

TRUTHFULLY NAKED

Strip Down to Create Extraordinary Relationships



MAGGIE BAIN

Maggie Bain's *Truthfully Naked* is one of those books that opens up the heart and mind to whole new dimensions. Get ready to laugh, cry, and be transformed as the simple truth concerning love penetrates your thought processes and leaves you forever changed.

Jan Goss
CEO, Civility Consulting



Maggie Bain has written an important and inspiring book that is desperately needed by so many people. Her writing is engaging from beginning to end as she shares her stories and wisdom.

For anyone wanting to have an extraordinary relationship,
this is a must read.

Lynn Robinson
Founder, The Robinson Group Training and Consulting Corp.
Co-Founder, Life Without Regrets



Maggie Bain's book is yummy! She dives into the full aspect of bringing sexuality back into a relationship with more **SIZZLE AND TINGLE** than you can imagine. But she also gives the practical, solid, foundational aspects of building and rekindling an intimate relationship to make it **LAST**.

Every word charges into broken down sexual areas where many couples suffer and find themselves paralyzed. This book inspires action to bring the relationship back to life and joy!
We highly recommend it for couples on (or off) the rocks!

Dr. Scott and Shannon Peck
Bestselling Authors, *The Love You Deserve:*
A Spiritual Guide to Genuine Love

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Extraordinary Relationships**

Maggie Bain

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www.BareNakedCoach.com

Dedicated to Marcus and Dominic

Naked Gratitude



Naked Gratitude

To those who have played an invaluable role in the development of my message and calling. Our relationships have provided a unique education in how to create and sustain a deep and fulfilling connection. For that, I will always be grateful.

To my two beautiful sons, whose heartstrings will forever be joined with mine. My love for them deepens with the passing of the years, and their support during the writing of this book will always remain a deep source of gratitude in my heart.

To the True to Intention editing team who understood my intention, honored my voice and style, and polished it for the readers.

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stature, with a calm and soft voice, you have an innate ability to draw out and clarify an author's message and help us create and maintain the depth of authenticity that comes from demonstrating that I have 'walked the walk' in order to 'talk the talk.'

To you, the reader of the first book in the Bare Naked series. My ultimate wish is that you find a way to push forward and live your life with extraordinary love and passion.

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Introduction

Time to Get Truthfully Naked



It's amazing how so many of us walk through life with tunnel vision, only seeing what we have been conditioned to see, thereby limiting ourselves to life's and love's wondrous possibilities. For instance, consider the title of this book. The term Truthfully Naked will conjure a myriad of images and feelings specific to each individual. Why? Because every single one of us have a unique set of experiences that have led us to hold certain beliefs about what it means to be truthful and naked, and what it might mean to be Truthfully Naked.

What came up for you?

Did you immediately imagine a human body in its naked form, and quickly assume that this book might help you become more comfortable with your body in intimate moments? Did you, instead, focus on the concept of truth, and consider that this book will help you to speak your truth in those challenging conversations?

And why did that come up for you?

If you're honest—and *come on, that is the whole point of this book*—then you know that you made assumptions based on your personal experiences, and specifically the ones that have involved truth-telling and nakedness...or the lack thereof.

Maybe you flushed with rage or even shame at the idea of Truthfully Naked because you feel disconnected from your body and have trouble loving it and sharing it with someone you love.

Maybe you felt pressure in your chest or a pit in your stomach because you know that you are not fully speaking or expressing your truth to yourself or your partner.

There are infinite interpretations because there are billions of unique individuals with at least that many experiences driving their perceptions...and their relationships.

This variance in perception is impossible to avoid, but the confusion and frustration and disconnection that often happens as a result of it is not.

As a Bare Naked Truth Coach, I see it all the time.

So many individuals are blinded to the truth in themselves and the person they love. They carry assumptions and expectations into their conversations and relationships, and sabotage any chance of seeing or hearing or experiencing what the other person is really trying to communicate.

“He works all the time, comes to bed really late, and expects to have sex. That’s all he wants me for!”

- Yet it might be that her bare naked truth is that she needs him to pay attention to her in other ways, and that she feels neglected and used. At the same time, she is confronted with her own reality that, given the short time they share together, the likelihood of her needs being acknowledged are slim.
- He, on the other hand, is operating according to his own unconscious bare naked truth,

which may be that he senses her reluctance to fully participate, and feels that she doesn't fully understand his need for a reward at the end of a hard working day. He starts to believe that she doesn't need, want, or even love him.

"It is so frustrating to me, and I get so upset. He just doesn't get it!"

- The bare naked truth she may really be experiencing is that his inability to identify with anything that she says feels like a lack of interest and even caring. Not being able to agree even on the smallest point leaves a wide disconnect.
- He, on the other hand, just doesn't think like her; and unfortunately, his bare naked truth is that hasn't grasped the importance of empathy in the "Lean on Me" role that he must play in the relationship.

"Sex has never been a big deal for me. If I never had it again, that would be okay."

- Her bare naked truth may be that he has not been listening or paying attention to what is really going on with her and, perhaps more importantly, within the relationship. She may even believe that she was born with a low sex drive, and with his lack of sensitivity, the light switch has been turned off.
- His bare naked truth may be that he has grown used to their infrequent and almost nonexistent

sex life. He may be tired of feeling like he has to beg or fight for his basic male needs, and so he has decided to leave the light switch off.

But it doesn't have to be this way. I know from experience that you can spend decades with a person and still feel excitement, passion, and longing when they walk through the door. You can have a love that feels safe enough to share your deepest sorrows and celebrate in your joy. It's possible to create a relationship where you can relax and sink into this deep, cushiony place that you have both created. Of course, it won't all be rainbows and roses—life happens, people change, and expectations shift—but it can still be a whole lot more extraordinary than you can even imagine!

Born in Nigeria, and brought up in Scotland, I moved to the Bahamas in 1988. After training in the United Kingdom as a Registered Nurse, Midwife, and Critical Care Nurse, I arrived to fulfill a two-year nursing contract, but fate had different plans for me. Within the first week, I met the man I would marry. We were blessed with two beautiful sons and a steamy, fulfilling relationship for twenty-three years.

It was extraordinary, and it wasn't long before my friends and colleagues began to ask me what we did to make it work so well. I was doling out relationship and sex advice long before my professional training, and it was clear after talking with them, that their relationships were suffering for the same reason people have their own interpretations of the title of this book.

They had been blinded to the naked truth in themselves and in those they loved. They missed opportunities to flirt and heat things up before they got to the bedroom. They had stopped hearing what their partner was saying without words, and so they could not be their friend, even when they wanted to be. All the sweet, endearing things they did in the beginning had disappeared—those things that melt our heart and meet our most basic need to feel known, needed, and loved.

In order to experience intimacy physically, emotionally, and spiritually, we have to get truthfully naked. We have to be willing to stand in front of a mirror and strip away the knee-jerk assumptions and behaviors that keep us stuck in a cycle of not feeling known, needed, and loved.

We have to learn how to uncover our bare naked truth and, also importantly, listen for the same from our partners. Only then are we able to understand and joyfully meet each other's needs and fulfill those deep desires.

While my hope is that you will be inspired by the stories, insights, and questions I have shared on these pages, I know that some of you may come face-to-face with some of the limiting beliefs, emotions, and behaviors that are unconsciously sabotaging your relationships. That's okay. In fact, it's normal, and it's good for you to become more aware of these saboteurs. By seeing and acknowledging them, you can change them.

If you start to feel emotional, take a deep breath. If you start to think, "Well, my man is not like the guys in these stories!" or,

“Why is she talking about this again?” go back and read it again and practice paying more careful attention.

Get truthfully naked with yourself and try to stay open to new possibilities.

I have designed this book to demonstrate the need for us to get truthfully naked—to look for the subtle nuances and details and then do something with them—and to give you the opportunity to practice it. Take your time, look between the lines, and make sure you answer the questions. One of them—the often repeated “How can I love you better?”—can change your life completely, all by itself.

Getting truthfully naked isn’t as painful as you might imagine. In fact, I think you’ll be amazed by how much easier it is to strip it all down than it is to live and love blinded by perception.

Postscript: All names have been altered throughout *Truthfully Naked* to protect the innocent. My intention is to honor the integrity of all of the relationships written about in this book.

Prologue

Rock a Bye Baby



The moment we took our first breath is when it all started. No matter who held us, or sneaked a peek at us, the thing they wanted most was to look into our eyes and make us smile. If they got the response they wanted, they left happy and knowing that there would be a return visit. As they sang the “Rock a Bye, Baby” lullaby, our eyes locked and a connection was made. With each visit, an insatiable appetite grew; we were the food and they were the fuel. We were joined by a need and stimulated by a desire to be needed, wanted, and loved.

Years later, it happens again, just like that. Eyes and smiles lock onto each other, and we find an instant match.

It is very hard to explain the quite inexplicable sense of knowing that we have in that moment. Perhaps, it is just as people describe—there is a ‘click’ and the light switch flips on!



Knowing that someone is an essential vitamin for us is one thing, but pursuing and sustaining those loving feelings over the course of the ups and downs of a relationship is another. In the beginning, some of us experience our heart being squeezed, and the rush of new emotions overwhelming our senses, all the way from the top of our head to the tips of our toes. Before we know it, our mind is brimming with thoughts of the other person. Once injected into our subconscious, the feelings of love take root, and we are hooked.

Then our mind takes over and the self-doubt settles in. It is in those moments, when we are flooded with emotion, that we question our feelings and marvel at how pragmatic we can be in other areas of our lives. Yet when it comes to a love relationship, wanting something without questioning or wavering is often alarming, and can take us off guard.

Does it mean a strong desire for someone brings with it alarm bells because it must have too much emotion attached to it? Or if I say, "I was led by my heart, not my head," does it really mean that I was not in my 'right mind' and my judgment should be questioned?

Either way, it becomes irrelevant because, ultimately, knowing how much we desire something will determine how hard we try to attain and sustain it. It is the awareness of the deep longing that gives us the ability to keep an eye on the goal. Our vision is steady and focused, and all peripheral distractions have a way of falling by the wayside.

It is that first spark of the longing and wanting that hopefully carries us through the uncertainties of the relationship as it grows and changes. Over time, love can get murky because of the necessary integration with the rest of our life. Bills have to be paid, children have to be raised, and the list goes on. If just loving someone were our full-time job, then we would clearly know our job description, hours, rules, and regulations. The handbook would have it all printed out clearly and precisely, and we could follow it closely. The hierarchy of power would place us in our required position, and life would possibly be more black and white. Our employer's

expectation is one-sided, and our job is to fulfill what is required of us. But shades of grey appear in the interaction with another person in a love relationship. Balancing a two-sided love relationship can become tricky, as trying to standardize expectations often times feels impossible.

It's weird, isn't it? I mean, when I visualize something, I can almost taste and feel it. I am even walking through that moment in time, and so for me, that makes it real. Then he comes along and changes things up, my expectations no longer matter, and my bubble bursts. Before I can even blink, I find myself in a perfect nose dive and free falling towards the earth... Thud!

Expectations often place us in unrealistic positions. Throw in past promises to each other, and the bar gets pushed even higher. We end up whitewashing our life and relationships in order to cancel out the dark hues. Then one day the white wash fades away and the years of heartache and disappointment are revealed. We find ourselves at a place of self-reflection, facing a deep sense of dissatisfaction at the road our life has taken and the quality of relationship we are experiencing, or disbelief at the poor hand that we were dealt. Or, it may be a life-altering event with its raw grief that brings us to a grinding halt. We may look inwards, then outward to others, and compare our lives to those around us.

What have they got that I don't? Did they really make better choices than I did? Are they really as happy as they look?

Yet rather than take the time to contemplate our unfulfilling relationship, we procrastinate in dealing with our unhappiness

and defend our lack of direction to our busy schedule. Busyness is a great defense. Our justifications are all lined up before they even leave our mind. Putting everything aside, all we really want is for someone to anesthetize our pain and make us feel happy again. We may even grasp at the first fast-fix union that comes along and keep our fingers crossed that the relationship will work. Of course, we know that is not always the wisest choice, but what the heck? Feeling a little quake or upset in our world is one thing, but not many of us would choose to be washed up on a deserted island all alone. We often opt for any companionship over none at all.

If we can learn how to ‘trim off the fat’ with our living expenses, find energy and cost saving shortcuts, then what is preventing us from doing the same with our love relationships? Surely, if we could find ways to steer clear of the jagged rocks that can rip holes in our relationship, then we would not have to spend so much time bailing the water out of a sinking boat. What if we were to try a new route? Perhaps if we ask—instead of demand—what we want. Maybe by asking “How can I love you better?” we can find out exactly what our partner needs from us and fulfill their every wish.

We may find that true loving kindness flows naturally once we realize that no matter our gender, we are all so similar. We all have a basic desire to be needed, wanted, and loved. The cravings have not changed since the moment we took that first breath.

And, just as in our newborn state, when our needs and desires are met, we can relax into and enjoy the loving gaze of the person looking back at us.

Chapter 1

Coupledness



The Truth Tango

She was young and full of life when their duet started, on that first night when their eyes and smiles locked. Timely, yet an obvious set-up, he asked her to dance as the live band played. Little did she know that the news had spread like wildfire and people were coming to watch the mating game.

The cramped dance floor, allowing only a few couples to move easily, was hot and smoky. “Aagh... I see you like to dance *and* you’ve got rhythm!” He grinned with appreciation.

All she could do was smile, her eyes acknowledging the sense of knowing that they both felt. His smooth and skillful moves on the dance floor conveyed a masculine sensuality, which matched her feminine sway. The dance had worked its magic and confirmed that they were compatible. This was the first of many duets.



If we are lucky, there comes a moment of clarity when we realize we have found our natural partner. A melody flows, a harmony wafts sweetly to the ears, and a duet is sparked with that first song and dance. It is only then that we come to understand why we have been out of tune with other people. Recognizing, and fully embracing the harmony, means seeing that our melody alone is incomplete. Blended together, the blessing of lyrical and musical abundance, the true gift of coupledness envelops us.

That's right! Electricity running through my veins and amplified to shake the house. May the good times "Rock On!"

Friends First

Authentic coupledness is a rare thing to witness, but definitely still possible. It is that bright sparkle of the eyes, and a twinkle that is only for each other. The reflex touch of the hand for encouragement or a cautionary warning. A "Do or Die" loyalty, and a passion that uplifts the soul.

Logically, we know we are supposed to get to know, and definitely like, the person who has taken our breath away. We may have learned that jumping straight into sexual intimacy, before really finding out who we are going to bed with, is not necessarily the smartest thing to do. That type of impulsivity may have worked when both of us were looking for momentary pleasure, but even then, these encounters often leave us singed by unspoken intentions and unnecessary headaches.

*Oh, oh flashbacks! Encounters that I think
I really shouldn't have had.*

Even at times when the sexual intensity is so great, and exploring the ecstasy seems unavoidable, we wonder if it is possible to have it all. Not only to have the hot sizzling sex, but also the heart of the person who fits us like a glove. The complete package. If achieving relationship success were really only up to us, then maybe our chances for winning would increase. However, by admitting that it takes “Two to Tango,” we are reminded once again that we cannot do it alone, and our partner’s cooperation is paramount.

*Yep, life's a gamble, and sometimes love feels like a game of
Russian Roulette. It's a hit or a miss.*

There is true beauty in taking the time to cultivate that “best friend.” That goal is the creation of a solid companionship that leaves all loneliness behind. It is a cavernous and deep-rooted intimacy that stretches widely beyond sexual intensity. To feel confident in the knowledge that when people fall by the wayside, even in the darkness, your partner remains grounded beside you.

Fairytale or Reality

The dream of a flawless life is ingrained into our love map. The sequence of events, the time factor, and the cookie cutter life are indulgences we are made to believe we are destined to have, thanks to the fairytale promises of Prince Charming magically sweeping us away on his white horse. Sadly, it is this fairytale thinking that sets us up for crashing disappointment, when it dawns on us that relationships require work and attention.

*But how do we come to terms with our life
when we are faced with a disappointing reality?*

We may not have witnessed such stellar examples of coupledness during our childhood. Whether we were from a single, broken, abusive, or generally dysfunctional home, when the inside of early life was sad or ugly, many of us looked into other people's lives in hopes of finding that true love was possible. For those of us who watched other happy couples interact, the profound impact of witnessing loving relations then has an even deeper impression on our future coupledness.

*So true. I wanted what they had,
and one way or another, I was going to get it!*

The revelation is in the secret: being grounded in sensibility and gloriously hopeful all at the same time. Living, in the real world, keeps our feet on the ground, and yet allows our mind to daydream in the clouds. As long as we remember to hang on to our perfect blend of good sense and hopefulness, we will be able to thrive within a relationship in today's world.



They had this couple thing down to a tee. It was almost effortless, and they spent all of their time together. It was only after many, many years together that they started to think that they spent TOO much time together. They rarely got tired of each other, but would rather describe their need for a little time apart as “reduced

air space.” Knowing that this was not the first time they had been faced with a new season in their relationship, they knew that the only thing they could do was be flexible and go with the flow.

“Honey, I’ve been thinking that you should hook up with your old friends again. You know, like the guys who stood in our wedding. Go and have a drink with them. I know you bump into them, but no one ever organizes anything. Maybe you need to be the one to arrange things. You could have them over here, and I’ll disappear and let you do your guy thing.”

“Yeah, I know you’re right. Maybe having them over would work better.” He hesitated. “I mean, the last time was okay, but you know it just isn’t the same without you. I just don’t have as much fun.”

“Aagh, that’s so sweet. Come, let me give you a kiss for that!” It’s amazing how with the smallest absence, the heart can grow even fonder.



Being Flexible with the Seasons

At one time or another, we have all experienced a shift in our world. Some are as small as feeling the need to spend some time separately hanging out with friends. Others, as large as a change in career, the arrival of a child, an unexpected illness, and even the process of aging, dramatically impact the security and confidence that we have grown accustomed to in our relationship.

*I've decided my life can go along smoothly for
about six months, and then something happens.*

Big or small, it really doesn't matter.

It creates a wave and something changes.

Life determines if things will turn slowly, allowing us a chance to inhale and absorb. Yet, sometimes change arrives turbulently, like a storm in the night, forcing us to brave the crashing waves as we steer perilously close to the rocky cliffs. How quickly we are able to catch ourselves and handle the fluctuations will then determine how easily we can reconfigure our lives.

It's called a tsunami wave. It does more than weaken my knees.

It whips them clean from under me and almost takes me out.

True, it recedes in time, but look at the devastation it leaves.

How we perceive these inevitable changes is the key to surviving the seasons. If we interpret everything in terms of winning or losing, then we will cause the power scale of our team to become lopsided and to feel unfair. This “Conquest or Failure” approach also detracts from the opportunities for learning and understanding the messages life can bring to us through the changing tides.

It is a wise couple that understands that any shift will, at some point, have a ripple effect throughout the relationship. Whether it is difficulty discussing the troubling situation, a lack of empathy, or removal of affection, it almost becomes irrelevant because it all has a way of making us question our feelings of being needed, wanted, and loved. Knowing this should then prepare us to stand firmly on the foundation that we built during the quieter times

of our life together. This will in turn prevent us from capsizing under our emotions.

To come to terms with the ebb and flow in our lives means that we need to acknowledge that periodic changes in our equilibrium are inevitable. Growth spurts, with an accompanying restlessness, can happen at different times for each individual. It can be disturbing for everyone involved, but learning to not become alarmed but instead go with the flow, will allow a new equilibrium to develop naturally. In time, the person we are meant to become will also be revealed.



The years had somehow flown by, and there they were at fifteen years of marriage. Tried, tested, and yet richer for all the blessings. During one of their more intimate conversations, he surprised her with a declaration.

“Darling, you need to know that my sole purpose in life is to love you and make you happy.”

It blew her away. If you were to ask a lot of men what their sole purpose in life was, they might answer, “All the luxuries and trimmings that money can buy.” But not this man. She felt as if she was cupped and cherished in his hands.

As time went on, she became aware of the serious significance of such a proclamation of love. She recognized that the weight and responsibility of *his* happiness rested in *her* hands. From that

point forward, every touch, every gift, every surprise became more intentional and fun because she understood that she could greatly influence his happiness and their sense of coupledness.



Creating Memories

The beauty and the artistry of our life together is the acceptance of the broad strokes – as well as the mindful attention to the fine details. Without either of these components, an integral piece of our picture is missing. The depth and width of the strokes create the foundation for our future and remind us of the importance of having joint goals and dreams. The finer details are the reminder of our here and now, in our life together.

For me, it is the small things that count. It is so easy to lose sight of the working goals. Yet I am awakened by the smallest thoughtful gestures that jolt me back to a place of loving-kindness.

A relationship starts as a blank canvas, and this glorious emptiness holds the possibilities of optimal creativity. We start anew; bad habits are thrown out and we move into areas of romantic love that we thought only lived in our fantasies. To have found a partner who fits us is only the first step. The remainder of a sometimes long voyage is the conception of something greater than us in the form of coupledness.

*The idea that there is no limit to loving someone
captivates my imagination. To dream of a special type
of love holds me breathless in this moment.*

To be confident in the knowledge that we have fully lived our precious life requires us to create each event as if in the form of a memory. Memories are our backup for hope and can be pulled up to remind us of our past feelings, remembering always that our tomorrow is simply a promise and not a guarantee. To keep our tomorrows fresh and alive, we have to be willing to keep the rhythm of our song, and maybe even create a new one.



How can I love you better?

☐ **Reminisce: Acknowledge history together.**

- Celebrate the highs and the lows. What have you two made it through together?
- Pat yourselves on the back for surviving. How will you celebrate?

☐ **Talk about the power of Team Work.**

- Are you strong in all areas that you come together?
- Are you both satisfied with the present arrangement?
- How can you make this stronger?

☐ **Discuss how much time you spend together.**

- Does this need to increase?
- What new activity could be introduced?

Coupledom is enjoying The Truth Tango as ONE. Remember, if we hurt our lover, then we are hurting ourselves.

If we are kind, then we are being kind to ourselves. And if we are loving, then we are loving ourselves.

Chapter 2

Firsts



The Kiss of Truth

It was one of those clear, full moon nights and, standing on her front porch, they kissed for the first time. Instantly, she felt as if she had hit the Jackpot. You know, when everything is perfectly lined up, the bells go off, and the colorful lights start flashing? Yes, a “home run” and a “sure win!” Impulsive and yet natural, the kiss confirmed what she had already known — they were a match.

You see, she knew her adult self, and had learned to listen to her own intuition. She had come to understand that this was an important part of her DNA. When she took the time to respectfully interpret all of the important information given to her from a First Kiss, it allowed her to have more success in her relationships.

There was something magical about that First Kiss. It was as if all of the flirting and exploratory questions were meant to steer her towards this starting point. For her, the First Kiss was always the “make or break.” It had the ability to “seal the deal” and act as an enthusiastic promissory note for the future. However, when she was

younger and less aware of her body, she would move further into a relationship, believing other things were more important, all the time ignoring the lack of erotic sensation on her lips.

When she heard all the bells and whistles going off in her mind and body during that First Kiss, she had to pay attention. As their playful relationship developed, they would experiment with little kissing games. They would change up the technique, pace, pressure, intensity, mood, and the setting, which then made each time a new first. They both came to understand that variety is definitely the “Spice of Life.”



Rock, Paper, Scissors

Childhood was famous for quick-thinking and hard-playing hand games such as Rock, Paper, Scissors. It was a game that could be played anywhere and at anytime — “spur of the moment” and “at the drop of a hat.” Do you remember playing that game? Never knowing whether your rock was going to be covered by paper, or if your scissors would be smashed by the rock? How many hours did we spend trying to outwit our playmate and at the same time being almost oblivious to the larger player named Luck?

As children, we were easily fascinated and transfixed with moment-to-moment prospects for invited spontaneous play, but something happened as we became adults and slipped into predictability. That is until love was sparked and the thrill of new moments with

our lover kept our minds aflame with possibilities. Suddenly, we became childlike again, looking forward to the next moment with its gift-wrapped fascination.

Familiarity

In the very beginning, we are mesmerized by every rise and fall of our lover's breath, every nook and cranny of every muscle. Intrigued by its originality, and with an insatiable drive to photocopy the imprint deep into our subconscious, we instinctively take time to interpret the skin's response to each touch and then store the learned knowledge for future reference.

*The marking on the road map of each mole,
dimple, and scars — markings on a treasure map
leading us to a magical Wonderland!*

Our mission is to truly know our lover and, by repeatedly retracing every step, we find ourselves becoming bonded and blended as one. As time goes on, we become confident in the knowledge that we have found our salve — to feel our daily bruises soothed in salt water and allow the coldness of the day to melt away.

*Why venture into uncharted waters,
when the outcome isn't so certain?*

The beauty of familiarity is that it can help to build our confidence and self-esteem. A track record of successful outcomes guarantees security. And, as our humanness would have it, we are often lulled by the predictable safety, and in the darkness, boredom enters.

Robot Life

There is no time frame for monotony to set in a relationship. But when we become cognizant that dullness can slip in almost unannounced, then it should make us hyper-vigilant to any shifts in feeling or behavior. At the same time, it is important for us to recognize our own past patterns and self-limiting beliefs, which have an uncanny way of preventing us from pushing forward. For example, if we have repeatedly seen and heard disappointing love stories, then it is so easy for us to adopt a defeatist attitude. It is as if we have a mutant gene that seems to find comfort in clinging onto disillusioning love. Perhaps because the chatter is louder, or maybe it's quite simply because those who celebrate love are just too busy loving to make a lot of noise!

When does a habit that once felt good start to feel flat? Is it our own perception, or is it an energy we feel from our partner?

Robotic living is the ultimate killer of romance and passion for life. Our life begins to feel preprogrammed, and predicting our partner's every move places us in the role of mind-reading experts. We hear ourselves forecasting the future and invariably answer with 'What's the point?' or 'It would never happen.' It is as if we only know how to be the bearer of bad news and impending doom.

If we continue to deny that there are even the smallest windows of opportunity for spontaneity in our hectic lives, then the greyness will continue. Taking turns to plan surprises is the simplest and quickest antidote to the problem. If thought through carefully, a momentary gasp of joy will work like magic fairy dust on any dreary day.



It was a balmy Sunday afternoon, and the decision to have a family afternoon nap was completely governed by the needs of their firstborn. He had played himself to exhaustion and now lay innocently asleep in his crib. Worn out by the constant demands of her toddler, she lay down in the cool, air-conditioned room and wallowed in the peacefulness.

Hours passed and when her body naturally awoke, she lay still for a few minutes, savoring the silence. The break was even more appreciated when she realized that the baby monitor had not jolted her into wakefulness. Refreshed and thinking about her plans for the rest of the day, she slowly ventured out to find everyone.

Walking into the kitchen, she was immediately greeted by him proudly holding out a plate. She looked down and blinked in disbelief at the exquisite, individually-poured, hand-made chocolates sitting prettily in their paper cases. *Mmmm....so delicious and tempting!*

The romantic gesture was flawless in its originality and unexpectedness. The thought, time, and effort were not lost on her, and she reveled in the knowledge that he had chosen to make a dainty gift for her.

So often we are blinded by the commercialism of gift giving and almost automatically equate it to the depth of the love. Knowing this, and still wanting to introduce a homemade gift, then requires

a calculated confidence, and if chosen carefully, has a priceless quality to it. In fact, his generosity was faultless and had a way of resetting their gauge for loving-kindness. It was the creation of a beautiful memory, in a picture-perfect moment in time, and a story that would be recounted for many years. His act of loving-kindness sparked within her the childlike innocence and hopefulness that so many of us lose in our adult years.



No More Firsts

It is not uncommon and certainly not surprising to know that most of us spend hours dwelling on “what has been” and “what could be.” Contemplating the years and mentally ticking off expected milestones.

Have I really achieved everything I thought my life would bring?

But what about all the areas I hadn't even imagined?

What about achieving the impossible?

The first time experiencing anything holds great symbolism because it chisels out a place in our memory, which then remains a benchmark for future experiences. As we naturally move from a place of awe and wonderment to one of contentment and comfort in our relationship, it is important that we recognize this as a natural progression and not as a decline. All that is required of us is to acknowledge that life often brings us to a state of balance before the next round of change begins.

*If only Firsts came with an indicator saying
'Savor it cuz it's never going to get any better than this!'* or
'Don't be fooled by this one, cuz the best is yet to come!'

Knowing all of this can, however, remove the magical element of a relationship. Many people only recognize the obvious Firsts, and it is at that point that their youthful exuberance seems to fade. They allow themselves to believe that there is nothing new and exciting left for them in their lives. Their jaded view of life, and love, leaves a sad lack of willingness to try and keep things fresh and new within the relationship.

When we look closely at couples that have managed to maintain their spark, we are made privy to their core workings. Not only do they still *like* each other as individuals, but they also *embrace* the untapped possibilities of their love. Through their eyes, love is all about the playful discovery of spontaneous pleasure and the matching appreciative response. They remain intrigued by the wonders of the limitless inner realms of their lover and engage in the ultimate pursuit of happiness, warding off any chance that their love can become unfulfilling and lifeless.



The room was quiet, and the soft evening light filtered through the almost-closed curtains. The air had an almost suspenseful quality to it; suddenly, a creative spark lit up her imagination.

Glimpsing and seizing an opportunity for spontaneity calls for heightened awareness and a commitment to living a passionate

life. Impeccable timing can be perfection in itself, as long as we recognize these occasions before they pass with the next breath.

Freshly bathed and lying prone on the bed, he was relaxed and waiting for her to massage his aching back. In an almost hypnotic whisper, she moved close to his ear and said, “Keep your eyes closed and don’t move.”

“Hmm, what is that? It smells like oranges. I can almost taste it.” His eyes were still closed, but he licked his lips in appreciation.

“It’s tangerine dusting powder. Shh...there’s more to come.” The staged silence was instrumental for the magnificence of the erotic moment.

Then, with an artist’s hand, she gently swirled and swept the ostrich feathers along his body. She took pride in the invisible painting she created and felt growing satisfaction that she had achieved her desired outcome. A rejuvenating experience that, with eyes closed, would zap him with a fresh energy and at the same time tantalize his imagination.



Turning Heads

At some point in our relationship, most of us have experienced that “aha” moment when we catch ourselves with that old signature spring in our step. It is a flirty rush of friskiness and perhaps a realization that something has been missing. Depending on how

things are at that particular time in the relationship, we may enjoy and explore it further, or put on the breaks and stop.

Who doesn't like an appreciative glance or compliment? Even the most innocent one can add a sparkle to my day. It's the confirmation that I'm still alive and kicking, and got what it takes!

Revisiting or developing our old flirting skills will work to our advantage in our relationships. Sometimes this requires conscious effort and repeated practice, but usually, our attempts to be flirtatious are warmly received. Stepping up and injecting a new rush of enthusiasm usually has the additional benefit of eliciting reciprocal behavior. Many times these skills need to be cranked up and oiled again to get the engine going.

However, all of this cannot be easily arrived at unless there has been careful attention to maintain free-flowing communication. If we do not feel comfortable enough to express our desires, then we invite questions about our motivation. What may start with well-meaning intentions may be interpreted as suspicious intent. Under these circumstances, small, subtle introductions are often easier, rather than large, sweeping radical changes in our own behavior. Once these have become commonplace, then increasing our Flirting Portfolio becomes more natural.

Flirting is, without a doubt, one of the lost art forms in a long-standing relationship. It leaves an invisible void, which has a dangerous precipice that can be eagerly filled by a stranger. Being aware of, and not becoming victim to, this almost obvious pitfall is

one of the key components to enjoying and protecting a fulfilling romantic life.

Playfulness is so important to me.

You never know what to expect, and it keeps you on your toes.

Impulsive demonstrations of love speak volumes to our partners. They prove our appreciation of the worth of the partnership and the importance of ensuring that the romantic embers remain lit. Life's simple pleasures and unpretentious treats are often the missing link, and spontaneous play is key to keeping the music that keeps us romantically entwined playing.



How can I love you better?

☐ **Do you consider yourself a spontaneous person?**

☐ **YES**

- When was the last time you acted on impulse?
How did it make you feel?
- Did it involve your partner? If so,
then what was the feedback?
- Does your partner like this aspect
of your personality?

☐ **NO**

- Do you admire that quality?
- Is it something you would like to develop?
- Is it something that intrigues your partner?

☐ **Discuss whether the romance has been missing.**

- Do you both flirt with each other?
- Does spontaneity need to be scheduled? Consider
taking alternate weeks to plan a surprise.

Flirt with your Love and create new Firsts!

Chapter 3

Communication



You Can Handle the Truth

It was only when the car had come to a complete halt that she noticed they were still at least five minutes away from her apartment. It hit her all at once, when she saw his puzzled look, that she had not said a word from the time she had sat down in the car. What for her was a momentary preoccupation, was obviously too difficult for him to decipher.

“Darling, just say what you have to say, because you know you’re going to at some point.”

And, in that moment, a heavy penny dropped with a clunk. This man, who she had been dating for only a few weeks, just reached deep inside her and pulled back the show curtain to reveal her inner self. He had said it calmly, without anger or sarcasm, but with clean and simple truth.

It was in that moment that they established one of the basic rules of their relationship. She saw that withholding thoughts, and then blurting a barrage of feelings (when it suited her), was definitely not how she would want to be treated. He was telling her quite clearly that he could handle a little rocking of the boat and was essentially saying, “Go on, give it to me.”

She took it as it was given, without malice, and simply said, “You’re right.”

Then, as he started the car, she began opening up about her anxieties and concerns.



Safe Place

Which comes first—the soft cushioning of a safe place to open up or the kind receptive ears that hang on to our every word? In truth, it can happen either way and, as long as there is a warm energy wafting back and forth, it really becomes irrelevant. All that is required is an acknowledgment that a need and a want require constant attention in order for the flint stones to keep on sparking.

Nobody can deny the full flame heat and intensity that is produced when both parties are fully contributing. It becomes a safe place that generates a mesmerizing dance and a breathtaking passion. We feel free to be who we want to be and relaxed enough to stretch our limbs, so as not to hit a wall. A freedom that means we are not confined or trapped within another person’s expectations. It

is that knowledge that we can extend beyond even the person that we have known ourselves to be, and that this partner allows us to nurture our soul.

*Do we have to feel the safe place from the get go?
Is it essential to have a definitive moment when the
cymbals crash and the trumpets blow?
I don't think I remember that.*

The uniqueness of each relationship and how it develops, adds to the magic and the unpredictability of coupledness. On one hand, it is extremely reassuring to have that early certainty. It adds, not only a heightened excitement during the rose-colored stage, but also boosts mutual self-esteem. Both styles appeal to different personalities and play a part alongside the alignment that is needed to create a successful relationship.



Trusting and having faith in her own intuition was the first step towards making a life-changing decision. Lying prostrate for hours on the couch, gazing into nothing was her way of sorting things out. A continuous tape played in her head with questions such as, “Is loving someone enough? Do I want to live here for the rest of my life?” The dilemma had her all in a whirl, and when she thought she had some questions answered, the other recurring ones would start getting louder. But even though there was a storm in her head, she knew with a deep certainty that if she was going to rock her boat any further, she had better make sure she was docked in the right place.

These were really tough questions that she had repeatedly asked herself over a period of about a month. He had been so sure of his feelings, but he did not have to give up anything. Thinking about a shift in her career and not being present for her family events rested heavily on her heart. It didn't seem fair that to gain something meant that she had to relinquish something that had previously felt so valuable.

Her problem-solving mind knew to deliberate each concern, and then file it in its appropriate folder. To a stranger, she could appear impulsive and rash. Little did they know the hours of reflection that would go into each choice. Once she was finished, she was completely sure of her decision. Her period of time for prostrate thinking had come to an end. She got up, plumped up the cushions, and went about her day with a new spring in her step. She looked forward to the evening and confiding in him about her decision. She had faith in her emotions and was confident that her heart was in the right place.



This is How I Feel

How many times have we all wanted to just say how we feel? Not to have to think about how the words will be received, or fear backlash or the possibility of hurting the other person's feelings? When we were young, we may have been chastised for blurting out our emotions and punished for the ensuing childish tantrums. As we grew, we came to understand that controlling our emotions

and explaining ourselves in a logical manner was adult-like and more acceptable. Knowing all of this, it is hardly surprising that we find ourselves holding back our true feelings when we realize the important role that we play in our partner's happiness.

*Wow, I can't even count the times I've bitten my lip,
and almost drawn blood, in order to keep the words in.
Even when things have to be said, I'm now really good at
reshaping them to ensure a soft landing*

Not paying attention to the words coming out of our mouths can have a long and damaging effect on the trust within the relationship. A cruel barrage of words can cause a painful wound that our partner will then carry around for an undetermined length of time. Over time, we may feel fortunate to be forgiven, but then are caught off guard when we discover that the past memory and impact can reappear when new conflict ensues. Weighing our options, and considering that our honest heartfelt words may cause a shift in the status quo, often puts a chokehold on our courage. Even the headspace that is required in gauging, or predetermining, outcomes can be exhausting. All too often, the minutest thought of a shake-up can seem too daunting, and choosing to be disingenuous to ourselves seems the least painful option.

*Sometimes it feels like a fine line that I'm walking between
doing the right thing and pretending that all is well.*

On one hand, we are told and encouraged to be authentic and honest, but so many relationships are complex. Many come with a proven history that honesty has not always been well received. This

is where relations become murky, and withholding information becomes the pastime of the day. Once this game is mastered, and rarely challenged, sliding into lies and secrets becomes easy play.



She had been immersed in his storytelling for fifteen minutes. As was his nature, more and more details were being added, but the intricate side stories, which definitely gave additional necessary information, had a way of redirecting her focus and confusing her. A tangled web, and if she was not careful, she would find herself zoning out and not being the respectful listener. She felt the glaze coming over her, so she said with a teasing smile, “Okay, could I get the short version?” He caught her eyes and held her gaze in order to focus his thoughts. It was a simple and yet effective method of grabbing his attention.

“Okay, well the guy finished by saying he would give me a credit for the returned product, and that he would call me by next Tuesday when the next shipment comes in.” He smiled as his story came to an end, and they laughed together at the fact that it had needed some editing.

A little humor always went a long way. It had been well tried and tested. Not too much so as to upset or offend, but just enough to diffuse a sticky situation. It became a private code that was easily recognized and understood. Never interpreted as a put down; on the contrary, it was respecting the sacred space between them.



Important Topics

In the center of our busy lives are the conversations that head the list of important topics. Hopefully, the longer we are engaged in coupledness, the wiser we become to our own key issues. Most couples require trust, fidelity, and financial security. Then, anything that follows will vary depending on the individual. What is significant to one person may not necessarily be to another, and it is this concept that is so very hard for most people to understand. With a blink of an eye, judgment slips in and sits beside us, swaying our objectivity. Judgment is the thing that stops empathy from being present, and without that, the space is pushed wider.

That's why I tease and joke around a lot. It's my way of getting someone to open up about something that I sense they're stonewalling me over. The tension is diffused, and before we know it, we find ourselves sharing on an intimate level.

Once we start to clue into this, and put it into practice, the most rewarding routes become apparent. Remembering always that we can never change people, if we love and want to be with them, then we need to understand their thinking. This is why creating a safe place for open expression not only satisfies the one who needs to share but, if viewed from a privileged place, allows us to truly know them.

The Rubber Band

The deeper the trust, the thicker and smaller the rubber band becomes around the rock that encompasses you both. It binds and holds you together as one. The relevancy of the size is significant because it illustrates the distance between each person. The tangible space between is a wedge that holds back full intimacy.

This does not mean that we should merge and lose ourselves in our partner, because it is also crucial that we maintain our individuality. But, it demonstrates the elasticity and spring-back mechanism, which takes us back to our rightful place. The “ping” to make sure we are still there, and the pull that we feel when distance comes between us. It ensures that it takes us to the exact starting point where we know we can relieve ourselves from the pressure to share our conversation. To satisfy the need to give the biggest portion of our thoughts, dreams, and desires to our partner, before distributing our news to others.

*I see myself doing it all the time—
bypassing everyone else just to speak with him first.
Like the cutting of a cake, and the first piece has to go to him.*

A lot of times, we feel this pull towards someone and describe it as sexual chemistry. We are drawn to them and the tugging that we feel is unquestionably present. Scientists tell us that it is the locking-in of opposing, but complimentary, pheromones—the silent scent that makes us walk towards a particular person. Undoubtedly, starting with a strong physical chemistry is important for the survival of sexual intimacy throughout the decades, and for

the longevity of a relationship. Add together the mind and soul chemistry, and the band becomes even stronger.

The result is a strong spiritual band that wraps and tightly holds together the sacredness of the partnership. It empowers every dimension of our personality and there is a deep knowing that settles into every part of our being. For some, this comes naturally and feels almost divine. However, it is possible to enhance and develop the union as long as there is an unflinching focus on each other.

To be able to achieve that wonderful in-tune quality requires both persons to commit to becoming sensitive and devout students of each other. To learn and embrace our individual uniqueness produces a quality of communication that becomes irreplaceable.



How can I love you better?

☐ **Discuss a ‘Set-up’ for relating.**

- Consider and prepare a certain time, place, and mood for relationship talk.
- Give examples of past times that did not work and those that did.
- Do you already know the answers?
- Are there any surprises?

☐ **Write down: Elements present when you both successfully resolved a problem.**

- Can they be easily replicated?

Remember: Sit back and allow yourself to fully engage. By becoming a great listener, you will gain the right to express.

Chapter 4

Integrity



Truth or Dare

“**B**ut how do you know? How can you be so sure it will work out? We come from different cultures and backgrounds.”

She had been completely thrown off by the start of this passionate relationship, and it had hurled her into frenzy. She had never considered this in her big plan of life. To stay in a relationship with him, she would have to make some significant sacrifices.

She had always been a resilient child and actually seemed to thrive on new challenges and change. It was as if she had been born with an additional tenacity gene. Put adversity in her line of vision, and she would find a way of dealing with or overcoming it. But this was something new to her. This was not just levelheaded reasoning and problem-solving; this was heart stuff. It was clogging up the airwaves in her brain and exhausting her.

As she got out of the car, he looked at her calmly and smiled, “Darling, I just know it’s going to work out. I just feel it.” And that was it. Confident and persistent from the beginning—a safe place.



When we make a decision to start a new relationship, we instinctively believe in our own good judgment. We may have hemmed and hawed and then, for whatever reason, decided to go for it. That need for personal closeness that we all feel allows us to take a risk—an ultimate leap of faith. The extent to which we choose—or allow ourselves—to open up depends on so many things aligning themselves.

Relationship challenges in the past may have left us with wounds so deep that we instinctively pull back whenever we come close to danger again. But, in time, even the deepest wounds heal and, although we are left with a scar, we mend. It may have taken a lot of medicine, dressings, tapings, surgeries, and even backtracking with infections, but at some point we find ourselves laughing with someone, and thinking of him or her in those absent moments.

Courage to Trust

Finding the courage to trust is not only a choice, but also a conscious decision. We get to that point where the need for more of that specific person outweighs the fears and apprehensions that have grown from our childhood naiveté and which were then added to by life's challenging experiences. There may have been a few false starts until we realize that every relationship needs a kick-start, or else it just won't get going. Then we go for it.

Trusting that we have selected a safe place to lay the foundation takes a brave heart and a boatload of courage. People looking in on our lives may hold or even voice conflicting opinions. They may believe their intentions are true, and try to accentuate the faults

of trusting in a new love and differences between you. Whether we listen to the soothsayers or not depends a lot on our own self-confidence and trust. Without these basic ingredients, the rock-solid connection that is so necessary in all relationships will not be formed.

*I heard people saying, "I wonder how long it will last?"
But what did they know, right? I know what I know, and it just felt
right. We had laid a foundation and started to build a foundation
that would last for ages. There was pleasure in proving them wrong*

Once we experience that sense of calm and safety in our decision to trust, it allows us to open up. Before we know it, sharing has progressed from daily events to fears and dreams. Bit by bit, the trust grows and the feeling of closeness increases. It becomes the hinge to every aspect of the relationship. With every change in the weather and season, the width of the heart opening can alter. As easily as it can be opened wide, so effortlessly it can be closed completely.



“You know, one of the things I really appreciate about you is that you are ‘straight up.’ What you see is what you get. I like to tell people that there is not one fakey bone in your body. I mean it—that means so much to me. When so many people let me down and disappoint me, I know at least I have one person I can count on and trust.”

“And you’re mine, too!” he said as he grabbed and held her close. “But you know the way I look at it is this—I treat people how I would want to be treated. It’s all about respecting people.”

“It’s a rare and admirable quality, and that’s why you stand out in the crowd.” They both smiled and felt comfort in the fact that they shared similar values.



Do Unto Others

When we enter any liaison, we never think, “I hope they will lie and deceive me.” Certainly, we may be more cautious and even skeptical due to our past. However, most people generally want to be treated with the same level of respect. It is believing in what they say and how they represent themselves that will determine how things move along. Trust will only thrive when we feel that we are receiving honest sincerity.

*Why are so many people so superficial? You think they are one way,
but when you scratch the surface, it all falls away.
I just don't get it, and I know I will never understand.*

For some people, how much to reveal of oneself is a question that is constantly being asked throughout their relationship and life. We believe that we are protecting our partner by thinking, “I don’t want to hurt them,” or “They don’t need to know all the details,” but in truth, we are acting from the instinct to protect ourselves. We are all able to justify our own actions because within our own mind, we are our own court of law. The voice of the defense team may shout louder at times, but inevitably the verdict will return in our favor based on our own fears and apprehensions.

The Power of a Secret

The dichotomy between maintaining our individualism and, at the same time, being part of a couple is a difficult adjustment and tricky walk for some. Defensive patterns of behavior creep in so easily and, before we know it, our fearful child re-emerges. Self-protection is learned at an early age, and usually stays throughout life. Few individuals have childhoods that have remained unscathed from disappointing adults, and nothing is ever “perfect.” Hopefully, our own experience has left us able to look at people with fairly balanced objectivity, and not complete distrust.

The power of a secret has enormous appeal for many people. It goes back to early self-protection and an area of their life that they can control—an area that is “their own.” Secret lives offer an escape from a dull or painful reality, and we convince ourselves that it satisfies not only a want, but also a need. We believe that this is the best solution, without losing everything, or rocking the boat.

This is my sore spot. Deliberately withholding something, because you think I wouldn't be able to handle it, quite literally does me in.

It takes me back to a time and place I would rather not return to.

Some early wounds, however, have left such deep underlying crevices that any slight reminder has a way of virtually ripping them open again. The deeper the damage, the more frequently we see the fearful child thrashing around with punching gloves on. Their life becomes a chain of self-protecting lies and secrets.



Throughout her life, she heard many people ask the question, “Can you ever *truly* know someone?” and this would lead into long and sometimes heated discussions on the subject. Does it involve years and time spent together, or is it the quality of the sharing of information? Or are we only able to share when we come to trust, not only our partner, but also ourselves when the truth needs to be told?

It took her over twenty years to reveal the last of her secrets to him. It was never a calculated intention to hide it from him, but like many things, there was an element of shame.

He was taken aback by her disclosure, not so much by the story, but because he thought he knew everything about her. His only question was, “And is there anything else you haven’t told me?” She saw the flicker of doubt pass across his face, and it seemed to settle in his eyes. It was only when she went on to explain the need for absolute trust in herself to fully expose her soul—even to those closest to her heart—that he finally came to see the privileged position that he now held, and it instantly added further depth to their connection.



Being Genuine

Many people go through life living behind their secrets, changing nothing about themselves and excusing their behavior as “this is just the way I am.” Yet life has a way of providing us with

opportunities to open up and let our true selves be revealed—both the good and the bad of what makes us the unique individuals that we are. It is so easy for us to see our good qualities, but acknowledging our not so appealing traits is more difficult.

I don't have a problem admitting my faults to myself.

My fear is that if I say them out loud to someone else that they may use it to their advantage. So what does that mean?

Facing and actually dealing with our wounds, or tender spots, is one of the greatest challenges of being honest. By doing this, we are actually revealing our true and authentic self. Whether you choose to slowly peel away at your protective mask or rip it off quickly to reduce the pain becomes irrelevant, because once the decision has already been made to become genuine, there is no going back.

Change of this nature is scary and definitely not for the faint of heart. When people have seen or known us to act in a certain manner, we begin to worry about our nakedness. We feel unsure about how we are going to be received, and even if they will want to be around us. Once we feel comfortable enough and start revealing more of who we are, we see the effect it has on the other person. More often than not, that person has been waiting for the moment. They may, in fact, view it as a privilege that they have been chosen. A new bond is formed, as long as the path of authenticity is continued.

It is almost as if an awakening has taken place, and we come to understand that being loyal to ourselves then translates into being

honorable. The only way to break this cycle of duplicity is to constantly practice being honest and vulnerable with our partner. The recognition and welcome responses to the “new you” will inevitably increase your self-confidence. The end result is that as you reveal more of your authentic, genuine self, the more rock solid you will be in your confidence, which in turn will strengthen your relationship.

Keeping Your Word

Without a doubt, being in a partnership where both persons value honesty marks the difference between a ‘ho-hum’ relationship and an extraordinary one. If you surround yourself with people who do not follow the same rulebook, then you start to think “What is the point?” Before you know it, their habits have become yours, and you have begun walking in time to their beat.

By adopting a habit of being evasive and dropping seemingly irrelevant information out of our conversations, we then have a feeling that minor conflicts and potential misunderstandings can be easily avoided. We convince ourselves that we have found the key to minimizing problems within the relationship. Everything reduces to a simmer, and we now understand why other couples have incorporated this form of dishonesty into their day-to-day lives.

Trying to diffuse the moment with play on words just makes things worse for me. All I ask is for you to be honest with me, even if that means admitting to making a mistake. That, I can take!

Even if we choose a word that makes us feel better, being evasive, vague, cagey, or hard to pin down erodes trust. No matter how we try to rationalize our choices, it is just a passive form of dishonesty. Not only do we betray ourselves, but we also deny our partner the opportunity to correct a problem. This careless self-absorption blinds us from really seeing, and paying attention to, what is required within the relationship. We may argue that it is unintentional, and logically explain it away by placing the blame in another direction. But each time this happens, there is a shift in the tide, the boat starts rocking, and a storm can be seen moving in on the horizon.



How can I love you better?

First get truthfully naked with yourself.

☐ **Make becoming a 'Person of Your Word' a priority.**

☐ **Ask yourself 'What do I really want?'**

(Do this separately.)

- Write down your fears that you know you overreact to, and the power they exert over your self-esteem.
- Write a list of priorities in the relationship.
- Is there enough trust in your partnership to work to a positive future?

☐ **Compare your lists.**

- How many overlap?
- How many are new and surprising?
- Select the most doable goals from the list and agree on a viable time frame for achieving them.
- Make a verbal or written commitment to comply and uphold the decisions made.
- Agree to revisit the list on regular intervals.

Remember, TRUST is a fragile gift not to be tampered with, and is at the cornerstone of every aspect of a relationship.

Chapter 5

Thoughtfulness



Flavors of Truth

When people asked them how they had met, she left it to him to tell the tale. His style of storytelling played to the imagination, and the listener was always captivated by his details. They felt his enthusiasm, his wonderment, and sense of luck at being one of the few to have experienced “Love at First Sight.”

He would describe what she was wearing, her eyes and her smile, and said in fact that it was her smile and dimples that had won him over.

The final feather in his cap was recalling his prophecy to his work colleague, “You can have the blonde because the brunette is mine!”



No matter our gender, we are all looking for that thoughtful, indulgent sweetness. Someone who enhances our taste buds, an additive that quite simply illuminates our life—the Light of our Life, our Honey Bun, our Chick-a-Dee, or Dee Dee Pie.

Time, practice, and experience are the only ways to find the flavor that works for us, remembering always that our taste may change over the years. In fact, we may find that we are completely allergic to synthetic ingredients, and only real organic materials are palatable. The more rare the ingredient, the harder it may be to access, but the sweet value they carry will certainly be worth more in the long run.

The Candy Store

As we enter a room, our eyes instinctively scan for candy. It is as if we have radar senses and laser focus for all things sweet, pleasing, and fitting our mold—from color, shape, and size to posture, mannerisms, and so much more. The more features that can be checked off on our shopping list, the wider our eyes become.

In Scotland, we call it the Sweetie Shop. How appropriate!

When we were dating, we soon discovered that looking sweet and edible was one thing, but it was the filling that really mattered. An attractive outer coating had the ability to lure us, but how many times have we bitten in, only to find a sour center? Remembering this is so important because our partners have chosen us for our sweet centers. Losing sight of this and neglecting to pay attention to this will inevitably bring disappointment to our love, and perhaps even open the door to another's sweetness.

*Just like a chocolate selection box, sometimes our old favorites don't
seem to taste the same, and at other times,
new flavors seem more appealing*

For our lover to choose to return to us, we must maintain our own quality and therefore preserve the status quo of the relationship. By now we know that the most frequently picked heart has a sugary mix of thoughtfulness and kindness. The end result is the proven confirmation of desire, intent, and execution all rolled into one. One without the other has some impact, but a caring thought turned into a kindhearted deed has a power within itself.

Yeah, a sugar surge is fantastic, but stabilizing afterwards is the problem. That's why consistency is so important.

No one wants to bottom-out.

No matter our gender, being responsible for the quality of our own center is imperative in making sure the goodness remains. To test our consistency, we need to sample each other's thoughtfulness to ensure we remain on an even keel. By doing so, a certain satisfactory standard is established, and from that point forward, anything less becomes unacceptable.



There is probably nothing more satisfying for a mother than to see her man spend quality time with her boys. In their younger years, her sons would, without fail, turn to her for everything, but as they entered their teenage years, they chose to learn manly things from their father.

They worked alongside him and became competent. They learned that along with all of the hard work came much blood, sweat, and tears.

But, for her, the reward was in the knowledge of their ‘well-roundedness.’ It was witnessing the warm, welcoming, and courteous young men they had become. They were interested in other people and had the ability to initiate an intelligent conversation with persons from all walks of life.

Pride came in the confirmation that both of them had passed on our unique ingredients and flavors to their offspring. They felt confident and took pleasure in the knowledge that they would both make great fathers and husbands.



Pride

It is such a wondrous day when we look at our love and realize that we have in fact found our favorite flavors in another person. Our hearts swell and squeeze in the knowledge that together we have created something quite delectable. Everything from our posture to our outlook on life seems to change from that point, and our heart bursts with pride.

*Head up, shoulders back, walking tall,
keeping eyes steady on the horizon.*

The role that we play in loving someone, and knowing that we hold their heart in our hands, should never be taken lightly. It is an honorable responsibility, which, if sincere and true, does not come along many times in a lifetime.

The importance of feeling that you are both equally contributing and satisfying all areas of reciprocal loving can never be minimized. In fact, the sweetest and tightest rubber band connections probably require an even greater degree of accountability. This is because their loving kindness allows each movement to feel like silk, and when they do sense some friction, it feels heightened and the pain is excruciating.

Ouch...not a good feeling!

Personal satisfaction comes with revering the worth of the love and appreciating the depth of your own unique thumbprint on the relationship. Never losing sight of this invaluable insight is the key to upholding and maintaining the quality of the affection.



Some of those challenging night shifts have the ability to take caring people “out.” All hell seems to break out between those witching hours. No wonder people call it “The Graveyard Shift!”

Just like an exhausted, over-stimulated child’s, her body would have a hard time relaxing after these long shifts. Falling asleep after a hot bath and massage would all help, but nothing would be complete without a sympathetic ear to soothe her mind.

On one particular day, she was still wound-up following her recovery ritual, and he had been downstairs for a while. She assumed he had been pulled away to do something else and was surprised when he returned carrying a colorful and artistically displayed platter of prepared fruit.

Thoughtful, and with such attention to detail, it was a touching demonstration of love and care—an aphrodisiac in itself.

“Aagh. You are so sweet. I could just eat *you* up!”

The gesture had worked its magic. She was instantly free from her work-self and transported to their personal playground.



In My Shoes

Walking beside and keeping in step with your lover has that lovely in-tune quality. Moving ahead of your lover, in order to be able to anticipate their needs and wants, even before they know themselves, then produces a sensation that they are always on your mind. Feeling included and a priority in each other's lives is what makes a relationship begin to stand apart from any other.

*Out of sight, but still on his mind, illustrates a real love,
and can win me over every time.*

There is something glorious about feeling that we know our lover. However, the irony is that there is also a fine line between reality and projecting imagined needs. It can become irritating for the other person, and in fact can be disconcerting, when we are off the mark.

That's when I start to think, "Well, if he REALLY knew me!"

Once we attain our physical and tangible desires, we then have an opportunity to move and connect on a deeply sensitive emotional

level. This is when intimacy takes on a whole new meaning. When we can intuitively identify with our lover's pain, joy, and multidimensional way of thinking, then we have reached a special place. We have slipped into their occupied shoes and walk as one.

Sweet to Sour

Having perfected the taste of your relationship and then to find things starting to sour is one of the most nauseating feelings of loving someone. It can leave you with a deep sinking feeling, but the overall message is always to hold on for the ride.

Whether the bitter taste comes from an inner or outer source becomes inconsequential. Either way, it needs to be stopped and resolved.

Other people can speculate but can never have the insider's knowledge as to what makes a particular love relationship tick. Corrective measures will vary depending on the couple, but without fail, there is one main ingredient that should never be omitted. The main equalizer and the one that can level any imbalance is compassion. Remove even the smallest splash of it, and you can shut down a conversation and turn trust inside out.

No matter how hard I try to get him to understand, if he can't even see a small part of what I'm trying to convey, then it's a lost cause.

Even the hardest conversation has the capacity to run more smoothly if our partner can identify with something that we are saying. Knowing that they can "see us" then validates our position and demonstrates a deep thoughtfulness for our feelings. It adds those bold, mouth-watering flavors to the relationship.



How can I love you better?

- ☐ **How would you rate yourself for thoughtfulness within your relationship?**
 - 1 – Does not come naturally
 - 2 – Think about it but rarely do anything about it
 - 3 – Keep it for Anniversaries and special days
 - 4 – Pride in planning kind gestures
 - 5 – Competitive player
- ☐ **How do you think your partner would rate you?**
 - Same scale = 1–5
- ☐ **Together: Compare notes.**
 - Is there a recurring theme?
 - Are there any surprises?
- ☐ **Suggestions: Commit to making ‘bite-sized’ thoughtful demonstrations of love.**
 - Each person takes alternative weeks to plan one
 - Purchased gift — set a price bracket for these
 - Home-made thoughtful gift
 - Home improvement gift
 - Romantic, sensual, or sexual gift

**Always remember that Thoughtfulness is the
Essence of Loving-Kindness.**

Chapter 6

Trust



Game of Truths

“Well, how come it is okay for you to say how you feel and I can’t?” he asked. She felt as if he had just come into the room and slapped her with this seemingly off the cuff comment.

Of course, she responded with reflex defensiveness, “Don’t I usually say, ‘...and what do *you* think?’ That means ‘how do you feel’ as well, you know? I thought we’d established this long ago. Surely, I don’t have to give you an opener every time. My goodness, do you see why women say ‘You have to spell it out to men?’ They only understand things when you are completely literal with them. Remember, you’re the one who taught me to ‘just say it?’ I’m absolutely cool with that. Say what’s on your mind!”

Perhaps, for some reason, he had thought she was not available to him. His words had hit a nerve, but she also knew that she had to reciprocate her interest when he asked it of her. She listened to his worries about work. He was hurt by a seemly unjust selection process, which so often was determined by ‘who you know,’ and

not by the quality of one's work or pricing. She felt his hurt, and together with hers, it became pain. They were warriors together, battling the injustice dealt to the little man. She completely agreed with him, on all points, and by the end, they comforted each other.



Interested

Being interested in someone's thoughts, feelings, and interests is at the very foundation of any friendship. Having thoughts about what they are doing or thinking pushes through into the front line of our minds. The formation of real friendship stems from the blossoming of curiosity and our need to have some or all of the answers about the other person. Yet everyone, at some time or another, has experienced the unwanted and awkward feeling of one-sidedness when our interest in the other outweighs theirs in us. Without that natural inquisitiveness from both parties, a real relationship would never develop.

*When there are gaps in my thinking, and there doesn't seem to be a
desire to help me fill them in, I start to wonder,
"What does that mean?"*

For a relationship to progress, both people need to move together at a reasonably similar pace, stepping in time with one another. This synchronistic movement brings comfort and relieves anxiety. For this balancing to take place, there has to be a reciprocal interest. Sometimes this happens without effort, and we are captivated by everything about that person —and they about us. Other times,

we have to develop interest in the other person with a little more intention.

Maybe, when he describes the first time he saw me as “Love at First Sight,” it must have been that all-encompassing captivation.

*It didn’t matter what he discovered about me;
it was love and acceptance all rolled up in one.*

That captivation can slip away, however, if we lose our intention to really *know* the other person. Words such as “detached” and “not present” all confirm a divide. People often refer to it as being emotionally unavailable or cold. Other seemingly more pressing matters or persons can distract us all. However, omitting to pay attention when your love partner needs you will get you into hot water. Getting burned once in awhile and learning from our mistakes is one thing. Unfortunately, habit-forming behavior can creep up on us so quickly if we lose our awareness. Soon we realize our partner has started to respond to us in the same way. A general air of coolness enters the room and, unless someone is willing to add some warmth, the atmosphere becomes chilled.

In established relationships, the emphasis of maintaining our connection as a priority is all too often overlooked, and complacency creeps in. Neglecting to share large parts of your lover’s life can shake a once-solid foundation.

*How often have we seen a new love interest come and
swoop a forgotten soul away?*

Being caught off guard, and then kicking yourself for not noticing that something has gone amiss, is a heavy burden to bear. So take

note, and anchor the wondrous art of stroking egos, which in turn stimulates self-worth. It is like having your own private ‘Mutual Admiration Society,’ which creates such a warm, glowing effect that you will always crave more of it.



“HELLO...could you stop for a moment? You know I can’t talk to you with all that noise. You know I need you to look at me when we talk.”

“I’m listening to you, Darling. Just cuz I’m working at the same time, doesn’t mean I’m not listening. People call it multitasking, you know? Sometimes I don’t have time to stop everything I’m doing and just look at you.”

“Well, you can say that, but if I don’t make sure I’ve got your undivided attention, then you often don’t remember. At least, this way, I have more of a guarantee that what I say has registered.” With the signature tilt of her head, and the teasing smile, she added, “Do I have to remind you, or give you some examples?”

He turned off the machine and looked at her, “Okay then, go ahead.”

Yes, he was mildly exasperated because he hated interruptions when he was on a roll, but he also knew that she would never interrupt unless it was important.



Playing Fair

It seems so basic, doesn't it — “You talk and I listen. I talk, and you listen?” What could be easier than that? Why do we have to feel as if we live between a rock and a hard place? Stonewalled — no matter which way we turn.

It sounds similar to a game of chess where each player is given extended courtesy to play. Time is given to deliberate, and each move is carried out with individual style. Board moves are made with caution, or swiftly and deliberately. Everything is orderly, and in an arena where fowl play is not tolerated. The game is started as a fun and playful pastime. The purpose is to win, or at least overtake their teammate. We watch the balance of power shift throughout the game, and everyone is on his or her toes. They understand, and yet it is almost predictable that if they stop paying attention, they may lose their edge.

Sounds familiar? Haven't we all been brought up to play by the rules?

Encouraged to play fairly, and not to pout or get angry when it is not going our way, we are supposed to know how to anticipate reactions and, over time, we learn the habits of the other players.

Think back to the start of the relationship and to the “getting to know you better” stage. Were you both polite and respectful to each other? Did it feel surprisingly balanced? And you thought to yourself “this could work?” You fed off each other, and it felt

good. It was probably for those very reasons that the relationship moved forward.

*So when did we forget all of this? Are we only capable of playing
fairly if we have a partner who is willing to do the same?
Does someone always have to play the part of the adult
when the other acts like a child?*

One thing we can be sure of is that a relationship never stays still. The waters are calm, and then a surge moves back and forth with the typical ebb and flow of a moving tide. The emphasis may at times tip heavily in one person's direction and may remain there, depending on what is going on.

The trouble with placing so much emphasis on one person is that the other can get drowned in the giving. Even the most generous and patient individuals, who place their needs on the back burner, will start to push forward when an awakening takes place and whispers (or loud wails) of "What about me?" begin breaking through.

Playing fairly is all about respect for the other person. We value not only their opinion, but ultimately their happiness. Everything we want for ourselves we should strive to attain for them as well.

Filtering Information

To some extent, our mouth has to be a colander in order to strain our true intention. To have, or at least, develop a sense of tact is so important in order that our brutal narcissistic honesty does not cause long-term damage. Hurtful words have a way of ripping through all good feelings and can raise question marks that

normally would not be there. It places doubt in front of everything, and we immediately find ourselves on opposing teams. Reigning in our need to be right can repair the damage already done; however, all too often, we are so preoccupied with our own feelings that we lose sight of the common goals and dreams in our coupledness.

Survival of the Fittest Mind Games become the order of the day with “Who can shout the loudest?” or “Who can out-smart the other?” Kind thoughts get translated into hurtful cutting words and, before we know it, all the warm and fuzzy feelings we once had have melted away.

I've now decided that people who seem to get joy by playing with my mind are bad news. History shows me that they aren't kind at heart and eventually only bring me sadness.

After living our life as a spinning top, going back and forth, we find ourselves exhausted and lacking our old stamina. We start to realize that we just do not have the energy for good old-fashioned talking and listening. We become excellent mind readers, and anticipate every move and response. All of the put-downs, sarcastic comments, knowing looks, or solutions become tiresome. We decide what information to pass on, and what to hold on to. The once-close intimacy has now gone, and a screening room now surrounds us.



“Oh my goodness, did you pick up what he was talking about last night at the party? Did you hear the end bit, just as you came to join us?”

“I heard him saying something about ‘No, he couldn’t talk to her about that’ and then ‘But what about me?’ What was all that about?”

She was so thankful that they had a relationship in which they could openly discuss things without the other person getting all screwy, or misinterpreting what was said or overheard, or not saying anything at all. By bringing things to the surface, it reinforced that they were on the right track and being honest with each other.

“Well, he chose to open up about them not having had sex for ages, months it sounds like, and that he’s been reading stuff online about women’s desire. He said that he didn’t know there was so much to it. He thought sex was just sex. Just as you came up, he was saying ‘But what about me?’ I didn’t feel like he was coming on to me. I think he was just wanting to bounce ideas off me and get a woman’s perspective.”

“Yes, well I could tell that, cuz he continued talking about it when I came to join you guys.”

“But I felt so sad that he thought he couldn’t even talk to *her* about it. Did you see how nervous, and almost scared he got, when she started moving closer? Gosh, I am so glad that we’re not like that. Just thinking about living like that gives me shivers. Well, all I know is that it won’t be me!”



Tit for Tat

When that cold door shuts behind us, it is hard not to respond in the same manner. Self-preservation protects us from an onslaught of potential pain. The more pain inflicted, the more layers of protective covering. In turn, the thickness of the armor we put up equates to the distance we place between us and the other person, and it is the start of the disconnection. The armor becomes a safe cocoon, and we start to feel secure in the knowledge that no one can touch us. Our whole demeanor can change to the point where we begin to notice we attract like-armored people. This may certainly bring a common thread in language, but the flip side is that any armor is hard to peel off when we want to reveal our true self.

Is there any way we can prevent that from happening? Don't we all need at least a thin layer of armor to deflect the blows of unkind words or thoughtless actions? If we were to allow the entire daily hurts to reach us, then we would walk around as war wounded.

Mirroring hurtful behavior is our safe childlike tactic to protect ourselves. Unfortunately, it gets us nowhere, nothing is resolved, and all that happens is that a general air of discontent permeates every part of the relationship. Many people spend years dancing in circles around each other, pushing to win, and incessantly hurting each other. The mere idea that one person would have to concede before the other adds to the stubbornness and unwillingness to change behavior. Blaming is easier than admitting fault.

Rules of the Game

The ground rule for a safe place of exchange is, without a doubt, trust. To feel and know that we can open up and share to confidential ears is powerful. It is as fragile as love itself, but also very potent as a significant piece of the rock and longevity of a relationship.

*As intuitive as I think I am, I admit sometimes I get it wrong
Am I too trusting? Do I extend myself too much, or am I just
too accommodating? Who knows? All I know is that it won't
stop me from embracing great personalities and relationships.*

What makes us open up to one person and not to another? One person receiving the shortened version of a story, and someone else getting all the details. The process of getting to know someone, and believing what they say is true, comes with an element of trial and error. Testing the waters to see if their responses, body language and, most importantly, their ability to be a safe confidant are the basis of a solid relationship. A little offset now and again is one thing and can be corrected with further discussion. However, complete opposite reactions can shut down discussion, and an imbalance in the relationship can occur. These changes may be apparent to everyone involved, or they may be so subtle that they enter almost unnoticed. No matter how it happens, we find ourselves playing a challenging Game of Truths if we do not learn to communicate our needs, wants, and desires and allow our partner to do the same.



How can I love you better?

☐ **Make becoming a Great Listener your top priority.**

- Commit to be fully available to listen when your love partner needs you. Yes, this will mean putting your own wants aside!

☐ **Listen with eyes and ears.**

- Turn, face your partner, and make full eye contact throughout the conversation.
- Concentrate on connecting to the full emotion, studying their tone of voice, body language, and movement of lips – even down to every nerve and muscle tweaked and pulled.

☐ **Listen without interruptions, criticism, or solution.**

- Consciously sit back and pay close attention.
- Recognize that this is “their time.”
- Use positive body language to encourage dialogue.

☐ **Understand the power of respectful listening.**

- Establish a mutual reverence for respectful listening.
- Yes, then you can ask for it in return.

**Becoming a Great Listener is the key to
Extraordinary Communication.**

Chapter 7

Noticing



Truth Tonic

“Well, thank you. I appreciate your appreciation,” she answered with a huge beaming smile. She was standing in front of the mirror putting on her mascara, and he was sitting on the bed with a “cat who got the cream” grin.

“I just love how you look in that orange dress. You look luscious and delicious!” His rapturous compliment made her feel like an adored rock star with an awestruck groupie.

“Why, thank you!” She glanced back at him with a flirty look and readjusted herself to ensure she was alluring from the back. There is nothing better than knowing how to preen yourself while the whole package is being appreciated.

To know that her efforts had achieved the desired effect was always a wonderful thing to experience. It was the realization that the power of a caring relationship had an additional benefit in its healing capacity. It could smooth out any lumps or bumps that had come about due to their day-to-day life together.

This life lesson sits out there for all to see. Some of us grasp it at an early age, but others go through life missing out completely. For

those of us who seize this little nugget, we see that it can turn our lives around and make anything possible.



Noticing from the Ground Up

When we learn to take time to look at our feet, and where we are walking, we start to look at our lives differently. The texture of what we are treading on and the content of the matter below become so important. Our brains tell us if we can stride forward with confidence or whether we need to be more mindful and move prudently. Really paying attention reminds us that we must view even the smallest particle in our life as an essential element.

If someone were to remove a granule, would I notice it as missing?

If I didn't, then did I really need it in the first place?

Or, was it that I had simply not made good use of it?

If we have too much stuff in our lives, and we view it all as inventory, then unless there is structure, the whole thing is chaotic and unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, it is often at those poignant moments in life that we discover the true authentic friendships that serve us. It is almost an awakening when we can truly see with our new eyes, and we find ourselves becoming more discriminating. Clarity can open our eyes wide, and we are suddenly able to differentiate between those we celebrate and those we tolerate.

The individuals who bring us great joy and satisfaction need to be reminded that they are our love tonic, and kept close. It is essential

for them to understand the “specialness” of their presence, and the importance of the role they play in our life.

The tiers of people, and their placement, then radiate out from that point. Once we establish that it takes a great amount of effort to reach them, we realize they are not so close and perhaps not so important. What can be disconcerting is when we fail to notice that someone either has, or needs to, move to another tier.

As we get older, we are often forced to come to terms with the painful reality that people come and go in our lives. We also discover that to fight this natural flow only brings additional unhappiness for everyone involved.

Eyes Wide Open

Living with our eyes wide open is definitely far more advisable, than with eyes shut tight. Thinking that we are seeing things, but really being blinkered in our interpretation of life, can bring a shocking reality when our eyes are pried open. Happy surprises can make us smile, but shocking ones can just bring tears to our eyes.

Am I ready for the clarity?

Am I ready to face things and deal with them head on?

Some people will admit to not wanting to know the whole truth about their lives. They would rather things happen away from them, out of sight, and definitely out of mind. Pain is to be avoided, at all costs, and many have grown accustomed to this way of thinking.

Have they got it right? Are there really too many potentially painful elements in life to even pay attention to? Is it really possible to close your eyes to the small stuff, and yet remember to open them for the big things? Isn't it when we ignore things that they tend to swell to ridiculous proportions out of neglect?

Some dreamers get lucky and can manage to avoid the big falling boulders. Unfortunately, all too often opportunists see an opening, come rushing in, and flatten them in the process. It is only in hindsight that we are reminded that there were early red flags. These sinister characters have a way of slipping in, as if in the still of the night. It is only in the aftermath, that we stop to reflect and say, “Hey, what was all that about?”



“What happened? Did you forget about me?” She made a determined effort to keep her voice down, as she was calling from the doctor’s waiting room. She was always conscious of the fact that her voice had a way of stripping back her emotions. The infamous razor blade tone could cut through the most harmless intention, and slice and dice the innocent at the other end.

“Honestly, I was just about to call you.” His attempt to appease her did little to explain the confusion.

“Where are you? You know we have to pick up the boys from school and then collect my car before the service department closes at five?” She had flashes of her strategic planning flying out of the window, and in her eyes, this was all due to lack of cooperation.

“I’m just heading back now. I’ll be with you in five minutes. I passed Mitch on the road, and he had a flat tire. He didn’t have a spare or money, so I had to help him with that. I couldn’t just leave him there.”

“Where are you exactly? You remember that five minutes our time is forty-five minutes in real time?” Explanations at this point did little for her urgency in solving this mix-up.

“Okay, well I am stuck in traffic, but it’s flowing now, and I will really be there in say fifteen minutes. How about I pick up the boys first and then we’ll all come for you?”

“Just hurry up — okay?” This was her cue to step away and finish the phone call. She could feel the pressure cooker between her ears and knew that a public place was definitely not the place for it to be released.

This was not the first time that this had happened but was, in fact, a recurring theme in their family life. His amiable personality was his most admirable quality and made living with him so easy. On the other hand, his easily recognized transparency was exploited at every step in life, and was often his downfall.



Attitude

We hear it all the time, “Life is all about Attitude.” We are told it is not what we do but how we do it. The thought and the intention behind our every behavior. For those who neglect to remember

this vital piece of knowledge, there are limitless placards with meaningful words of affirmation. Reminders, to nudge us at a moments notice, lest we forget.

Having the ability to shift your thoughts to a more up-beat and hopeful place is invaluable. Not only can it lift your mood and take you out of yourself, but it opens your mind to the big picture of life—the pinnacle of what is really most important, and life-altering if we were to lose it. Ultimately, it takes you to that place of humbleness and gratitude.

*But aren't we born that way? Some people are more optimistic,
and others more pessimistic. I thought it was partly genes,
environment, and life events. Isn't there something to be said
for living in the moment and owning your feelings?*

If we observe people who exhibit contentment with their life, there seems to be a common thread. They start by being grateful for each new day, and they are continuously counting their blessings. When and however they mastered this lesson becomes immaterial. The beauty lies in their personal resilience to life's hardships. Even when they have been stunned, and the breath has been knocked from them, they know how to get up again. They may have been down, but they are defiant in making sure that they are not out completely.



It was a hot summer evening and the electricity had just come back on. Ahhh... It was humid and, even with the fans blowing on high, the air was thick.

She was in the kitchen chopping up vegetables, and he was sitting at the table drinking a cool beer.

“Every day, there is something that either isn’t working, needs to be mended, and then to add to our frustration, they have to cut the light off for ‘load-shedding’ just at six when everyone is coming home. It’s never ending!” He clearly needed to vent his feelings.

“I know, and it drives you crazy. But at least we now have the pool to jump in and keep cool. Not like years ago when I used to get in the car in the middle of the night for the air-conditioning. Remember? I thought I would go out of my mind!”

“You know, Darling. I always tell people how amazingly adaptable you are. I know the years have been so up and down with my work, and you rarely complain.”

“Thank you. Just never lose sight of that. Because you see how some other wives are? We all have to look after what we have because it can all be taken away so quickly.”

They did this often. Reminders of how fortunate they were and the life they had built together. Leaving those thoughts in their heads was one thing. Saying it out loud brought intensity that was impactful in its message.



Taking for Granted

It is so easy to take every aspect of our lives for granted. We become used to having certain people present, doing what they do, and a comfort sets in. We have faith and believe that they will always be there. However, needs and expectations change with the seasons of time, and not appreciating the natural rhythm of life can catch us off guard. It rarely dawns on anyone that people stay in our lives by choice.

This can be said about all relationships in our lives. We are quick to point out obvious omissions in other people's behavior, shake our heads, and tut-tut our disapproval. But how many of us really ask the people within our circle, "How can I love you better?"

*Do I do that? Do I take people for granted? Is it possible that my loving isn't actually enough, and that they need more from me?
Is my heart big enough to satisfy everything they ask of me?*

Hearing horror stories and being reminded of personal loss is often all that is needed to jolt us to our senses. Honoring our nearest and dearest with sincere words of appreciation has a deep reward. Valuing what we have together will nurture and satiate the deep well of our self-worth. It is the necessary topping-up, and recharging of our Love Battery. The afterglow is the feeling of being wrapped in the arms of an Earth Mother—a soft, cushiony place to recline.

Being Humble

Natural disasters constantly remind us of the fragility of life. Our hearts squeeze in pain, watching lives devastated. Their eyes show the disbelief, that a hell on earth has touched their world. No rhyme or reason and, all too often, unforeseen. Everything they had worked for has gone. People they loved are either hurt or dead. Their future erased, now their only thoughts are focused on existing.

Do we have to lose everything before we realize what we have?

Is it only then that we find out what is most important to us?

Why do we have to feel desperation in order to accept an outstretched hand? Do we have to experience a similar pain in order to be able to look at a fellow human being with understanding and compassion?

The reality is that for any of us to truly understand something, we have to experience it ourselves. We have to feel the sensation of discomfort moving through every nerve in our body. To become saturated in the emotion, and delirious in the moment. Compassion is a wonderful attribute for an onlooker, but nothing can replace deep personal knowledge. Wisdom is recognizing that you have to “Walk the Walk” to be able to “Talk the Talk” with authenticity.

Sorrow and joy sit together, and when we swing on the pendulum of life, we are reminded of the depth of each.

Losing touch with our humility is one of life’s great sorrows, and a sign that we have lost our footing somewhere along the way. This is where grasping and truly understanding the beauty of teamwork and coupledness allows us to appreciate the small things and live a life of gratitude.



How can I love you better?

- ☐ **Start paying attention to the PLEASE and THANK YOUs in your daily interactions.**
 - Practice reintroducing them if they have been missing.
 - As often as possible, make eye contact when saying them.
 - Note the effect.
- ☐ **Appreciate the power of Sincere Declarations of Love.**
 - Take time to really think about what your partner does for you.
 - Dig deep to find ones you have yet to express, or those you have not relayed for some time.
- ☐ **Play together.**
 - Take turns finishing this phrase:
“I appreciate you because...”
 - You may be surprised how things develop once you get past the top 5!

Never forget that “actions speak louder than words.” This is an essential ingredient for the maintenance of respect.

Chapter 8

Problem- solving



Volcanic Truth

She ripped back the shower curtain and shouted, “How on Earth could you keep that a secret from me? I was mortified when I met Carol today! There we were, chatting away, and at the end she said, ‘Well, I have to think you don’t know that your husband borrowed money from me.’ Do you know how stupid that made me feel? I just wanted the ground to open up!”

“I know, I know, I should have told you but I just thought I could repay her quickly. I’m doing work at her house, so it was really almost like an advance.”

“No, it wasn’t because before I could ask her ‘How much?’ she said it was more than the cost of the work. So that is a loan.” She could feel her eyes flashing red. She was furious.

“I’m sorry, Darling. I know I’m late paying her back, and I should have called her to keep her updated. Look, I’m finishing a job this week, and I’ll pay her before the weekend. I promise.”

“Well, PLEASE call her and let her know. All this could have been avoided if you had just kept her informed. Goodness, I thought we

were a team. If I'm open with you about everything, I expect you to do the same. You know I HATE secrets!"

The cry and pain of her voice clearly affected him. His face fell instantly, and he spent the remainder of the evening quietly moving around the house. Meanwhile, she lay down on the bed, exhausted by the shock of the discovery and by the strength of her anger. It was rare for her to feel this type of emotion toward him. In fact, she had ever been this angry toward him.



Many people live their lives like molten rocks of lava. Bubbling and gaining heat, slowly rising to reach the inevitable point of explosion, they finally spew without control and cause heaps of destruction.

*Sounds familiar. At different times in my life, I have been surrounded
by seemingly dormant volcanoes who, without much warning,
erupt and burn. Definitely a landscape I'd rather keep well
away from - myself included!*

Being in close proximity to a person who appears to have a bubbling volcano within can make for a life that is both unpredictable and exhilarating at the same time. Yet someone with that personality type can be quite exhausting to be around.

Alternatively, we may in fact *be* that very person. It may have dawned on us that even satisfying basic needs does little to dismiss the weightiness of discontent. A restlessness may have germinated

from childhood and grown with the years. Sometimes, it seems as if everything bothers us. We live with a sense that no matter what we do, we will never be able to shake the feeling that there must be something better out there for us and we just don't know how to find it.

I really wonder if it is this highly driven world that we live in which exhorts such pressure on us to push hard? Or, is it us not wanting to face the fact that we made a wrong choice and a wrong turn?

Expectations

Planning and setting goals are how we are taught to be productive citizens in the global world. We are encouraged at an early age to be high achievers and to be purposefully motivated. Moving forward and not standing still is seen as a natural progression in character formation. Ambition is an admirable personal quality and a highly sought after strength. It is one of those universal qualities that can be applied to all areas of our life, and in varying degrees.

There is something extremely attractive about a purposefully driven workingman — The Great Protector.

When things do not seem to be working out, we often find ourselves standing amongst falling rocks, sporting bruises to prove all that we've withstood. At times, we may feel that we have been treated unfairly or misunderstood. Or, we may be frustrated with ourselves for not having the capability to get to where we need to be.

Did I bite off more than I can chew? Sometimes I seem to get it right, and then other times I'm stuck and nothing I do seems to work.

*Being turned upside down and shaken seems to be the only
remedy to get things moving again.*

Sounding off or venting our emotions has a wonderful shedding effect. Stripping ourselves clean may happen in layers or in one heartfelt discussion, depending on how practiced we are in sharing our feelings. The role of a love partner comes with this footnote. In a balanced relationship, there is a feeling that mutual time will be given when needed. Unfortunately, for many, equilibrium has become a rare commodity and resentment builds within the dependable giver as failing expectations mount.



“I just don’t get it. I just don’t get it.” Ramming the clothes in the basket to emphasize her point, she continued, “I mean, how many times have you heard me tell the boys to put their dirty clothes in the wash basket?” She knew he could probably see the steam coming out of her ears. She was hot and close to her limit with the warning flashing eyes.

“Many, many times. I know.”

“The basket is only about four feet from where they drop their clothes. Does that make sense? It’s so irritating, because no matter how much I talk, the problem just goes on and on. See, now I have a thumping headache and it’s so unnecessary.”

“Calm down, Darling. You’re going to give yourself a stroke. Go and have a bath and a lie down. I’ll speak to them and explain that you have had enough.”

“It won’t make a difference. I just don’t understand. If I do things to make their lives easier, why won’t they do the same for me?” Tears were running down her face. She was exhausted.

“I’ll handle it, and we’ll see how we can solve this problem. We can’t let something like this drive us insane. It’s just not worth it.”



Small Irritations

It starts like a pebble in a shoe and then, before you can blink, the splintered rock has ripped holes in the relationship, to the point that everyone can see them. The small things that come between us can deteriorate into a humongous eyesore.

But life is full of this, isn't it? The questions we need to ask ourselves is, "Why did we let it happen?"

Perhaps our peripheral vision has been failing us, and now it is time to open our eyes fully. Or, events and circumstances have simply run amuck, and we have to catch up quickly in order to contain it. Time and experience, within a particular partnership, allow us to determine the most effective route to take to bring us back into balance, to find healing.

Life's irritations have a way of revealing themselves. Luckily for most of us, the irritations are just surface deep. It is important for us to recognize the problems for what they are. They are superficial enough to be relatively easy to treat, but significant enough to have the capacity for long term damage if ignored.

Infections

Left untreated, and without taking steps to prevent deeper damage, the very same problems can become infected. Over time, they can even become putrid and may cause excruciating pain when touched. Healing seems impossible.

How we tackle these issues will ultimately direct us toward the outcome that we are striving for. One alternative is a thorough cleansing and rebuilding with the help of a professional. On occasion, an assessment may reveal that the only answer is severing the affected area and starting a new.

*I like that—just cut it off! I can relate to that completely.
Things like loyalty and trust are so deep for me that I often feel
I can never fully get them back. Better to just move on.*

Wisdom provides the answers. A gift from the highest, that intuitiveness comes from our soul and then speaks to our mind. That's where our foundation is formed, solid and able to withstand anything that comes our way. Having the insight into what is really right for us as individuals is the key to resolution, and we can only find that by going to our partner and telling them the truth, no matter how challenging it is.



“In the Big Picture of things, it really isn’t so important.” This had become something of a personal mantra for her. Not only did she feel the need to pass this gem on to those closest to her, but it was also a self-reminder. “I mean, in the big picture of our life, and life in general, missing out on one Mother’s Day lunch isn’t really going to make a big difference.”

“I’m so glad you said that, Darling, because you know these fishing trips don’t come up that often.”

“I know, I understand. You go and enjoy yourself, but make sure you bring back some fish!” They both laughed at their own personal willingness to keep each other happy. What could have been perceived as a deal breaker, and a selfish request, was handled with their usual sense of fair play.



Neglect

To a certain extent, entering adult loving without the necessary knowledge to transverse unknown waters is to be expected. We start dating, thinking that we are getting to know another person when, in fact, it is an appreciation of ourselves that is being formed. Little by little, we start gaining experience; we start determining what we like and what we don’t like. We start chipping away at

the rock and begin shaping the image of the type of person who would suit us best.

*I wish it were as easy as modeling clay. A vision of perfection...
but what about the inside? Hmmm...*

Experience can come in many forms, starting at the very beginning of our life. Feeling warm loving arms and adoring kisses surrounds us with the knowledge that this is love. Witnessing, with our own eyes, kind deeds and interactions within our own home becomes a familiar landscape.

But, what happens if the coin lands on the opposite side and what you see and experience is far from love? It would be as if everyone was talking gibberish and you had been dropped in a foreign land. You'd feel like an outsider looking in on another person's life, but with a resigned sense that this could never be your reality, because deep in your soul you know there is more.

*I saw it and wanted it so badly. I craved it so much that
I could taste it, and it was like nectar.*

It makes sense why so many people appear to have a "hands off" approach to their love life. They do not have the "know-how" to handle life when it gets a little down and dirty. Time passes. Problems grow. Emotions rise, and our foundation cracks and becomes unstable. Reactions become overreactions, and responses become unpredictable. We erupt. Essentially, the relationship has been neglected and without radical repair, there is a great chance that it will self-destruct. The volcano will erupt, spewing molten

rock and lava in all areas of our life and covering everything with a layer of ash.

This is where learning as much about ourselves is as important as learning about relationships. Having as much control as life allows us will then permit us to stand at the helm of our own ship, instead of being lost at sea.



How can I love you better?

- ☐ **Discuss: What is the Big Picture of our life together?**
 - Focus on steps to future goals.
 - Hold the vision when moving through the following recommendations.
- ☐ **Acknowledge resentments and unresolved problems in your relationship.**
 - Start by making individual lists.
 - Decide together if there are any outstanding complaints that can be easily rectified. Take one from each list to satisfy a win-win for everyone.
- ☐ **Try to talk with honesty and openness about sensitive issues involving trust and respect.**
 - If this is not possible, then professional advice would be the next step.
 - A compassionate, confidential third person relieves pressure and opens communication.

By gaining balance in our life, we can then concentrate on filling our lives with happiness.

Chapter 9

Intimacy



Sex, Truth, and Rock and Roll

They were having one of those wiped out and exhausted evenings. After making dinner and dealing with the children, they looked at each other and dropped heavily into their seats. As they slowly started to recover, they bounced ideas back and forth for the rest of the evening.

“No, you’re not pouting, are you? You’re kidding, right? I mean how many times have you been turned down for sex in all of the time we’ve been together? Not counting when I’ve been ill, probably only a handful of times, right?” She couldn’t believe his attitude.

“I know, Darling, but I can’t get enough of you. It’s like the more I have, the more I want. I’m addicted to you!” He laughed at himself, yet he was still obviously disappointed.

“I’m just exhausted. I didn’t sleep well last night because I had so much on my mind. You know that is the first thing that goes when my head is so full. Look, just let me have some peace and quiet and power nap for a couple of hours. You know that always does the trick. Then I’ll be wide-awake, bright eyed, and bushy tailed. Deal?”

“Okay, but you promise to wake up when I waken you?” His hopeful eyes looked like they needed further reassurance.

“Promise. Now go before I change my mind!” She laughed, satisfied that she had been successful in her negotiations.

The very idea of being in a relationship where your needs are honored and your feelings count seems foreign and unimaginable for many. Having an atmosphere where ideas can be bounced around, and everyone’s input is equally considered, may be laughable and completely idealistic. But, if you were asked the question “How can I love you better?” would you feel comfortable enough to voice even the mildest dissatisfaction about your most intimate sexual life?



Bridging the Gap

Building that bridge between the wide chasms created by unkind words and deeds from others in our past and the place we would rather live is having faith in a positive future. Learning the art of catching your toxic thoughts and moving them directly to a better

place is a major component of self-reliance. It is being reminded of others less fortunate, and keeping your blessings in big bold letters in the forefront of your mind. However, for us to fully understand this, we have to experience that slipping and sliding into self-pity. It can feel cathartic in that moment, but predictably takes us to a place of immobility and hopelessness. We may believe this is the way to grieve and heal, but unknowingly, we descend to a constant place of sadness.

The passageway to a healthy future is the ability to open the gap to a person with whom we can feel safe. To repeatedly talk about the pain, and slowly gain trust until the pain slips from your lips as easily as the events of the day. Hopefully that person is your love partner, and with the sharing comes the reward of a special intimacy.

The strength of our relationship is determined not only by our willingness to share innermost secrets with our love partner, but for them to reciprocate. Mutual honesty and trust are the most wondrous healers.

*When I speak my thoughts out loud in the dark of night, I know that
they will go unchallenged. My shyness and fear at expressing them
in the light of day vanishes in the stillness.*

Dissatisfaction and feeling that we are missing out on something can have a dampening effect on our life. Thinking and talking through those feelings can help to explain the restlessness. It may reveal itself as something exclusively personal that you need to

work on and achieve. Or, it may involve your partner and your life together.

How we deal with this new information will take us down varying paths in our lives. Accepting and cherishing it as privileged knowledge will then give you an opportunity to fulfill the requests. Being big enough not to take it as an accusation or criticism is not an easy task. Our intention behind our every move is the key to maintaining the relationship, or not.

Feeling Good

Learning to feel good about ourselves began when we first started recognizing our own bodies and gender. Calling them our “impressionable years” is so precisely on target, because everything made an impression, and some to our disadvantage. Early labeling may have made us an easy target for hurtful comments and bullying, and in later years, we may rename it as “branding.” No matter how we see ourselves reflected in the mirror every day, it is hard to replace that early imprint.

*I sometimes wonder why I had to reach adulthood before someone told
me how amazing my eyes were. Now I know my beauty is
within and is expressed through my eyes.*

The years passed and, for most of us, we entered our adult sexual life. How we presented ourselves to the world was very much influenced by the knocks and dents from others. Anyone who had attacked our mental or physical equilibrium left an impression that would affect our overall self-confidence and relationship

expectations. Even if we considered ourselves to be good healers and strong individuals, we would be reminded and even haunted by our past at times.



“Hey, Baby, can tonight be all about me? I think I need the works!” She said it with her coy, saucy look that he knew so well. “You know when I like to lie and zone out. You could massage me...very slowly,” she said with a wink.

“Okay, okay. Well, I think I could manage that,” he replied, trying to feign some seriousness. In truth, he knew that making her happy meant his happiness would be returned.

They drew great comfort in this game that they played with their sexual needs, joyful in the knowledge that neither of them would be forgotten or silenced.



It Takes Two to Tango

The beauty of new relationships is the opportunity to start afresh, and create things in the way you know they need to be. Setting things straight from the get go so that there are no surprises is so important. Whether you are both able to complete the voyage will be revealed over time, but at least you will have gotten off to a good start.

The synchronicity of a compatible coupling brings an ease and lightness to each step. There will, of course, be the odd misstep but there is a generally minimal stepping on toes. Each person is an obedient student and memorizes the floor patterns. Walking is one thing to master, but dancing is another.

Picking up the pace in the presence of sexual arousal, and continuing to be attuned, is often a challenge for even the most expressive couple. Our pre-programmed mind tells us that we are supposed to be having unfailing, earth-shattering sex throughout our lives. However, this same thinking can play tricks on us. It can set us up for disappointment and a pressure to perform on cue.

I get it, I understand. Sometimes it's more about me, and other times it's all about him. It fluctuates, but it works.

Once we grasp an understanding, not only of our own variations in desire, but also our partner's, then the perceived gravity of the situation is diffused. Being willing to work with differing time preferences and varying levels of participation is half the battle. The emphasis is on our own responsibility in maintaining an all-around level of satisfaction, and not placing it solely in the lap of our lover.

Libido

Many debates have been generated as to where individuals produce, and subsequently place, their libido on the scale of desire. Undoubtedly, the governing body of all the contributing factors is the power of the mind and imagination. Our ability to tap into this vast resource in our psyche is the drive behind the desire.

Certainly, there are some additional contributors, such as levels of sex hormones, overall self-esteem, and the quality of reciprocal loving care. However, many people judge their level of desire by the frequency and the quality of the lovemaking. For them, this is their language, which translates into how much they are needed, wanted, and loved.

Absolutely, it's my way of expressing love and appreciation.

It makes me feel so good and eases anything that's bothering me.

It's my 'pick me up!'

This is why sexual intimacy is the very pulse of a loving relationship. When the timing is off, then a fluttering can be felt extending out into other areas of our lives. Unavoidable events may affect the natural flow, and so being flexible and kind with each other is vital for loving feelings to remain. Remembering always that being affectionate with each other, even in the absence of intercourse, is still an integral part of sexual closeness.



Their big jet bath had been filled, the lights dimmed, and the tall cathedral candles were lit around the tub. Soft music set the mood and the end of a hard workday was drawing to a close. In his eyes, it made it all worthwhile. The icing on the cake.

They bathed together like this almost every night. They faced each other and chitchatted about their day's events. Their teenagers knew that this was "their time" and never disturbed them. It was their safe playground and a private sanctuary.

She bathed him in a ritualistic manner, first his face, then his back, with her bending him forward. She dried his face and head, and then turned her attention to each limb. Lifting each in turn, and slowly soaping and rinsing. He simply surrendered to this anointing of his body. Not only was it cleansing the sweat of the day, but also had an analgesic affect on each painful muscle. His stressed mind was eased by the therapeutic effect of the ceremonial affair, and the body followed.

As the water cooled, the time allocated came to a close. Their senses had been stimulated, and an effortless love making usually took place.



Understanding the Power of Giving and Receiving

If your personal attitude is the expectation of always being the receiver, then knowingly or unknowingly, you are allowing lethargy to creep in. Being in a committed relationship is more than just showing up. It includes being fully present and playing big in the picture of your life. Each of us has a personal responsibility in contributing to the life force that produces the combined energy. Not fully participating is essentially denying the relationship the possibility of reaching its full potential.

*I see that all the time with friends. It's like they just can't
be bothered anymore. They've given up.*

Withholding affection on a long-term basis can be interpreted in so many ways. Whether it translates to a lack of interest, caring,

or even punishment, the truth is that it all hurts. Being on the receiving end of pain is gut wrenching and raw. Small dips are to be expected just by living with another individual, but breathtaking plummets can hold some risk.

Are we born being a “giver” or a “receiver,” or is it all learned behavior? Can we start predominantly as one, and find ourselves at the other side due to our life experiences? How much can we really control, and how much is out of our hands?

Being able to put yourself at the head of the line of receivers is often the starting point for self-worth. So often we are told, or made to feel, that we are selfish when we try to enforce our wants. An egotistical woman, wife, or mother has such unpleasant connotations in society that we quickly want to shake it off and redefine ourselves. This may stop the boat from rocking in the short term, but continuously dampening someone's spirit can sink them altogether. This is why it is so important to learn how to deal with our past and feel good about ourselves, in order to maintain our unique essence.

Big Love is the best description of pure giving and receiving. It means having the ability to temporarily remove oneself and channel our loving-kindness towards our lover. To truly come to understand the difference that this gift can make in your intimacy will then be life-changing. The beauty of true giving and receiving is that it creates a shift in the energy and love. The result is a spiritual connection, which becomes all consuming and addictive.



How can I love you better?

- ☐ **Commit to a fresh new attitude toward your mutual sexual happiness.**
 - Learn from each other through the eyes of both a student and a teacher.
- ☐ **Discuss and find a light sense of humor for discussing sexual intimacy.**
 - Do you consider your relationship playful and fun?
 - Is this important to you?
- ☐ **Discuss how much passionate kissing is present today.**
 - Understand that kissing is the gateway to all forms of eroticism.
 - Reintroduce or enhance the frequency, intensity and technique of your kissing. Kissing has the ability to refresh any tired love life!



☐ **How do you rate yourself sexually?**

- Are there things you would like to improve on?
- What is stopping you from making those changes?
- Compare notes. Any matches? Discrepancies?
- Discuss if there are any areas that can be mutually improved upon, and set realistic goals.

**Moving from “Just Sex” to “Making Love”
means committing to Big Love.**

Chapter 10

Growth



Truth Bombs

“I love that we go out a lot, but aren’t you tired of the same old places?”

“Kind of, sort of. Why? What were you thinking?” She had caught his attention. They prided themselves in being creative with their social life, and the mere thought that they were getting stale in that department was unthinkable.

“Well, we love dancing, so I was thinking about Salsa lessons, and then we could practice at those salsa events around town.”

“Oh yeah, that’s a great idea. It’s like Merengue, so we should be able to pick it up quite easily.” He was quickly enthused and started moving in time to the imagined music.

“Yeah, Baby, go for it! Swing those hips!”

Dinner was in the oven, so they slipped in their one and only Salsa disc and danced, in time, to the Latin beat. They were instantly energized by the idea of adding another dimension of sensuality to their repertoire.



Having the ability to sustain, and ultimately increase, our lifelong appetite for life has to be recognized as a gift. Mundane daily living has to be one of the primary sources for dampening any zest for life. Yet so many of us move along with mindless predictability and keep our actions within the safety zone of comfort. We spend our lives keeping close to the walls and parameters of our box, so as not to cross the line.

Is everyone born with a box, or is it given to us as we “come of age?”

Isn't there safety in knowing that we have the same packaging as everyone else? Or is that safety what deadens our appetite for life?

Walking along the same well-worn paths can dull our gaze and squash our enthusiasm to take even a slight turn or detour on our journey. We may well have become so incarcerated by our habits that the thought of stepping out sets off alarm bells to the very depths of our soul. We learn to quell the restlessness and reconcile that it is for other, more venturesome people.

But is it a trade off? Do we lose our sparkle and pizzazz?

The Zest

A zest for life has to be our individual condiment. We can personalize it with our own particular flair, but to run out of it completely is to lose a main ingredient in the elixir of coupledness. Of course, you have to find, recognize, and then be able to pull it out of your back pocket when things start to become bland. This

comes easily when taking note of the things that make us happy and light hearted – the thought of a person who brings a smile to our face and an experience that brings us pride and joy.

*Yep, I know the ingredients that I have to mix together
to make everything taste delicious. I have it bottled and
ready at a moment's notice!*

Discovering the zing or kick is often the answer to overcoming the many mental obstacles that come our way. These are the self-imposed speed bumps that make us stall and prevent us from moving into action. We may believe that we are handling things with due diligence and care, but at the same time be reminded of the fine line between caution and immobility.

*Sometimes the list of “what ifs” and “buts” can go on forever,
and before I know it the moment and opportunity has passed.
Instead of grabbing it, I let it slip away.*

How we fully embrace today, and clinch a deal with our tomorrow, has a lot to do with our past experiences. Memories can have such a tight hold on us that personal freedom seems almost unobtainable. We may try hard to move forward, but are continuously thrown off course by the self-imposed speed bumps disguised as doubt and fear.

One effective remedy is to observe the people who seem to have walked the same path and burst through the other side. Their stories may vary, but typically there is a common theme and a basic truth to the secret of their success. The first thing we realize

is that they have made a conscious effort to declutter their mind and simplify their life by letting go of redundant relationships. A cleansing has taken place and from there a new self-trust and an optimistic faith in their future have grown.



“Are you getting everything you need?” She had thrown him a deliberate curve ball. She liked to describe it as her personalized safety gauge to make sure that everything between them was intact.

“What do you mean? We’re eating dinner. Yes, I’m getting a hot meal. If that’s what you mean.” He looked puzzled but intrigued at the same time. He had grown used to her unique style of opening a conversation about their relationship and knew that it would then develop into so much more.

“You know, anything and everything. Whatever your little heart desires. I would just hate to think that you are needing and wanting so much more to complete your happiness. So that’s why I’m asking you the question.” They had this great openness and had even reached the stage where they could handle hearing each other’s fantasies.

“Seriously? EVERYTHING that would complete my happiness?” He was winking, grinning widely, and laughing all at once.

“No. Those fantasies, including your dream girls, will have to remain in your head. You know exactly what I mean. Anything that involves us.”

“Aagh...well, when you put it like that...” He nuzzled in and, with his famous Russian role-play accent, proceeded to whisper instructions.



Sick and Tired

When we are not getting all that we need and want in a relationship, it may start to wax and wane, and then a disabling weakness seems to take over. A lethargy and lack of interest comes and sits within the relationship. No matter from which direction it has entered, the fact remains that it has caused our strong foundation to crack and weaken. A quick response to even the smallest hairline crack is called for or else the structural defect has a way of mirroring itself in others.

*Ha! Funny, and yet so true! If we don't watch out,
it's like we are pulled down by sinking sand.*

This is why it is so important to discover our own antidote to the blues in order for us to avoid the potentially weak spots of our foundation. What works for you may well have a similar response in your lover. To master the “prop up,” “lean on,” “catch them when they fall” mindset is worth the investment. Like a wise old sage, you have learned the true essence of loving-kindness.

*In the light of the day, I now realize that the only thing of great value
that I can give to someone is loving support and encouragement.*

The longer we know someone, the greater our chance of really getting to know their tender spots and vulnerabilities. Of course, if we want to weaken our foundation even more, then we can use this knowledge to our advantage and rock our lover's world in a negative way. But, if we are committed to strengthening and promoting healthy relations, then we can anticipate and avert the pain for our lover through our loving words and deeds.



“I was thinking today about our marriage preparation classes. Someone was talking about them recently, and I’m not sure why, but it popped up into my head. It was the bit when Father talked to us about the importance of always trying to think about your partner’s positive qualities, and not their negative, *‘Because once you let all that negative stuff come in, it just has a way of taking over.’* So true, isn’t it? Don’t you think it’s because we are both more upbeat, positive people, that it’s worked so well for us?” she asked.

“Yeah, absolutely. I also remember my uncle taking me aside at our wedding reception and telling me not to ever treat you like a piece of furniture. And I haven’t, have I?” He was grinning from ear to ear because he knew, and felt confident, of how she would answer.

She always laughed hard at the memory, but also at his need to be reassured. “You’ve been great. I know you appreciate me and you know that I do too, don’t you?”

Nothing like a big sloppy kiss to seal the deal! And on they went with their day.



Piece of Furniture

The day we start to view our partner as a useful appendage is a sad and perilous day. Their skills and gifts may be so impressive that we find ourselves bowing out to their superior capabilities. It may seem flattering and novel at first to be so needed, but over time, feelings of being taken for granted or neglected may begin to emerge.

*Like washing dishes and changing diapers, they do it so badly,
and we can't bear to watch it. So we're left with no choice
but to step in. Suddenly, we are experts!*

Feeling that your presence is only desired because of your handiness has sad repercussions. Our role starts to feel like a job, and before we know it, we have acquired an employee mentality. We start to evaluate activities within our relationship by their perceived monetary value, and anything extra as overtime compensation.

*I hear and see it so often —
love portioned out only when it passes inspection.*

It really does not matter whether we are that piece of furniture, or the one using, it all has a similar soul-destroying effect: overlooked and neglected. Not seeing or appreciating the love that we have been given is risky because of the potential loss and waste of a precious life.

Tarnished and Needs a Polish

Sometimes, when we have found that cozy little niche, our first instinct is to hunker down and mark our territory. We stand guard and prowl around the perimeters to warn off potential intruders. Our mind and eyes work in quick response and recall – thorough and vigilant.

Mama Lioness protecting her own.

Don't make me growl or snap at you!

We can feel gloriously confident in protecting our territory and may in fact feel that this is instinctively natural for a female. In our contentment, we even believe that if we keep on doing what we are doing, things will remain the same. However, we can quickly become habitually preoccupied and lose focus on the importance of looking inwards and nurturing our love.

Hopefully, we are not caught off guard and our instinct has been equally sharpened to catch sight of a little lackluster that may have developed. Understand that membership, in a committed couple, is accepting responsibility to keeping things polished. Whether this entails a little stripping, or a heavy buffing, will become evident when we admit to what is going on inside.

The meaning of “housework” suddenly becomes clearer.

But what products do I use to polish?

This is where home schooling and becoming well read in all areas of romance is so important. It will lead to you to the magic and mysteries of your lover's mind, heart, and soul. Not knowing how

to bring up such a topic, without it being misconstrued, is often the stumbling block. But, keep in mind, that as we try to read our lover's mind, they are probably trying to do the same.

Be the first to initiate a conversation, and you may be surprised to discover that you are both ready to study at the same time. It is possible, at any age and stage, to become one of those couples that have a permanent sheen.



How can I love you better?

☐ Create your Zest Bottle.

- List the top 5 things that are your antidote to the blues.
- Are they easily accessible?
- Do you need to update your list?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

☐ Create Relationship Housework.

- Are there things that would benefit from a little shine?
- How would you go about achieving your goals?
- Tackle one at a time and agree on a time frame for completion.



☐ **Create your Wish Lists.**

- What things have been talked about but never accomplished in the relationship?
- What has been preventing you?
- Set 1, 3, 6 month and yearly goals to generate enthusiasm and energy.

1 Month: _____

3 Month: _____

6 Month: _____

Yearly: _____

**Remember, we only have ONE LIFE
to LIVE and LOVE FULLY!**

Chapter 11

Consistency



Standing the Test of Truth

“Do you remember when I was telling you about the guy that came up to me after my last talk?” They were both sipping cold drinks in the swimming pool as dinner was cooking. Not only did it give them an opportunity to unwind outdoors, but it also allowed them to have focused time together.

“Do you mean the older or the fresh young one?” he asked.

“The younger guy. Well, he called me today. Not on my work phone, but on my cell phone. You know I rarely give that number out, so I’m completely thrown off to start with. He then asks if we could meet—not a session.”

“Wow! Did he say how he got your number?” She could tell he didn’t like what he heard.

“No, and I didn’t ask. Didn’t need to cuz it was not going to go anywhere. We met in a professional setting, and it was going to remain there. I just said, ‘No thank you. I don’t see clients outside

of work, but I would be happy to make an appointment whenever you are ready,' and that was that."

"Good. Hope he got the message!" He never really got overly concerned because he knew that she was competent to handle situations like this with ease.

"Dear, always remember that my honesty and openness is out of respect for you." They both smiled and nodded in agreement.



Being Constant

Being one half of a committed relationship has to come with the guaranteed assurance to be constant and true. This means that the promise comes with a conscious decision to be loyal to each other. In many cases, this requires us to shield one another from the rocks life throws at us in the form of unavoidable disappointments.

*"Ping" goes the rubber band, and I spring back to face my
rightful place and our reality. Or do I try to turn and hide?*

To be able to speak the bare naked truth and live an authentic life has to come with cast iron intention and rigorous practice. It is only by living this huge commitment to ourselves that we are then able to reenact it in our love life. Without a doubt, dependability is one of the most enviable qualities to aspire to and attain. It is such a virtuous attribute that it often has the ability to override other human failings. Whether it has all come naturally or has been perfected as a result of

warm feedback almost becomes irrelevant, because it is a wise lover who knows that it lies at the foot of a satisfied relationship.

Knowing that our role requires us to be present and available whenever our loved one beckons is often one of the biggest challenges for the non-conformist. It makes us question our independence and commitment to the coupledness. Sometimes there may be a variety of reasons, but more often than not it is the feeling of being controlled that causes resentment.

*Do I do what is expected of me and be a good girl?
Or is it a matter of him getting used to my idiosyncrasies?*

Being able to deliver promises is one of the things that many people struggle with. Usually, the only way to overcome this is to be accountable to a significant other and uphold a conscious willingness to change behavior.

To follow through on a promise can test the solid core of trust, respect, and commitment. Without the bond that holds a couple together, a relationship will likely be prevented from growing into maturity. In fact, the effects of a break in any of these areas, and at any level, can quickly terminate a relationship.



For her, holding hands had always represented a special type of intimacy. She just couldn't, and wouldn't, hold hands with anybody. To her, it signified a deep trust connection that she did not place arbitrarily. Her father was the person who taught her

this and even as a young adult she would feel comfortable walking hand in hand with him. It brought her much joy to know that she had passed this loving gesture on to her grown sons, as they often took her hand in public.

So you see, when he took her hand for the first time as they came off the dance floor, at the start of their Truth Tango, she felt a familiar comfort. It felt similar to her father's hand, and from that point forward, she knew no harm would come to her. In fact, all the way through their relationship, they continuously held hands. Even in the sun, where everything gets hot and sweaty, they would join pinkies. As they aged, people would laugh at them and view it as a sprightly youthful behavior. To them, the perceived unusualness of the act was in fact instinctive. In response, they would laugh back, and all the time hold on to their secret that they held hands while lying in bed.

The intertwining of fingers and hands signifies the naive and almost childlike elements of placing yourself in another person's hands. It is a respectful affirmation that this is the first person we choose to turn to, or to be led by. Not only does it symbolize the union, and that "We are joined as One," but most importantly it reflects the beauty and simplicity of Love.



Lean On Me

Almost from the very start of a relationship, there is an unspoken testing of the “Lean on Me.” Sharing our life with someone means that they become aware of our worries and concerns. To have the ability to lean on our partner with our conversation helps to lighten the load and make everything more bearable.

This is what respect is built on. Initially, this may seem one-sided, but it is amazing how when we need someone, we then find them responding in a similar fashion.

*This is the truth. Not only is my back being rubbed,
but my ego is being stroked.*

It is only when life pummels the outer layers of our relationship that we discover if the foundation is whole and uncracked, reassuring and allowing us to move on with other areas of our life. Or, we may find ourselves completely taken off guard when we discover that the solid relationship we thought we had isn’t so stable after all. This will require us to step back and evaluate what needs to be done. However, if the task seems insurmountable, then it is important to remind ourselves that we were not all meant to be Do-It-Yourself experts, and to reach out for help.



They were known for their signature parties, and this one was particularly memorable because it had landed on the hottest night of the summer. The outdoor heat was wildly above humid and had

a melting effect on the guests. So much so that the usually packed dance floor remained sparse all night.

They had all worked hard preparing for the party and had been building the platform for the live band right up to the last hour. Caterers and bartenders whirled around and their returning illusionist surveyed the grounds for his best vantage point.

As much as she had planned the night, she never lost sight of the fact that he was giving this to her as a birthday gift. So when she was handed the microphone to thank everyone for coming, she took the opportunity to say something very special.

“Please raise your glasses to the Main Man and the Man who makes All Things Possible!!!”

Everyone roared and cheered and drank to him. His enormous smile quite literally stretched from ear to ear. The look of pride and adulation was written all over his body, and the moment would always remain etched in her memory. In one simple and yet profound sentence, she had managed to lift him up and show everyone that he alone sat as king within their marriage.



Pedestal

From an early age, the seeds of being someone's cherished and coveted love has been deeply embedded into our heart's desires. Fairy tales of princes and princesses were instrumental in planting the vision of being in that majestic position.

Isn't that the epitome of being treasured?

To be held up and idealized?

Graduating from being a friend, and “one of the crowd,” to being the “one and only” means that we move from being a pebble on the beach to being selected as that special one, now being kept close to their heart. Not only are we viewed and treated differently, but our own perspective changes as well. We have stepped up to the top tier of our love’s circle.

Getting to that point is often the steepest part of the climb for many people. Sometimes, we can feel that we present and offer ourselves in a package that seems impossible to refuse. Or, we may feel that “There is nothing more that I can do,” and “They can either take it or leave it,” and overall, the relationship seems like hard work. Alternatively, we may be puzzled by a seemingly effortless relationship that only requires a gentle step to that special spot high above our competitors. The love equation still remains a mystery to academic love researchers, but does little to deter our quest for personal happiness.

The question behind the question mark.

Why do we fall for the people we fall for?

Finding your way onto the pedestal is one thing, but remaining there requires ongoing input from both parties. This special place can be as sturdy and secure as you want it to become, and will then have the capacity to hold any weight. The pedestal legs have to be leveled and anchored into that foundation, or you’ll find yourself standing on teetering legs.

*No one wants to be the ornament toppling off the upper tier.
Painful, ugly, and embarrassing all at the same time.*

The Bubble

As the years tick by, most of us come to know ourselves and who we are within our relationship. Hopefully, the most difficult things have been ironed out, or at least there is an acknowledgment that this is how things are, and will probably remain. Once we figure out that constantly battling the inevitable only brings us more grief, an element of relinquishing the fight can bring us a new peace.

*So true. When I resist the path that has obviously been chosen for me,
I just keep on bucking up against a wall.
If I then step back and take time to work out how I'm
going to be able to deal with it, I do much better.*

Capturing a life of peace and contentment has to be created within a strong, but stretchy, bubble of joy, peace, and happiness. A protective, airtight environment that holds the outside world at bay. It is that nurturing safe place that allows us to be ourselves without serious harm. To stay and thrive within this bubble, we need nutrients to fuel our survival. This comes in the form of our love partner who lives and breathes within our space.

I've found it, so don't burst my bubble!

The modern lifestyle bubble is adaptable, but without a solid foundation, it may burst in the sunlight.



How can I love you better?

- ☐ **Do you place your lover on a pedestal?**
 - Are they aware of it?
 - If not, then why not?
- ☐ **Rate your dependability within your relationship.**
 - 1 – History of being completely undependable
 - 2 – Used not to be but trying to be different
 - 3 – Pretty good, but for the rare occasion
 - 4 – Rock Solid
 - 5 – Considered to be the greater Rock Solid partner
- ☐ **Compare scores and discuss specific and/or recurring situations.**
- ☐ **Have you ever experienced living within a Bubble?**
 - ☐ **YES = Present**
 - Trust
 - Respect
 - Commitment
 - Love
 - ☐ **NO = Absent**



❑ Discuss how to improve the foundation of your relationship.

- What do you expect from each other?
- Agree to discuss your relationship on the first weekend of each month.
- Set new monthly goals and record it on a calendar using three statements. For example:
New Beginning, Sexy, Work Hard.

The aim is to always feel as if you are moving forward and not backwards.

About Maggie

Born in Kano Nigeria and raised in Scotland, Maggie Bain ventured to the Bahamas in 1988. She arrived with a wealth of knowledge after having been trained in the United Kingdom as a Registered Nurse (Foresterhill College, Aberdeen), Midwife (Olive Haydon School of Midwifery, now amalgamated as the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery), and Critical Care Nurse (Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh). After more than thirty years of nursing, she decided to pursue her lifelong interest in human sexuality at the Florida Sex Therapy Institute, West Palm Beach and returned to break new ground by becoming the first Sex Therapist in The Bahamas and sparking conversations on sexuality.

In addition to her work as a Relationship and Intimacy Specialist in her private practice, she wrote a weekly column titled ‘Loving Relationships’ for the health section of Nassau’s Tribune newspaper

and hosted 'Love on the Rock,' an interactive relationship radio show on Island FM. Realizing how powerful this work was for the individual and the collective, she left the Bahamas to study with bestselling author, transformational speaker, and featured teacher of *The Secret*, Lisa Nichols, and launch a global brand to help people strip down to their authentic selves and create more intimate relationships in their lives.

Known today as the Bare Naked Coach, Maggie uses her natural ability to see the hidden pain and gently bring it to the surface, so that people can experience some quick relief before they learn the skills required to enhance their relationships and deepen their intimacy. She also guides many through the pain of infidelities, ends of relationships, and divorce.

As a Speaker, she often approaches taboo conversations with an intoxicating combination of lighthearted humor and the intensity of someone who is unwilling to allow relationships to remain anything less than extraordinary. Intimate personal stories and thought provoking insights mesmerize audiences--moving them between tears and laughter and leaving them uplifted, hopeful, and equipped to transform their love lives.






A Special Invitation

If you're ready to strip it down
to create extraordinary relationships,
and need a little help figuring out where to start,
head back over to **www.BareNakedCoach.com**
to check out my free resources or schedule a
FREE coaching session with me.

Strip down. Get honest. Create an Extraordinary Relationship.

Relationship and Intimacy Specialist Maggie Bain slams the text book shut and pulls back the curtains (and the covers!) to show you the real secrets to deepening intimacy in your relationship. Relatable stories and thought-provoking insights make it easy to identify the limiting beliefs and behaviors that are keeping you from experiencing the love you deserve.

You will learn how to:

-  **Dance the Truth Tango**
-  **Express Yourself Authentically**
-  **Create Trust in Your Game of Truths**
-  **Keep It Fun and Delicious**
-  **Make Your Relationship Stand the Test of Truth**

*It's TIME TO GET TRUTHFULLY NAKED AND CREATE
AN EXTRAORDINARY RELATIONSHIP!*



*Maggie Bain, The Bare Naked Coach,
works with individuals and couples to
promote intimate relationships.*