needs weren't fully met as a child, or if you have experienced trauma or unsafe connections with others as a kid, your needs may have become amplified as an adult. Let's face it; with or without histories of trauma, we all need safe and secure relationships with others. It's just harder to achieve that when we've never had it.

It's so important for you to realize on a deep emotional level that it's not your fault that your needs were not met as a child. It is, however, your responsibility to get them met as an adult.

If those needs were never met and they're now amplified in your adult life, you may always be left screaming and asking for more from your partner. It's never been okay for you to trust that you'll be taken care of fully, because you really haven't been.

Perhaps it's hard to be satisfied by your partner or trust that they will be there for you, even when they are. It's like there isn't a template in your mind for

a safe other person, so you don't know how to be open and vulnerable with someone. It is simply too dangerous.

Your "attachment style" of turning your needs way up or down (or both) may be especially rigid and may easily flare up. At one point in history not too long ago, it was believed that these "styles" are stuck with people for life.

As we discussed earlier, the good news is that research has now demonstrated that "attachment styles" can change over time. This is especially true if you are in a relationship with someone who is a little more securely connected.

If you are more securely connected than your partner, you can help them stay a bit more grounded and become more easily able to trust others in their life. And likewise, if you have a trauma history and frequently get anxious or disconnected at the slightest signs of distress, your partner can help you establish a more secure way of relating in your life.

But to do this, you must take risks and get close.

We get into problems with our partners when we try to defend ourselves with these secondary emotional experiences that we have. We either start throwing daggers or building walls. When you notice yourself doing this in your relationship, put your mindfulness hat on and slow down.

Now that you have both stopped the destructive pattern from overhauling your relationship, you may be able to feel a little safe to let your partner know what's really going on. If you're scared, take the risk and let your partner know. If you feel deep down that there is something wrong with you, open up and check in with your partner about it.

***"The strongest love is the love that can demonstrate its fragility."***

***—Paulo Coelho***

Take a deep breath, take risks, and get close.

Check out Exercise #21 in the workbook, "Taking Risks, Getting Closer", to give it a whirl.

*A bit on shame:*

I'm going to write a little bit about shame here because if there's shame in that mix of awful raw emotions that I'm asking you to dig up, things can be a bit dicey.



While shame's evolutionary purpose can be said to maintain human cooperation, ironically, it can be toxic in your relationship.

Shame basically stops us from connecting to anyone, including our partners.

Shame exists to regulate social behavior. It comes online when we fail to cooperate with the group.

We do something wrong and then shame tells us that we're bad and that we don't deserve to connect because of that reason. Essentially, it breaks down the opportunity to connect.

It is such an awful feeling that we often try to protect ourselves from it, like we do with many other difficult emotions. Many might take pills, drink, smoke, or eat too much in an attempt to numb out the feeling.

But it really doesn't go away. It sits there inside of us. And it makes us want to create as much distance as possible from it, even though it's our experience.

Shame is quite tricky though because if we really start to experience it, we shut ourselves off from other people.

I'm telling you not to numb yourself out, but don't dive into your shame too deep or else you'll be consumed by it. I realize I'm being a little self-contradictory here: feel your shame, but not too much.

Remember, by its nature, shame cuts us off from others. When we feel shame too intensely, we get sucked down into a shame-hole.

Here's the thing: the fastest way out of shame is with the help of another. But that's tricky because shame cuts us off from others!

So what do you do?

If you can see your shame, know it's there, feel it to a slight degree, and be open to it, that's great. But don't let it consume you.

Ask yourself, what are you ashamed of?

If you really did something you regret, allow yourself to feel badly about it. Tell yourself that you were an idiot. Or that you really made a grave mistake.

Do whatever you can do, if even possible, to make it right.

Remember, however, to recognize your imperfection as a human. None of us gets it right all of the time.

Offer yourself forgiveness. While forgiving yourself, own what you've done, your experience, and own your shame. And if it's about something you did wrong in your relationship, let your partner know.

After going there yourself, invite your partner into that place where no one is allowed. Allow yourself to touch the edge of that shame and show it to your partner.

Remember, shame is important. It's there for a reason and it comes with a lesson. But make sure not to drown in it, as it can be that powerful. When it consumes you, it becomes a relationship poison.

Don't let something that's supposed to help your relationship be a poison to it. In other words, to get the most from shame, practice your self-awareness skills and don't let it sneak up from you. Learn your lesson and own up to your mistakes and your experience. Try to make things right.

Most importantly, let your partner see you, shame and all. When you are seen, especially with something as isolating as shame, your connection to your partner will grow that much stronger.

Exercise #22, "Shame, Shame, Go Away", in the workbook should help you get started.

I know that all of this is a lot easier said than done, but try to take small risks if you can, while being gentle with yourself. Individual and couples therapy can really help with this if you are struggling or if you feel stuck, but know somewhere in your heart that you deserve more.

*A bit on therapy and coaching:*

If you are interested in seeing a therapist or a coach, I want to impart some advice.

- Your relationship with your therapist or coach is so important. I cannot overstate this. If you meet with someone who makes you feel creepy or judged in anyway, find someone else. It is important to feel comfortable and connected with whomever you meet, particularly if you are a survivor of trauma and seeking a therapist.

- Don't be afraid to go shrink shopping. You should feel out a few different folks to see who you feel is the best match for you. Just because someone has a degree and a license and may even be a great therapist doesn't mean that they are the right person for you to work with. Shop around and see what you can find.
- If you have a bad experience with a therapist or feel that it wasn't helpful, don't write therapy off all together. It's likely that you weren't with the right therapist.
- The decision to see a therapist or a coach is a big one. Be wary that coaches do not have to be licensed nor do they need to demonstrate that they have a certain education to practice, whereas a legitimate psychotherapist will have a graduate degree and a license. This does not mean that a coach cannot help you, it is just important to be aware of this and to be picky about who you decide to see. If you have a history of any mental health problems, you will probably be better off with a therapist as they are trained to work with mental health problems. If you are looking for a couples therapist or relationship coach, it is imperative that they can demonstrate some kind of training or model from which they work from, so make sure to ask how they practice!

I have heard all kinds of horror stories. Therapists who talked about their own problems, therapists who fell asleep, therapists who took phone calls, and one therapist who constantly ate popcorn that messily got lodged in his beard, are among some of the stories I have heard.

If you see these or any other red flags during your initial visit, get out of there! Avoid these people and find someone good (unless a therapist with popcorn in his beard might be comforting to you in some way).

The International Center for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy ([www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com)) is your best bet to find a Certified EFT therapist. Check them out to find a couples therapist that really understands and incorporates the New Science of Love into their practice.

EFT is a revolutionary approach to couples therapy and is the basis for this guide to your best relationship. Any therapist trained in this approach with whom you feel comfortable should be able to help you. A relationship coach with EFT training may also be a good fit for you if you feel comfortable with this person and neither you nor your partner are looking for help with any

mental health problems other than the understandable distress that relationship problems bring.

After having gone through these steps, if you aren't able to get as close as you'd like without the help of a couples therapist or relationship coach, it is my hope that you will still experience improvements in your relationship. My advice: Do yourself the favor of finding someone to help you and your partner really make the most of the process.

## **Conclusion**

There you have it—the seven steps to your best relationship.

If only it were that easy to just walk through each step and suddenly have your best relationship. It obviously isn't that easy.

If you found any of these steps to be difficult or if you found yourselves escalating into your cycle just trying to get through them, you're not alone.

This is really hard work and sometimes you will need an experienced guide to help you through the difficult parts.

In this section, after going through the seven steps, we also discussed how to find the right kind of guide for you to help you with this work. A couples therapist or relationship coach will hopefully be helpful; an Emotionally Focused Therapy trained couples therapist or a relationship coach who knows about EFT most definitely will.

The seven steps are really all about knowing yourself very well and knowing your partner very well, in addition to knowing the negative cycle between you very well. They are about teaming up against the pattern and taking your relationship back from it.

To do this, you have put into practice your mindful self-awareness skills and have been able to access what's going on for yourself on all levels. You've been able to share this with your partner and also take in your partner's experience.

Additionally, you've been able to hopefully go a little deeper with each other and share more raw parts of yourself that you'd otherwise keep hidden.

Again, if this was extremely difficult or unfruitful for you, a trained EFT couples therapist can come to the rescue.

**PART**



**Maintaining Your Best Relationship**



## Introduction to Part IV

Congratulations!

You have taken the seven steps toward your best relationship. By now you have learned about your destructive pattern and have understood both your role and your partner's role in it on all levels.

You have been able to stop the pattern from overtaking your relationship and as a result, there is much less distance between you both. Hopefully, you have been able to take risks and get closer.

Using your mindfulness skills, being self-aware, and being able to turn to each other with your primary emotions in times of distress on a regular basis, you continue to build a stronger and stronger relationship every day.

Like any new behavior, you must make efforts to maintain it.

We are all creatures of habit and it is so easy to backpedal. I have met with many couples who have found their way out of the cycle and into each other's hearts, only to be blocked out again by the same pattern that sneakily arises again and catches them off guard.

It can be so discouraging because after all of the work you put in to get where you are, it feels like it all goes up in smoke when the pattern returns and you are back at square one.

If this happens to you both, please know that you are not alone. In fact, I'd be more surprised if you didn't temporarily take a few steps back than if you did.

Taking two steps forward and one step back is sort of how learning new things goes. And the work that you have done to build your new relationship

is not lost. It is going to be so much easier to get back there since you've already been down that road.

It's far from easy, but each time will be easier to find your way back to each other.

And it takes consistent effort and tons of awareness.

Part of maintaining the gains that you have achieved thus far will entail repeating what you have already learned.

Schedule a time each day to practice being mindful. Even if it is just for a minute or so several times a day, practice your mindfulness. Build it into your routine: whether it's when you're eating lunch, on your commute, or when you first wake up in the morning, find regular and consistent times to just check in with yourself and be present.

Your life will be greater because of it.

Additionally, review Part III and the seven steps from time to time together. Check in with each other to see how you're doing with the cycle. Do you slip back into it? Have you been great at stopping it?

In Part IV we will discuss a few additional maintenance tips to make sure your relationship continues to get the minimum attention it deserves. Once you have built a foundation for your best relationship, it is crucial that you maintain it.

Remember the New Science of Love and what it teaches us about our relationships: they are our most precious assets. Don't lose sight of that and protect the most valuable thing that you have.

***“The best thing to hold onto in life is each other.”***

***—Audrey Hepburn***

Now, let's dive in and discuss three ways of maintaining your best relationship, which are as follows: telling them and telling them again; using time and presence; and honoring rituals and anniversaries.



## CHAPTER

# 13

## Tell Them, and Tell Them Again

Let your partner know how much you appreciate him or her. Who doesn't like feeling appreciated? We all need to hear this and we can never get sick of hearing how much we mean to our partner.

People tell me, "I do so much to show him I appreciate him. I cook dinner, I do the laundry," and ramble on. That's great, but *tell him*. You each need to hear it from each other.

This might be more difficult for some of you than others. Not everyone was brought up with parents who were particularly generous with praise or compliments. If you or your partner did not hear that much appreciation growing up, it is going to be difficult to suddenly throw on an appreciation hat and start spewing compliments.

It's important to know and understand your level and your partner's level of comfort in terms of expressing appreciation. It's also important to exercise those appreciation muscles because whether we heard it or not as kids, we all need to hear it as adults.

It's never too late to learn how to express appreciation. If you have kids, they need to hear it too.

Do a quick check in with your own comfort level with compliments by completing Exercise #23 in the workbook, "Compliment Comfort", and share your results with each other.

If saying it feels too difficult at first, find other ways to show your partner that you are grateful for them. Leave sticky notes around, send them text

messages mid-day, or express yourself in another way in which you are more comfortable.

Just tell them, and tell them again. It's good to hear, and it's good to help your most important other feel good. As a bonus, you'll start to hear more from your partner about how much you are appreciated as well.

That's a good deal!

Check out Exercise #24 in the workbook, "Get Your Appreciation On", to get it on.

P.S. Many people who aren't naturally comfortable expressing appreciation or giving compliments feel even more uncomfortable doing so when it feels forced, like after reading directives to compliment your partner. If this is you, my bet is that if the compliment or appreciation is genuinely coming from your heart, your partner will love hearing it regardless of whether it feels forced or unnatural to you.

Go for it.

## CHAPTER

# 14

## Time and Presence

Spend time together. I know you are busy, but your relationship is so important. Even just a few minutes a day of guaranteed quality time is better than nothing.

I see workaholics and busy couples with young children who have been so busy taking care of others and of their financial lives that they let their relationship go down the tubes without even realizing it. I applaud them for seeking help when they come to therapy, seeking a new path of restoration and a new direction, before it's too late.

Many busy couples make time to see me in therapy for an hour every week. They do amazing work together: They take risks with each other, they show sides of themselves they've never shown or even experienced before, and they reach each other in new ways.

The most successful couples in therapy never miss a session. They commit to themselves and to me and they show up like clockwork every week.

These couples experience success and have a tremendous experience with the process, coming out of it connected to each other like never before.

But what happens when we stop meeting? When, during their busy weeks, do they actually see each other? Between work, family obligations, other commitments, and everything else, couples often lose each other, which is one part of the problem that brings them to counseling in the first place.

*Don't let this happen in your relationship!*

I make sure that with every couple who leave my office after the process of therapy, they commit to each other *at least* what they committed to me and the process of therapy, if not much more. For therapy, they set a recurring time in their calendar on a weekly basis and showed up present and ready to engage. Similarly, with each other, after we complete therapy, I beg them to do this.

For example, I met with a couple over the period of about six months who attended their hour-long sessions each Tuesday at 6 p.m. like clockwork. Neither had experienced any outright trauma or abuse in their lives, but at the same time they never really were given the emotional support or validation that we all need.

They had a very distant relationship with each other and despite being married nearly twenty years, they felt that something was missing.

This was a busy couple—with two children in their early teens and an eight year old, you can imagine. They were also overachievers, so it was important that their sons and daughter were involved with all kinds of activities. They had recitals, games, plays to attend, you name it. Both parents had busy careers and were successful themselves, so they barely had any time for each other.

We worked together and, over time, they were able to tune into themselves to understand their own emotional experiences and turn toward each other, experiencing themselves in the relationship in new ways, connecting as they never had before. There were some road bumps along the way, but eventually they really understood themselves and each other in a new way and didn't get into the same spiral of distance that they previously couldn't escape from.

We started meeting every other week, and eventually we felt that they were doing so well they didn't need my help anymore. They found their way out of the distance and into a rich and meaningful connection with each other. They safely experienced this new connection enough with me that we were confident that they would be able to continue this on their own.

When I asked them about how they would continue these conversations and continue to maintain and nurture this connection, they nearly protested with me:

*"How are we going to do this? We don't have time."*

We really looked at this issue—they had been using an hour every week, plus the time it took to commute to my office two ways, for the past six months. They really felt they didn't have the time to do this alone?

Was it that they weren't confident about their ability to keep up this connection? No. Was it that they were afraid they'd fall back into old patterns? No, they had done that before, they had easily bounced back after a few times, and they knew they could always call me if needed. What was it then?

*They really felt that they didn't have time!*

But they did have the time. They just needed to prioritize how it was spent.

We decided they'd go for hour-long walks with each other, and only each other, every Tuesday at 6 p.m. They continued this on their own and later told me they started walking Thursdays as well.

They were spending more quality time with each other than ever, really connecting and nurturing what had become their greatest asset: their relationship.

Make sure to schedule these chunks of time with each other. It's also important when it's just you and your partner during these times to turn off the technology. Get off Facebook, your email, or whatever else you do online, and just be with each other.

Your emotional presence with each other is more important than you can imagine.

Check out Exercise #25 in the workbook, "Setting Aside Time and Being Present", to help set up your weekly schedule with each other to make sure that you don't slip off each other's to-do list.

## CHAPTER

# 15

## Rituals and Anniversaries

Previously we discussed quality time and how to create it with each other. I also am suggesting that you automate rituals in your relationship that are easily implemented and don't take up any energy.

You probably brush your teeth on a daily basis, and I imagine you tend to have other habits that regularly occur no matter what. Your relationship should also be on this list of things to take care of next to your teeth and your health.

You probably already have some rituals that you may not even be aware of; for example, coffee in the morning together, a kiss hello when you see each other after a day of work, maybe even a morning shower together??

What rituals do you already have in your relationship? Where can you add more?

Couples get lost from one another in the shuffle of life. That's when the distance creeps in. That's when it becomes easy to misunderstand each other. And that's when negative patterns start to take over and mask themselves as crappy relationships.

You don't need to let your relationship fall prey to any of these negative patterns or this distance. You do need to maintain the health of your relationship by automating times of connecting. A quick text in the middle of the day might work just fine. You need to figure out ways of making sure you are letting your partner know that you are thinking of them and trying to connect.

Exercise #26 in the workbook, “Create Rituals and Celebrate Anniversaries”, should help you both brainstorm on ways that you are already doing this and where you can beef up your routine with some of these rituals.

It is also important to honor special events in your relationship. Wedding anniversary celebrations are more common, but what about other important dates in your relationship?

Do you remember the day that you first met or became a “couple”? When was your first date? What other special things unique to your relationship can you celebrate?

Remember what the New Science of Love teaches us: your relationship is paramount to your wellbeing.

Honor and celebrate it.

### ***Conclusion to Part IV***

After learning the New Science of Love, setting the stage and putting into practice the seven steps for creating your best relationship, it's important that you maintain your relationship and continue to grow together and toward one another.

To do this, in addition to remaining mindful and reviewing the seven steps from time to time, we discussed three forms of maintenance to put into practice immediately.

Expressing appreciation and gratitude to each other is extremely important in any relationship. Practice this regularly and rev up your game a bit if you are appreciation-shy.

Spending ample time with each other and using your mindfulness to be fully present is also clearly important in any relationship. Without quality time, people drift away from each other and problems sneak in when distance arises.

And lastly, we discussed the importance of integrating daily rituals into your lives to connect as well as celebrating important milestones and anniversaries in your relationship.

If the first part of this program helps you get connected, Part IV is all about staying that way.





# The Grand Conclusion

You did it!

You made it through.

It is my hope that you are more connected than ever and that this program has been worth all of your time and effort.

Speaking of celebration in the previous section, after having completed this book and workbook together, I think it is time to party.

Chill the champagne!

Whether you understood the New Science of Love before you began this program or not, clearly some part of you knew the importance of taking care of your relationship.

I seriously applaud you both for making it to the end. I sincerely hope this guide and workbook has helped you understand relationships in general and yours in particular. I hope that you will review this material from time to time, when needed, so that you can continue to create your best relationship.

As a result of having gone through this program, you should have a rich understanding of the New Science of Love and why our relationships are so important.

You have delved into your own history and ideas around love and dependency and have taken a closer look at your own blueprint for love. If it was not in line with the New Science of Love, you have fixed your blueprint for love, and have taken steps to create your vision of your best relationship.

You understand the science behind the New Science of Love including some of the research, the underlying chemistry and the effects of love on pain and social pain on your brain. You have learned to apply the New Science of Love to your own life by tapping into the infinite love held for you by your love allies.

You successfully prepared yourself to take the steps to create your best relationship. In so doing this, you learned and exercised the ancient practice of mindful awareness, which will be something I hope you continue to use throughout your life in all aspects, not just in your relationship.

Additionally, you have learned the importance of emotions as keys to our survival. While many around us continue to stuff, numb out, or try to squash their emotions, you are one who is working now to honor, accept, and be open to your deepest of feelings, even the darker more painful ones.

Together with your partner, you have taken the seven steps to creating your best relationship. You know the importance of accessibility, responsiveness and emotional engagement in any relationship, and you are more accessible, responsive, and emotionally engaged with each other.

You were able to identify a destructive cycle that once grabbed a hold of your relationship. Equipped with the awareness of each of your roles in this cycle on behavioral, cognitive, and emotional levels, using the strategy of externalizing, you have been able to wrangle your way out of this terrible pattern. You have teamed up to break the pattern.

You are taking risks and getting closer, being vulnerable with each other, and connecting in a whole new way.

If the seven steps didn't exactly go as planned or you feel you are too deeply entrenched in your pattern, you know a few things about finding a good therapist or relationship coach who can really take you the rest of the way. Hopefully, if necessary, you've set up an initial appointment. Otherwise, review this guide again and again, practice patience and presence with yourself and your partner, and recognize that a way of relating established over an entire lifetime may take some sweat and tears to change.

And lastly, you know how to maintain this rich new relationship that you have created with each other. Through your mindfulness, knowledge about the New Science of Love and awareness about your own patterns, you can continue to go through the program to keep your foundation strong.

You are appreciating each other openly now more than ever, giving each other the best gift you can give of your time and emotional presence, and you are honoring your most precious asset with regular rituals while celebrating it for whatever reason whenever you can.

That's a lot.

Even if I don't know you, I am so thrilled you have let me into your world by joining forces with me through this program.

While I put a few pieces together and tapped into my own experience as a therapist, partner and human, I did not make any of this up, and this program would not exist if it were not for Susan Johnson and Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy.

If you haven't already, run out or online and grab your copy of Johnson's *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*. While much of this program was inspired by *Hold Me Tight*, the book itself will help you both go even deeper with the New Science of Love.

Bonus points: Go find a Hold Me Tight workshop. The lived experience with the guidance of a skilled facilitator is better than anything you can go through by yourselves. The New Science of Love proves that.

We are wired to connect and are better off for it.

In closing, please complete the final exercise in the workbook, which is numbered 26.2 since it is like the last 0.2 miles of a marathon: the best part.

Thank you for including me on your journey toward each other.

Cheers, salud, and slainte to your best relationship!



# The Workbook



# Introduction to the Workbook

This is where the program comes together for you.

Take your time with these exercises. Go slow, do them together, and do them completely.

Please don't skip this.

Knowing about the facts and the science behind the New Science of Love is great and will certainly help you create your best relationship. Without actually implementing what you learn in your own relationship, however, that knowledge may not do you very much good.

It's really important to go through the exercises.

Doing these steps together can be really difficult. It can feel cheesy and you may want to avoid it, but just do it. See what comes up.

It's my hope that these exercises will not only help you understand yourself better but will serve as springboards for deeper conversations together and, ultimately, a much richer and closer connection.

## EXERCISE

# 1

## The D-Word and Your Relationship

Take a second now to think about your beliefs around dependence. What does the word “dependence” conjure up for you?

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If words like “weakness” and “neediness” came to mind, you are not alone. The New Science of Love teaches us that effective dependency on one another is a major key in living happy and healthy lives. This is contradictory to the way many of us are brought up to believe.

Now think about your belief systems around autonomy and independence. Are these qualities you generally try to strive for?

Yes  No

If so, where did you learn this from, and if not, where did you learn that from? Your parents? Your teachers? Your society? Who were your early influences?

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Do you see close others in your life as generally reliable or dependable?

Yes  No

Was there someone on whom you could depend when you were a little kid?

Yes  No

If so, who was that?

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When you were a small kid, what did you do when you were faced with something difficult? If you had a hard day or something bad happened to you, would you go to someone, such as a parent, grandparent, or older sibling, to seek comfort? Or would you mostly keep things to yourself?

Try to remember an early memory when something bad happened to you, and write down how you handled that and if you went to someone with your distress:

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If you did go to someone, how did that person respond to you? Were they emotionally present to provide you with comfort, or did they give you another message (e.g., they were too busy, you should be stronger, etc.)?

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As you think about your childhood and the availability of others on whom you were or were not able to rely upon, do you find that your idea of whether close people in your life are generally dependable stems from these early experiences that you had with your caregivers?

Unless you've worked extensively on this issue or have had extreme experiences since your childhood, you probably answered "yes" to the above question.

If people were not so available to you when you are growing up, it is likely harder to trust that your partner will be there for you when needed.

Using the above questions, take some time to get a sense of your early experiences with others and whether you could depend upon them.

Once you think about this and recall your experience, check in with your partner who should be doing the same exercise.

Share with each other what life was like for each of you growing up and whether you were made to feel safe and able to depend on others.

# EXERCISE



# 2

## Know Your Blueprint for Love

Take a few moments to think about your blueprint for love. Where did it develop from? Society, your parents, the people who raised you, TV, movies... these sources all probably had their hand in your development of your blueprint for love.

Identify 1-2 primary caregivers and take some time to remember what their relationships were like when you were a child.

Did you have parents who were happily married? Did you have parents who were unhappily married? How did they treat each other? Did your parents go through a terrible divorce? Did they go through an amicable divorce and married step-parents you got along really well with? Were you raised by someone other than a parent, and what were their primary relationships like?

Take some time to jot down your memories of the most significant romantic relationships that were around you:

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As you think back on your early experience, note whether you were surrounded by happy and supportive partnerships among adults or discordant and disconnected relationships? Perhaps you were surrounded by both.

What message did you receive from your childhood surroundings about what romantic relationships should look like?

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With a divorce rate in the U.S. hovering around fifty percent, many people do not even believe in love, or at least in a love that lasts. What are your beliefs in love?

In other words, what's your Blueprint for Love? What might a *realistic* relationship look like to you?

Somewhere up in your psyche is this template of what a relationship should look like. Now it's time to get in touch with that so that you can be clear on your Blueprint for Love.

Try not to censor yourself as you think about what your Blueprint for Love is. Just write down your implicit assumptions about love and what relationships should look like.

You may not agree with everything that you come up with as you are jotting these ideas down, but it's important to be honest with what you think love really looks like in a relationship.

Here are some examples of possible aspects in one's Blueprint for Love.

Circle the ones that apply to you, and then add as many of your own as you can.

- Partners should kiss every day.
- Partners should be best friends.
- Partners can't be best friends.

- Partners tend to disagree on most things.
- It's impossible to have a long lasting relationship; true love never lasts.
- Partners should pursue hobbies together.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Are you surprised at what you came up with? Do you agree with everything you wrote, as you look at it now?

Share your answers with your partner and discuss with each your Blueprints for Love. (Don't worry if you don't agree with what you came up with; we're going to remodel your blueprint.)

## EXERCISE

# 3

## Fix Your Blueprint for Love

Thinking about what you have learned about the New Science of Love thus far, do you agree with your Blueprint for Love?

Yes  No

If yes, that is great. Are there any changes you wish to make to your Blueprint for Love? Possibly not, and if so, feel free to skip to the next exercise! You are ahead of the game.

If, however, you didn't agree with everything you wrote about your Blueprint for Love, and would like to change it to some degree to perhaps incorporate some wisdom from the New Science of Love, now is the time.

Go through each of your previous statements in Exercise 2 and decide which ones are keepers and which you'd like to change. Correct them with a red pen.

And add these jewels from the New Science of Love to your list, in your own words, if you agree:

- Partners should be accessible to each other.
- Partners should be able to depend on each other.
- Partners should be emotionally present with each other.
- Partners should be responsive to each other.

Taking your revised list from the previous exercise and incorporating the New Science of Love, what do you want your Blueprint for Love to look like?

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Share your response with your partner, including whether anything has changed about your ideas on love after learning a bit about the New Science of Love.

## EXERCISE

# 4

## Your Relationship and Your Fear, Pain, and Distress

Your relationship is supposed to be the ultimate buffer from the trauma of everyday life.

It is absolutely necessary for you to be able to turn to your partner in times of distress and be able to seek comfort from him or her.

*(If this doesn't generally happen, do not fret. That is why you are going through this program together, and I applaud you for that.)*

Think of a time when you were especially nervous, worried, or distressed about something outside of your relationship. Write a brief summary of what happened:

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Did you turn to your partner?

Yes  No



Did they show up for you and provide comfort?

Yes  No

If your answers were yes to both questions, that is great. Hopefully, that generally happens for you both: that you are able to turn to your partner when you need to and that they respond in the way you need.

How did it feel that your partner was there for you? What would have been different if you did not turn to them or if they didn't respond to you the way you needed them to?

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If you did not turn to your partner, reflect on why that might have been. Maybe you just didn't think of it. Perhaps this stems back to not believing that people can be relied upon, or maybe you are in such a bad place with your partner that you can't rely upon them. Maybe you felt like you could handle it yourself or you didn't want to be a burden of some kind.

Spend some time and jot down what comes up when you ask yourself why you didn't rely on your partner:

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If you *did* turn to your partner and your partner wasn't there for you in the way you needed, reflect now upon *how* you turned to your partner. How did you let them know that you needed them? I'm asking you to do this because many times partners send tiny signals to each other beckoning for their support, but these signals can be easily missed.

Did you ask your partner loud and clear? What did you do to let your partner know that you needed him or her?

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Now, take turns and ask your partner if they knew that you were asking for their support during this time. It is possible that they will not be able to remember this event even if it stood out for you because we all have different salient memories, so don't be discouraged if this exercise seems like it doesn't go anywhere.

Right now, we are just getting the dialogue started.

I imagine that you were perhaps let down, hurt, and/or angry if your partner did not show up for you the way you needed them to.

It is also very important for you both to discuss a few times (if you can) of instances in which you *were* there for each other and how that felt when your partner provided you comfort. Write one of those down here:

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Now, share your responses with each other and discuss your experiences together.

# EXERCISE

# 5

## Your Love Allies

If Exercise 4 was smooth sailing for you and you are easily able to call upon your partner in times of need, then that is *awesome*. You are both doing so much right for each other and for your relationship.

If, however, you're like many people and you had a hard time coming up with times in which your partner was really there for you the way you needed, I'm going to ask you now to think of someone else in your life who has believed in you no matter what.

You can repeat this exercise for as many people as you can and would like.

Is there someone in your life, past or present, who has really supported and believed in you? If you can't think of anyone close to you, was there someone who might have been more distant in your life but, even so, believed in you? Perhaps a teacher or a coach, for example?

Who is this person?

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That person is one of your Love Allies.

Write down how that person has been really there for you and the things they have done or said to make that clear:

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How did you feel when this person was there for you?

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The purpose of this exercise is to really get clear on how it felt to have someone who totally believed in you *because we all need that*. Sometimes in the chaos of life we lose sight of how that feels.

Keep your Love Ally with you in your heart at all times, especially at times when you are doubting yourself or struggling.

If your #1 Love Ally is not your partner, it is my hope that this program will help you become each other's #1. In the meantime, while you are working on things, you still need to feel supported.

Remember, the New Science of Love teaches us that we are stronger and better because of our connections with important others.

So whenever life throws you a curveball and you are having a hard time, call upon the image of your Love Ally or review this exercise to make it vivid. It won't make everything better, but it should help you get through the tough times a little easier.

# EXERCISE

## 6

### Getting More “O” In Your Relationship

Using some examples from the guide, or examples you find on your own, list 3 things you can implement regularly to increase your oxytocin:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Share these ideas with each other.

Together, share what's realistic and achievable for each of you, and make an effort to increasing your O in your R.

What can you do together on a regular basis to ensure your oxytocin levels are soaring?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Great—now go to it!

## EXERCISE

# 7

## Know and Understand the New Science of Love

This exercise is about integrating your understanding of the New Science of Love with your ideas about your relationship.

Turn to your partner and discuss what you've learned so far. Each of you should take a turn and summarize the gist of the New Science of Love in a few sentences.

Here are some questions to ponder as you discuss:

- Are you surprised at all by what you've learned?
- If so, what's new for you?
- Do you agree with what the New Science of Love says?
- Do you feel like your relationship is where it should be, based on the New Science of Love? (If not, that's why you're here, don't worry!)
- What have you learned about the New Science of Love that you can apply to your relationship?

Well done!

A very clear understanding of the New Science of Love will help you get there, so make sure to review this from time to time if ever you feel like your understanding of this is slipping away.

# EXERCISE



## Get Clear on Your Desires

Remember what you know about the New Science of Love and that you deserve everything your ideal relationship has to offer.

How would you like to *feel* in your relationship?

In the space below, list various ways that you'd like to feel in your relationship. I've started you off with some examples—feel free to circle the ones that resonate with your desires. List as many as you can.

Adored

Cared for

Understood

Appreciated

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Take some time now to think about what might need to happen in your relationship for you to feel as you wish. Share your top three desired feeling states with each other.



# EXERCISE

## 9

## Know Thyself and Cultivate Presence

### Mindfulness A – Just Be Still

Take out your smart phone if you have one and set the timer for 1 minute.

During that minute, sit quietly, with your eyes shut if you'd like, and just breathe. Take nice deep breaths and notice what you feel like.

Observe your experience. Be aware of what your breathing feels like.

Try to maintain an attitude of openness, acceptance, and non-judgment.

If you find yourself getting into your head and thinking about stuff, so be it—that's probably going to happen.

Notice your thoughts and watch them come and go, like river floating by.

Likewise, notice if you are having any feelings, and watch them come and go as well.

Just be still and pay attention. For one minute only.

When the minute is over, feel free to discuss your experience together.

Repeat as often as you can.

## EXERCISE

# 10

## Know Thyself and Cultivate Presence

### Mindfulness B – Mindful Mealtime

If you are generally busy and don't often see your partner for dinner, pick a date when you will eat together. It probably makes the most sense to stay at home for this exercise because it might be awkward to try in public. If you'd prefer to go out, though, be my guest!

Together, you are going to enjoy a mindful meal together.

Sit down together and eat a meal without participating in any other activity. No talking, checking your phone, reading the paper, watching TV, listening to music—just eating.

I know it's weird that a couples' exercise involves not speaking with your partner, but, for the purpose of this exercise and cultivating presence, that's what I'm asking you to do.

When you eat your meal, pay close attention to your experience of eating. Eat slowly and mindfully. Notice how the food smells, how it feels in your mouth, what it's like to chew, and how it feels to pick the food up, and notice the various tastes and textures. Practice extreme awareness.

You'll probably be surprised at the nuances you discover about the food that you may not have been aware of before. You also may find yourself more satisfied by your meal.

Eating like this is much better for your digestion than the typical rushed and multitasked meals that many of us have on a regular basis.

When you're done, speak with your partner about your experiences together. What was that like?

If this was interesting or enjoyable for you, plan a regular mindful meal with your partner. Your taste buds and digestive system will thank you for it.

## EXERCISE

# 11

## Know Thyself and Cultivate Presence

### Mindfulness C: Walking Mindfully

Take a walk together, in silence, and practice mindfulness. Agree on the amount of time you'll spend walking mindfully or on the route, and go for it.

Just walk and breathe.

Notice how your feet feel on the ground, how the air feels on your skin, and what you feel like in general in the present moment.

If you notice yourself floating up to your head, just observe your thoughts and, again, practice an open, non-judgmental, accepting awareness.

Let your thoughts flow in and out and pay attention to what the present moment feels like. Enjoy it if you can.

When you're done, discuss your experiences with this together.

## EXERCISE

# 12

## Befriending Your Emotions

Take a second and check in with yourself. How are you feeling right now?

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Can you remember how you felt the last time you and your partner had a disagreement? How did you feel then? How do you generally feel when you feel like you cannot connect with your partner?

Circle any of the emotions that you identify with and then add your own. Emotions are usually messy, so you may feel a variety of them:

- Sad
- Hurt
- Angry
- Exasperated
- Joyful
- Frustrated
- Invisible
- Unimportant
- Ashamed

- Overwhelmed
- Helpless
- Infuriated

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# EXERCISE

# 13

## Putting It All Together

Take some time together and discuss three things that stand out from what you've learned thus far. Have either of you had any insights that you can apply to your relationship? Discuss.

Here's a little quiz to test your knowledge. Take it together:

1. The New Science of Love teaches us that we are \_\_\_\_\_ when we are secure in our relationships and able to depend on our partners.
  - a. Stronger
  - b. Healthier
  - c. More Independent
  - d. All of the Above
  - e. None of the Above
  - f. A and B but not C
2. True or False: When someone has had a traumatic upbringing, they tend to connect to others in a dysfunctional way, and they are bound to live like that no matter what. In other words, they will never be able to have a healthy relationship.
3. True or False: Visualization is an important tool in achieving your goals.

4. True or False: You shouldn't allow yourself to fall deeply in love with someone because nothing is permanent and ultimately you will be hurt and be weaker as a result.
5. True or False: In order to benefit from mindfulness meditation, you need to set aside a minimum of an hour daily practice.

*Answers: 1. D; 2. False; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False*



# EXERCISE

# 14

## Putting Your Relationship to the Test

Take the following quiz to test your relationship and your ability to be Accessible, Responsive, and Emotionally Engaged with each other.

This quiz is adapted from the A.R.E. Questionnaire that originally appears in Sue Johnson's book and program *Hold Me Tight*.

*From your viewpoint, is your partner ACCESSIBLE to you?*

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. I can get my partner's attention easily          | T | F |
| 2. I can easily connect with my partner emotionally | T | F |
| 3. My partner makes it clear that I come first      | T | F |
| 4. I feel neither lonely nor shut out by my partner | T | F |
| 5. When I share my feelings, my partner listens     | T | F |

Accessibility Score:      Number True: \_\_\_\_\_      Number False: \_\_\_\_\_

*From your viewpoint, is your partner RESPONSIVE to you?*

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. My partner is there when I need connection and comfort                     | T | F |
| 2. When I signal that I need my partner, s/he responds                        | T | F |
| 3. I can lean on my partner when I feel anxious or insecure                   | T | F |
| 4. Even when we fight, I know I am important to my partner                    | T | F |
| 5. If I need reassurance about how important I am to my partner, I can get it | T | F |

Responsive Score:      Number True: \_\_\_\_\_      Number False: \_\_\_\_\_

*From your viewpoint, are you and your partner emotionally ENGAGED with each other?*

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. I am comfortable trusting and being close to my partner | T | F |
| 2. I can tell my partner just about anything               | T | F |
| 3. When we are apart, I am confident that we are connected | T | F |
| 4. I know that my partner cares about how I feel           | T | F |
| 5. I feel safe to take emotional risks with my partner     | T | F |

Engagement Score:      Number True: \_\_\_\_\_      Number False: \_\_\_\_\_

*Your results:*

It's probably fairly obvious that the more "trues" you get, the better. Look at your scores. Were any areas particularly less strong than others?

By the end of this program, it is my hope that you can both score 15 out of 15. But if you don't now, don't worry. I will ask you to retake this quiz at the end and hopefully we'll see some forward movement.

Discuss your results with your partner.

Listen and be present when your partner is sharing their answers with you. Try not to get defensive. Your partner is just sharing their experience. It is crucial that you are both able to do this safely with each other, and it's important to learn about their experience in the relationship.

# EXERCISE

# 15

## Identify Your Pattern

What's your pattern?

Circle the statements below from either column that apply to you in your relationship.

When my partner and I aren't on the same page and we can't reach each other, my experience is that:

### Column A

I want to figure things out  
I move toward my partner  
I can become critical  
I can be demanding  
I might get naggy  
I feel frustrated  
I feel invisible  
I become exasperated  
I can become hostile  
I feel like my partner doesn't care

### Column B

I back off  
I prefer to shut down so things don't get out of control  
I get overwhelmed  
I feel like nothing I can do can satisfy my partner  
I feel helpless  
I appear cold  
I lose myself in something else  
I avoid coming home  
I tip toe around my partner, desperate not to set off a fight  
I feel attacked

Write down how many you circled in each column:

Column A: \_\_\_\_\_

Column B: \_\_\_\_\_

Share your answers with each other. Using the same list below, circle the phrases that your partner identifies with when things aren't going well in your relationship.

Column A

I want to figure things out  
 I move toward my partner  
 I can become critical  
 I can be demanding  
 I might get naggy  
 I feel frustrated  
 I feel invisible  
 I become exasperated  
 I can become hostile  
 I feel like my partner doesn't care

Column B

I back off  
 I prefer to shut down so things don't  
 get out of control  
 I get overwhelmed  
 I feel like nothing I can do can satisfy  
 my partner  
 I feel helpless  
 I appear cold  
 I lose myself in something else  
 I avoid coming home  
 I tip toe around my partner, desperate  
 not to set off a fight  
 I feel attacked

Write down how many your partner circled in each column:

Column A: \_\_\_\_\_

Column B: \_\_\_\_\_

*The results:*

Note which column you each have the most responses in:

I have more responses in:

- a. Column A
- b. Column B

My partner has more responses in:

- a. Column A
- b. Column B

If you both have more responses in Column A, you probably identify most with a "Find the Bad Guy" pattern.

If you both identify with responses in different columns than each other, you likely identify most with the "Protest Polka" pattern.

And lastly, if you each have most responses in Column B, you may identify most with the “Freeze and Flee” pattern.

What do you think?

Do you agree with this assessment of your relationship? Do you agree with each other that this is your pattern?

Just knowing a little bit about this negative cycle and that it is reversible is hopefully somewhat helpful in itself.

*Many of you may have a roughly equal number of responses circled in each column. That just makes it harder to discern a particular pattern that you become caught in. Check in with each other and try to figure out if there is any predominant pattern that seems to take over your relationship.*

## EXERCISE

# 16

## Your Role in the Pattern

You basically did the work to identify your role in Exercise 15 when you were determining your pattern. Please refer to Exercise 15 throughout this exercise.

If in Exercise 15, you weighed most heavily with responses from Column A, you are more of a pursuer in your relationship.

If you most of your experiences were listed in Column B, you are more of a withdrawer in your relationship.

Do you agree with this assessment?

Together, discuss your typical ways of coping in times of disconnect, and offer each other with experiences from your day-to-day that illustrate times when you are either pursuing (or becoming hostile, demanding, critical or any other similar behavior in which your needs are turned up) or withdrawing (or numbing out, shutting down, pulling away or engaging in other similar behavior in which your needs are turned down.)

## EXERCISE

# 17

## Know Your Role on All Levels

In this exercise, we will look at what's happening for you and your partner behaviorally, cognitively and emotionally when your negative cycle takes over your relationship.

Circle your cycle as titled by Sue Johnson (refer to Exercise 15):

- Find the Bad Guy
- Protest Polka
- Freeze and Flee

Circle your role in the cycle:

- Pursuer
- Withdrawer

Fill in the blank spaces with your experiences and what your partner might be experiencing beneath following statements.

### *Behaviorally*

When my cycle starts up and I feel disconnected from my partner, I often react by *(describe your behaviors)*:

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When we aren't getting along, my partner often reacts to me by (*describe your partner's behaviors*):

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*Cognitively*

When my partner reacts like this, and when we are not getting along, I often *think*:

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I imagine my partner might be *thinking*:

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*Emotionally:*

When my partner reacts this way and we aren't connecting, I initially *feel* (remember, feelings can be complex and multilayered):

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Underneath this feeling, from a deeper place, I also might be *feeling* (slow down, check in with yourself, is there anything else underneath there? Feeling scared? Hopeless? Overwhelmed? Disappointed?):

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When I feel this way, I often see myself as:

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When I feel this way, I *long for or need*:

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When I react the way I do, I imagine that my partner *feels*:

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Great work. This was not an easy exercise and hopefully you took some time to do this.

Share your responses with your partner and listen to your partner share their responses with you.

When you're done, reflect on the following questions:

- What is your cycle? Discuss together what happens on all levels when you don't connect. Discuss how you and your partner trigger each other's thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
- Are you surprised with any of your partner's responses about their experience?
- Are you surprised by what your partner imagines you feel or think when you get into your pattern together?

## EXERCISE

# 18

## Know Your Partner's Role

Hopefully from the previous exercise, you have learned about how your partner feels, thinks and behaves when you both get caught in your pattern.

This exercise is essentially a review to make sure that you have a clear understanding of what happens for your partner.

Write down your understanding of your partner's behaviors, thoughts and feelings below:

*When my partner and I aren't getting along:*

My partner reacts by *(describe your partner's behaviors)*:

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My partner *thinks*:

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My partner is often *feeling*:

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What my partner is longing for or needing is:

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Review your answers with each other. It's very likely that you may have still gotten it a bit wrong. That's okay, but it's important to educate each other on your experiences so that your partner can really understand you.

## EXERCISE

# 19

## Externalize the Pattern

By the time you have completed this exercise, it is my hope that you can each see the deleterious cycle that arises between you as something that is actually outside of you. It is like a malicious third force in your relationship that wants to keep you disconnected and happy.

### Part I

Together, brainstorm adjectives that describe your cycle. Here are a few to get you started—circle the ones that you see fit, and then add your own.

Remember what brainstorming means: there is no censoring. Just write down whatever comes to mind for each of you.

*Sneaky*

*Violent*

*Hostile*

*Cold*

|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

**Part II:**

Of the above adjectives listed, decide on 5 that you both agree fit your cycle the best:

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**Part III:**

Really think of this pattern as something that exists outside of your relationship. It is definitely outside of your ideal relationship, so work hard to think of your pattern as something outside of yourselves.

Using the adjectives that you selected together, if helpful, choose a name together for your pattern:

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Great! Now, whenever you notice it starting up, you can refer to it by name.

## EXERCISE

# 20

## Stopping the Pattern

It's time to join forces and team up together against the pattern.

You have a name, you realize it's outside of yourself, and you know what the pattern pulls you into doing, thinking, and feeling. It's time to claim ownership again of your relationship.

This exercise will give you some building blocks to overtake your pattern so that it does not overtake your relationship.

First, write down the last time you remember getting into your pattern:

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What were you doing, what were you thinking, and what were you feeling at this time?

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Looking back, what was the first warning sign that you had that told you that it was starting up again?

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Generally speaking, what are usually the first warning signs that indicate you may be getting into your pattern? These warning signs could be what you find yourself thinking, doing or feeling, or they may be behaviors of your partner's. Just write down what you think are the first signs that tell you the pattern is about to start:

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Share your answers with each other. You will likely discuss two different instances in which you got into your pattern unless you chose the same instance. Discuss with your partner how they thought, felt, and behaved, as well as how you thought, felt, and behaved in each instance.

Be clear on your warning signs.

Pay close attention to whether these warning signs arise as you go through your day.

Let your partner know what your warning signs are.

Agree with each other that when either of you start to experience those warning signs, you can call yourself out on it.

You can say, "I feel (*your name for the pattern*) starting up again!" Calling yourself out on this is not necessarily going to stop the pattern, but if you can at least agree that it is happening, this is a step in the right direction.

Example: Donna gets really angry and frustrated with her partner Nick when he pulls away. She notices him pulling away and her blood starts to boil. She says, "Nick, I feel like the hurricane is starting up again. I notice my warning signs are going off. Do you notice this too?"

You are still going to have your issues with each other, but at least you can be on the same page that the pattern is starting.

Call yourselves out on this as often as you can.

## EXERCISE

# 21

## Taking Risks, Getting Closer

When you are disconnected from your partner, usually—underneath your surface—you may be feeling there is something much more painful and raw happening. This is an emotional experience that we don't always like to admit or be in touch with. It is painful. It makes us feel vulnerable and it can be scary or overwhelming.

In previous exercises we have tried to tap into this well of emotion that may lie underneath your more surface feelings. At this point, I'd really like you to let your partner into that experience. I want you to really let them know, see and experience what it's like for you.

To do this, you will both have to feel very close to completely safe with each other. Can your partner feel safe with you?

First, let them know whether they can feel safe with you.

If you can't make and keep that promise, just let them know and keep working at steps 1-6 until you feel more secure together. Better yet, find a couples therapist or relationship coach to help you move more swiftly through the process.

If you can promise that you will be there and that you want to hear from your partner, let them know. Make sure you can keep that promise.

And if your partner promises this to you—let them in a little deeper into your experience. If you're terrified or feeling hopeless or struggling with something else all together, let them into your raw experience a little bit more. Let them know what you might need from them to help with these pains.

When your partner shares their raw experience with you, make sure to be open and try to understand.

Continue to do this when you feel like you aren't connected. It can be so difficult but it makes all the difference in your relationship if you can do this with each other.

## EXERCISE

# 22

## Shame, Shame, Go Away

Using your self-awareness skills and building from everything you have done up until this point, honestly check in with yourself and ask yourself if you have any shame in there.

Many couples I have worked with have experienced deep shame about their contributions to the negative pattern of their relationship. Some people feel so deeply ashamed about their behavior, so ashamed that they could not speak it. Is this you?

Perhaps there is something that you have done in your relationship that you truly regret, feel ashamed of, and afraid to admit?

Or maybe there is something about yourself that you just don't like and might have some shame around it.

Take some time to check in with yourself and see if you can come up with something that might make sense to share with your partner.

Let them into your experience and let them know.

Remember: Shame makes us want to hide. It makes us want to disappear into ourselves and never connect. It might be very uncomfortable for you to let your partner into your shame, but give it your best shot.

I imagine you will feel liberated from it and hopefully will feel a great deal closer to your partner.

When you hear about your partner's experience, also make sure to be open and accepting. This is very difficult for them to let you in, just as it may be hard for you to let them in.

Hopefully, this exercise will help you both decrease your shame just by exposing it to each other.

# EXERCISE



## Compliment Comfort

*Discuss the following questions with your partner:*

- How comfortable are you with compliments?
- Do you accept them easily? Do you think your partner accepts them easily?
- Do you dish them out frequently? Do you think you hear plenty of compliments and appreciation from your partner? (My bet is that you could handle a bit more...)

*Reflect on the following question and write out some of your thoughts below:*

When you were a child, did your family express a great deal of appreciation to each other? Were you complimented frequently? Do you think that your family environment had anything to do with your own level of comfort expressing or receiving appreciation or compliments?

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Share your responses with your partner.

If your partner isn't happy with the amount of compliments that you deliver, could it be because you generally aren't comfortable giving compliments because of how you were raised?

Mind you, that's no excuse to not give compliments, but it might explain something.

In the next exercise, we will look at ways to accelerate your appreciation.



# EXERCISE



## Get Your Appreciation On

First, list 5 things you appreciate about your partner. They don't have to be huge ideas and can be simple things like the way they make the bed in the morning, but take your time and come up with 5:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, tell your partner those things. You should hear some nice stuff from them too.

Take turns.

How did that feel?

Tell each other.

Was that hard?

Is it a struggle for you to do this if it's not forced or asked of you?

List a few ways you can implement complimenting your partner a bit more. Feel free to use the suggestions from the main text if you find them helpful:

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Remember to keep this up. Set yourself reminders if you have to! Just because you're reminding yourself doesn't mean that you aren't being sincere. You're just reminding yourself to let your partner into your experience of appreciation for them.

# EXERCISE



## Setting Aside Time and Being Present

Write down how much quality time would you ideally like to spend with your partner on a weekly basis. Write the answer to this question if you had your best relationship. Make sure it is at least an hour, not watching TV on the couch or merely inhabiting the same space working separately. We are talking *quality* time, when you can talk and connect:

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Discuss your answers together. Compromise and agree on a minimum.

Don't be discouraged if your partner wants to spend less time with you than you wish to with them. We all have different set points of how much time we need alone. If your partner wants less time with you than you want with your partner, that probably says more about your partner than it does about you.

*If the above goal feels like it would be hard to accomplish because you don't have time:*

- List 3 things you do on a daily basis that waste your time (e.g., checking email and/or Facebook every ten minutes, working late four nights a week, you get the picture):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Decide whether it makes sense for you to monitor the above behaviors and give them up so that you can spend more time with your partner.
- Are there any other activities that you could give up or do together in order to create more time together? Are there any boundaries you could put up around certain things you do to ensure that you also have time for your relationship (e.g., make sure you leave work by a certain hour, etc.)? List them here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, list 3 regular times during the week which you can carve out to be together. You may already have some and it's ok to include those times if you think that's enough. If not, if you can only come up with ten minutes a night before bedtime, go with that. Start with whatever you can, preferably adding up to at least a few hours of quality time each week, if not more:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

If you are especially busy, use a calendar system to keep the commitment. Whether it's the calendar on the wall or an electronic calendar like Google calendar, plug it in and think of it like an appointment. You'll be more likely to keep it if it's written down (just don't play with your calendar while you're connecting with each other—remember: no technology!).

Agree on some set times to just be together and hold each other accountable!

# EXERCISE



## Create Rituals and Celebrate Anniversaries

### Part I - Rituals

In the previous exercise, we made sure that you and your partner carve out enough time for each other from week to week.

In the first part of Exercise 26, we will make sure that you have built in rituals on more of a daily basis to ensure that you don't get lost in the hustle and bustle of your busy day.

Together, list out a few rituals that you might already have in your relationship. Do you call each other when you get to work? A kiss "hello" when you greet each other at the end of the day? Whatever they are, write out those rituals in your day to day that you can usually count on. Do this separately and then share your answers with each other:

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Now, brainstorm together ways that you can beef up your daily rituals of connection. Decide to implement 3 of them and hold each other accountable. I have heard new habits take anywhere from 16 to 40 days to take hold, so keep it up in order to cement these rituals in your relationship.

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## Part II – Anniversaries and Celebrations

What anniversaries, occasions, or events do you regularly celebrate in your relationship?

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If you feel like you can add some celebration to your life (and why shouldn't you?), think about some less obvious things about your relationship to celebrate.

Some suggestions: When you first met. Your first date. When you decided to be a couple.

What are your ideas? Write them down and then share with your partner:

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Agree on a few of these important milestones, anniversaries or reasons to celebrate in your relationship and get right to it!

Get out your calendar and add them in now before you forget!

## EXERCISE

# 26.2

## The Final Step - PARTY TIME

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have nearly completed all of the exercises in the workbook.

It's just the last little stretch before it's over.

Taking advice from the previous exercise, it's time to celebrate what you both just did. For each other, for yourselves, and for your relationship.

Do something great together.

It can be an evening out, a nice dinner in, or even better, a weekend away somewhere relaxing or a vacation together.

Find a time and place to just spend together and treat yourselves.

If you really put your heart into this program and took your time with these exercises, you have worked hard and taken risks. You have hopefully learned and have grown a great deal – together and as individuals.

You deserve a huge pat on the back and no one is going to give that to you but yourselves.

It may not have all been perfect each step of the way, but the fact is, you went the distance.

Now go celebrate.

Congratulations!



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## About the Author



Jenev Caddell, PsyD, is the founder of [www.mybestrelationship.com](http://www.mybestrelationship.com) and My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC. She is a psychologist, certified Emotionally Focused Therapist, and relationship coach for entrepreneurs and career driven professionals whose relationships can use some help. Her mission is to spread the word that your best relationship is crucial to your health and happiness and that it is also within your reach. Dr. Caddell works with couples committed to each other who are ready to strengthen their relationships, whether they are struggling and on the verge of breaking up or eager to upgrade their already strong relationships.

**D**o you want to improve your relationship but can't bear the thought of going to couples therapy? This book may be your answer. In the last few decades, a science behind love has been discovered with an exploration of romantic relationships through rigorous research. Using the principles of Emotionally Focused Therapy, a well researched and highly successful form of couples counseling built on this new science of love, Dr. Jenev Caddell reveals how you can create your best relationship.

This book will help you discover the principles behind this new science of love and how to apply them to your relationship. Complete with worksheets and exercises to do with your partner, this book will teach you what a healthy relationship is really all about, and will help you take practical steps toward achieving it. This book is for couples of all sexual orientations and religious beliefs who are ready to deepen, enrich and even save their relationships.

The average couple waits through six years of distress before seeking outside help. If you are struggling in your relationship, couples therapy will help, but if you are reluctant to go, pick up this book. Don't put off protecting and improving your best asset – your relationship.



Jenev Caddell, PsyD, is a psychologist, certified Emotionally Focused Therapist, and relationship coach. Her mission is to spread the word that your best relationship is crucial to your health and happiness and that it is also within your reach.

Please visit [www.mybestrelationship.com](http://www.mybestrelationship.com) for more information.

