KEVIN BOYLE

THE COMPANION WORKBOOK FOR

"BUT DAD, I LOVE HIM!"

FREEDOM

FROM YOUR

ATTACHMENT STYLE

HEAL THE BELIEFS BEHIND YOUR TRIGGERS,
CONNECT INSTEAD OF REACT, AND BUILD
DEEP, LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

Disclaimer:

"FREEDOM From Your Attachment Style: Heal the Beliefs Behind Your Triggers, Connect Instead of React, and Build Deep, Lasting Relationships" is a reflection of my personal journey, including the empowering exercises and methodologies I used to heal my dysfunctional attachment style, release disempowering beliefs, and overcome the fear, loneliness, and anxiety I experienced following my divorce. This book is intended to support others facing similar challenges and is for educational purposes only.

Please note that this book is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The insights and strategies shared are grounded in personal experience and what worked for me, but should not be interpreted as professional therapy or counseling.

This book is not recommended for individuals who have experienced sexual abuse, assault, or who arc currently dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If you have a history of trauma or mental health conditions, it is crucial to seek guidance from a licensed clinician, psychologist, psychiatrist, or other qualified mental health professional.

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INTRODUCTION



I'll never forget the day I received that fateful phone call.

"I am sorry, Kevin…"

Your body stiffens as soon as you hear those words. It knows only too well what is coming next.

"…things just aren't working out. It's over."

With the shock came disbelief. Yes, I knew we had problems. But couldn't we work them out? I always thought we would.

Then followed a tumult of emotions: sadness, the anger, the grief, the pain, the suffering. I experienced it all.

I could hear myself pleading, bargaining. I would do anything to fix this… I begged for a chance to make things right, but to no avail.

It was one of the darkest periods of my life. I was devastated. I was awash in deep pain in the days thereafter. I would flip-flop daily, sometimes within the span of a few hours, from desperately wanting my ex back to hating them and vowing to myself that I would never go back.

I kept asking myself the same question, over and over again, in an endless loop: "Why? Why doesn't she want to work things out?"

The funny thing was (and not in a ha-ha kind of way), I never asked myself why she cheated. I just couldn't get past the overpowering question, "Why am I not good enough?"

In that moment, I felt alone and completely broken, as if the weight of the world had come crashing down on me.

And then my fears and anxieties started to take over my thoughts: "I don't think I can ever love again. It's just too painful! I can't bear the thought of going through another breakup. Am I destined to be alone forever?"

It was in that moment that I realized I needed to figure out how to break the cycle of my failed, dysfunctional relationships.

If you are reading this book, you're probably sick and tired of the heartache and heartbreak that come with failed, abusive, or dysfunctional relationships—the misunderstandings, and the struggle to fully connect with a loved one (whether a partner, spouse, or family member) on a deep, intimate level.

And because of that, I'm so glad you found me! Together, let's explore how having the loving, healthy, and deeply committed relationship you've always wanted—one that will go the distance—is truly possible!

Right now, I would like you to take a moment to self-reflect. And ask yourself the following questions:

Why can't I find that one special person to spend my life with?

Why are my relationships so chaotic and messy?

What is really holding me back from having the loving, healthy, successful relationship I have always wanted and dreamed of?

Because sometimes it can feel like we are not the captain of our own ship, that we are just getting swept along, and that life is happening to us instead of with us.

Like many, I grew up believing the well-intentioned lie that time heals all wounds. But through my own journey, as well as through my work with clients, I learned that there are some wounds that time just won't heal.

"FREEDOM From Your Attachment Style" (the companion workbook to *"But Dad, I LOVE HIM!"*) is for you if:

- You want to free yourself from your anxious, avoidant, or fearful attachment style, to become more grounded, secure, and non-reactive in your communication and relationships.
- You are just getting over or still trying to get over a breakup.
- You want to be a better parent—calmer, more understanding, and less reactive.

- You feel lonely. Your soul aches for a fulfilling, long-term, successful relationship.
- You have difficulty trusting others.
- You have a disempowering limiting belief that you want to let go of.

This workbook goes into great detail on the steps and the exercises I used to heal my anxious/avoidant attachment style, get over my depression, heal the deep emptiness and loneliness I was feeling in my life, and to let go of my disempowering limiting belief that I was not good enough.

It is also the workbook hundreds of my clients have used to reach more secure beliefs and loving, successful, fulfilling relationships.

Established brain science research conclusively proves that certain memories embed themselves deep within our nervous system and our subconscious minds. They stay with us from childhood and deeply affect how we experience ourselves throughout our entire lives.

Note: This concept is explored in works like American Psychology Today, "When Trauma Gets Stuck in the Body: How do we Heal?" and "The Body Keeps the Score" by Bessel van der Kolk. Both works highlight how unresolved trauma is not only a psychological experience but also a profound sensory and emotional one, deeply embedding itself in and affecting the body's nervous system.

They are called implicit memories, and they literally become the lens through which we see and experience our world and our relationships.

Serving as a foundation for our belief system. These beliefs stay with us our entire adult lives, manifesting themselves in our relationships and, ultimately, in who we attract and who we think we are worthy of.

If these beliefs are "negative," then more likely than not, they will cause havoc, pain, and suffering for ourselves and our relationship partners.

I have also discovered that these deep-seated beliefs are not something you can heal or let go of by watching another video on YouTube, reading another self-help book off of Amazon, going on another spiritual retreat, doing a 12-step program, or just hoping that they will disappear over time.

We need to go deeper, deeper than you have ever been, deeper than you have ever thought possible.

Together, you and I will peel back the layers of the onion that form your life's intricate stories and beliefs. Then, we will equip you with the tools to separate who you are from what has happened to you.

It was only through my own personal journey of healing the painful wounds of my past that I discovered this transformative process.

By healing and releasing disempowering limiting beliefs, you can heal your anxious or avoidant attachment style, break free from unhealthy relationship patterns and behaviors, and truly change your life!

What many people may not realize is that often unresolved emotional childhood wounds from caregivers who had their own trauma are at the root cause of their disempowering limiting beliefs.

These limiting beliefs we have adopted from childhood create emotional walls that prevent us from having the loving, supportive, fulfilling relationship we have always wanted because these beliefs are the root cause of our anxious, avoidant, or fearful attachment styles, patterns, and behaviors.

It was only through my own healing journey that I discovered, that when you heal and let go of the emotional wounds attached to your limiting beliefs, you will release and let go of the limiting belief, which in turn transforms your attachment style!

I want to be clear: this is not another book about necessarily "finding yourself."

This book is about "wiping the slate clean" and recreating yourself. It is about a fresh start, a new beginning—a more empowered one.

It's about experiencing a POWERFUL inside-out, life-changing transformation and living your life as the most confident, joyful, and loving version of yourself. It's about doing "the work" to finally heal and let go of your triggers.

You will become more secure, grounded, and non-reactive in your dating and relationship attachment style. You will become more resilient, like a sturdy rock in the chaotic storms of life. You will feel lighter, happier, more loving, less reactive, and most importantly, more patient in all of your relationships!

Many of my clients tell me that it feels like a huge burden has been lifted off of their shoulders. The best way I can describe it is to imagine you are walking outside on a sunny day, in a meadow on the

side of a mountain, feeling the sun warm your face and skin—your mind is clear, and you feel like anything is possible.

So consider this an invitation to you and for you, to discover the most confident, joyful, loving, and POWERFUL version of yourself, and to leave the pain and the wounds of your past behind!

CHAPTER 1:
PEELING BACK THE LAYERS OF THE ONION



"I realized something had to change and that 'something' was me."
—Kevin Boyle

This book will help you to discover the root causes of why you might feel stuck in your life, why you might be having difficulty in your relationships, and why you have trouble trusting others.

Most importantly, it will help you DRAMATICALLY improve the way you relate and communicate with others, so you finally get out of your own way when it comes to having healthy, successful relationships.

What I'm going to teach you is what I did to heal my life and heal the loneliness and emptiness I was feeling inside. It's how I became so grounded, secure, and most importantly less reactive in my attachment style. And it's how I was able to put the pieces of my life back together again.

Before we start, there is one underlying lesson I would like you to take away from this book: the grass is **not** always greener on the other side of the fence.

I believe we live in a "throw-away" society where most people would rather just walk away from their partners and relationships rather than face and work through their issues. Their own egos need to be right, their fantasy of what they think their life or partner should look like, and their problems.

The critically important life lesson we all need to learn is that the grass is always going to be greener on the side of the fence that you "choose" to water.

This workbook is for people who want to water the side of the fence they are on right now, and either save the relationship that they are in right now, or help them find the relationship that they have always wanted.

It took me a very long time to learn this critically important life lesson about life and love. You cannot run away from your problems and who you are when in a relationship.

"Who you are" will just keep following you from relationship to relationship, from person to person. Ultimately, you will most likely pass unhealthy relationship patterns and behaviors, attachment styles, fears, and anxieties on to your children.

Second, I want to be completely 100% upfront with you: This work is not easy and this book does not pull any punches.

Your healing, your "Inside-Out Transformation," does not come from me telling you what to do or telling you what you want to hear, in the way that you want to hear it. It comes from me having the courage to tell you like it is. And believe me, it's the only way. I only want the best for you because I have been you.

It will likely be very triggering for you too. But know that on the other side of your disempowering limiting beliefs, unhealthy anxious/avoidant dating style, fears, and painful wounds of the past is everything you have ever wanted.

EVERYTHING. Your dream life, and your dream relationship partner who will go the distance with you.

If you follow the tools, tips, and strategies, and you do the exercises outlined in this book, you will find the peace and closure you are looking for.

You will stop the pain and suffering. You will find joy once again, and emerge out of this more confident, loving, kind, and powerful than you ever thought possible.

These tools and strategies include:

Self-reflection through journaling and asking ourselves the right questions.

This workbook will help you to ask the "right" questions that lead you to your own "aha moments". Those moments will guide you to new behaviors and to take new actions.

Writing offers a very powerful, focused, and practical way to access your innate wisdom through self-reflection. A lot of the exercises and journaling I will ask you to do will force you to face who you are truly being in your day-to-day life and in your dating and your relationship life.

Correction via connection.

The one thing that will lead to your healing is most likely the one thing that you have been avoiding or resisting: connection.

I believe the source of most of our emotional pain comes from the belief that we are separate and alone. As a society, we have stopped seeing the value of community and family.

But we are social beings. A big part of our healing comes from being "witnessed" and by having a sense of community and connection. It comes from feeling that we are seen, that we are heard, that we matter, and that someone cares about us.

Connecting to the right "who."

Knowing the right "what" and "how" is critical to learning a new skill, moving forward in your life, changing undesired patterns or behaviors, and learning new ones.

But the right "who" leads to something that is even more critical than knowing what to do and how to do it.

The right "who" leads to CLARITY.

Having a good coach or mentor for accountability is important, but real value lies in getting clarity from a coach or a mentor—clarity that comes from another person's life experiences, accumulated wisdom and knowledge, and expertise!

A good coach will also give you the gift of objectivity. Part of what makes this work so hard is that it involves taking an unflinching, objective look at all aspects of ourselves. We have to take a deep inventory of who we are being in relationship to others, and of OUR choices in relationship partners.

This companion guide to "But Dad, I LOVE Him!" is full of practical insights, exercises and tools to help you cultivate healthier connections in your dating and relationships.

By healing old wounds, we create space for healthier relationship dynamics and develop a stronger sense of security within ourselves.

Complete the exercises in this workbook to:

Cultivate a healthier sense of self-worth and self-validation.

Building a secure attachment style begins with self-acceptance and embracing our strengths and imperfections.

By recognizing our own value and meeting our own needs, we become less reliant on others and external validation. That fosters a more secure and balanced approach to relationships, which removes undue pressure from our partners.

Learn how to set healthier boundaries and effectively communicate.

Setting healthy boundaries is an essential pillar of a secure attachment style, allowing us to prioritize our needs and honor our values.

Effective communication involves actively listening, expressing ourselves clearly, setting and maintaining clear boundaries, respecting our values, and empathizing with our partners' unique needs. All of that is crucial for creating a safe and supportive relational environment for both partners.

Embrace vulnerability and genuine intimacy with our partners.

Vulnerability is the cornerstone of deep and meaningful connections. Building a secure attachment style necessitates embracing vulnerability and cultivating intimacy.

By practicing self-disclosure, expressing authentic emotions, and creating safe spaces for vulnerability, we foster trust and develop secure attachments in our most important relationships.

Self-forgiveness also plays a vital role in this process, allowing us to heal old wounds, unresolved childhood trauma, and embrace vulnerability with courage.

And lastly (and in my opinion, most importantly), become less reactive.

Being grounded in the present and healing the wounds of your past (letting go of old triggers) leads to one of the biggest benefits of being securely grounded. You will become much less reactive in your relationships and your communication with others.

There will be a quiet confidence about you, which is an extremely attractive quality in a person. You become a solid, unbreakable rock in the chaotic waters of life. And you will become less needy, anxious, and "messy" in relationships.

Does all of that sound like a lot? Well, there is no quick fix. There is no magic pill or button or "5 minute abs" shortcut.

I wish there was! But it is a process.

All to say, going through this workbook, you will be peeling back the layers of the onion of your life's story for deeper clarity on how you might be sabotaging the kind of life and relationships you say you want.

It will help give you the answers to the tough questions that you haven't asked yourself. It will help you get to the heart of any disempowering limited beliefs that cause over-reactivity during disagreements with your romantic partners, defensiveness, projections of past hurts onto your loved ones, and any negative self-talk you might be inflicting upon yourself.

As we go through this workbook, we will be peeling back the layers of the onion of your life's story for deeper clarity on how you might be sabotaging the kind of life and relationships you say you want.

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The Follow It Home Healing Methodology™
Five Steps to Healing the Relationship You Have With Yourself

This is that process. It's the process I used to heal my own anxious-avoidant attachment style and the triggers at the root of the reactivity in my relationships. I have used it with hundreds of clients who were tired of feeling stuck, anxious, tired of endless dating, failed relationships, and that question I know only too well:

Why am I not good enough?

Follow It Home is a transformational change from the inside out.

A shift in your internal belief systems, how you feel about yourself and your life, how safe you feel, your wounded inner child, and the story that has been running your life and your relationships.

Here is your new road map to peace, joy, safety, and a life full of more connection to self and others.

Step 1 – Identify the Limiting Belief

When you find yourself upset, anxious, or triggered, there is a limiting belief underneath it: "I am not good enough." "I am invisible." "No one cares." "I have to earn love." "If I trust, I'll get hurt."

That core belief becomes the lens through which you choose, create, and experience every relationship.

In the moment you feel triggered, ask yourself one question: "What am I believing about myself right now?"

You cannot change a belief you cannot see. Once you name it, it stops quietly making your choices for you.

Step 2 – Feel It to Heal It, Then Follow It Home

You cannot heal and let go of what you are unable or unwilling to feel. Feelings are the super glue holding the painful beliefs of your past in place. When you let your body fully feel and process a feeling, instead of ignoring it, pushing it down or finding a way to distract yourself, it loses its charge.

The next time you have an upset or a disagreement with your partner, pause before you react. Name the belief underneath it, then notice where the feeling lives in your body. Breathe, and stay with it.

Then ask the question that leads you home: "Just like when?" Not to relive the past, but to name where this feeling first began, so it no longer runs your present.

Step 3 – Interrupt the Signal

When we have a disagreement or misunderstanding with our partner, many of us are triggered into fight or flight. Our nervous system takes over, and we react instead of respond. Our anxious or avoidant behaviors kick in, because we don't yet have the tools to self-regulate.

So in that moment, we ask our partner to do for us what we are unable to do for ourselves: help us regulate.

But our partner cannot regulate our emotions for us. We are asking them to do something they are simply not equipped to do.

Here's what's really happening. Your nervous system does not know the difference between a real threat and the limiting beliefs you hold deep in your subconscious mind about love and relationships. It sounds the same alarm either way. In this workbook, you will learn three practical, effective tools to interrupt that signal: The Swaying Hug, 4/12 Breathwork, and The Feeling Release Meditation. They will help you feel safe in your body, so you can choose to respond and connect instead of react.

Step 4 – Reparent the Wound

Truth be told, the vast majority of us are wounded children walking around in adult bodies. That's right. Most of us carry limiting beliefs and old emotional patterns that were set in childhood and repeated throughout our lives.

The cure? To give our child self the love, validation, and support we so desperately craved, this time from ourselves. To integrate the scared, wounded child self with our adult self.

Step 5 – Reframe the Experience, Rewrite the Story

For me, this was the final step, and the most difficult one. This is where we change the meaning of what happened. We don't rewrite the story to excuse what happened. We rewrite it so old beliefs no longer get to choose who we are and how we experience our life and our relationships.

It begins with the hardest words to say: "I forgive." Forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others will free you. That's when the original belief starts to lose its emotional grip. Forgiving others is not something you need to do before you are ready. It will happen when you decide, and that part is always a choice.

Then we take small steps. State a need and have it met. Hold a boundary and see that the relationship survives. Each moment we rewrite our story in the present is counter-evidence for the nervous system.

The hard part is that this new way feels unsafe. The nervous system can't tell past danger from present danger, so it pulls you back toward protection, hiding, and performing. But when you hide behind a mask, the mask is what gets accepted, not you.

Together, these five steps are the inner work that will transform your life and your relationships.

If you are single, the Follow It Home Healing Methodology™ will stop the old patterns that have been choosing partners for you.

If you are in a relationship, these five steps are what you do first, so your partner is no longer being asked to regulate you, validate you, and help you reparent your wounds.

When you are ready to bring this into your relationship with your partner, you'll find the Bringing It Home Connection Method™ and its Five Shifts in Chapter 17.

For now, stay here. Continue the work in the next chapter, and let's make the internal shifts that make connection, safety, and trust possible.

CHAPTER 2:
FEELINGS ARE THE SUPER GLUE TO OUR PAINFUL WOUNDS OF THE PAST



"When children are criticized, neglected, or abused, they don't stop loving their parents... they stop loving themselves."

—Gabor Mate

Why are the painful wounds of our past and disempowering, limiting beliefs so hard to heal and let go of?

It's because your conscious thoughts generally do NOT create your reality. You might think they do, but your subconscious beliefs, biases, patterns, habits, and fears are generally responsible for creating your reality every single moment of the day. And for most of us, we are not even aware of it.

Some of us were conditioned to believe certain things, like we're powerless, undeserving, or not good enough. The disempowering beliefs you hold in your subconscious mind are sabotaging you and keeping you STUCK at a very deep level, well beyond your awareness.

That's why if someone makes you mad, and you have not done the work to release your feelings about a past hurt, you'll most likely become reactive, perhaps even lashing out in anger.

You can't help yourself; your subconscious mind takes over, and your actions mirror the pain that is already inside of you. Because a reactive brain is on autopilot, it is fight or flight.

This is why, for a lot of people, positive affirmations, visualization boards, or certain therapies do not work. Before beginning conscious work, we first need to intentionally clear out disempowering, limiting beliefs from our subconscious mind that's being stored in your body's nervous system for change to happen.

Did you know that only 5-10% of our choices, thoughts, and actions are made deliberately at a conscious level? It may sound unbelievable, but it's true. The impact of this on our society and relationships is profound.

What I did not know and what I discovered far too late in life is that limiting beliefs don't just *exist* inside you. We are *living everyday through them,* keeping the life, the love, and the financial abundance, we want, just out of reach, and ultimately sabotaging success and our relationships when things start going well. Dramatically influencing your ability to give and receive love, how reactive you are whenever these is a misunderstanding, miscommunication, or disagreement in your relationship, and whether you push love away or not.

If your caregivers were emotionally unavailable, critical, absent, or abusive. We will sub consciously carry this relationship dynamic into every relationship and out on every date we go on.

These deep unresolved emotional wounds from childhood become the root cause of our limiting beliefs, reinforced by life events, like being bullied in school or having our heart broken one too many times, silently sabotaging our relationships and pushing love away as we adopt the belief that love is unsafe, or that we are not worthy of it.

But there's an even deeper truth we need to talk about…

It's not just that our limiting beliefs block love and success in our lives.

It's the *fears* that those beliefs create, keeping you stuck in a lifetime of painful patterns and behaviors. Where your fears drive your nervous system into a constant state of fight or flight.

And try as you might, you can't help yourself. To your deep primal brain, it sees this fear as a threat to your very existence, and when there is a perceived threat, your whole biology is set up, so there is no time for thinking - only reacting.

And that's why these fears create so much reactivity and chaos in our relationships - it's your brain and your body on full automatic.

In your dating and romantic life, more often than not, these anxious and avoidant behaviors look like…

- Pulling away, isolating, emotionally checking out, or an inability to trust.
- Over functioning or people pleasing.
- Making assumptions, outbursts of uncontrollable anger, or controlling behaviors.

These fight of flight behaviors damage the very relationships you want to protect. They push away the people who are *trying* to love you.

So, here's the real question…

What protective walls have you built around your heart—and are they now keeping love out?

Because the real pain… the real wound… doesn't live in your mind the way you think it does.
It lives deep in your emotional state, in the unresolved pain and stored trauma that your nervous system is holding onto, right now.

It's why so many people continue to struggle with anxiety, loneliness, and depression, even after years of therapy or personal development. Because the root cause isn't in your thinking brain—it's in your emotional brain.

And until you heal and release what's buried *in your emotional brain,* you'll keep trying to think your way out of pain that was never meant to be solved by your thinking mind.

Because underneath every limiting belief is an unresolved emotional wound— often tied to deep, repressed emotional states like shame, fear, invisibility, anger, or abandonment.

These silent saboteurs are the emotional superglue keeping your limiting beliefs stuck in place.

Unresolved feelings and emotions that live deep within your nervous system and your subconscious mind. Just waiting to be triggered, causing us to blow things out of proportion, get defensive, and project the pain we have living deep inside of us onto our partners.

When I first begin working with someone, one of the most critically important questions I ask is:

What does your fear allow you to avoid?

And inevitably as I start to learn about their story, the events in their lives that have helped shaped their experience and perception of love and relationships, I discover for many avoidantly attached clients, the answer is the intimacy a relationship requires. Being seen, needing, and trusting.

For anxiously attached clients, the answer is generally the risk of rejection or abandonment. So, they hesitate to set boundaries, over function, and can be overly "clingy," hoping to keep love from leaving.

But if your brain equates love with danger, your subconscious will try to "protect" you by keeping what you want just out of reach.

This is why you can consciously crave a loving relationship while unconsciously behaving in ways that push it away—because the deeper driver is the subconscious minds need for safety (whether from losing the bond which ironically pushes partners away or losing yourself in it).

Both attachment patterns are looking for "safety," just in opposite directions.

Note: The fearful-avoidant attachment style mixes both anxious and avoidant behaviors; chasing and avoiding.

Your attachment style (and the limiting beliefs around dating and relationships it reinforces) becomes the lens through which you attract, create, and experience your intimate relationships and romantic partners.

The result? You will continue to reinforce the limiting belief that love is unsafe, and the patterns will continue.

What I discovered through my own healing journey, is that when you learn how to connect with, express, and process your suppressed emotions attached to your limiting beliefs, you will heal and release them.

Because when you heal the wound that's tied to a limiting belief, the emotional charge fades, it loses its power, its grip, and it clears your thinking!

It's like "wiping the slate clean!" And this is the promise, one day, sooner than you think if you continue to do the feeling release work, you will wake up, and you will no longer have the limiting belief.

You will lose all attachment to it – you will feel lighter, you will feel free, and you will experience clarity in a way that you have never experienced it before.

It's simply The Universal Law of Attraction at play: Which states.

Like attracts like, healthy attracts healthy, and unfortunately the reverse is also true – unhealed attracts unhealed.

What makes this so dangerous is that unhealthy love… feels emotionally familiar to someone who has had emotional pain and unmet needs in their past.

Why? Because these deep emotional wounds become hard wired into us—our nervous system learns to equate inconsistency, emotional distance, or the need to over function with love.

Your nervous system becomes wired for unpredictability, emotional highs and lows, and for flight or fight behaviors, not connection and closeness.

That why healthy love—the kind that's steady, calm, and consistent—feels boring. Like plain vanilla.

And that's when the painful patterns start, because your system has been highjacked.

So, if you find yourself chasing love, running away from love, or pushing love away—it's because your nervous system is calibrated for unpredictability, chaos, and distance.

Despite the thousands upon thousands of YouTube videos and self-help books out there, I believe our unresolved attachment style wounds from childhood is generally why the divorce rate is so high and why so many people continue to struggle with dating and relationships!

Right now, I want to share with you a very powerful, easy-to-use, and easy-to- learn technique to help you dissolve and let go of uncomfortable feelings, emotions, and upset.

Write down:

Follow It Home Steps 1 and 2: Identify the limiting belief of self under the upset and then identify the feeling.

What is a current upset?

What is your fear of self because of this upset?

This fear that you have - how does it make you feel?

With all of the days in your life, with all of your experiences in your life, what stays with you the most? What do you remember the most easily? Those events have the most emotions attached to them.

Feelings and emotions are intertwined with our thoughts, especially when they stem from powerful memories, past events, or childhood trauma.

Due to our inherent negativity bias, negative experiences tend to leave a deeper and more lasting impression than positive ones. These negative emotions from past events or traumas can be so powerful they often linger for years, rooted in our subconscious minds, embedded in our bodies nervous system, affecting our present lives.

For example, if you've been cheated on, those painful feelings can persist well into your new relationships. When you're with a new partner, certain words or actions might trigger those past emotions and thoughts from your previous relationship.

However, by doing a special healing meditation that focuses on these feelings and by healing and letting go of them, you can begin to lessen their impact and grip, helping you regain control over your current emotional well-being.

Do you ever meditate? Are you any good at it?

I've tried it but never really got the hang of it — too much monkey chatter in my brain. However, a small tweak made meditation work for me. I started sharing it with my clients and they started getting great results from it, as well!

Instead of focusing on your breath while you meditate, focus on what you are feeling.

For twelve minutes a day. I want you to find a quiet place to meditate about how you are feeling. I want you to visualize in your mind's eye your current uncomfortable thought or upset.

And then I want you to focus on the feeling associated with that thought. Is it shame, sadness, frustration, loneliness, feeling unsafe — anger?

Whatever it is, I want you to stop ignoring it and suppressing it. Instead, I want you to invite it in. I want you to expand into it. I want you to allow yourself to fully feel your feelings and feel what part of the body it is in and allow it to breathe. Give your feelings life.

A big warning: this is hard work. When I first start doing this Feeling Release Meditation with clients, some clients say that the pain can be so intense that they can only handle doing this meditation for five minutes at a time. That's fine. Over time it will get easier. Work your way up to twelve minutes.

This exercise will help to heal our painful wounds from our past and let go of our disempowering, limiting beliefs, our unhealthy relationship patterns, behaviors, and attachment style.

Because, we cannot heal what we will not allow ourselves to feel.

Most of us ignore our real feelings because they are just too painful. We distract ourselves by eating our favorite foods to excess, playing a video game, posting and scrolling through social media to get our dopamine fix for the day, turning to substances, or unintentionally taking it out on friends or family.

We suppress or ignore our true feelings because who wants to feel bad?

But this way of being is actually causing us to hurt ourselves. If you continually repress or ignore your feelings to avoid feeling your feelings, your pain and fears will always control every decision you will ever make.

Let me repeat: If you continually repress or ignore your feelings, so you don't have to feel them, your pain and your fears will always control every decision you will ever make.

Fear exists and will continue to persist because of one behavior: avoidance. As long as you avoid your true feelings, your subconscious fight or flight behaviors will always exist. All of your decisions will be based on whether you are willing to feel uncomfortable or not.

This is how we self-sabotage. This is how we abandon ourselves, our futures, and our dreams.

Often, without even realizing it, we allow our fears to dictate our actions, decisions, and behaviors.

Because fear is not just a fleeting emotion—it's a powerful force that can and will shape our reality if we let it.

Tips on how to get the most out of the Feeling Release Meditation;

1. Journaling before you do the Feeling Release Meditation allows you to find and explore your triggers.
   Use the prompts (questions) found on pages 21 and 49 to help you find your emotional triggers.
2. Once you "find" the feeling - now is the time to go into the Feeling Release Meditation.
3. Welcome the feeling in - look for where it is in the body, and allow thoughts and your feelings that encourage the feeling to "expand."
4. Embrace your feelings, and your triggers. Then take long, slow, deep breaths and breath with intention into the feeling. This will help dissipate the feelings associated with the upset.
5. The point of this meditation is to allow whatever needs and wants to come up, to come up and to be fully expressed in order to be processed.

There is nothing else to do. This is not a thinking brain exercise. This is a feeling release exercise.

Get in the "mud" with it, let yourself experience the emotions fully as they come up.

Do not censor or hold back. Complete acceptance of what you truly feel, especially the emotions you've been burying or suppressing, is the key to healing. Because, your inner child wants and needs to be seen, heard, and validated.

For this next exercise, I want you to write down and take some time to reflect on your answer that I posed earlier in this chapter:

"What does my fear allow me to avoid?"

Stay with Follow It Home Step 2. This question shows you what the fear is protecting – and what it is costing you.

Really think about your answer to this. What is your fear allowing you to avoid?

This is a critically important question. And you need to be 100% honest with yourself.

This question is so important because it forces us to confront the ways in which we are letting our fears hold us back from living the life we are truly meant to live.

It's easy to dismiss our fears as something we just "learn to accept," but when we avoid certain situations, opportunities, or ultimately let it affect our relationships, we're making a choice—a choice to stay small, to play it safe, to abandon the future we truly desire.

Now, I want you to take a moment and visualize your younger self, perhaps between the ages of five and nine. Imagine what it was like to be that age, with all the innocence, wonder, and vulnerability that came with it.

For this next exercise, I want you to answer the following question from your younger self 's perspective.

This is an important step, as it will help us dig even deeper into the roots of our fears: reflect on this:

"Why do I have this fear? What disempowering, limiting beliefs did I hold about myself when I was a young child or as a teenager?"

Still stay with Step 2, and follow it home. When did this belief first take root?

By understanding the roots of our fears, we can begin to unravel the stories we've told ourselves since childhood, stories that may no longer serve us.

These beliefs were often formed when we were young, at a time when we were very impressionable, and they've shaped our perceptions and behaviors ever since.

But now, as adults, we have the power to rewrite these stories, to challenge those limiting beliefs, and to stop abandoning the most powerful version of ourselves in the process!

Until I was 49 years old, I carried this burden because I had no clue how to heal the wounds of my past. Maybe you are doing what I did, the best that you can.

Maybe you were taught what I was taught, not to feel my feelings, to "pull yourself up by your bootstraps," and "to just get a good night's sleep."

But these patterns in your life, these feelings, are not going away unless you are prepared to do the work.

They will keep manifesting in your life, through your experiences and your relationships, until you finally make the decision to heal the emotional wounds of your past, that have become the emotional anchors of today.

I call them "The Silent Saboteurs" - the invisible super glue that is keeping your limiting beliefs in place. Reinforcing the old story about who you are, what you deserve, and what's possible for you in your life, and in love.

Step 3: Interrupt the signal. If the feeling gets too big, ground yourself by coming back to your breath, before you go deeper.

Author's Note: Self Soothing. As mentioned earlier when you are doing the Feeling Release Meditation, this exercise will most likely bring out big emotions, and for some clients - the anxiety, the fight or flight response may become too intense. This is where the practice of self-soothing and grounding will help calm the nervous system and comfort the body.

How to Self Sooth: The Swaying Hug.

Start off by giving yourself a tight hug around the chest and shoulder area. And then gently sway from left to right.

Close your eyes, and visualize putting your hand on your childhood self's shoulder. Imagine him or her smiling back at you. Then wrap your arms around them, hugging them from behind – they might turn around and hug you from the front. If not, it's ok, there might be some resistance there. Let the frontal hug come in time.

Remember this is not a thinking exercise. This is a feeling exercise. Feel the warmth. Feel the connection. Feel being held.

For me this was the first time I've ever felt "held." I've been hugged, but I never felt held. I actually broke down the first time I did this exercise.

Think positive affirmations while you are swaying back and forth and hugging your childhood self. "I love you, I am so proud of you, you are so brave, everything's going to be ok, I am here for you, etc…"

If feelings of fear or anxiety comes up, invite them in and let them pass. Do not try to fix them, distract yourself from them, or fight them. You simply want to acknowledge them, breath into them, and let them pass.

When fear or anxiety becomes too much:

When your nervous system is in fight or flight mode, it doesn't know that there is not a saber tooth tiger in the room. To your nervous system, your thinking, your fears, "are real."

And your nervous system "flows up." All of that anxious fearful energy flows from your nervous system up to your brain. That's why you don't solve this from trying to "think" your way out of it. You go to the source of the pain – which is in your nervous system. And you show it safety.

Think of it this way. The sabretooth tiger (your fear and anxiety) are outside of you. Your nervous system (fight or flight) is what is reacting to your fear and it sends the signal to run, distract, or escape up to your brain. By soothing your nervous system (Step 3) you interrupt the signal.

4/12 Breathwork: How to feel safe in your body.

Breathe into your stomach through your nose, for 4 secs (filling your belly full of air). Then breathe out of your open mouth by making a deep, loud ARRROU sound for 12 seconds or as long as it takes to breath everything out. (You should feel a vibration in your chest as you make the ARRROU sound and exhale).

Empty every particle of air out of your system until there is nothing left to breathe out.

Note: I do the 4/12 breathwork exercise for 6 minutes.

And finally, know this: it's okay to pause, take a deep breath, and a break.

Ask yourself: "This feeling I'm experiencing… how old does it make me feel?"

For many of us, these feelings of anxiety, fear, or emotional overwhelm aren't just about the present moment—they are echoes of the emotional wounds of our past. Often taking us back to childhood, to moments when we didn't feel safe, seen, or supported.

That's why it's so critically important during these times to comfort your inner child.

Ask: “What do I need right now?”

It might be the warmth of a hug.

It might be a few kind, reassuring words: “You’re safe now. I’ve got you.”

In the first phase of the Feeling Release Meditation we gave ourselves permission to fully feel, express, and process our suppressed emotions.

When I feel like I have fully expressed the “upset,” and the emotions associated with that upset. It’s then time to go into the second phase. It’s time to start to healing, to reconnect with that hurt little boy or girl that is deep inside of you.

To see them, hear them, and most importantly validate them.

The second phase is when I will do the Swaying Hug.

I get a “mental” picture of when I was a young boy. I look into the eyes of that beautiful, innocent little child, so full of joy, curiosity, and life.

And I take on the role of a guardian.

Step 4: Reparent the wound. Our adult self stands up for and by our hurt wounded self (our inner child) so our partners do not have to heal something that was never theirs to heal.

I stand up and stand by for my wounded inner child. I reassure him, that I have his back and that I will protect him, that no one will ever hurt him again. I put my hand on his shoulder. During this phase I will reassure my inner child that he is safe, that I love, and 100% accept him.

In this second phase, I offer him encouragement and remind him how proud I am. I hold him close, affirm his worth, and celebrate his accomplishments. I gently integrate positive events and memories, replacing old, outdated beliefs with new, empowering ones. This time together will often naturally shift into lightness and joy, finding myself smiling, laughing, and even playing with him.

I have found that this practice of self-soothing your inner child is where true healing begins. Because the more you learn to meet yourself with compassion where you once felt abandoned or unseen, the more whole, safe, and grounded you will become.

CHAPTER 3:
ATTACHMENT TO OUR BELIEFS IS WHAT SEPARATES US FROM OURSELVES AND OTHERS



"In the garden of relationships, rigid beliefs are the weeds that choke the flowers of understanding and compromise."

—Kevin Boyle

Even though I had made up my mind to make a change, I was still left with a big question: "How do I get rid of all of these disempowering, limiting beliefs that are underneath and driving my feelings of shame, loneliness, and pain?"

- I am powerless.
- No one will ever love me for me.
- I am not good enough.
- I am not deserving.
- I feel deep shame about something that happened to me.
- No one cares.
- I am invisible.
- I don't ever want to be hurt again.
- I need to be in a relationship to be happy.

These are all examples of disempowering, limiting beliefs.

But if our beliefs become our shield and armor, or the twenty-foot walls around us, how will we ever experience connection and genuine intimacy in a relationship?

And this is why this work is so critically important!

What I did not fully realize, and understand was that these walls that we think we have built to protect us, are also the same walls that are preventing your ideal life partner from seeing you as their ideal life partner.

Which then begs the question: where do all of these disempowering, limiting beliefs come from, and what can we do about them?

It usually comes from our family of origin (our caregivers). What our parents tell, teach, and model for us, we become. What they withhold from us, what they do not give us, we will generally look for in others.

Our experiences in life and with relationships — further reinforce our disempowering, limiting beliefs about ourselves and others.

If we have a history of being bullied, experiencing failed or unsuccessful relationships, or struggling with anxious or avoidant attachment styles in dating and relationships, overcoming these challenges can be quite difficult for us to overcome.

Anxious, avoidant, and fearful attachment styles, more often than not, attract people who mirror us and our own unhealthy relationship patterns and behaviors.

Healthy people (which is what we say we want) will be repelled. They see your "neediness" and/or your avoidance as annoying and unhealthy. Inadvertently, you will create more of what you fear (isolation and disconnection) and subsequently judge yourself again as unlovable and unworthy.

So, how do we defeat this origin story of disempowered, limiting beliefs to become more grounded, secure, and non-reactive in our communication and relationships with others?

Our attachment style profoundly influences how we communicate in our relationships. Building a secure relationship attachment style empowers us to experience love and trust with patience, confidence, and authenticity.

When I was five, my mom dropped me off for my first day of school, and in my mind, at that moment, I felt abandoned. I can still remember that day vividly, like it was only yesterday — sitting there screaming in pain. All of the kids in my class stared at me: *What the heck is wrong with him?*

In that moment, I felt DEEP shame.

From this day, from this event, I developed the belief that I will be abandoned in my relationships, by people I care about, by people I love.

I searched tirelessly for a way to clear the painful wounds of my past that lay beneath the disempowering, limiting beliefs driving my dysfunctional anxious-avoidant attachment style.

What I learned through my coursework and studies with Clearmind International, was life-changing: the loving, supportive, fulfilling relationship you long for may never materialize if, like me, you are unknowingly projecting your unresolved past emotional wounds onto your relationship partners.

As a graduate, I've taken those foundational tools and exercises, integrated them into my own coaching program, and refined them into tools and practical techniques that I now use with my clients.

They've empowered me to not only heal my unhealthy attachment style but also to help transform the lives of others.

The exercises in this book reflect the same tools and principles I have developed over the years to help me let go of my emotional wounds from the past and the limiting beliefs I had adopted as a child.

After doing the work, I was able to finally let go of all the emotional pain I associated with my childhood. It was transformational! It felt like I had "wiped the slate clean," and that I had been given a fresh start.

In this next chapter, let's start digging deep and explore where these beliefs come from.

CHAPTER 4:
WHAT BELIEF IS KEEPING YOU SEPARATE FROM OTHERS?



"Connection leads to correction."
—Clearmind International

Have you ever wondered why sometimes we can be alone and never feel lonely while other times we can be surrounded by our friends and family, or in a relationship — and still feel lonely?

I want to help you answer that question.

There was a time when I hated being alone, but I didn't realize I was the one isolating myself. Cultivating and nurturing friendships had taken a backseat to my career as I poured myself into work. Then one day, I woke up and I came to the painful realization that I didn't have a lot of friends. And if I was being 100% honest, I was secretly miserable.

When I say secretly, it's because I didn't want anyone to know the truth about my life. Whenever I did spend any time with people, I always had my "game face" on, pretending everything was OK, and I was happy.

But the reality was that I spent most of my days and nights burying myself in work, a hobby, or some other distraction so I didn't have to face the pain of being alone.

According to a 2023 poll by the American Psychiatric Association, about one in three Americans reports feeling lonely at least once a week, and 10% experience loneliness every single day.

This issue is particularly pronounced among young adults and single individuals, who are nearly twice as likely to feel lonely regularly compared to their married counterparts.[1]

If you feel lonely, if you are longing for a serious, committed long-term relationship where you feel respected, cherished, and adored, and if you are looking for a way out of loneliness, it is possible to find a new path.

I walked that road, but now I am living the life I always dreamed of. I have a loving supportive wife, an amazing career, and a fun engaging hobby (Kizomba) that helps me feel connected to others and part of a larger community of family and friends.

Let's start at the beginning and dig deep, shall we?

The first step is to realize that loneliness is often self-inflicted.

For a moment I just want you to listen with an open mind.

1 American Psychiatric Association, "New APA Poll: One in Three Americans Feels Lonely Every Week," January 30, 2024, https://www.psychiatry.org/News-room/News-Releases/New-APA-Poll-One-in-Three-Americans-Feels-Lonely-E.

There have been times in your life, and for most of us, when we have been quite happy when we have been alone. But that's usually because, in general, we feel supported, have purpose, and a life that we look forward to living. We have a reason to wake up everyday.

Although I was working on my purpose, I did not feel supported. I felt alone, because I was alone. I was doing everything except fully engaging in my life, meeting new people, and making new friends. Underneath, in my subconscious mind, I didn't believe I was good enough. And that belief became a wall between myself and others. Over time, this became my isolation.

Unintentionally, I had abandoned myself because of my disempowering limiting belief that who I was was not good enough—that sooner or later, whoever I did get close to, would abandon me.

Meanwhile, I was inadvertently looking to my dating and romantic partners to fill that void within me, to change my beliefs about myself.

It didn't work. It led to a lot of blow ups, misunderstandings, defensiveness, projection, miscommunication, and a series of failed and disappointing relationships. This resulted in even more feelings of loneliness and despair!

I want you to answer this very important question…

What emptiness inside you are you trying to fill, and where does it come from?

For every person, the answer is different. For most people, this missing "thing" is generally what we did not get from our caregivers in the past. Now in the present, we are looking for what we did not receive from them in another person — usually our romantic partners.

When you rely on someone or something else to fill that emptiness inside of you, make no mistake about it, you are self-abandoning. And if you are no longer living a life that's fully engaged, you will live a life not of your own making but one that will further increase your feelings of powerlessness.

Whatever your caregivers did not give you, whatever you feel that emptiness inside is, filling that emptiness is always the same: healing the wounds of the past, self-love, self-acceptance, and living a fully engaged life!

Nine times out of ten, when I work with clients who are struggling with unhealthy attachment styles, loneliness or one too many failed or abusive relationships, as we go deeper into their past, I will find that they also have a disempowering, limiting belief driving their anxious, avoidant, or fearful attachment style.

Inadvertently, they are self-sabotaging at a very deep, subconscious level.

In reality, our disempowering, limiting beliefs become a judgment about ourselves, and this is how we self-sabotage.

Our judgements poison our mind against us. They prevent us from living a life that's fully engaged and fully accepting and they then become the lens upon which we experience our world, and how others experience us in relationships.

For instance, I love dancing, and I used to plan on going out to a salsa dancing event on Friday nights. I was a new dancer and felt very self-conscious about not being "good enough." Whenever Friday came, even though I had looked forward to going all week, I would find any excuse not to go. Even though I hated being alone, I would sit at home convincing myself I wasn't good enough, I wouldn't fit in, or I wouldn't meet anyone there that I would connect with.

Interestingly enough, when I did finally fight the urge to isolate and actually go to dance, I would dance a few songs, get frustrated because I didn't like the music they were playing (other people did, but not me), or I didn't connect with anyone (but other people were connecting; just not me) and then I would want to leave. Really, I would see everyone else dancing and having fun and I wasn't.

Instead, I felt not good enough, separate, and I wanted to go home. I wanted to isolate.

Underneath the loneliness and isolation, I was feeling my disempowering, limiting belief: "I am not good enough".

As soon as we have a disempowering, limiting belief, we are doing two things: we are judging ourselves, and we are abandoning ourselves. In doing so, we experience more isolation — leading to even more feelings of "loneliness." As long as we abandon ourselves through self-judgment, we will never feel lovable or worthy.

No one can take away the pain of your own self-abandonment.

The cure for loneliness is connection. How can we experience connection when we are busy building walls, judging ourselves or others as not good enough, or judging others as less or more than us?

If we only see differences or see ourselves as less or more than others, how can we experience the deep connection our soul longs for? If we are blaming the world for our unhappiness, how can we connect with the world?

We need to become our own best friend. Isn't it ironic how we accept our friends and family members' flaws, their "warts" and all, but we can't seem to accept the warts within us?

Judgment creates disconnection.

We try to console ourselves by telling ourselves our pain is caused by others, by the events and circumstances in our lives. In reality, our pain is self-inflicted. It's not the event itself that hurts us the most — it's our reaction to it.

We are living a reactive life, convincing ourselves that we are unworthy, unlovable, stupid, powerless, too fat, too ugly, too old, a failure or not good enough.

Most of us have been conditioned by our society or grow up believing the right person to love, to love us, or to complete us is the solution to our loneliness or our unhappiness. But this is also a form of self-abandonment, looking to others to do something we should be doing for ourselves.

No one is better for us than ourselves. We are our own perfect soulmate, if we learn how to fall in love with "who we are" and the life we are creating.

This is the real journey. This is your salvation. Our end goal is for you to be your own perfect soul mate and to provide for yourself that which you seek from others. There is no more powerful validation than the validation you have for yourself.

Imagine being the most powerful, loving version of yourself. Imagine waking up every day and feeling like anything is possible. I will tell you this: when you walk into a room, you will be glowing when you embody this version of yourself. You will become a radiant light of confidence. Everyone will be attracted to you because of who you are. It is a powerful transformation.

If you have ever wanted to have massive results in your personal growth, you'll achieve them through self-acceptance. When you change how *you* see the world. It will change the way you show up for others on the outside.

Going inside to look for the parts of ourselves we find distasteful or don't like is the challenge of self-acceptance and truly becoming your own perfect soulmate. We label the parts of ourselves we don't like as "bad" and secretly loathe ourselves for it.

If you want to be the "captain of your own ship," the hero in your own life's journey; and the healer of your own life, then you must face your self-judgements, your disempowering limiting beliefs, and the loneliness that oftentimes accompanies them.

Now is the time to become your own best friend and commit to doing the work for your personal growth. Now is the time to stop looking for the answers "out there," start looking within, and stop living a life of distraction and disconnection. As you "show up" for yourself, the loneliness will start to disappear, and you will make this wonderful shift into the most powerful, loving version of yourself!

When you finally free yourself of your disempowering, limiting beliefs, unhealthy relationship patterns and behaviors, it's like wiping the slate clean and starting your life over again.

When YOU start living a life that is fully engaged and self-accepting, you will fall in love with yourself. You will fall in love with the person who is on the other side of this. You will fall in love with your life. And that's when you will attract your true soulmate. When you are your most powerful, confident, joyful, loving, grounded self, you will become an irresistible incredible radiant light, and the loneliness you are experiencing now will become a thing of the past.

CHAPTER 5:
YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE AND WHY IT MATTERS



"To the child, abandonment by its parents is the equivalent of death."

—The Road Less Traveled *by M. Scott Peck*

Not to be overly dramatic, but I do believe attachment style is one of the main reasons the divorce rate is so high in our society.

If you are not securely grounded in your attachment style, there is a very good chance you will be highly reactive.

And if you or your partner are highly reactive, you will probably have a very "emotional" relationship where one or both partners are ready to go to war at a moment's notice (this used to be me).

Any disagreement, miscommunication, and/or perceived slight will trigger one or both of the partners into a sea of reactiveness.

Defensiveness, controlling behaviors, jumping to conclusions, and "blowing things out of proportion" are all behaviors of a highly reactive person. This person more than likely has an anxious, avoidant, or fearful attachment style usually stemming from unresolved trauma from their childhood.

"Trauma" does not have to be from one event. For example, it could be from an overly critical parent who slowly chipped away over the years at that child's self-esteem. It could be from the loss of one or both parents. Or it could be a child's experience at the hands of a bully. The reasons are numerous and every person experiences life, relationships, and dating differently.

Attachment styles can be broken down into four primary categories:

1. Secure, grounded, and non-reactive
2. Avoidant
3. Anxious
4. Fearful-avoidant

If you are curious about which attachment style you are, there is a handy list of characteristics in my first book "*But Dad, I LOVE Him!*" associated with the major behaviors of each attachment style. This will help you determine whether you are anxious, avoidant, fearful, or secure.

Because we have all been there! In the midst of an argument, a heated discussion, or a misunderstanding, it's very easy to get defensive, project onto our partners, and blame others for our relationship problems.

But relationships involve two people — two people who may have very different backgrounds, beliefs, values, needs, desires, and, more importantly, attachment styles!

Real personal growth begins when we take the time to stop, look in the mirror, and reflect on the role we play in our relationship dynamics, and why we choose the relationship partners we do.

Our ego convinces us that we are "right," that we know best, that it is our partner's job to change to help make us happier.

"If they would only do this or stop doing that, I would be so much happier!"

But before seeking change in others, we must first acknowledge our own personal flaws, recognize our own harmful patterns, and, if you are experiencing problems in your relationships or having issues finding the "one," seek the right professional help.

You see, it is our job to reprocess and heal emotional pains, upsets, and unresolved trauma from our childhood. No one else can do this work for us, and this work starts from within. There is no ignoring it or running away from it.

You might say, "Well, Kevin, my partner is abusive."

That may be true, but let me ask you this (and I know this may sound rather cold and heartless): why did you choose to be with an abusive person, or why are you staying? It only highlights how essential this work is for your growth, healing, and most importantly, your self-esteem.

As hard as this is to admit, the fact is, there are aspects of that person's personality you found attractive, or emotionally comfortable with - otherwise you would not be with them. Until you can be honest with yourself about that, you will continue to attract people who either diminish you, undermine you, are abusive, controlling, or exhibit other undesired behavior.

There are millions upon millions of people who are in healthy, thriving, successful, loving relationships…so, why not you?

Instead of trying to fix others or hope they will change over time (they rarely do), it's time to get real about your part in the "dance."

That means really taking a look at who you are attracted to and recognizing what you need to do to break free from your patterns. That is the first step.

The second is to take action and go through the steps to heal and change your attachment style, which involves healing and letting go of any disempowering, limiting beliefs you might have.

To make the change, we start by delving deep into your past to better understand pivotal moments in your life. These moments helped mold your attachment style, your personal relationship dynamics, your reactivity during disagreements and misunderstandings, and ultimately, how you see yourself and your own internal emotional landscape.

Let's take a look at how past experiences could have affected where you are today — and where, exactly, that's left you.

People who have an anxious attachment style tend to have experienced:

An Overbearing or Overprotective Parent: Overly controlling or overprotective parents can often create anxiety in children. Children may feel smothered and may develop a fear of living a life independent of others.

Neglect or Abandonment: Children who experience neglect or emotional abandonment may develop an anxious attachment style. They may grow up feeling unimportant or unworthy of love and attention, leading to a strong desire for validation in future relationships.

Unpredictable Caregiver Behavior: When a caregiver's behavior is unpredictable, children may develop heightened anxiety. They may become hypervigilant, always on the lookout for changes in the caregiver's mood or responsiveness.

Parental Separations or Loss: Events such as divorce or the death of a parent can contribute to the development of an anxious attachment style. Children may become anxious about the stability of their relationships and fear further loss or abandonment.

Excessive Criticism: If children are subjected to constant criticism or are made to feel inadequate, it can lead to low self-esteem, leading to a constant need for reassurance, attention, and validation.

Anxiously attached people tend to be attracted to avoidants.

Individuals with an anxious attachment style often find themselves attracted to people who exhibit characteristics of being emotionally unavailable in relationships.

This pattern can be attributed to several factors:

Seeking Reassurance: Anxious individuals tend to seek constant reassurance and validation in their relationships. They may have a fear of abandonment or rejection and, as a result, desire consistent attention, validation, and affirmation.

Fear of Being Alone: The fear of being alone or facing abandonment can drive anxious individuals to stay in relationships with emotionally unavailable, controlling, or abusive partners, hoping that one day they will change.

Seeking Validation: Anxious individuals often seek external validation and reassurance to alleviate their insecurities and anxieties. They may believe that if they can win over an emotionally unavailable partner, it will prove their worthiness and desirability.

Chasing the Unattainable: Some individuals with an anxious attachment style may have the subconscious belief they can change an emotionally unavailable partner. They engage in the "chase" to win their partner's affection, believing they need to "work" in order to get a relationship, and the harder they work, the more it will validate their self-worth.

Fear of Abandonment: Anxious individuals often have a strong fear of abandonment. Being with an emotionally unavailable partner can trigger this fear, as they are uncertain of the relationship's stability. Paradoxically, the anxiety of potential abandonment can reinforce their attachment to the emotionally unavailable partner.

People who have an avoidant attachment style tend to have experienced:

Emotional Neglect: When caregivers consistently show emotional unavailability, dismissiveness, or neglect, children may learn to self-soothe and become self-reliant. They may develop a belief that expressing emotional needs is ineffective or discouraged.

Intrusion ("Helicopter parenting"): Children who experience intrusion into their personal space or are overstimulated by caregivers may learn to create emotional distance to protect themselves. They may associate emotional intimacy with discomfort.

Parental Criticism: Children who experience a lot of criticism from caregivers may develop a fear of emotional vulnerability and learn to suppress their thoughts, feelings, and emotions to avoid further rejection.

Modeling of Avoidance: If children witness their caregivers avoid emotional closeness or exhibit avoidant behavior themselves, they may learn to adopt similar attachment strategies.

Separation: Prolonged or frequent separations from caregivers, particularly from emotional abandonment or divorce, can contribute to the development of an avoidant attachment style.

Avoidants tend to be attracted to anxiously attached.

Individuals with an avoidant attachment style are often subconsciously attracted to those with an anxious attachment style, creating a dynamic I often refer to as the "anxious-avoidant dance."

Several factors contribute to this attraction:

Complementary Needs: Avoidant individuals value their independence and can feel overwhelmed by too much emotional closeness. Anxious individuals, on the other hand, often seek high levels of emotional intimacy and reassurance. This complementary dynamic can initially create a false sense of balance and fulfillment in the relationship.

Initial Attraction: In the beginning, the anxious partner's warmth, attentiveness, and emotional engagement can be appealing to the avoidant partner because, subconsciously, the avoidant does desire attention and intimacy; but, consciously, they are deeply afraid of it.

Challenge and Uncertainty: Avoidant individuals may find the emotional intensity and pursuit of the anxious partner intriguing and, most importantly, validating. The initial phase of the relationship can be emotionally stimulating and gratifying for them.

Validation of Independence: Anxious partners may inadvertently validate the avoidant partner's need for independence. When the anxious partner becomes overly dependent or clingy, it can reinforce the avoidant partner's belief that independence is crucial.

Familiarity: If an avoidant individual grew up with a caregiver who was emotionally inconsistent or overly demanding, they may find the anxious style familiar and even comforting.

Unconscious Healing: In some cases, avoidant individuals may unconsciously seek to heal their own attachment wounds by being with an anxious partner. They may hope they will become more comfortable with emotional intimacy and learn to trust through the relationship.

The first step is acknowledging your attachment style. Are you anxious, avoidant, fearful or a combination of all three?

Write down your attachment style:

_____

CHAPTER 6:
YOUR TOP 5 LIFE UPSETS OR TRAUMATIC EVENTS



"Unhealed wounds of the past are far too often the silent architects of our future relationships, building walls around our hearts instead of bridges."

—Kevin Boyle

After you have determined your attachment style, the next step is to try and determine which event or series of events led to the disempowering, limited beliefs you hold about yourself.

Early events (especially ones in our early development) tend to shape how we see ourselves and the world we live in. These "events" or "upsets" will have associated feelings with them. These feelings actually become the glue that binds them to our subconscious mind, which serves as the foundation for our belief system.

For instance, I was held back for a year and grew up believing that I wasn't as smart as everyone else. I was a slow reader and struggled to understand concepts as quickly as the other kids could. It wasn't until I started to do the work that I made the connection that it reinforced the narrative I wasn't good enough. As it turns out, I was only held back because my mother had originally put me in school a year early and she and the teacher decided it was best if I repeated the year to be with kids my own age — not because of my intellect or ability to do the school work.

EXERCISE: Top 5 Upsets or Traumatic Events

Write out your "Top 5 Upsets or Traumatic Events" in your life, along with the approximate age at which it happened and how you feel about the upset or event.

List at least one upset or traumatic event for each age group.

1. Age 5-7 / The upset and your feelings associated with it.

2. Age 8-12 / The upset and your feelings associated with it.

3. Age Teenager / The upset and your feelings associated with it.

4. Age 18-25 / The upset and your feelings associated with it.

5. Age _____ / The upset and your feelings associated with it.

Review the exercise you have just completed and rank your top three upsets or traumas.

Then, for each of the top three upsets or traumas, do the following exercise:

Because of this Upset or Traumatic Event…

What does it say or mean about me? That I am not good enough, I am ugly, I am stupid, I am a loser, I am unworthy of love, no one will ever love me? Etc.…

Why is that so bad?

And why is *that* so bad? What does that mean or say about me?

Go deep. Keep peeling off the layers of the onion. Keep going until you cannot answer the questions "And why is that so bad? What does that mean or say about me?" anymore.

And why is that so bad? What does that mean or say about me?

And why is that so bad? What does that mean or say about me?

After I have "peeled off the layers of the onion," what is my core disempowering, limiting belief about myself?

After doing this exercise. What feelings are "coming up for me?"

Do the *Feeling Release Meditation* found on page 21

Journaling prompts to get help you get to your core emotional wounds.

1. "What is my unmet need?"
2. "What is the best, truest version of yourself and what is stopping you from living that version of you?
3. "What resentment do I have towards my mother?"
4. "What resentment do I have towards my father?"
5. "What do I not like about myself or my life?"
6. "What am I avoiding or resisting?"
7. "What's something I need to let go of?"
8. "What is my anxiety or worry trying to tell me?"
9. "What truth about my life am I afraid to admit?"
10. "In what ways am I worried that I might fail?"
11. "In what ways do I feel unworthy? Who makes me feel this way?"
12. "What resentment do I have toward this person?"
13. "What am I afraid people might discover about me?"
14. "In what ways do I not trust myself?"
15. "Am I moving towards something or away from something?"

Grab a separate piece of paper, respond to the journaling prompts above, and just start writing. Don't censor yourself. Let whatever comes up, come up! The goal to emotional healing is to fully accept the emotions that come up for you, to embrace them and welcome them in and then to allow yourself to fully feel your feelings to help you process them.

Do the *Feeling Release Meditation* found on page 22

CHAPTER 7:
NO ONE CAN EVER TAKE AWAY THE PAIN OF OUR OWN SELF-ABANDONMENT



"A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking, because her trust is not on the branch but on her own wings."

—Charlie Wardle

Here are some of the most common disempowering, limiting beliefs, or self-judgments. Which ones resonate with you the most?

I am broken.

There is something really wrong with me. No one will ever love me. The wounds are so deep and my heartbreak is so heavy that my ability to love or trust someone else has been broken forever.

No one will ever love me again.

After my last breakup, I felt rejected by the one person who meant the most to me. I am not good enough for anyone. I am a loser. I will be alone forever.

I have nothing left to offer.

My heart has been broken one too many times. I am done with dating. I am done with men. I am exhausted. I can't do this again. I do not want to have to start all over again.

There must be something wrong with me.

I can't seem to make a relationship work. Every guy I meet is abusive, lazy, a player, or a jerk. And now because of it, I am so messed up.

I'll never find the same kind of person again.

He was perfect for me, and I blew it. I will never find anyone like him again!

There's no one out there for me.

I have tried and tried and tried. I have been on hundreds of dates, and I honestly believe the person I am looking for does not exist. Men today do not want to get married and that means there is no one out there for me.

I am a failure.

I feel like when it comes to men and relationships, I always pick the bad ones. Truth be told, I no longer even trust myself to pick a good man anymore.

Love is too painful.

My heart was broken into a million pieces. I don't ever want to be that open or vulnerable again. I cannot trust men. They're all liars. After my painful, soul-crushing breakup, I'd prefer to swim through a tank full of sharks than get into another relationship. I want and need to play it safe in order to protect myself, so I have built this wall around my heart to protect myself and not take a risk on love again.

I don't measure up.

I am getting older. There are so many younger, prettier girls than me. When I go out and I see all of the competition, I know deep down in my heart that I am doomed. Men are so superficial; all they care about are looks. When I look in the mirror, I think, what guy would ever want me? I am ugly, my nose is too big, etc.

Now that you've considered these examples, I want you to write again (like you did at the end of the last chapter).

What are my top 5 disempowering limiting beliefs (self-judgments)?

Disempowering Limiting Belief #1 is _____

How does this belief manifest itself in my life, dating, and my relationships?

What event or series of events first caused this belief?

What current or recent event supports this belief I have about myself?

What is your fear because of this event?

This fear that you have – how does it make you feel?

Do the Feeling Release Meditation found on page 21 of this book.

Disempowering Limiting Belief #2 is _____

How does this belief manifest itself in my life, dating, and my relationships?

What event or series of events first caused this belief?

What current or recent event supports this belief I have about myself?

What is your fear because of this event?

This fear that you have – how does it make you feel?

Do the Feeling Release Meditation found on page 21 of this book.

Disempowering Limiting Belief #3 is _____

How does this belief manifest itself in my life, dating, and my relationships?

What event or series of events first caused this belief?

What current or recent event supports this belief I have about myself?

What is your fear because of this event?

This fear that you have – how does it make you feel?

Do the Feeling Release Meditation found on page 21 of this book.

Disempowering Limiting Belief #4 is _____

How does this belief manifest itself in my life, dating, and my relationships?

What event or series of events first caused this belief?

What current or recent event supports this belief I have about myself?

What is your fear because of this event?

This fear that you have – how does it make you feel?

Do the Feeling Release Meditation found on page 21 of this book.

Disempowering Limiting Belief #5 is _____

How does this belief manifest itself in my life, dating, and my relationships?

What event or series of events first caused this belief?

What current or recent event supports this belief I have about myself?

What is your fear because of this event?

This fear that you have – how does it make you feel?

Do the Feeling Release Meditation found on page 21 of this book.

Can you start to see how our disempowering, limited beliefs are actually the first step towards judging ourselves or others as either more or less than?

By wearing the mask of judgment, we place a wall between ourselves and others. Therefore, not only do we make ourselves unavailable for others through judgment, but we also abandon ourselves and what we truly want. Which, usually, is a genuine, heartfelt connection with another person.

How can I connect with others when through my judging, everyone is either more or less than me?

Ask yourself in your social interactions and relationships...

In what ways am I building bridges with this person? Or am I busy building walls because of fear of being hurt or abandonment or because I have already pre-judged myself or them as not worthy enough?

Judgments are what keep us separate and disconnected from others.

This man is too short, he's too nice, he's boring...

I once had a very good client, a very nice woman. Very pretty and very single. I remember seeing a picture of her on Facebook with one of her best friends. Her best friend was significantly shorter than her. My client had a huge smile on her face. You could tell how happy she was.

Did her best friend's height matter to her? Did she ever think for a moment to say to her best friend, "I am sorry when I wear heels, you are just too short for me, and the pictures just don't look right. I just don't feel very feminine when I am with you, so unfortunately, I can never see myself being with you. I am sorry we can't be best friends."

I highly doubt it.

Yet in the society we live in, we say we want our romantic partners to be our best friends, but we treat them like trophies taped to our arms that need to be and look a certain way.

Our judgment of others and our need for validation through our romantic partners color our ability to see what is really important.

So, how do we stop judging others?

First, we need to stop judging ourselves. In the moment that we judge another, we are judging ourselves as either not enough or more than.

I cannot stress to you how important it is to do the work to stop this.

Underneath your judgments of self or others are your disempowering, limiting beliefs of yourself.

This is the foundation. This is what is underneath and at the core of everything. This is where all of your beliefs about the world and your place in it come from. And when you get this, EVERYTHING in your life will change.

For this exercise, I would like you to write down the event or the series of events that made you feel or think this way. It doesn't matter whether you believe it today. What matters is the way it made you feel back then.

Now, I want you to note at what age you first started judging others or yourself as either less than or more than...

By starting to have a greater understanding of where these judgments and limiting beliefs came from, we can begin to finally let them go.

CHAPTER 8:
HEALING AND LETTING GO OF OUR DISEMPOWERING LIMITING BELIEFS



"Life only gives you MORE OF WHO YOU ARE BEING. Because the universe does not place any limits on us, we either allow other people to place limits on us or we place those limits on ourselves."

—Kevin Boyle

Our minds are powerful creators, and your mind will create more of what you are already thinking, doing, feeling, and believing. So be 100% honest about what you really think about yourself and others. What are your "real" disempowering, limiting beliefs about yourself, others, and your relationships?

For instance, the "I am not good enough" belief is a pervasive and insidious self-imposed limitation that feeds our fears and anxieties, hinders our personal growth, and affects our relationships with others.

As discussed in earlier chapters, what is causing most of our pain and suffering is our attachment to our disempowering limiting core beliefs.

Core beliefs generally come from our early childhood experiences. Early enough that, for most of us, we most likely do not even remember them! Most of us don't remember what was modeled for us by our primary caregivers, how they spoke to us, and how they spoke to each other in front of us because it happened so long ago.

But we do remember how it made us feel! And the way our primary caregivers made us feel about ourselves and how we felt in relation to others created the main foundational aspects of our attachment style: secure, grounded, and non-reactive or avoidant, fearful, and/or anxious.

As well-meaning as our parents are, they are human and make mistakes. They have their own unique, unhealthy relationship and attachment styles, patterns, and behaviors. As we go through life, we tend to ignore anything (confirmation bias) that does not validate and reinforce our core disempowering, limiting belief about ourselves, our core beliefs become the foundation for how we see ourselves and embed deeply into our subconscious mind.

Challenging your disempowering, limiting beliefs is the first step to transforming your thoughts and changing your life. It paves the way for a healthier self-concept, creating a solid foundation for building meaningful, successful, fulfilling relationships.

The famous quote by Denis Waitley, "It's not who you are that holds you back, it's who you think you're not," underscores the impact of our beliefs on our behavior. When we challenge our disempowering, limiting beliefs, we open ourselves to new possibilities through positive new behaviors. These new positive behaviors will, over time, feed and reinforce a healthier belief system about ourselves.

Challenging disempowering, limiting beliefs is not just a personal endeavor; it is a gift we give to ourselves and those in our lives we cherish. Sukhraj S. Dhillon wisely said, "Your beliefs don't make you a better person; your behavior does."

By actively challenging our disempowering, limiting beliefs, we not only improve how we feel about ourselves, but we also become better, more compassionate, non-reactive, and grounded relationship partners.

Remember, the journey of self-discovery is ongoing, and each step we take to challenge our disempowering, limiting beliefs brings us one step closer to the successful, empowered individuals we are meant to be.

Let's examine the four main reasons why disempowering, limiting beliefs impact our relationships with others.

THE LENS OF LIMITATION

Imagine wearing glasses with a distorted lens that only allows you to see a fraction of reality. Disempowering, limiting beliefs act as these lenses, coloring our perception of ourselves or others and the important qualities in a person to have a successful, loving relationship. They create a skewed narrative that holds us back from embracing our full potential in relationships. Whether it's believing we are unworthy of love, inherently flawed, or destined for failure, these beliefs restrict our ability to form meaningful, successful relationships that will withstand the pressures of time.

THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

What we believe about ourselves tends to manifest in our actions and behaviors. If we hold onto disempowering beliefs, we inadvertently reinforce them through our choices, behaviors, and interactions.

For example, if we believe we are unlovable, we might engage in self-sabotaging behaviors or settle for less than we deserve because we will look for and feel more "comfortable" with people who share the same opinion of us. This self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a cycle of disappointment and reinforces the very beliefs we seek to overcome.

OUR PROJECTIONS ONTO OTHERS

Our disempowering beliefs not only affect how we perceive ourselves but also how we view others. We project our insecurities, fears, and negative self-perceptions onto those around us. This projection often leads to misunderstandings, conflict, and a distorted image of others. It becomes challenging to form genuine connections when we view others through the lens of our own limiting beliefs.

BUILDING WALLS AND BARRIERS

Disempowering, limiting beliefs erect walls and barriers instead of bridges. This isolates us from authentic connection. These beliefs create a fear of vulnerability, making it difficult to trust, open up to others, and to say we are sorry when we are wrong or when we have hurt others.

We become guarded, hesitant to let anyone see our true selves, for fear of rejection or judgment. As a result, relationships become superficial, lacking the depth and intimacy we yearn for and the foundation that makes a relationship resilient.

Exercise: My Top Seven Disempowering Limiting Beliefs.

Disempowering, limiting beliefs not only become the "lens" through which we see ourselves, they also become the lens through how we see and experience others.

For this exercise, I will identify some very common disempowering, limiting beliefs you might have about yourself. Some will resonate with you more powerfully than others (and some won't).

I felt powerless.

*Note the event or the series of events that caused you to adopt this disempowering belief and at what age you first experienced this feeling or thought about yourself.

I felt like I am not deserving or worthy.

*Note the event and age

I felt rejected.

*Note the event and age

I felt like I am not good enough.

*Note the event and age

I was bullied, and it made me feel like…

*Note the feeling, event, and age

I was made to feel like I do not deserve to be loved.

*Note the event and age

All men (or all women) are…

*Note the belief, event, and age.

Becoming the "Hero" in Our Life Story

The journey to transforming the relationship with ourselves and others begins with challenging and replacing our disempowering, limiting beliefs with empowering ones.

By consciously questioning the validity of our beliefs and reframing them, we can break free from their grip. Embracing empowering beliefs — such as self-worth, growth, and possibility — allows us to approach relationships from a place of "I am worthy, I am powerful, and yes, I am enough!"

For this exercise, I would like to ask you an important question:

Have I made my belief about myself or others an absolute truth or a subjective truth?

Because our beliefs are neither true nor false, they are subjective. Oftentimes, our beliefs can create a prison of our own making until we finally decide to challenge them. For example, not everyone thinks I am ugly, and not everyone thinks I am good-looking. But what "subjective truth" am I adopting about myself?

Over time, as we adopt these disempowering, limiting beliefs, they start to get in the way of us meeting the ideal high-quality person we say we want.

How many of your disempowering, limiting beliefs are you unwittingly projecting out into the world?

93% of our communication is nonverbal. Our energy, our attitude, and our body language "introduce us" before we even speak. Challenging limiting or disempowering beliefs frees us from them and is critically important to your healing and experience of the world.

For this exercise, I would like to go back and review your answers from the last exercise on pages 50, and 51 and pick the three disempowering, limiting beliefs that seem to resonate with you the most.

What are my top three disempowering limiting beliefs?

i.e., I am not good enough, no one will ever love me, all men are…, etc.

Is your belief about yourself 100% true all of the time?

How do you know for certain that this belief about you is absolutely true?

Who currently in your life supports this belief about yourself?

Now for the next step, I want you to answer:

Who or what first gave you this belief about yourself?

When have I felt this way before? *Just like when…?* (That time in your life when this pattern started.) This step starts the journey into your past and starts the process of beginning to comfort and heal your hurt inner child.

The further you go back in time (into your childhood), the better.

When did I first feel like this?

Usually from ages 5 to 10.

What other times have I felt like this?

Please note the age and the event.

What does it say or mean about me?

Why is that so bad?

And why is that so bad? What does that mean or say about me?

Again, go deep. Keep peeling off the layers of the onion. Keep going until you cannot answer the question, "And why is that so bad? What does that mean or say about me?" anymore.

Are there any similarities between your answers in this exercise and the exercise you completed on page 46?

I used to have this belief that I was not good enough. I had to purposely look for events in my life where I was good enough, and where I was successful.

One of yours might be "All men are jerks." But if you dig deeper, you might think about how your uncle is one the most fun, patient, and loving people that you know. And I bet if you challenge this further, you know a lot of good men.

In what ways can you challenge your beliefs? Look for examples in your life that are the direct opposite of your disempowering limiting belief.

What is your top disempowering, limiting belief?

Give three real-life/world examples where the opposite is true.

Do this exercise for the top remaining two negative disempowering, limiting beliefs you have about yourself or others.

Negative disempowering limiting belief

Three real-life/world examples where the opposite is true.

Negative disempowering limiting belief

Three real-life/world examples where the opposite is true.

What are three ways I can show up as MORE powerful in my life right now?

CHAPTER 9:
RELEASING REGRET



"The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one."

—Elbert Hubbard

When we start to use our disempowering, limiting beliefs as the lens we see and experience our life through, we tend to lead a regretful life. Regret for the things we never tried, never did, or the things we did say or do.

Regret can show up in our lives in many different ways…

THE WEIGHT OF REGRET

Regret is a formidable force that can play a significant role in our disempowering, limiting beliefs we have about ourselves. Regret often shapes our perception of ourselves. It weighs us down, paralyzes us with self-blame, and prevents us from embracing self-acceptance. It's the nagging feeling that we could have done better, made different choices, or taken a different path. It lingers in our minds, causing us to question our worth and our competence. But it's important to recognize that dwelling on regrets can paralyze us as we take on self-blame and self-doubt instead of seeking solutions.

THE PARALYSIS OF SELF-BLAME

When regret takes hold, it often leads to self-blame. We become trapped in a cycle of criticizing ourselves, replaying past events, and questioning our abilities. This constant self-judgment prevents us from embracing growth, learning, and changing. It's crucial to distinguish between taking responsibility for our actions and succumbing to the paralyzing grip of self-blame.

THE ROAD TO SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Self-acceptance is a key antidote to regret. It involves acknowledging our mistakes, flaws, and imperfections as part of our human journey. By accepting ourselves, warts and all, we open up space for growth and positive change.

Embracing self-acceptance means cultivating kindness, compassion, and forgiveness toward ourselves!

Exercises for Letting Go of Regret

To let go of regret, let's do some practical exercises that promote self-acceptance, learning, and healing.

Take time to reflect on a few regrets and write a letter to your past self, offering forgiveness and understanding. This exercise allows you to release negative emotions and embrace self-compassion.

1. I regret…

**include event and age*

If I am being completely honest, what stopped me from taking a different (or any) action?

What have I learned about myself or life because of this regret?

2. I regret…

**include event and age*

If I am being completely honest, what stopped me from taking action?

What have I learned about myself or life because of this regret?

3. I regret that I didn't…

**include event and age*

If I am being completely honest, the part that I can own is…

What have I learned about myself or life because of this regret?

4. I regret that I didn't…

**include event and age*

If I am being completely honest, I can own my part in it:

What have I learned about myself or life because of this regret?

RE-SHAPING YOUR FUTURE

Regret should not confine us to our past! It can be a catalyst for transforming your future. Instead of dwelling on what we can't change, we can forgive ourselves, let it go, and focus on what we have learned and what steps we can take differently while moving into the future.

Setting goals, taking concrete steps, and for some, finding a good mentor, all help us move toward creating the life we desire, which empowers us to move forward with a renewed sense of purpose and determination.

By understanding the immense weight of regret, embracing self-acceptance, and taking life's lessons learned as an opportunity for personal growth, we can begin the road to taking positive steps to reshape our future and break free from its grip.

Remember, it is within your power to create the kind of life you have always wanted!

When it comes to answering life's biggest question ("What is the meaning of life?"), the answer is actually a better question: "What would give my life meaning?"

That question is what starts the journey to a life of purpose!

What would give my life meaning?

Now, take a deep breath, and do the meditation exercise about feeling (found on page 21) your biggest regrets and slowly start to release them.

Acknowledge your true feelings. Allow yourself to fully embrace them and put your regrets in the past where they belong and start living your life as the most POWERFUL, confident, joyful, loving version of yourself!

CHAPTER 10:
HEALING SHAME: UNRAVELING ITS IMPACT ON SELF AND ON OUR RELATIONSHIPS



"Shame corrodes the very part of us that believes we are capable of change."

—Brené Brown

Shame, often hidden and unaddressed, can silently erode our self-esteem, hinder personal growth, and sabotage the most important relationship we will ever have: the one we have with ourselves.

In this chapter, we will delve deep into the intricate web of shame that grips us and explore its far-reaching consequences. We will uncover how shame shapes our internal dialogue, influences our behavior, and offer insights and journaling exercises for breaking free from its grip.

UNDERSTANDING SHAME: THE SILENT TORMENTOR

Shame is a powerful emotion that stems from feeling fundamentally flawed, unworthy, or inadequate. It creeps into our psyche, whispering destructive messages that reinforce negative self-perceptions. By exploring the origins of shame, whether from childhood experiences, societal pressures, or personal disappointments, we can gain a deeper understanding of its roots and its impact on the relationship we have with ourselves and others.

When it comes to healing and letting go of shame, essentially it comes down to one question: "*Can I separate who I am from what happened to me?*"

Shame and Self-Sabotage: The Self-Perpetuating Cycle

Shame has a way of perpetuating itself, fueling self-sabotaging behaviors and limiting beliefs. Shame often manifests itself as self-criticism, self-doubt, and an overwhelming fear of vulnerability. These dynamics not only inhibit personal growth but also hinder our ability to build trusting and lasting relationships with our romantic partners.

Cultivating Self-Compassion: Healing Shame

To break free from the grip of shame, cultivating self-compassion is essential. By practicing self-forgiveness, which ultimately leads to self-acceptance, we can begin to heal the wounds inflicted by shame and create a solid foundation for meaningful relationships with ourselves and others.

Nurturing Healthy Relationships: Vulnerability and Empathy with Yourself and Others

Shame thrives in isolation and secrecy. If we want to build fulfilling and authentic relationships we must step through our fears and embrace vulnerability, which allows us to foster empathy.

Isolation (hiding our shame) prevents growth, healing, and connection. Who can we talk to about what happened to us, how it makes us feel, and ultimately how it shapes the way we see ourselves?

In later chapters, we will explore how vulnerability in our communication with others can be a catalyst for deeper connection and how empathetic understanding can dissolve the walls of shame that hinder genuine intimacy.

By acknowledging, addressing, and choosing to heal and let go of shame, we can and will create a space for vulnerability and deep emotional connection in our romantic relationships.

Exercise: The Environment of Shame

Answer this question: How responsible are you for the environment that you grew up in?

What do I feel shame about?

Shame says, "I made a mistake, therefore I am a bad person."

How am I a "bad" person?

In what ways am I a good person?

I know I am in shame when I feel…

If I were to have a compassionate authentic conversation about who I really am with [friend's name] I have this fear that they would see the real me. That I am…

Or, I have this fear deep down that if I did have a conversation with [friend's name], I would feel…

Because I do not want to be perceived as…

1.

2.

3.

What is my shame trying to tell me about where I need to grow as a person?

What if you woke up tomorrow believing in the very best in yourself? I want to be perceived as…

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What would you do differently?

State your negative belief…

i.e., I am powerless, and I will never;

…and reverse it to your new belief

i.e., I am powerful, and I will…

Write down your new belief:

Shame lives in negativity. It hinders us from seeing all the ways in which we're actually powerful in our lives. Let's focus on that for this next set of questions.

Give three examples of when you have been powerful in your life...

1.

2.

3.

Give three examples of how you could show up as more powerful in your life right now…

1. Who would I talk to, and what would I talk to them about?

2. What habit do I have that I need to change or rid myself of?

3. What behavior would I like to change?

By focusing on where we are powerful instead of the ways in which we are powerless, we can begin to change the narrative, stop shame in its tracks, and begin to see all that we have — and all that we should be grateful for.

CHAPTER 11:
THE POWER OF GRATITUDE



"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough."

—Melody Beattie

It's very common to inadvertently focus on what we lack rather than fully appreciating what we have. But practicing gratitude shifts our perspective from scarcity to abundance. Let's explore how.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE MINDSET

Gratitude is a powerful tool to cultivate a positive mindset. When we consciously choose to appreciate the good in our lives, we start to see the world through the lens of positivity. A positive mindset not only boosts our overall well-being but also makes us more attractive as partners.

Positivity is contagious, and being with someone who exudes positivity can lead to stronger connections and happier relationships.

STRENGTHENING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

Life is full of challenges and setbacks, both personally and in relationships. Gratitude acts as a shield against negativity and strengthens emotional resilience. When we focus on the positives, we become better equipped to handle difficult times with grace and optimism.

Being a resilient partner allows us to offer support, understanding, and empathy when our loved ones face tough times.

ENHANCING EMPATHY AND CONNECTION

Gratitude enhances our ability to empathize and connect with others. When we appreciate the kindness and love we receive, we become more attuned to the emotions and needs of our partners. It fosters a deeper understanding of their perspectives and feelings, allowing us to communicate and relate much more effectively and create a stronger emotional bond.

EXERCISE: The Gratitude Tool

Do this exercise daily: Think of the three things you are most grateful for. Think back throughout your life, and remember the friends, family members, and mentors who supported, loved, and helped you. Think of new insights, new perspectives, or new understandings of life experiences from people who have come and gone in your life.

Gratitude #1

Gratitude #2

Gratitude #3

LETTING GO RITUAL

Time for out with the old, in with the new!

Create a symbolic ritual to release upsets, disappointments, negative thinking, and regrets. Journal everything negative you are feeling, thinking, and believing on a piece of paper. Visualize releasing the hold that this event, thing, or person had on your life. This act of letting go can be cathartic and liberating!

If your upset is about a particular person or a relationship, write a letter saying what you have always wanted to tell them. DO NOT censor yourself, and let it all out.

Then burn it!

Next, write a compassionate letter to yourself, like you were writing to a good friend. How would you console them? What do you appreciate or admire most about them? What do you like most about them? What's their best character trait?

By replacing everything we let go of with more gratitude for everything we want to keep, we start to become more powerful and more whole than we ever thought possible.

CHAPTER 12:
HAVE I BECOME CODEPENDENT IN MY RELATIONSHIPS?



"When you make someone the answer to your happiness, you give them the power to take it away."
—Donna Goddard

When it comes to romantic relationships, there is a delicate balance between interdependence and codependency. While the former fosters growth and mutual support, the latter can silently erode the foundation of even the most seemingly robust relationships.

Donna Goddard's words remind us of the profound truth of our relationships: tying our happiness solely to our partner can make us codependent and very vulnerable.

Let's unravel the different layers of codependence and explore the transformative journey toward independence in love.

THE ILLUSION OF COMPLETENESS

In the initial throes of romance, it's easy to believe your partner is the missing piece that completes the puzzle of your life. However, this belief, while seemingly romantic, can set the stage for codependence. True love should enhance your life, not define it.

In an interdependent relationship, both partners maintain a sense of self, bringing their completeness to the union. Recognizing and celebrating your individuality is the first step towards breaking free from the illusion of needing someone to make you whole.

THE EROSION OF PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Codependent relationships often blur the lines between where one person ends and the other begins. Healthy boundaries are the cornerstone of any thriving connection, allowing each partner to express their needs, desires, and individuality. When these boundaries dissolve into the sea of codependency, it can lead to a loss of personal identity and autonomy.

Understanding the importance of maintaining healthy boundaries is crucial for fostering a relationship where both partners can flourish independently.

THE PERILS OF EMOTIONAL RELIANCE

Relying solely on your partner for emotional support can create a heavy burden for both individuals. Emotional self-sufficiency is a key component of a resilient relationship. While sharing your feelings with your partner is essential, placing the responsibility of your emotional well-being entirely on their shoulders can lead to feelings of suffocation.

Learning to cultivate emotional independence allows for a more balanced and sustainable connection.

NAVIGATING THE PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

Breaking free from the shackles of codependence requires a commitment to personal growth and self-awareness, trusting your partner (by aspiring to be non-reactive), and good communication with your partner. It's about rediscovering and nurturing your own passions, hobbies, and friendships that are about you having a joyful, fulfilling, fully engaged life. This creates a tapestry of experiences you can bring back to your relationship, creating opportunities for shared growth.

Communicating openly with your partner about your journey toward independence is vital. It allows both individuals to evolve together, fostering a relationship that stands strong on the pillars of mutual growth.

The journey towards independence in love is a liberating experience that enriches both partners. Embrace the beauty of interdependence — two whole individuals coming together to create something even more extraordinary. Break free from the chains of codependence, and let the strength of your individuality illuminate a path to a love that is empowering, trusting, and enduring.

Exercise: Am I Codependent?

Do you feel out of control or powerless in your relationships?

When I am not in control, I fear…

How do I react in relationships toward someone else when I fear I am losing control?

What behaviors do I exhibit?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

How do I use care-taking or helping others as my primary relationship skill?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

Am I able to love someone and still let them be "who they are"?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

Do I now understand the relationship dynamic that would lead me to pick a relationship partner who needs/wants freedom while I struggle with the need to take care of or control my partner?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

Do I want to deprive those I love the benefit of learning from their own mistakes and/or experiences?

Knowing this, how could I show up differently for the people I love?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

In what areas of my life do I feel overly responsible?

By understanding we can never control another person unless they are actually our children (who have no choice in the matter), what is the healthiest way for me to manage my anxiety over things out of my control?

Knowing, ultimately, trust is the antidote to my anxiety, how can I build up trust in my relationships with others?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

How might my life be different if I were to accept there will be many things in life where I will be absolutely powerless over outcomes?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

CHAPTER 13:
BEING LOVED VS. BEING LOVING



"Love is the highest form of meaning."
—Dr. Viktor Frankl

Many of us make the very common mistake of going through life, trying to "get love." But remember, the universal law of attraction is that life only gives us more of who we are being. Therefore, if we want love, the answer is not to "chase" love; it is to be more loving.

If you have an anxious or avoidant attachment style, this can be a very challenging exercise and a scary thought. But you have to understand, this is your ego trying to protect you from your fear of being hurt or abandoned.

Ego is not a place to have a relationship from. Ego only leads to more frustration, miscommunication, reactivity, and power struggles.

Often, we can become so focused on "being right" or getting the love, attention, and acknowledgment we crave from our partners or others that we do not realize how "needy," controlling, or off-putting we can become.

We also may be unintentionally lying to our partners if we are telling them what we think they want to hear, rather than being 100% honest and upfront about what we really think and feel.

Ironically, these very behaviors we engage in to get love and validation from others tend to repel people and do the very opposite of what we say we want.

Think of the Oprahs of the world and the people closest to you whom you admire the most… How loving are they? How non-judgmental, warm, genuine, thoughtful, and inclusive are they?

Somewhere along the line we became convinced that "nice guys finish last." But the truth is, when you are not nice, how does it really feel? Not very good, does it?

Instead of asking, wanting, or taking, "loving" people are generous in spirit, thoughtful, and giving. They are not giving from a "what can I get" point of view, they aren't expecting something in return. It is giving with no expectation of outcome or return.

It's from this place of authenticity and groundedness, you will attract.

Be the light that attracts others to you like a moth to a flame. Decide how you wish to show up for others as your most loving self!

Often it is very difficult to "see" ourselves and how we show up for others. This exercise is designed for us to take a DEEP look at our behaviors and attitudes.

For each question below, take a moment to reflect: Is my answer coming from a place of attachment to "I need to be seen as right or heard?" or "I need or want to be acknowledged in some way so that I feel loved?"

Or is my answer coming from a place of "I am being my most loving, my most thoughtful, my most powerful, non-judgmental self, who is not attached to the outcome?"

The next few questions are designed to help you make the shift from "being loved" to "being loving."

Do you feel a need to control your life, your friends, your romantic partners, or your environment?

Do you have trouble making friends or trusting people?

Do you look for the one thing someone gets wrong, instead of all the things they get right?

Do you get defensive when your friends or romantic partners want to hold you accountable for your words and/or your behavior?

Do you tend to see your role models/friends as "more or better than you" and yourself as flawed?

Do you say to yourself, "I validate my own self-worth by secretly diminishing others or comparing myself to others"? Can you show up in a different way?

Do you experience anxiety if someone does not text or call you right back?

Do you justify your own bad behavior in friendships and relationships by comparing to others faults, behaviors, or misdeeds?

Have you ever thought or said; "I need you to acknowledge you have hurt me, my behavior towards you will make sure you know and feel how disappointed I am in you."

Can you show up in a different way?

What helped me the most in making this shift, while I was in a social situation or out on a date, was continually checking myself:

Am I trying to get love right now, or am I building bridges by being open, thoughtful, patient, and gracious?

I tell you, once you make this shift, you will feel ten times more grounded and powerful than you have ever felt before!

CHAPTER 14:
SETTING HEALTHIER BOUNDARIES



"Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others."

—Brené Brown

Establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries is a crucial aspect of building and sustaining fulfilling relationships. Boundaries serve as the invisible fence that defines where one person ends and another begins. Healthy boundaries help establish the limits of our emotional, physical, and mental space, ensuring we are respected, protected, and able to thrive interdependently within our relationships!

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES HELP TO PRESERVE OUR INDIVIDUALITY

Healthy boundaries allow us to preserve our sense of self and individuality within a relationship. They ensure each person has the space and freedom to pursue their own individual interests, goals, and personal growth.

By establishing boundaries, we can maintain our own identities, talents, and passions, which ultimately contribute to our overall happiness and fulfillment. It is through the preservation of individuality that a healthy balance between togetherness and independence is achieved, fostering a stronger and more resilient relationship.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES ENCOURAGE MUTUAL RESPECT AND AUTONOMY

Boundaries promote mutual respect and autonomy within a relationship. When we establish and communicate our boundaries, we convey our needs, preferences, and limits to our partner. This open and honest communication sets the foundation for mutual understanding, trust, and empathy.

Respecting each other's boundaries demonstrates a genuine concern for the other person's well-being and fosters an environment of emotional safety. It allows both individuals to feel heard, validated, and valued, which strengthens the bond between you and your partner.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES CONTRIBUTE TO OUR EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Maintaining healthy boundaries is essential for emotional well-being. By setting limits on how we are treated, we safeguard ourselves from physical and emotional harm.

Boundaries help prevent the erosion of self-esteem, protect against manipulation, and promote healthy self-care practices. In relationships where boundaries are not respected, individuals may experience emotional enmeshment, where their emotions become entangled with those of their partner. Having clear boundaries protects against emotional manipulation, excessive dependency, and emotional and physical abuse.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES AID IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Boundaries play a crucial role in conflict resolution within relationships. When we have clear boundaries, we are better equipped to express our needs, values, and concerns clearly and effectively. This clarity minimizes misunderstandings and reduces the likelihood of conflicts escalating into harmful arguments. Boundaries provide a framework for healthy communication, negotiation, and compromise. They allow individuals to navigate disagreements respectfully, addressing and resolving issues in a manner that promotes understanding, growth, and shared solutions.

Healthy Boundaries Strengthen Trust

When we consistently respect and honor each other's boundaries, trust is nurtured and deepened over time. Trust forms the foundation of a healthy relationship, allowing both individuals to feel secure, supported, and confident regarding each other's intentions.

When I am in a relationship with someone, how do I want to feel?

The answer to this one critical question becomes the baseline for all of your relationships.

If your answer is "at peace, happy, and fulfilled," then do a check-in: are you actually feeling those feelings in your current relationship?

And then ask yourself, why or why not? Is it because of your own expectations, which may or may not be realistic? Or is it because of your partner's bad behavior and mistreatment of you?

TIPS FOR SETTING HEALTHIER BOUNDARIES

* Use these feelings as your litmus test in relationships with friends and romantic partners.

* Do they try to "make you" feel stupid, unimportant, less than, or judged?

* Dr. John Gottman's research, outlined in "*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*", revealed that nearly 70% of all problems between couples are unresolvable. This insight underscores the importance of choosing our battles wisely in relationships.[2]

* You will never MAKE other people care about what you want or need. Either they do, or they don't. The trick is to work toward a compromise or common ground.

* Say what you mean, and mean what you say. Don't play games. If you're serious about meeting a **great** person, then you need to *be* a **great** person.

* We need to set boundaries early in a relationship, so people know what to expect from us.

A common mistake some people make early on in relationships is not speaking up for themselves or enforcing their boundaries. Whether out of fear of losing someone's interest, a tendency to people-please, or because of low self-esteem, many stay silent during the early stages of a relationship, which is actually the best time to set the 'tone' for how the relationship will develop.

When you need to assert your boundaries, simply say 'no' calmly and confidently. Keep your tone neutral, gently shake your head from side to side, and offer a polite smile. This approach helps maintain your composure while reinforcing your limits.

HOW THAT MIGHT LOOK IN CONVERSATION

Maybe you need some time to make a decision.

> Other: Hey, next Thursday we are planning on going to Whistler for the weekend. Why don't you come along?
>
> You: That's a great idea! Can I have a few days to think about it?
>
> Other: Why? You are such a "Debbie Downer." Let's just go!

2 John Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, (London: Orion, 2000).

You: My first thought is yes, I would love to go. But, this is something I need to think about. I need to figure out some things before I can commit 100%.

Or perhaps you and your partner are having a disagreement about something?

You: I know you want to work this out, I know you want to talk, but I need a day or two to gather my thoughts. Can we talk about this tomorrow?

Exercise: Setting Better Boundaries in our Relationships

1. Whose responsibility is it to handle conflict between my partner and my family and or friends?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

2. How do I typically react to someone when I fear my needs are not being met or I am not being heard in the relationship?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

3. Am I accommodating other people's requests because I want them to like me, I want things to run smoothly, I am afraid of conflict, or am I expecting them "to return the favor"?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

4. Have I ever given my relationship partners unsolicited advice?

It has manifested itself in my relationship with _____ in this way…

5. What would be the best way for me to move forward with permanently unresolvable relationship differences?

6. Do I use avoidance as a way of dealing with people? What could I say to a person I am in a relationship with to help them get the reassurance they might need when I feel smothered and need space?

7. Do I struggle to speak up for myself and maintain my composure when someone crosses my boundaries or does something that upsets me?

8. Using a current or recent situation, what could I say to a family member, romantic partner, or co-worker who I feel isn't respecting my boundaries?

CHAPTER 15:
DISCOVERING YOUR FIVE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP NEEDS



"A successful relationship requires falling in love many times, always with the same person."

—Mignon McLaughlin

In the vast tapestry of human relationships, finding our one special person and a love that will endure the test of time is, for many of us, is a profound and universal desire.

We yearn for a connection that brings us joy, fulfillment, connection, and a deep sense of belonging. Yet, the path to finding lasting love is difficult and, at times, can feel almost impossible.

What if I told you the secret to unlocking this extraordinary love we all seek lies within us?

UNDERSTANDING OUR INNER COMPASS

To embark on the journey of finding love that will stand the test of time, we must first understand our own emotional landscape.

By identifying and acknowledging our five most important relationship needs, we will gain clarity about what truly matters the most to us. These needs act as our inner compass, guiding us toward compatible partners who can meet them and away from relationships that fall short. Through self-reflection and introspection, while dating, we will align ourselves with the love we deserve.

NURTURING VULNERABILITY

To foster genuine and lasting connections, it is essential to communicate our needs with our partners from a place of vulnerability, not a place of expectations, judgment, and ultimatums.

By embracing vulnerability, we create a safe space for emotional intimacy, deeper conversations, and the cultivation of an environment where love and understanding can truly flourish.

BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION OF COMPATIBILITY

Compatibility forms the bedrock of a successful and enduring relationship. Identifying our relationship needs allows us to discern whether a potential partner aligns with our core values, beliefs, and life goals. By seeking partners who can fulfill our important needs, we lay the foundation for a connection built on a shared vision, mutual respect, and understanding. This compatibility nurtures growth and creates a solid framework for our relationship to thrive.

SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AND GROWTH

Relationships are not static. They require continuous effort and growth. By understanding our relationship needs, we can navigate the inevitable challenges and conflicts that arise in any partnership. By actively addressing our needs and communicating them with our partner, we foster an environment of mutual support and collaboration.

This fuels relationship satisfaction, promotes personal growth, and ensures your love for your partner grows and thrives over time!

Exercise: Our Top Five Relationship Needs

In this next exercise, we delve deep into the significance of identifying our five most important relationship needs.

Select the ten needs that resonate with you the most ("Meaningful Communication" is highlighted in bold because it should be a NON-NEGOTIABLE!). After you have selected ten, narrow your selection down to five.

Meaningful Communication	Reliability	Adventurous	Generous	Trustworthy
Honest	Thoughtful	Kind	Emotionally Supportive	Challenging
Community Minded	Creative	Affectionate	Spirituality	Growth
Fun / Playful	Commitment	Loving	Teammate	Influence
Integrity	Financially Secure	Independent	Competent	Harmony
Attentive	Willingness to Compromise	Respect	Authentic	Openness
Grounded	Respectful	Optimistic	Open Mindedness	Quality Time Together

After defining your top five relationship needs, it's important to reflect on past relationships and determine if those relationships met your core needs.

After you have listed and ranked your top five core relationship needs, rank, on a scale of one to ten, how well your last relationship met each need.

Value Ranked	My Core Need	Your Last Relationship	Relationship with Father	Relationship with Mother
1	**Meaningful Communication**	**4**	**7**	**4**
2				
3				
4				
5				

Fascinating, isn't it? In our quest for lasting love, understanding our five most important relationship needs gives us a glimpse into our past. Looking forward, it serves as an indispensable compass to help guide us toward more fulfilling and healthier relationships.

Now, for primary family members (father, mother, brothers, sisters) and friends, how can we improve those relationships and feel like our needs are being met by the people who matter to us the most?

Primary Value #1 (Meaningful Communication)

How can I improve my communication with _____?

Primary Value #2

How can I improve _____ with _____?

Primary Value #3

How can I improve _____ with _____?

Primary Value #4

How can I improve _____ with _____?

Primary Value #5

How can I improve _____ with _____?

As in all relationships, it's not only about *what* we communicate. More importantly, it's about *how* we communicate.

In the next few pages, we will examine what secure, grounded, non-reactive communication looks like and how we can apply it in our relationships. The first step to improving our communication with others is understanding where our reactivity is coming from: lack of trust.

CHAPTER 16:
STEPS TO BUILD MORE TRUST IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS



"When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear."

—Thomas Sowell

The deep loving connection you desire from others comes from your decision to be truly vulnerable in communication with friends, family, and your romantic partners. Tell them the truth — because there is no connection without vulnerability, and you cannot be vulnerable without TRUST.

Can we trust ourselves enough to show up as the most powerful version of ourselves, know the right thing to say, and how to say it?

Here are five steps to build more trust in your relationship with others:

1. **Express gratitude**

   To build trust with someone you care about, start by expressing gratitude.

   "Sandra, I am so grateful to have you as my friend. There are so many times when you have stuck by me and have been there for me. And even when I have not been my best, you have always shown me just what a great friend you are. Thank you!"

2. **Set your intention to communicate from the best, most compassionate possible version of yourself**

   The goal is to communicate from a more compassionate place with more empathy and understanding.

   "I need to share something with you. The other day, it felt like you were pretty angry with me when _____. Is everything OK?"

   or

   "The other day you had shared some thoughts about _____ and it actually took me off guard since I wasn't expecting that. Can you share with me a little bit more about why you are upset?"

3. **Don't project onto your friends or relationship partners**

   No one is responsible for your happiness. Every moment another person chooses to spend with you is a gift. It is not an obligation. It is not a right. It is a gift; so treat it as a gift. Nurture it, cherish it.

   Allow others to show up for you in their own way without judgment, without thinking they are supposed to be a "certain way" for you. Our goal, as friends, is to seek understanding through active listening. Why does this person you care about so much feel and think the way they do?

   "To be understood, first one must understand." —Stephen R. Covey

4. Come clean (don't lie), be accountable, and make amends

When we tell the truth, even when it isn't pleasant, we become much more trustworthy. Being known as a person who doesn't lie, even in tough times or moments of significant pressure, shows people your moral strength.

Own your stuff. Fully admit your wrongdoings and accompany your admission with a sincere apology. Back up your apology with the intention not to do it again and make amends as soon as possible.

"I've been thinking about our conversation the other day, and I realize I can do more to help around the house. I know I contribute, but I can see how it's frustrating when things like laundry don't get done on time. I'd like to be more consistent—how about if I had my own basket and took responsibility for doing my own laundry? How does that sound?"

5. Set your boundaries using your relationship needs and listen to your gut

Oftentimes, when we feel like others have let us down or been less than truthful with us, we can jump to conclusions.

If you truly want to live life as the best version of yourself, ask for clarification before jumping to conclusions, making assumptions, or blowing things out of proportion. Practice active listening and curiosity to better understand why your partner feels the way they do or why they did what they did.

"I understand you were upset yesterday, but when you call me names and you start swearing, it really makes me feel uncomfortable and you need to know that it is not ok. I do love you, and I do care about our relationship, but I can't be in a relationship where I don't feel respected. I am just curious, what is it about what happened yesterday that got you so upset? Are you open to talking about it and getting help?"

Always keep in mind, it's far better to trust your intuition and honor your commitment to yourself than to diminish yourself in order to try to appease someone else or get someone to like you.

CHAPTER 17:

THE POWER OF GROUNDED, SECURE, AND NON-REACTIVE COMMUNICATION IN BUILDING FULFILLING LONG-LASTING SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS



"The quality of your communication determines the depth of your connection."

—Debra Fileta

You have been doing the inner work.

The Follow It Home Healing Methodology™ is how you become less run by your triggers and old wounds and old beliefs. You named it. You felt it. You interrupted the signal. You stood by the child inside you. You began to reframe the experience and rewrite the story.

That work is what makes a different conversation possible.

Because here is the truth I had to learn the hard way: you can understand your attachment style and still blow up a Tuesday night over a tone of voice. Insight in your journal is not the same as presence with a partner.

The Follow It Home Healing Methodology™ is you and you.
The Bringing It Home Connection Method™ is you and them.

It's how you bring your healing home when love is in the room.

And when love is in the room, everything you have healed comes together in the way you speak, the way you listen, and the way you create space for your partner.

Not in your journal. Not in your head. Out loud, with the person who matters most, in the moments when it would be easier to shut down or strike back.

That is where we are going next. In the chapter ahead, you will learn how to stay grounded, secure, and non-reactive when it counts, and how to say the vulnerable thing instead of the defended one.

Because in our quest to find that one fulfilling relationship, we often underestimate the role deep, meaningful, vulnerable communication can play.

Vulnerability is not something a lot of people, regardless of gender identity or socialization, are particularly comfortable with. Oftentimes, most of us tend to focus on shared interests, physical attraction, similar values, and/or compatibility to help determine love interests; but, without vulnerable communication, relationships will, generally, sooner or later falter.

Aspects of Vulnerable, Meaningful Communication

1. Creating emotional safety through empathy

Vulnerable communication begins with empathy. It involves genuinely being curious about our partner's thoughts and feelings, as well as acknowledging their emotions and experiences.

By actively listening and showing empathy, we create emotional safety, allowing our loved ones to express themselves freely. This foundation of trust paves the way for open and honest communication, enabling us to address concerns and resolve conflicts constructively.

2. Sharing our authentic selves

Many of us make the common mistake of asking our partners to be vulnerable with us, to share their innermost thoughts and feelings, without reciprocation. What about our part? Are we willing to truly risk being vulnerable with our partners as well?

By taking that step toward trust via sharing our innermost thoughts, feelings, and fears with the people we care about the most, we will begin to create a place for authentic connection, which will strengthen the bonds that tie us together and will lead to even deeper understanding.

Is it scary? Yes.

But open, honest dialogue is the only way to nurture and build trust, ultimately paving the way for the relationship's and our own growth. Honest communication allows both parties to navigate challenges in their relationship with greater understanding and mutual empathy.

3. Choosing our words with care

Words have tremendous power— they can either build bridges or create walls in our relationships.

Vulnerable communication involves choosing our words with care and using language that promotes understanding, respect, and kindness.

And always, by asking ourselves how can I be supportive without giving unsolicited advice unless asked?

4. Seeking win-win solutions

> In any relationship, conflicts and disagreements are inevitable. However, how we approach and resolve these conflicts can make all the difference. Vulnerable communication encourages a collaborative mindset, where both parties actively seek win-win solutions. Rather than viewing conflicts as a battleground or a competition, we can aim for mutual understanding and compromise. By focusing on shared goals and finding common ground, we will strengthen our connection and build a resilient partnership.

Most relationship experts will tell you that one of the leading causes of problems in relationships is due to poor or lack of communication. While this is generally true — it does not tell the whole story.

The real question is why is there so much poor communication or lack of communication between partners?

I believe it is because of reactivity, our fight-or-flight response to stressors—triggered by deeply held fears of not being seen, heard, or understood.

In other words, what's really happening is that **communication breaks down in relationships when the nervous system goes into protection mode.**

That's why when we have a partner who overreacts or explodes into fits of anger, it's usually not about the present moment at all.

More often than not, it's our nervous system reacting to old emotional wounds—often formed in childhood through unmet needs, attachment injuries, learned limiting beliefs, or unresolved experiences of not feeling safe, seen, or understood.

When we're triggered into these fears, we project onto our partner, get defensive, and react as if the past is happening again in the present.

Learning to work through this will help you become more grounded and less reactive.

Therefore, the first step is to see **communication as a nervous system issue,** not a skills issue.

And we do that by first addressing the fears that are "driving" our reactivity.

THE BRINGING IT HOME CONNECTION METHOD™

The Five Shifts to Secure, Grounded, Non-Reactive Communication.

You know that moment when a simple conversation with your spouse or partner suddenly turns into a full-blown argument?

It starts with something small:

- A tone.
- A phrase that hits a nerve.
- A sigh, an eye roll, a small criticism.

And before you know it, voices are raised, someone shuts down, someone storms off, and the room is full of tension and hurt.

That's not really about the dishes. Or the schedule. Or whose turn it was to take out the trash.

That's reactivity.

It's your triggered nervous system. Often based in old fears, old attachment wounds, and old limiting beliefs flipping you into fight, flight, or freeze mode.

The Bringing It Home Connection Method™ is a simple, powerful process built on The Five Shifts that helps you interrupt that pattern and create something new.

It moves you from:

- attack and defense → to understanding and safety
- blame and shutdown → to honesty and repair
- me vs. you → to us vs. the problem

The Five Shifts are:

Shift #1: Non-Reactivity – calming your nervous system so you can choose your response.
Shift #2: Validation – helping your partner feel seen and understood.
Shift #3: Gratitude – rebuilding warmth and appreciation.
Shift #4: Vulnerability – letting your real self be known.
Shift #5: Intention – choosing "what's best for us?" instead of "how do I win?"

Let's walk through each one.

Shift #1: Non-Reactivity – Creating Emotional Safety

If there's one skill that changes everything in a relationship, it's this one.

Non-reactivity is the ability to pause between what happens and how you respond. It's what allows you to stay grounded and present instead of being dragged around by old fears and triggers.

Think about the last time you said something you regretted the second it left your mouth.

Maybe you saw the hurt flash across your partner's face. Maybe you thought, "That's not even what I meant… why did I say that?"

That's reactivity talking, not your true self.

When our nervous system feels threatened, it goes into survival mode:

- Fight – we attack, criticize, argue, defend.
- Flight – we escape, change the subject, leave the room, scroll our phone.
- Freeze – we shut down, go quiet, numb out, shut our partner out.

In those moments, we're not really responding to our spouse. We're responding to old experiences, old attachment wounds, and old beliefs about what conflict means.

And here's the hard truth:

Protection and connection cannot exist in the same moment.

When you're locked in self-protection, your body might feel safer for a second, but your relationship pays the price.

Non-reactivity is not about:

- ignoring your feelings, or
- letting your partner walk all over you.

It is about:

- noticing when you're triggered,
- calming your body,

- and choosing a response that serves to connect, not just react.

Practical ways to practice non-reactivity:

i. (Safety) Request space during difficult times.

You're allowed to say:

"I need a bit of time to calm down, because I'm feeling a bit triggered right now. I don't want to say something I'll regret later. Can we come back to this later today (or tomorrow)?"

Important Note: This is not about avoiding the conversation—it's about giving your nervous system time to settle so you can return grounded, open, and present.

ii. (Awareness) Do some self-reflective journaling.

After an upset with your partner, ask yourself these three critical questions:

- What am I afraid might happen?
- When have I felt triggered/fearful like this before? (Just like when...)
- What does my behavior allow me to avoid or control?

Set aside time to journal your thoughts and emotions on these three questions. Reflect on your interactions, identifying moments of emotional withdrawal, avoidance, making assumptions, "blowing things out of proportion," or jumping to conclusions.

Take deep slow breaths as you write, allowing your body to register that you can "handle" the danger.

Then write the words:

I am safe, everything is OK, and we can handle this.

Strategy: Use your journal as a tool for self-awareness and introspection.

Notice your triggers and defensiveness, exploring the root causes of your avoidant, anxious, fearful, or controlling behaviors.

iii. (Ownership) Take responsibility for your triggers, fears, and projections.

Instead of thinking, "He or she makes me so mad", try:

- "I feel triggered when they said or did this…"

Ask yourself: What am I really upset about?

Do you go into "upset mode," blaming, or being judgemental?

Or can you get curious about where your upset is coming from?

Is this response connected to an old wound or an old belief?

Can you also get curious about why your partner might be thinking or feeling the way they are?

Non-reactivity is emotional leadership.

It's you saying, "I'm going to be the one who stops pouring gasoline on the fire."

When you slow yourself down, your partner's nervous system often starts mirroring yours.

Voices soften. Shoulders drop, and real conversation becomes possible again.

Shift #2: Validation – The Power of Feeling Understood

Stephen Covey said, *"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."*

And that simple truth might be one of the most powerful healing tools you'll ever use in your marriage or your relationship.

If Non-Reactivity opens the door, Validation is what invites your partner to walk through it.

We've all had the experience of sharing something vulnerable and hearing:

- "That's not true."
- "You're overreacting."
- "It wasn't that bad."

It feels like a door slamming right in your face. You don't just feel misunderstood; you feel *invisible* and like your feelings don't matter.

Now flip it.

Your partner finally says, "I feel like I'm drowning and you don't even notice," and your first impulse is to defend:

"What do you mean? I help all the time. You're acting like I do nothing."

Instantly, the conversation gets heated and defensive. They shut down; you feel attacked. No one feels seen.

Validation isn't about agreeing with everything your partner says, or admitting they're "right" and you're "wrong."

Validation is simply saying:

"I may not see it exactly the same way, but I want to better understand why you feel the way you do."

When someone feels understood:

- their nervous system calms,
- their defenses drop,
- and the need to "prove their case" fades.

The missing piece in validation: honest self-reflection

When my wife finally shared how overwhelmed she was. The mental load, the kids, the house, the endless "to-do" list. My first instinct was to defend myself.

But when I slowed down and asked, *"Is there some truth here?",* I had to admit:

- Yes, I was more shut down than I realized.
- Yes, she was carrying more than I'd been willing to see.
- Yes, I could show up more consistently and find a way to help out more.

Acknowledging truth is not the same as taking all the blame.

Not, "Are they 100% accurate?"
Not, "Do I like how they said it?"

Because when I slowed down and asked myself the hard question — *was there some truth in what she was saying?*

I didn't automatically go into defense mode. I leaned into **her experience.**

Could I soften? Yes.
Could I show up more consistently? Yes.
Could I meet her exhaustion with care instead of defensiveness? Yes.

But I had to set aside my ego, and set aside my need to be right.

What validation sounds like

Instead of:

"You're overreacting."

Try:

"I can see that. I want to better understand why you feel this way."

Instead of:

"You always make me the bad guy."

Try:

"It sounds like you feel really hurt and alone in this. Can you tell me more so I can see what you're seeing?"

If you truly don't understand, you can say:

"I know we see this differently. Can you help me understand why this feels so important to you, so we can find a win-win that works for both of us?"

Validation tells your partner: *Your feelings matter to me.*

And when people feel seen, they begin to soften. That softening is the beginning of repair, and that's when emotional safety begins to rebuild.

Shift #3: Gratitude – Rebuilding Warmth and Appreciation

When couples start to drift apart, they often stop noticing the small, good things. The focus shifts to what's missing — what's wrong, what isn't working.

But when you intentionally look for and speak gratitude, something beautiful happens: your spouse or partner feels appreciated, not *criticized.*

Because, it's hard to feel grateful when:

- you're hurt,
- you're resentful,
- or you feel like you're the only one trying.

Our brains naturally fixate on what's wrong. We scan for threats, shortcomings, and disappointments. Over time, we stop seeing what's good and only see what's missing.

The problem is: when your partner mostly hears criticism, correction, or silence, they start to believe:

- "Nothing I do is enough."
- "Why bother trying?"
- "It doesn't matter what I do, I'll just get it wrong."

That's when most people emotionally check out.

The two kinds of gratitude that change everything

1. Gratitude for what they do

This is about noticing and naming your partner's efforts:

- "Thank you for making dinner tonight. I know you were tired, and it meant a lot."
- "I noticed you handled that situation with the kids so patiently. I really appreciate how steady you are with them."
- "Thanks for taking care of that thing I was stressed about. That really helped."

This tells your partner: *"I see your effort. It matters."*

2. Gratitude for who they are

This goes deeper — it acknowledges their character and presence in your life:

- "I love how kind you are. I don't say it enough, but it's one of my favorite things about you."
- "You have such a calming presence in this house. It helps me more than you know."
- "I'm so grateful for how committed you are to our family. I really see it."

These simple acknowledgments create warmth and safety. They remind your spouse: *You matter, and I see you.*

And here's the thing — gratitude doesn't just change how your spouse feels, it changes how **you** feel.

A simple gratitude practice

For the next month, I encourage you to start a small gratitude ritual:

- Once a day, write down **two to three things** you're grateful for in your partner — either something they did, or who they are.
- At least a couple of times a week, tell them one of those things out loud, looking them in the eyes.

It might feel small or even awkward at first.

But over time:

- your focus shifts from what's wrong to what's right,
- your nervous system calms,
- and the emotional climate between you starts to warm again.

Gratitude doesn't mean you ignore problems.

It simply means you refuse to let the problems become the focus of your relationship.

Shift #4: Vulnerability – Letting Your Real Self Be Seen

If gratitude opens the heart, vulnerability invites your partner in.

Most of us did not grow up with healthy models of vulnerability. We learned that "strength" meant keeping it together, not sharing how we feel, and never admitting weakness, fear, or need.

So, in marriage and our relationships, we protect ourselves by:

- using sarcasm instead of honesty,
- criticizing instead of revealing hurt,
- withdrawing instead of saying, "I am afraid…"
- acting like we don't care as much as we actually do.

The problem is: your spouse can't connect with you through a wall.

Vulnerability isn't weakness — it's the courage to show up as your true authentic self, even when it feels uncomfortable.

It sounds like:

"I feel like we're growing apart, and it scares me."

One day, my wife told me it felt like we were becoming "roommates." That hit hard. I realized my emotional armor, meant to protect us from conflict, was actually shutting her out and starving the relationship.

So, I started experimenting with vulnerability in small, honest ways:

- "I have this fear that we are starting to drift apart."
- "It's hard for me to say this, but I've been feeling really disconnected from us lately"

And do you know what happened?

She didn't pull away. She softened. She leaned in, and she shared some of her own fears too.

Vulnerability didn't break the relationship, it started to heal it.

What vulnerability is (and isn't)

Vulnerability is **not:**

- dumping every emotion without boundaries,
- saying extreme things like, "I can't live without you,"
- using your "truth" as a weapon,
- expecting your partner to fix your feelings.

Vulnerability is:

- sharing your fears, in small ways, kindly and clearly.
- naming your needs, and desires without attacking or blaming.

Turning defense into vulnerability

Here are some examples of how to shift from defended to vulnerable communication:

Defended:

"You never make time for me."

Vulnerable:

"I am starting to feel like we're drifting apart, and that really scares me because I love feeling close to you."

Defended:

"You don't even care."

Vulnerable:

"I miss feeling connected to you. I want us to get back to that place again."

Defended:

Silent treatment after an argument.

Vulnerable:

"I don't want us to keep fighting like this. I love you too much for that. Can we take a break and then come back to this when we're both calmer?"

Notice the difference?

Same situation. Completely different energy.

One pushes away.
The other invites in.

Yes, vulnerability for most people, is scary, especially if you've been hurt before. But it is also the doorway to the kind of intimacy, connection, and closeness most couples have wanted their whole lives.

Because, vulnerability is a cornerstone of trust in relationships. When we are vulnerable, we show our true, authentic selves, including our fears, insecurities, and emotions. This authenticity fosters trust and reciprocity, encouraging others to open up, as well.

By being willing to be vulnerable FIRST, we create an environment where both parties can feel safe to be themselves, cultivating deeper connections with our partners.

Mutual Support and Empathy:

Vulnerability creates an opportunity for mutual support and empathy. When we share our vulnerabilities, we allow others to understand and empathize with our struggles. This shared experience fosters a deeper sense of compassion and encourages others to offer support and assistance.

The Opportunity for Growth and Personal Development:

By embracing vulnerability, we open ourselves up to new perspectives.

Through vulnerability, we can address areas of personal growth within the context of our relationships, leading to new insights and understanding.

Conflict Resolution:

Vulnerability plays a crucial role in conflict resolution. When we approach conflicts with vulnerability, we create a space for honest and open communication. It allows us to express our needs, fears, and concerns without defensiveness. By being vulnerable, we promote greater understanding, empathy, and set the potential for finding mutually satisfactory resolutions.

Putting our vulnerability into our words:

"I have this fear…"

"I am afraid that we are drifting apart, and it scares me…"

"Sometimes I can get triggered from things that happened way before you. For that I am sorry."

"I know I overreacted…"

"Listen, I am feeling triggered right now, I just need some space, and then I'll be OK."

Shift #5: Intention – From "Me vs. You" to "What's Best for Us?"

If the first four steps are about healing and softening, **Intention** is about consciously choosing who you want to be in your marriage or your relationship — especially in moments of conflict.

Because most relationships are running on autopilot.

We don't wake up and consciously decide how we're going to show up. We just react:

- to our stress,
- to our partner's mood,
- to our old stories about what they "always" do.

When both people are frustrated, overwhelmed, and on autopilot, the relationship becomes a loop of:

- trigger → reaction → defense → distance.

"Intention" refers to the underlying motivation, purpose, or aim behind our words, actions, and behaviors.

Here are several reasons why our intentions are so crucial in our relationships:

Clarity and Alignment:

Our intention in any given situation provides clarity about what we are seeking to achieve or convey in our relationships. When we have a clear intention, we can align our actions and behaviors accordingly. It helps us communicate our desires, values, and boundaries effectively, leading to a more harmonious and authentic connection with others.

I often tell my wife that I am "ride or die," which means I am committed; we will figure this out, and we will get through this.

Impact and Outcome:

Our intention greatly influences the impact our words and actions have on others, and the outcome of our interactions. When our intention is nonreactive, respectful, and compassionate, it enhances the likelihood of positive outcomes and constructive engagement. Conversely, negative intentions can lead to misunderstandings, conflict, and damaged relationships.

Building Trust:

Our intention is closely linked to trust-building in relationships. When our intention is sincere, trustworthy, and aligned with the well-being of others, it builds trust and credibility. People feel secure when they can perceive our genuine intentions, leading to stronger and more resilient bonds.

Resolving Conflict:

In conflict situations, our intention greatly impacts the approach we take and the potential for resolution. My intention with my wife and my daughter is always to try to "show up" as curious and wanting to find a compromise, if possible. I ask open-ended questions, try not to jump to conclusions or assumptions, and try to work toward understanding, connection, and common ground.

Self-reflection and Growth:

Being mindful of our intention allows us to reflect on our own motivations, biases, and patterns in relationships. It encourages self-awareness and personal growth as we examine our intentions and consider their impact on others.

Intention invites a different question:

It's about shifting from me versus you to we're both on the same team.

When your intention is "team". Not being right, not winning, not controlling the outcome, your energy changes completely.

Your spouse can feel that. And it changes how they respond to you.

It's you pausing to ask one simple, powerful question:

"What's best for us?"

Not:

- "How do I win?"
- "How do I protect myself?"
- "How do I avoid getting blamed?"

But: *"What's best for the relationship we're trying to build?"*

What intention looks like in daily life;

Without intention:
Your partner says something that stings. You snap back.

With intention:
You feel the sting, pause, and ask, "What's best for us right now?"
Then you say:

"I have to admit, I'm feeling a bit triggered right now, but I really want to understand where you're coming from. Can we slow this down and talk it through later?"

Without intention:
You're exhausted, so you shut down and withdraw for the rest of the night.

With intention:
You notice your exhaustion and say:

"I'm really worn out and not in a great headspace. Can we pause this for now and reconnect tomorrow when I can be more present with you?"

Without intention:
Your partner makes a mistake, and you immediately criticize.

With intention:
You pause and ask, "What's best for us?"
Then:

"I have to be 100% honest. I am afraid we won't have any money for emergencies, if we keep going in this direction. I really want us to figure out a way to handle this that works for both of us, can we take a look at our budget tomorrow"

Intention doesn't mean you never get upset.
It means even if you don't fully agree, you can still move forward together with respect and empathy.

Because true partnership isn't about always seeing eye-to-eye, it's about remembering that you're on the same team.

More examples of putting our intention into words.

"I've given what we talked about a lot of thought. And I am just curious, what are your thoughts?

"How might we both get a win out of this?"

"It's important to me that we overcome this challenge together and grow stronger as a couple. I'm here to support you, and I'm ready to put in the effort and make any necessary changes to improve our relationship."

"I genuinely care about you and our relationship and I want to work through this together. I also want us to be partners, I want to be with someone who is willing to put in the same amount of effort into this as me. Where do you feel like I could do better?"

"Do you understand why I am upset? Do you have any thoughts on how we might find a compromise that works for both of us?"

Putting It All Together: From Conflict to Connection

The real power of The Bringing It Home Connection Method™ shows up in the heat of the moment — when a misunderstanding or a disagreement happens, or when tension rises.

Here's how the Five Shifts work together in a single conversation:

1. **Non-Reactivity:**
   You notice you're triggered. Instead of lashing out, you pause and say,

"Quite honestly, I'm feeling triggered right now, and I don't want to fight. Can we take a quick break so I can calm down and we can actually hear each other out?"

2. **Validation:**
   Once you're calmer, you say,

"Help me understand what this feels like from your side. What's been hardest for you about this?"

3. **Gratitude:**
   You reassure them of their value,

"You mean so much to me. I really appreciate everything you do for our family, even if I don't say it enough."

4. **Vulnerability:**
   You share your heart,

"Lately I've been feeling us drift a little, and that really scares me. I don't want that for us. I miss feeling close to you."

5. **Intention:**
   You shift from me vs. you to us,

"What do you think is best for our relationship? I'm willing to [specific action], does that seem fair to you?"

None of this is about being perfect. It's about practicing a new way of relating — one where your nervous system is calmer, your partner feels seen and valued, and your words move you toward repair instead of deeper damage.

The bonus? These same Five Shifts don't just transform your relationship. They change how you relate to everyone:

- your kids,
- your co-workers,
- your extended family — and most importantly, yourself.

EXERCISE: Can I take a more BALANCED View?

One of the biggest improvements I've noticed for myself in all of my relationships, and my communication — came when I learned how to become more balanced in how I saw my upsets.

For example, if someone broke up with me. I could think it was the "end of the world" and that I would never find true love again.

Or, I could try and find a more balanced view.

If I am being 100% completely honest with myself - is there any possible benefit to the breakup?

What are the possible benefits to my current upset?

What is the gift in all of this? (what can I learn / how can I grow from this?)

And lastly, have you ever done or said something similar to someone?

Chapter Summary: The Five Shifts in Your Relationship

To recap:

- Non-Reactivity helps you stop pouring fuel on the fire and start creating emotional safety.
- Validation reassures your partner that their inner world matters to you.
- Gratitude shifts the emotional climate from criticism and scarcity to warmth and appreciation.
- Vulnerability invites real intimacy and connection by letting your true self be seen.
- Intention turns daily choices into a conscious commitment to "what's best for us and our relationship."

You don't need to master all five before you see change.

Even using one or two of these shifts consistently can begin to soften longstanding patterns, rebuild trust, and create new, healthier ways of relating.

Because when you show up differently, more grounded, more open, more intentional. The whole dance between you begins to shift.

This is the heart of The Bringing It Home Connection Method™:

You stop letting old wounds run your relationship… and you start creating a new experience of love, one choice, one conversation, and one small shift at a time.

CHAPTER 18:
THE POWER OF SELF-FORGIVENESS



"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."
—Nelson Mandela

Follow It Home Step 5

We do not rewrite the story to excuse what happened. We rewrite it so old beliefs no longer get to choose who we are.

In the pursuit of lasting, loving, successful relationships, we must remember forgiveness begins within. By practicing self-forgiveness, we open ourselves to the transformative power of compassion, healing emotional wounds, and embracing vulnerability.

Through reflection, release, and affirmations, we can cultivate a deeper sense of self-worth and create the foundation for meaningful relationships with not only ourselves but also with others.

Remember, we all make mistakes. It's a fundamental part of being human. Yet, when it comes to forgiveness, we often focus on forgiving others while neglecting the most crucial recipient of our compassion: ourselves.

The ability to forgive ourselves is a transformative practice that holds the key to creating the kind of relationships we truly desire.

In this chapter, we will delve into the power of self-forgiveness and explore how it can profoundly impact our journey toward finding lasting love and commitment.

EMBRACING IMPERFECTION

In a world constantly emphasizing and fetishizing perfection, it's easy to succumb to self-judgment and unforgiving expectations. However, self-forgiveness invites us to embrace our imperfections and recognize making mistakes is inherent to continual growth. By acknowledging our fallibility, we open the door to self-compassion and pave the way for healthier relationships that are built on acceptance and empathy.

HEALING EMOTIONAL WOUNDS

When we hold onto past mistakes and harbor guilt, it becomes an emotional burden that hinders our ability to connect authentically with others. Self-forgiveness offers us the opportunity to heal these emotional wounds, allowing us to let go of resentment and embrace inner peace. By releasing the emotional baggage of the past, we can — and will — create space within ourselves to give and receive love wholeheartedly and without reservation.

CULTIVATING SELF-WORTH

Forgiving ourselves nurtures a sense of self-worth that radiates into all areas of our lives, including relationships. When we forgive, we acknowledge our inherent value and recognize our past does not define us. This newfound self-worth attracts healthier dynamics and empowers us to set better and healthier boundaries, communicate more effectively, and seek partnerships based on mutual respect.

EMBRACING VULNERABILITY

Self-forgiveness encourages us to embrace vulnerability, the cornerstone of deep and meaningful relationships. When we accept our imperfections and forgive ourselves, we develop the courage to show up authentically in relationships. We no longer fear judgment or rejection but instead foster an environment of openness and understanding, allowing true intimacy to flourish.

Exercise 1: Reflection and Release

Taking a moment to reflect on our past mistakes and the emotions they evoke is an essential first step in self-forgiveness.

Write a letter to yourself, acknowledging the pain caused by your actions or inaction and expressing genuine remorse. Allow yourself to feel the emotions that arise, and then consciously choose to release them.

Burn the letter as a symbolic act of letting go and granting yourself the gift of forgiveness.

Exercise 2: Affirmations of Self-Forgiveness

Affirmations are powerful tools that reshape our mindset. Create affirmations centered on self-forgiveness and self-compassion.

Repeat them daily, emphasizing that you are worthy of forgiveness and possess the ability to learn and grow from past experiences. Embrace these affirmations as guiding principles on your journey toward creating fulfilling relationships.

Exercise 3: Peeling Back the Layers of the Onion

For this exercise, first pick an event that is upsetting for you.

Then, do some journaling using the below questions and prompts to explore how it is still impacting your life and how it continues to show up for you.

Am I feeling angry toward myself for not reacting or handling the situation differently?

Am I disappointed that things did not turn out the way that I would have liked?

Do I now have difficulty trusting my own judgment?

Do I feel powerless or like my life is out of control?

I wish I had done this instead (this is where the growth happens!)...

What are my deeply-held, core negative beliefs this upset or event reinforces?

People always abandon me/l am alone; just like when...

It is not safe to speak up and be heard or assert my boundaries; just like when...

No matter how hard I try it's never good enough/I am not enough; just like when...

I do not deserve and/or I am not worthy; just like when...

No one will ever love me/I am unlovable; just like when...

Other people's needs come first/others are more important than me; just like when...

Rumination is the focused attention on the symptoms of one's distress — going over the distress over and over again in the mind. Repeatedly. Journal what you find yourself ruminating on.

These same thoughts prevent me from enjoying friends/time alone/activities...

I cannot find forgiveness for myself for...

I worry a lot about what other people would think if they ever knew what I had done when…

When guilt or shame rears its ugly head, confront it, share it, and let it go. The past is over. We each do the best we are capable of.

It is time to learn from our mistakes and ask ourselves…

What can I do differently in the future so that this does not happen again?

What makes you valuable and worthy despite your mistakes?

Do you want to try to own your feelings? Because, often, our feelings are actually deeply held suspicions of self from past trauma.

This experience, this upset, triggers me and reminds me of how I have felt in the past, just like when...

Can we show ourselves compassion and empathy — the same way we would show a good friend, relative, or child?

Rejection: I feel flawed, therefore I am rejected...

What would I tell a good friend?

Abandonment: I never want to feel abandoned again, therefore I will not get close.

What would I tell a good friend?

Humiliation: I often wonder if the ridicule or bullying was deserved or accurate...

What would I tell a good friend?

Deception: I was lied to and/or cheated on, betrayed. Can I trust/believe my own intuition?

What would I tell a good friend?

In what ways have I grown as a person despite these challenges and experiences?

By beginning to examine our actions, and the thoughts lingering behind them. We can forgive ourselves and stop us from ruminating on those negative thoughts any further.

CHAPTER 19:
THE POWER OF FORGIVING OTHERS



"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."

—Lewis B. Smedes

Remember, we all make mistakes. It's a fundamental part of being human. Forgiveness is not an easy journey, but it is a transformative one.

Forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but a testament to our inner strength, courage, and resilience.

By choosing to forgive those who have hurt us, we break free from the emotional grip they have on us. It allows us to shift our perspective from powerless to powerful and cultivate empathy and compassion within ourselves.

And while it may seem challenging, even impossible, forgiving others is essential for our own liberation, well-being, and inner peace. Remember that by forgiving others, we ultimately set ourselves free.

Let me tell you a story. One night, during a get-together, a good friend of mine, Sarah, made a comment that struck me to the core.

In front of everyone, she said, "You always seem so obsessed with your work. Do you ever have time for anything else?""

Her words felt like a public accusation, suggesting I was neglecting my family and friends. I felt hurt, embarrassed, and angry. I spent the rest of the night brooding over her words, replaying them in my mind, and feeling the sting each time.

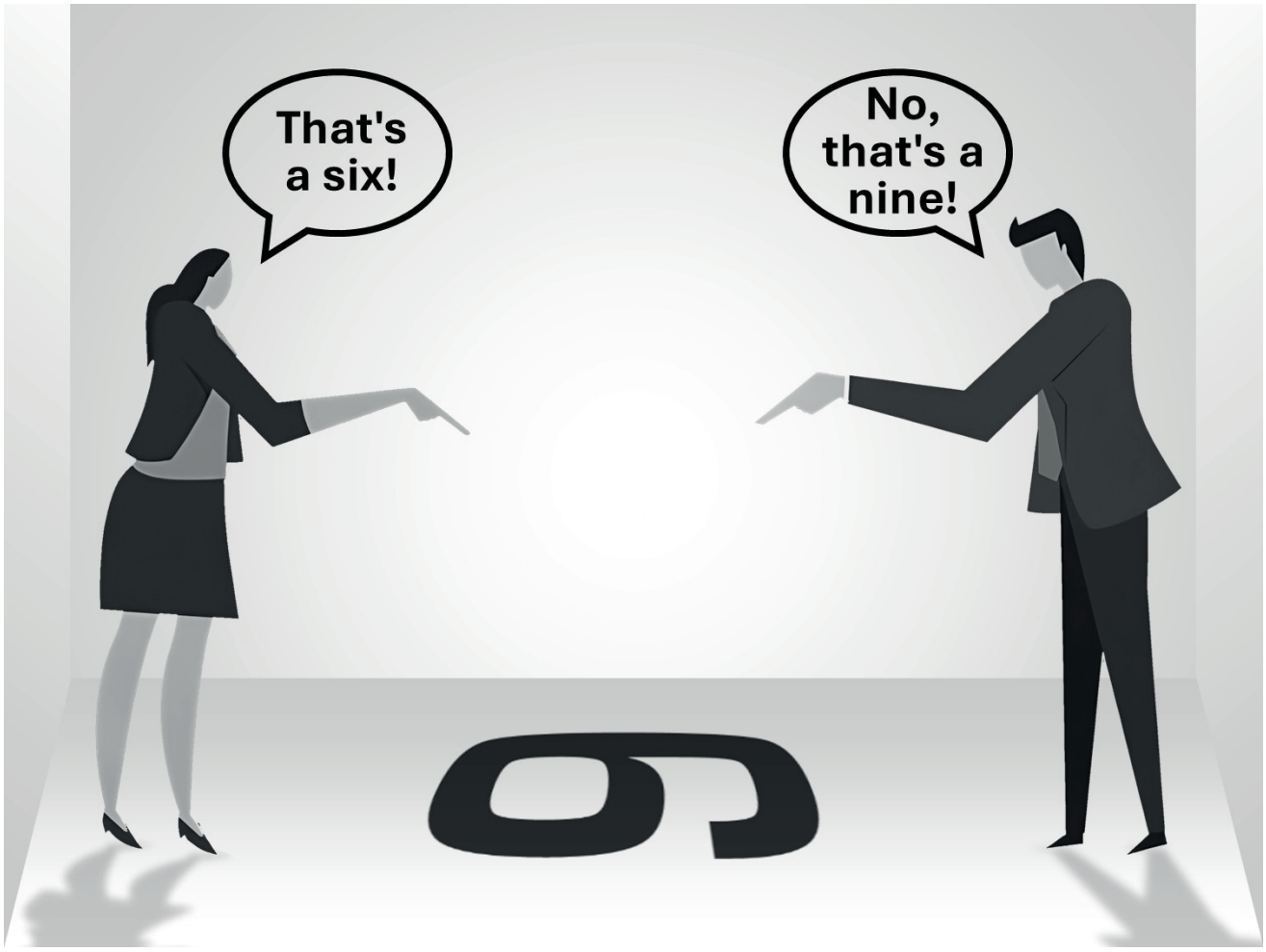
As the evening went on, my anger grew. I couldn't believe she would say something so insensitive and judgmental. I began to see her in a different light, viewing her as someone who didn't understand how passionate I am about my life's purpose. That night, I could hardly sleep, replaying the scene over and over, thinking about all the ways I could or should have responded.

The next day, I was still upset, but as I reflected on the situation, I began to think about all of the other times she had been so supportive. She had always been a good friend. I decided to take a step back and consider what might have prompted her to say what she did. Maybe she was genuinely concerned about me, or perhaps she didn't realize how her words would come across.

Two days later, I called Sarah and asked if we could talk. I started by telling her how her comment had affected me.

"Sarah, when you said that I seem obsessed with work, I have to be honest, in the moment I felt judged and embarrassed. I value our relationship, and I wanted to let you know how I felt."

To my surprise, Sarah was genuinely apologetic. She explained she hadn't intended to hurt me and was merely trying to express concern in her own clumsy way. She shared that she admired my dedication and was worried I might be burning out. Hearing her perspective made me realize her intentions were not malicious.



Our conversation allowed me to let go of the anger and resentment I had allowed to build up. By expressing my feelings and hearing her out, I found a way to reframe the experience. This experience reiterated the importance of vulnerability in my communication and understanding. Sometimes, people say things without realizing the impact of their words, and it's up to us to choose how we respond.

Forgiveness isn't always easy, but it's a powerful tool for healing and maintaining relationships. By addressing the issue head-on, I was able to mend the rift I had fabricated in my mind and strengthen our bond. This experience reinforced my belief that open, honest communication is essential for resolving conflicts and fostering forgiveness.

In this chapter, we will delve deep into the power of forgiveness of others, and explore how it can profoundly impact our journey toward personal empowerment.

FORGIVING OTHERS ALLOWS US TO…

Acknowledge and Validate our Emotions

At one point or another in our lives, someone hurts us deeply. It is completely normal to feel hurt, angry, or betrayed when someone has wronged you, seemingly or otherwise.

Your feelings matter, and they deserve recognition. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge and validate the pain caused by others by taking the time to fully process these emotions. Give yourself permission to feel and experience your feelings.

But please keep in mind: There comes a time when we need to let go of the painful wounds of our past. Embracing forgiveness toward another does not mean invalidating your feelings but rather finding a path toward personal healing and growth.

Shift Perspective

Choosing to forgive is an act of empowerment. Forgiveness is not about condoning the actions of others. It is about releasing the grip these actions and words have had on your life.

Shift your perspective from victimhood and powerlessness to empowerment. Recognize that by holding onto resentment, you give your power to those who hurt you, allowing them to control your emotions, your thoughts, your feelings, and, ultimately, how you see and experience future relationships with people who never hurt you. You can (when you feel ready) reclaim your power by choosing forgiveness as a means of personal liberation.

Cultivate Empathy

Forgiveness flourishes in the soil of empathy. While it may be challenging, make an effort to understand the perspectives and life challenges of those who have hurt you.

Hurt people often hurt others. Their actions may stem from their own unhealed wounds, their own childhood trauma, and the environment they grew up in.

Cultivating empathy does not mean excusing their behavior, but it allows you to detach emotionally, fostering a compassionate mindset that supports the forgiveness of others.

This does not mean being a doormat to others. I cannot stress this enough. This is about your own personal liberation from your painful events of the past. Leave them in the past where they belong!

Liberate Ourselves from Grudges and Resentment

Grudges and resentments, more often than not, can weigh heavily on our hearts and minds. Continuing to carry the weight of resentment and anger toward those who have hurt us keeps us emotionally shackled to the event and to our past. They end up consuming our emotional energy, perpetuating a cycle of disempowering, limiting beliefs.

Forgiveness offers a way to liberate ourselves from this bondage. When we choose to forgive, we release the negative emotions that hold us captive, allowing us to reclaim our emotional freedom. Forgiveness offers a way to release this burden and make room for positivity, personal growth, deeper connections, and better relationships with others. When we let go of grudges, we create space for love, peace, and personal TRANSFORMATION.

Open the Door to MORE Meaningful Relationships in the Future

By practicing forgiveness, we create an environment that fosters trust, vulnerability, and authenticity in our relationships moving forward. It frees us and our relationships from being defined by past hurts and allows us to embrace a more empowered and fulfilling present.

Exercise 1: Reflection and Release

Taking a moment to reflect on our past mistakes and the emotions they evoke is an essential first step in forgiveness.

Write a letter to yourself, acknowledging the pain caused by other people's actions or inaction, expressing genuine upset about how they hurt you.

DO NOT CENSOR YOURSELF. Let it all out! Allow yourself to FULLY feel the emotions that arise, and then consciously choose to release them.

Burn the letter as a symbolic act of letting go and granting yourself the gift of forgiveness.

Exercise 2: Affirmations of Forgiveness

Affirmations are powerful tools that can help reshape our mindset.

Create affirmations centered on forgiveness of others and compassion toward others. Repeat them daily, emphasizing your ability to learn and grow from your past experiences. Embrace these affirmations as guiding principles on your journey towards creating fulfilling, successful, healthy relationships in the future.

Exercise 3: Letting Go of Resentment.

A key step on the road to forgiveness of other, is dealing with legitimate feelings of resentment.

For this exercise, pick an event or a person that is upsetting for you and journal on the following prompts about how it is still impacting your life now, what you might be ruminating on, and how it continues to show up for you.

Event or person

I am angry at _____ for what they said or did. I feel…

I feel powerless or like my life feels like it is out of control.

How can I ever forgive someone who is not sorry for what they did to me?

What are my deeply-held, core negative beliefs this person reinforced?

People always abandon me. l am alone, just like when...

It is not safe to speak up and be heard or assert my boundaries, just like when...

No matter how hard I try it's never good enough/I am not enough, just like when...

Other people's needs come first/others are more important than me, just like when...

I am having difficulty finding it within myself to forgive _____ because...

How may their parents/father/mother or the environment they grew up in have affected their behavior?

What are the benefits for me, personally, if I was to make the decision to forgive?

Why do I think the ability to forgive others is important?

If I am not able to forgive this person, is there an underlying motivation for not wanting to do so?

How might this underlying motivation benefit me in the future?

What do I need in order to take that first step in forgiving and deciding to let go?

Consider your resentment and ask yourself honestly:

Where/When have I shown the same type of behavior toward others?

In the past, have I ever shown a lack of commitment toward another in a relationship?

Has there ever been a time in my life where I have hurt someone or let someone else down? Would I like to be forgiven?

Looking back, is there anything I could have done differently?

What do I think is the lesson for me in all of this?

What can I do differently in the future so that this does not happen again?

Even if you don't forgive this person face-to-face, there is still freedom and power in forgiving others simply inside of yourself.

FORGIVENESS, MY FATHER, AND FINDING CLOSURE.

Finding a way to forgive your parents or caregivers is often the final—and, for me, it was the most difficult step in my healing journey.

As I've shared before, my father was verbally abusive and relentlessly critical throughout my life. In his mind, his harsh words were meant to "make me stronger." But in truth, they left deep emotional scars.

Even on his deathbed, he couldn't stop criticizing me. I remember standing beside him trying my best to be supportive as he yelled, "You're doing it wrong!" The early morning phone calls—his voice, full of anger, shouting, *"Where are you? You're supposed to be here, I'm dying!"*—still echo in my mind.

This constant abuse, yelling, and diminishing set up this dynamic through out my whole life whereby I had multiple limiting beliefs that were layered and blended, making them that much harder to identify, heal, and let go of.

The idea that *"I'm not good enough"* evolved into *"I'm not worthy."* And if I'm not worthy, then I must *prove* that I am—through perfectionism, people-pleasing, and overachievement. I spent much of my life trying to earn my father's pride, to finally hear the words, "I am proud of you son" or "I believe in you." But they never came.

Those beliefs followed me into adulthood, shaping my romantic relationships. I thought, *If I can't prove my worth, I'll be alone forever. As who could love someone as broken and messy as me?*

And yet, the most liberating step I ever took was this one: *forgiveness.*

Forgiving my father did not mean excusing his actions. It meant freeing myself from the emotional prison I had been trapped in for decades. It meant understanding that he, too, was shaped by trauma far greater than I could have imagined.

His childhood was filled with unimaginable pain. His parents—both alcoholics—physically and emotionally abused him before abandoning him at age eight, where he was sent to Mount Cashel.

Mount Cashel was a Roman Catholic orphanage in St. John's, Newfoundland, run by the Christian Brothers.

It became the center of a major child abuse scandal in the late 1980s and early 1990s, involving decades of physical and sexual abuse of boys by members of the religious order and a subsequent cover-up by church and government officials.

I can only imagine what that must have been like for my father. He would tell me stories about the "Brothers" coming late at night to pick which boys they were going to assault. Imagine, trying to sleep, wondering if it would be your turn that night?

No wonder he had control issues. No wonder he needed to feel strong. No wonder he kept the world at arm's length, even towards his own sons.

To forgive, I had to first find empathy. To try to see him not just as my father, but as a wounded, scared boy—just like I had been.

But I also needed closure. So, I performed a letting go ritual.

I went out to a campsite, built a fire, and burned some of his old belongings. I had an honest, uncensored conversation with him. Saying everything I never got to say. All the pain, the anger, the resentment poured out.

It was messy. It was emotional. But it was *healing.*

Now it's your turn.

In the space at the end of this exercise, write a letter to your caregiver or abuser. Say what needs to be said. Let it all out. Don't hold back.

You don't need to send it.
But you do need to say it—for you.

What did you most want or need from your parents/caregivers that they were unable to give to you?

Who was the most critical of me while I was growing up?

Whose approval did I want or need the most while I was growing up, and why?

What unspoken expectations or judgments from my parents shaped how I see my own worth today?

Am I looking for the approval I did not get as a child through my relationship partners?

Is there a different way I could get my validation needs met?

If I could call, email, or write to either of my parents or caregivers, what would I want to say to them, and why?

CHAPTER 20:
FOUR STEPS TO AN EMPOWERED RELATIONSHIP MINDSET



"It's not that the man is the prize or that the woman is the prize. It's the relationship that is the prize. Because there is no room for ego in a successful, loving, healthy relationship."

—Kevin Boyle

If you're ready to move from a disempowered to an empowered relationship mindset, this chapter covers the four steps for you to take to achieve it.

STEP 1: BECOME THE LEADER IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Take responsibility for how *you* are showing up.

Your partner may be difficult, your partner may resist, your partner may be angry, your partner may even stonewall.

BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER when you are grounded, secure, and non-reactive in your attachment and communication style. You will no longer be triggered by your partner's defensiveness, reactivity, or their dysfunctional relationship dynamics.

The goal is to be non-reactive. Be patient, be understanding, be thoughtful. And be CURIOUS about why your partner thinks and behaves the way that they do. Use this time to grow and strive to be the best version of yourself; use this time to improve how you relate to others.

STEP 2: EXPERIENCE THINGS AS THEY ARE, NOT AS "YOU" ARE

Stop trying to "fix things" (remember, 70% of all problems in a relationship are unresolvable). Stop blaming and stop trying to control. This only leads to more miscommunication or arguments, i.e., "I am right, you are wrong, and I know best."

Your focus should be 100% on trying to create emotional safety for you, your child, or your partner. You do that by being non-reactive, actively listening, asking open-ended questions, clarifying, and having empathy.

STEP 3: BOTH YOU AND YOUR PARTNER ARE FIGHTING AGAINST "CONFIRMATION BIAS"

We have history with our partner — a lot of history. Your partner (and you) are not just going to magically forget everything that has ever happened. In fact, now that your relationship is experiencing problems, your partner will tend to focus on the one thing you are doing wrong as opposed to the ninety-nine things you are doing, or have done, right (and vice versa).

What determines whether your relationship will survive or not is what you do when things get difficult, not when things are easy.

How do you react when they get angry? How do you react when they say they are leaving? Are you going to respond from your "new" empowered, grounded self or your old, defensive, hurt self?

STEP 4: FOCUS ON "THE PROCESS"

When you are attached to outcomes, more often than not, you will get triggered. You also may get defensive, make assumptions, people please, "blow things out of proportion," push your partner away, and get angry or frustrated — the complete opposite of what you want.

Always go back to: gratitude, vulnerability, and intention (seeking understanding) not outcomes (what you want).

How? Through:

a) Acceptance – let go/ practice non – judgment/focus on becoming your best self.

Now is the time to actively listen and let your partner fully express themselves without you feeling the need to defend, deflect, or to be "right."

Acknowledge that, yes, there may be problems, but at the very least, you can talk to your partner about them.

Respond with curiosity: "So, tell me why you are feeling the way you are right now — what is your fear?"

"I really do want to better understand why you are so upset…"

b) Emotional Safety – your partner wants to be seen, heard, and understood.

When you react badly or get upset, you unwittingly destroy emotional safety for your partner, and your partner may shut down, stop sharing with you, or they may escalate.

Paraphrase back to them your understanding of what they said.

"So, you feel like I am being really difficult right now. Can you help me understand more about why you feel this way?"

c) Mutual Admiration and Respect – if you have emotional safety and your partner knows you are committed to them and your relationship with them, then conflicts don't matter as much.

My client Emily and her partner Mark are a wonderful example of a couple who have built their relationship on mutual admiration and respect. They've been together for over a decade, and their

bond is as strong as ever. One of the key elements of their relationship is the emotional safety they provide for each other.

Emily often speaks about how much she admires Mark's dedication to his work and his unwavering support for her career aspirations. Mark, in turn, deeply respects Emily's intelligence and her compassionate nature. This mutual admiration creates a foundation of trust and emotional security.

One evening, Emily and Mark found themselves in a heated discussion about finances. They had different opinions on how to manage their savings and investments.

During the conversation, Emily remained calm and listened attentively to Mark's concerns. She didn't interrupt or dismiss his ideas, even though she disagreed with some of them.

At one point, Emily said, "Mark, I really appreciate your perspective. You always think things through so carefully, and that's something I admire about you. I am just concerned that if we do it this way, we won't have enough money for emergencies and it scares me."

Mark responded with, "I worry about money too. Is there anything we can cut back on? Is there any place where we are spending money that we don't have to? Can we both go through our budget together and let's find a solution that works for both of us?"

Their mutual admiration and respect helped diffuse the tension and turned the conversation into a collaborative problem-solving session. They were able to find places that they could cut back on, allowing them to reach a compromise that satisfied them both. The conflict, which could have been a source of stress, became an opportunity for them to reaffirm their commitment to each other and their relationship.

d) Intention – it's not me vs. you. It's us vs. the problem. We work on our problems together.

My wife and I have been together for over 12 years, and like any couple, we face our share of challenges. One particular issue that has been causing some tension has been our differing approaches to parenting our teenage daughter, Chiara.

I believe in a more disciplined approach, while my wife favors a more lenient stance. Our disagreements about how to handle various situations with Chiara often lead to arguments regarding the best way to handle things, leaving both of us feeling frustrated and misunderstood.

One evening, after a particularly frustrating conversation, we decided to take a different approach. We sat down together and acknowledged our fighting was not helping Chiara or our relationship.

We realized our true intention was the same: we both wanted the best for our daughter. It was time to shift our perspective from "me vs. you" to "us vs. the problem."

We agreed to approach the issue as a team. We started by listing our shared goals for Chiara: we wanted her to feel loved and supported, to grow into a responsible adult, and to develop good decision-making skills.

With these shared intentions in mind, we began to brainstorm ways we could work together to achieve these goals. During these discussions, we focused on listening to each other without judgment. We made a conscious effort to understand each other's perspectives and to find common ground. For example, we decided to implement a system where we combined both discipline and understanding. We agreed on consistent rules and consequences while also ensuring we communicated openly with Chiara about our expectations and the reasons behind them.

By working together and keeping our shared intention at the forefront, we were able to create a more cohesive parenting strategy. We found that our combined approach was more effective, and it brought us closer as a couple. Instead of feeling like we were constantly in opposition, we began to feel like partners facing and resolving our challenges together.

e) Commitment to the relationship – we are a team; we will figure this out.

My wife and I have always prided ourselves on our strong commitment to each other and our relationship. However, there was a period a few years ago when we were both tested in ways we hadn't anticipated. I had lost my job due to the economy, and the financial strain put a significant amount of stress on our marriage.

During this difficult time, we made a conscious decision to remain committed to each other and to our relationship. Our commitment became our anchor.

First, we agreed to communicate openly and honestly about our fears and concerns. We made time to talk about solutions, how to better budget, our feelings, and any worries that were on our minds. This helped us stay connected and to understand each other's emotional state. We reassured each other it was OK to feel scared and uncertain, and we would face these challenges together.

We also made a point to find small moments of joy and gratitude amidst the hardship that did not cost a lot or were for free. Whether it was watching a funny movie together, taking a walk in the park, or going to visit friends, these moments helped to reinforce our bond and remind us of the good things in our lives.

Financially, we worked as a team to adjust our budget and find ways to manage our expenses more effectively. We sat down together and reviewed our finances, making tough but necessary decisions about where we could cut back. Our shared commitment gave us the strength to keep going.

My wife showed incredible strength and resilience during this time, and I made sure to acknowledge and appreciate her efforts.

As time went on, things began to improve. The economy improved, and I found a better job. Through it all, our unwavering commitment to each other had been our guiding light. We had faced the toughest times hand-in-hand, and our relationship emerged stronger than ever.

This experience taught us the true meaning of commitment. It's not just about being there for the good times but about standing by each other through the darkest days. By remaining committed to our relationship, my wife and I were able to navigate the hard times together, emerging with a deeper bond and a greater appreciation for each other.

Moving to an empowered relationship starts with having the right perspective to ensure you're effectively communicating instead of merely reacting.

CHAPTER 21:
HOW TO STOP OVERTHINKING AND BEING SO REACTIVE



"Realize deeply that the present moment is all you ever have.
Make the Now the primary focus of your life."
***—Eckhart Tolle's* The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment**

Imagine this: you are lying in bed, but try as you might, you can't fall asleep.

Your brain has shifted into overdrive. You start thinking about the same thing over and over again. I call it the "what if" mode — worrying about the future, a potential romantic interest, your finances, a relationship, or dwelling on something that happened yesterday or perhaps last week. No need to tell you, this is not fun when it's 3 o'clock in the morning and you have to work or go to school the next day.

So, what to do? How do you get out of the overthinking "what if" mode?

How to stop ruminating: One of the fastest and most effective ways I have found to keep myself from overthinking or to help me interrupt any negative thoughts I might be having is to ask myself this one simple question:

How are my thoughts behaving?[3]

When I do this, what often comes to mind is two stick figures dancing. This mental imagery helps shift my focus away from what I was thinking, helping me break the cycle of rumination.

The second step is to replace my original thought with an image of a time, place, or person where I felt at peace, joyful, and where I felt connected to someone or something. Engage your five senses, allowing the image to wash over you like a warm blanket.

The next step is to…

LOOK FOR THE EMOTION UNDERNEATH THE UPSET

As mentioned earlier, our feelings act as the super glue that binds us to our painful wounds of the past. They keep your thoughts—your story—along with your pain, beliefs, and ultimately, your suffering, firmly in place.

When we take the time to dissolve the feelings around an upset, a belief, or an unresolved trauma from childhood, we can dissolve our attachment to those beliefs, thoughts, or upsets. In doing so, we can let them go and leave them where they belong, in the past!

As these feelings dissolve, our thoughts will become calmer. We will relax knowing that we are safe, secure, and that we can handle whatever life is going to throw at us.

The keys to dissolving the feelings around our upsets are acceptance of what is, recognizing that we've always found a way to navigate life's difficult challenges, embracing vulnerability, and giving ourselves permission to fully lean into and feel our pain.

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3 Anthony Metivier | TEDx Talk: Questions That Silence Negative Thoughts

Shame (self-judgment) is at the heart of disempowering, limiting beliefs about ourselves and others. Shame separates us from others who want to love us.

Shame expresses itself in negative thoughts and self talk, including:

1. Overly-critical thinking - "I am not good enough."
2. Unrealistic thinking - "Things will never change."
3. Catastrophic thinking - "If what I want does not happen, I am doomed."

To combat this, allow yourself to FULLY feel the depth of your fear, sadness and loneliness. Immerse yourself in it and allow yourself to fully explore your true, raw emotions. Learn how to be comfortable, fully embrace, and experience uncomfortable feelings of loneliness, despair, and fear without turning to distractions, such as isolating, over functioning, people pleasing, controlling behavior, or anger.

We need to learn how to become unreactive. The way we become unreactive and more secure and grounded is by healing our repressed feelings.

Because YOU are the one that needs to comfort your hurt, that inner child deep inside of you. No one can take away the pain of your own self-abandonment.

Exercise: Learning to Be Less Reactive

1. What is the upset?

Write down what is causing you to overthink. Who, what, when, and where.

2. My reaction to the event and my thoughts about the upset...

3. Feeling my feelings

I feel lonely, scared, sad, etc… this is our vulnerable self which lies underneath our lens of attack and blame defenses.

I feel _____

Exercise: Exploring My Feelings

As we connect with these feelings, we start to take ownership of our side of the experience.

I am angry because…

What is my anger trying to protect me from?

I am sad because…

Why am I so attached to the outcome I want?

I am afraid because…

Could losing this "thing" make room for something better? Like what?

I feel powerless because…

What is the best way for me to feel like I have influence or power over my life?

I feel abandoned or all alone because…

How can I be OK with being alone at this moment?

I feel "stuck" because…

What is the "stuckness" trying to protect me from?

What might I do differently? What small step can I take to move forward?

Who can I ask for help?

What does it say about me?

Because of this upset, my disempowering, limiting belief about myself is that I am not good enough, I am ugly, I am stupid, I am a loser, I am unworthy of love, no one will ever love me, etc…

1. Why is that so bad?

Go deep; keep peeling off the layers of the onion…

2. Why is #1 so bad? What does that mean or say about me?

3. Why is #2 so bad? What does that mean or say about me?

4. Why is #3 so bad? What does that mean or say about me?

5. This was just like when…

Where have I felt this way before? This step starts the journey into your past and starts the process of beginning to comfort and heal your hurt inner child. The further you go back in time (to earlier childhood) the better.

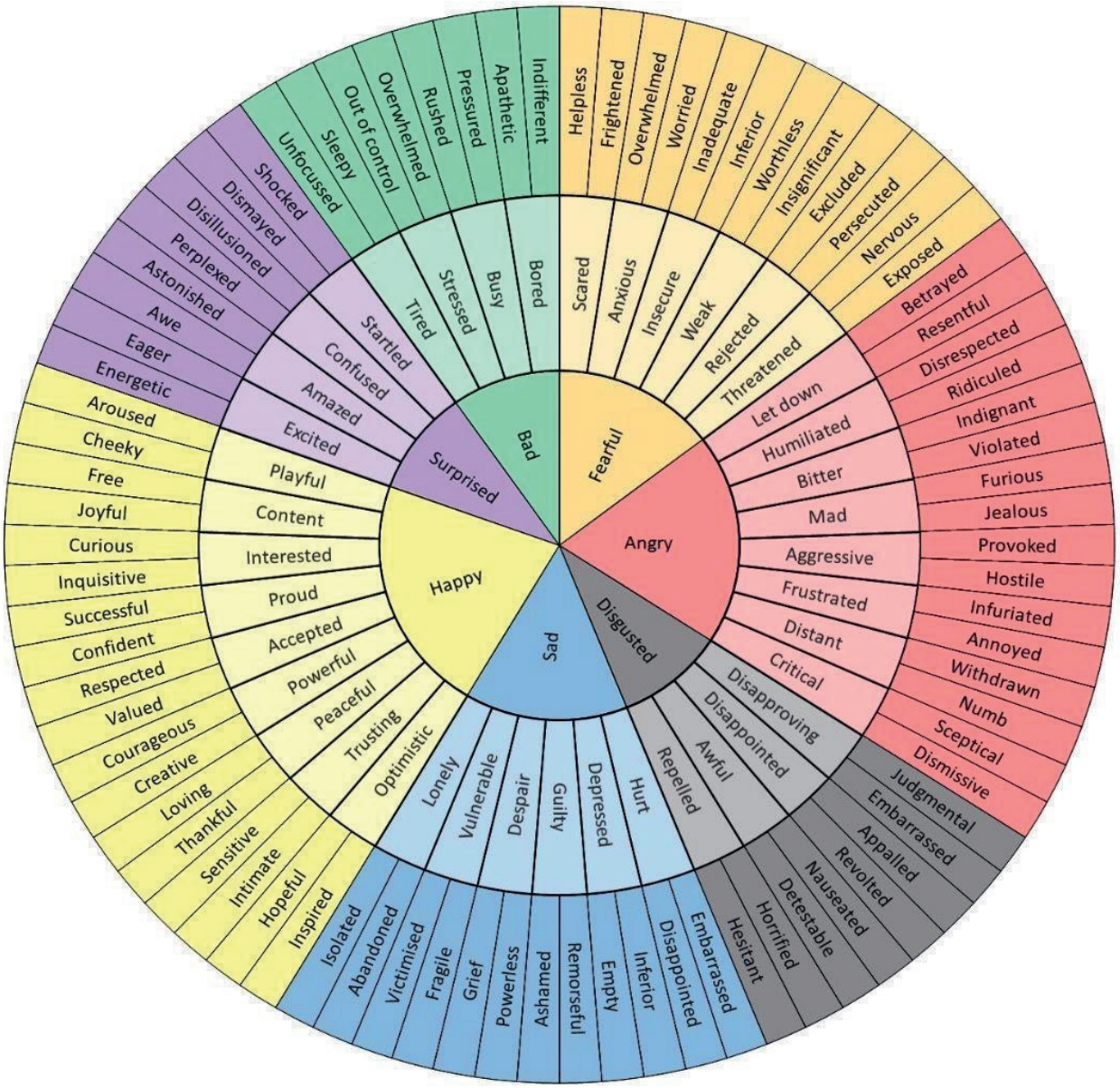
What other times have I felt like this?

THE FEELING WHEEL

The Feeling Wheel was developed by Dr. Gloria Willcox in 1982 to help individuals better identify exactly what they're feeling and to provide a powerful framework for expanding emotional awareness.

You start at the center of the wheel, where your options are Bad, Fearful, Angry, Disgusted, Sad, Happy, or Surprised.

Then, you work your way outwards. For instance, you may be feeling sad. On further examination of the wheel, it may be that you are really feeling lonely, vulnerable, in despair, guilty, depressed, or hurt. In this particular case, you might decide that you are feeling mostly hurt. From hurt, you may find that what you are really feeling is disappointed or embarrassed.



CALMING YOURSELF

When you feel reactive, to help calm your mind, take the following actions:

1. **Journal**: Now is the time to continue to let it all out, in freeform. Do not censor yourself, just let it all go. Write down whatever comes to mind. Get a pen and a piece of paper and just start writing.

2. **Feeling Release Meditation**: As discussed earlier in this book, take the most intense feeling that comes out of your journaling, and meditate with the intention of feeling the intensity of that feeling, be it sadness, anger, loneliness, or grief, and let yourself feel it!

3. **Exercise**: Variety and getting social are both key! Are there group activities that you can join to get you moving and socializing?

4. **4/12 Breathwork:** By taking long, deep, slow breaths in, and then making the ARRROU sound while you exhale, you will activate your parasympathetic nervous system, calm your emotions, and slow your heart rate - signaling to your nervous system that you are safe and that everything is OK.

Deeply breathe in and out, while focusing on your breath.

Begin by inhaling in through your nose, counting to four.

Allow yourself to relax while you do this.

Hold your breath for four seconds, and say the following affirmation: "I am safe, I am loved, and I always find a way."

Then, slowly exhale through your mouth "emptying" your breath (forcing all of the air out of your body) while making the ARRROU sound.

* Repeat as many times as necessary

CHAPTER 22:
LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE



"The two most important days in life are the day you are born and the day you find out why."

—Mark Twain

Six months after committing to the inner work, becoming more secure, grounded, and less reactive in my relationship with my then-girlfriend. I discovered an unexpected benefit: my fears and anxiety vanished! This transformation empowered me to propose to my girlfriend, and she said yes.

Fourteen years later, we are still happily married, we own our own home, and we have been blessed with a wonderful teenage daughter who is the light of our lives.

Because of these fulfilling relationships, I was able to author an empowering, transformative book for women titled *"But Dad, I LOVE Him!"*, which I am proud to say won the Global Readers Award for "Best Dating, Parenting, and Relationship Book of 2025" and has been receiving amazing 5-star reviews on Amazon from all around the world, since!

All of this was made possible because I chose to confront how I was getting in my own way of having and living the life I said I wanted, doing the necessary work, and healing and releasing my past pain.

In this journey through life, finding purpose not only shapes our individual identity but also profoundly influences how we feel about ourselves, which in turn affects how we show up for others in our relationships.

In this journey through life, finding purpose not only shapes our individual identity but also profoundly influences how we feel about ourselves, which in turn affects how we show up for others in our relationships.

As Mark Twain so wisely stated, one of the most important days of your life will be the day when you find out why you are here. Is it just to get up everyday and go to work? Or is it when you finally wake up to the realization that who you are at your deepest core is a very powerful creator?

As I mentioned in my first book, "*But Dad, I LOVE Him!*", it is up to you what you want to create every single day of your life. Do you want to create strife and chaos in your life and relationships, or do you want to create peace, harmony, and mutual respect?

It's not easy to tame the beast that is inside of us and "to feed the right wolf." Hopefully, after doing the exercises in this workbook, you will continue the practice of being more securely grounded in your relationships. If so, the way you communicate with your partners, coworkers, friends, and family will be more non-reactive.

No one that creates anything does so without failing and making mistakes. The only true failure is not to get back up again, to refuse to learn and grow, and most importantly, to refuse to do the work.

Do not use failure as a reason to quit. The answer to a history of bad or failed relationships is not "no relationship." It's to learn how to create a good relationship — and a good relationship starts with picking a good partner. And we will start picking better relationship partners when we start to see ourselves as worthy of a good relationship partner.

We start the process by asking ourselves the question:

What do I want to create today?

Living a life filled with purpose encompasses these four principles:

1. **A Life Filled with Purpose Acts as a Personal North Star**
   Having a purpose in life acts as a guiding principle, a North Star that navigates our decisions and actions. When individuals are driven by a deeper purpose, they radiate authenticity and confidence, and they take responsibility for their choices in life. This authenticity becomes a magnetic force, drawing people toward us who resonate with our values and principles.

2. **A Life Filled With Purpose Fuels Personal Growth**
   Purposeful-driven individuals are in a constant state of self-improvement. They seek knowledge, experiences, and challenges that will lead to personal growth. As we evolve and become more self-aware, we bring a richer, more enlightened version of ourselves to the foreground. This growth not only benefits us individually but creates a dynamic environment for shared development within all of our relationships.

3. **A Life Filled With Purpose Gives us Resilience in the Face of Challenge**
   Life's journey is filled with challenges and leading a purposeful life helps provide the resilience needed to overcome them. It instills a sense of determination, confidence, and perseverance, traits that are invaluable in navigating the complexities of relationships. Partners who face challenges with a shared purpose can weather storms together, emerging stronger and more united.

4. **A Life Filled With Purpose Helps Foster a Mindset of Contribution**
   Purpose extends beyond personal satisfaction. It often involves contributing to something larger than oneself. Engaging in acts of generosity, thoughtfulness, or service to others cultivates a mindset of contribution.

   In a relationship, this shared commitment is the "glue" that helps keep the relationship together during difficult times.

I've always said, it's not whether the woman submits to the man, or vice versa. It's that the man and the woman both "submit" (commit) to the relationship.

Can my partner and I put our egos aside to make our relationship work and do what's in the best interest of ensuring our relationship thrives, is healthy, and is successful?

Exercise: Determining What's Important to Me in Life

Select ten values that are important to you. Your ten values that you want to use as your "Personal North Star."

Authenticity	Achievement	Adventure	Authority	Autonomy
Balance	Beauty	Boldness	Compassion	Challenge
Community	Creativity	Family	Faith	Fame
Fun	Growth	Happiness	Humor	Influence
Integrity	Inner Harmony	Justice	Kindness	Leadership
Learning	Love	Loyalty	Meaningful Work	Openness
Peace	Pleasure	Recognition	Religion	Reputation
Respect	Relationship	Financial Security	Service	Spirituality
Stability	Success	Status	Wealth	Wisdom

Why is each value important? Give them priority by ranking them on a scale of one to ten, ten being the highest. Then, rate how well you're abiding by each value. Finally, list the action steps you can take to increase this last score**.**

MY VALUES	Value Ranked	Living the Value Current Score (10)	Action Step to Increase Score

Now list out your passions. Rank yourself and how closely you are embracing your passions in your life right now. Add action steps to increase your score.

MY PASSIONS	Passion Ranked	Living the Value Current Score (10)	Action Step to Increase Score

Now list out your skill sets. What are you good at?

What I am good at!	Importance to me ranked	Living the Value Current Score (10)	Action Step to Increase Score

Next, make a list of what it is that you want out of life.

What do I want?	Importance to me ranked	Living the Value Current Score (10)	Action Step to Increase Score

Make a list of things that get you excited and give you energy.

What energizes me?	Importance to me ranked	Living the Value Current Score (10)	Action Step to Increase Score

Make a list of the things you have done or achieved that make you the most proud of yourself.

What am I most proud of?	Importance to me ranked	Living the Value Current Score (10)	Action Step to Increase Score

What do you want to be remembered for?

What will be your legacy?

What parts of your past/present jobs did you enjoy the most/least?

If you knew you could not fail and you could do what you wanted, what would you do with your life?

When you become clear on what matters to you and the meaning you want to say your life has, you can start living that kind of life RIGHT NOW.

How might your life look differently if fear was not stopping you?

What proactive steps could you take to help you overcome your fear(s)?

CHAPTER 23:
CREATING YOUR ACTION PLAN THAT MOVES YOU TOWARDS YOUR NEW LIFE!



"The day I found purpose marked the beginning of my healing journey. While finding purpose brought clarity and direction, true healing required letting go of my wounds from the past, personal growth, and support from others."

—Kevin Boyle

You've completed your inventory of what you are good at, what you are passionate about, and what your core values are. You've done the work to repair the old; now it's time to create a NEW life!

It's time to write out your action plan.

What goal would I like to achieve in the next 3 months?

What is the first step I need to take in order to help me reach my goal?

After that, what is the next step I need to take in order to reach my goal?

What is the next step I need to take in order to reach my goal?

What is the next step I need to take in order to reach my goal?

What is the next step I need to take in order to reach my goal?

To support you in attaining your new goals, think about what you need to STOP doing, do LESS of, KEEP DOING, or do MORE of to create your new life. What new skill sets will you need to learn to accomplish your goals?

What do I need to stop doing or do less of?

What do I need to keep doing?

What do I need to do more of?

What new skill(s) do I need to learn?

Lastly (and most importantly), who can help you get the results you are looking for?

The general rule of thumb is, if you have been struggling with a problem, it's time to get out of your own way and start looking for a good coach or mentor to help you get the results you want.

There are thousands upon thousands of self-help books and videos on Amazon and YouTube, but we still have millions of people who continue to struggle with relationships, communication, and their finances.

That's why, in my opinion, it's not whether you know what to do or how to do it; more often than not, it's more about working with the right person.

Who has the knowledge, the skills, and the expertise to best help me get where I want to go?

The right "who" will show and teach you the right "what" and the right "how."

When you work with the right "who," they will give you the most important gift you can ever get from a coach or a mentor: clarity. You'll receive clarity about what you need to do and which mistakes to avoid making. They will help you get the results you are looking for so much faster.

CHAPTER 24:
KEY TAKEAWAYS AND FINAL WORDS



We have gone over a lot of information, so I wanted to provide you with key takeaways you can refer to easily and often:

The Follow It Home Healing Methodology™ is the process we use to heal the relationship we have with ourselves: Identify the limiting belief. Feel it and follow it home. Interrupt the signal. Reparent the wound. Reframe the experience and rewrite the story.

The Bringing It Home Connection Method™ brings that healing into your relationship through the Five Shifts: Non-Reactivity, Validation, Gratitude, Vulnerability, and Intention.

Then live it every day — in how you speak, how you stay, and how you love.

1. The key to being more grounded and secure in your attachment style is to work toward being non-reactive in your relationship with others.

2. The key to being less reactive is to find and heal your emotional triggers (usually based in fear and/or anxiety).

3. Our emotional triggers generally come from a painful event, or a series of painful events, that over time have become the lens through which we see ourselves and how we experience others.

4. This "lens" comes in the form of a disempowering, limiting belief. For instance, my Dad was extremely critical and made me feel like I could not do anything right. In his mind, he was helping me to become strong. But in my mind I had formed the belief that "I was not good enough," his criticism only reinforced my belief that I was not good enough.

5. Feelings are the super glue to our painful wounds of the past. Feelings are what keep our disempowering, limiting beliefs — and our triggers — in place.

6. Heal the feelings attached to your belief and you will let go of the belief.

7. Focus on a current upset. Determine what disempowering, limiting belief this current upset is reinforcing. I.e., "No one will ever love me." Find the feeling associated with the disempowering, limiting belief and do your *Feeling Release Meditation* focusing on that belief.

8. Do the *Feeling Release Meditation* two times a day for 10-15 minutes at a time.

9. Do the exercises in the book, journal, accept, and find a way to forgive and let go.

10. Pick a person you trust and reveal to them (this is called witnessing) your disempowering, limiting belief and the events that triggered it. Ask this person not to comment but to simply

give you space and listen (this person can be a close friend, a family member, a coach or a mentor).

11. Discover your five most important relationship NEEDS and use this as your new baseline for a relationship partner.

12. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, now that you have journeyed through the questions and exercises in this workbook, it's time to revisit the pivotal question I first posed to you in Chapter 2, on page 23: "What does my fear allow me to avoid?"

I invite you to answer this question once more, but this time, from a place of renewed strength and clarity. Embrace the most powerful, confident version of yourself. The self you've worked so hard to uncover, nurture, and create!

With this new perspective, it's time to craft your action plan (found on page 175), one that reflects your true and highest potential and aligns with the future you've always wanted and dreamed of!

Before I go, I want to leave you with some life advice to help you on your journey to your best self — the most courageous, confident, joyful, loving version of yourself.

Know that the loving, supportive, lasting relationship you want is sitting there waiting for you on the other side of healing your unresolved childhood emotional wounds of the past and the limiting beliefs that were instilled in you because of them.

Because here's the real danger. If we choose not to heal these wounds – there is a very good chance we will pass them down to our kids.

And I for one, did not want to pass my unhealthy relationship patterns and behaviors down to my daughter.

So, I was honest with myself. I had to do this work, not just for myself - but for my family.

And if this book stirred something in you.

If you're beginning to recognize that maybe you too have been carrying old emotional wounds, stuck in patterns, or trapped by an anxious, avoidant, or fearful attachment style that are silently sabotaging the love, connection, and perhaps even damaging the very relationships that are so important to you.

Then I want you to know this:

You're not alone.

You just need the right tools, a proven process, and the right person – to help you.

I wrote "FREEDOM From Your Attachment Style" because I really do care, and I want you to experience what I now have: a loving, committed, long-term relationship with a partner who truly sees you, values you, and cherishes you.

And as a thank you for picking up this book, I want to gift you something that can genuinely change everything.

Free 44-minute workshop:
"The Limiting Beliefs Quietly Destroying Your Relationships (And How to Heal Them)"

I recorded this workshop to help you get the most out of this book.

Come spend 44 minutes with me and get real answers to your real questions about relationships, healing, and how to create lasting positive change in your life.

It's not a sales pitch. It's real coaching, and real guidance.

From someone who has lived this path, done this work, and built the relationship and the family I always wanted.

This is for you if:

- Watching you or your partner react in ways you hate, and not being able to stop
- You feel emotionally shut down when you desperately want to open up and connect
- You feel lonely or disconnected (whether you are in a relationship or not)
- Feeling like you are failing, and not knowing how to fix it
- Worrying that your children are watching you, learning from you, and carrying your patterns forward
- You're going through a breakup or a rough time and need real support
- You have a limiting belief you're finally ready to let go of
- Walking on eggshells, bracing for the next blow up or the next silence

In this video, I'll walk you through how your unresolved childhood wounds and limiting beliefs become the emotional triggers of today — what I call the invisible superglue — quietly reinforcing the old story about who you are, what you deserve, and what's possible for you in life and your relationships.

Real coaching. Real answers. Real world help.

And it just might be the breakthrough you've been waiting for.

Then I want you to know this: You are not broken. You are not bad at love. You and your partner are not doomed to repeat the past.

You are just responding to old wounds that were never healed. And the moment you understand that, really understand it — everything becomes possible.

Because the love, the connection, and the deeply fulfilling relationship you have always wanted isn't out of reach. It isn't impossible. It's sitting there waiting for you — on the other side of healing.

Scan the QR code to watch your free workshop

SCAN ME

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

Thank you for taking the time to read "*FREEDOM From Your Attachment Style: Heal the Beliefs Behind Your Triggers, Connect Instead of React, and Build Deep, Lasting Relationships."* This is the companion workbook for "*But Dad, I LOVE Him!*"

As a small indie publisher and writer, I appreciate seeing your honest heartfelt feedback on Amazon. It's not easy to have an independent book from a small independent author stand out in a sea of relationship and dating books written mostly by researchers, "gurus," and well-known celebrities. That's why, if you have found value in this book and believe in its transformative message meant to help people heal and free themselves from the wounds of their past, please consider leaving a review on Amazon.

Your generous, thoughtful words will hopefully inspire others to purchase this heartfelt book and seek their own healing. It will only take a few moments of your time, but the ripple effect it will create for future generations will be immeasurable. Every review is one more voice inspiring countless people to find peace in their lives and the long-lasting, loving, successful relationship they have always wanted!

With heartfelt gratitude,

Author and proud dad, Kevin Boyle