

SPECIAL REPORT



REAL LOVE

**The Simple Secrets of a Happy Life
and Fulfilling Relationships**

*With Real Love, Nothing Else Matters;
Without It, Nothing Else Is Enough.*

By Greg Baer, M.D.
Author of the *Real Love*® series

- ⊗ Do you somehow sense that something is missing from your life?
- ⊗ Do you find yourself hiding who you really are from other people?
- ⊗ Do you remember how you felt when you fell in love with your partner? Do you miss that?
- ⊗ Do your children argue with you?
Do you hate it?
- ⊗ Do you find your job less than fulfilling?
- ⊗ Do you find yourself irritated at people a lot?
Do you wish you were more peaceful?
- ⊗ Does dating seem like an endless, frustrating game?
- ⊗ Do you feel like almost nobody understands who you really are? Do you feel alone?
- ⊗ Are you having sex less and less, and enjoying it less?
- ⊗ Do you find parenting stressful?



- ⊗ Are you less confident than you wish you were?
- ⊗ Are you sick of meeting losers when you date?
- ⊗ Do you and your partner argue about money? Children? Sex?
- ⊗ Do you wish your life were somehow more fulfilling?
- ⊗ Do your children fight with each other? Hate that?
- ⊗ Do you spend a lot of time motivating your employees to work faster and better?

Anger, frustration and loneliness have become so common **that we accept these feelings as NORMAL**, even unavoidable. We feel like we have to settle for less than we really want.

WRONG. We just don't know any better. If you will follow the clear, simple principles in this report, **you will experience a level of peace, joy, and confidence you never thought possible.** Really. So what will your life be like for you **FROM NOW ON?**

- ☺ You'll have a level of confidence that will eliminate fear from your life. That's a miraculous feeling.
- ☺ You'll enjoy a richly fulfilling relationship with your partner, friends, and others.
- ☺ You'll enjoy being with your children, and they will enjoy being with you. No more contention.
- ☺ You won't get irritated at the many little things that bother you now.



- ☺ You'll discover who you really are, which fewer than 1% of people recognize now.
- ☺ You'll lose whatever addictions you have—to food, alcohol, drugs, sex, and more.
- ☺ You'll finally understand all the puzzling and annoying behaviors of everyone around you,.
- ☺ You'll enjoy sex in ways you can't imagine now.
- ☺ You'll get a sense of satisfaction and excitement from your job that you've never known.
- ☺ Dating will become effortless and rewarding. No more frustration.
- ☺ You will never have to feel alone again.
- ☺ You'll know what to do if you begin to feel sad, an-

gry, or alone.

There's more...

So what if you DON'T read this report? What is the **COST**?

*I'm am NOT trying to be a downer here, but I have counseled thousands of people from every continent on the globe, and I can tell you **EXACTLY** what happens to people who don't live by the principles in this report—and that is the case for the vast majority of us.*



- ☹ Your anger, sadness, and frustration will deepen and become unbearable.
- ☹ You and your partner will argue even more, or you'll drift apart and divorce.
- ☹ Do you somehow sense that something is missing from your life?
- ☹ Your children will become more unhappy and almost certain to have miserable relationships with their future partners.
- ☹ Do you find yourself hiding who you really are from other people?
- ☹ Do you remember how you felt when you fell in love with your partner? Do you miss that?
- ☹ You'll feel more and more alone. That's the

worst feeling of all.

- ☹ You'll hate your job more and pray for the end of every work day.
- ☹ You'll find yourself more irritated at people for all the little things they do.
- ☹ Dating will become an intolerable ordeal. You'll hate every minute of it.
- ☹ You'll acquire more addictions: food, alcohol, drugs, sex, and more.



- ☹ You'll become more and more exhausted.
- ☹ As they become adults, your children will avoid you, and you'll be baffled why they don't call more often.
- ☹ You'll likely be in and out of therapy. I routinely talk to people who have spent 10-20 years in therapy at \$50,000 to \$200,000 and more.
- ☹ You'll be far more likely to DIE. No kidding. Stress has been absolutely proven to cause heart disease, digestive problems, immune deficiency, cancer, and more.



On the following page is an introduction to the principles that will eliminate the fear, anger, and confusion in your life and replace those conditions with peace, joy, and confidence.

SECTION ONE

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

What Our Lives and Relationships Really Need

It's pretty obvious that something is wrong with us as human beings. Half the marriages in this country end in divorce, and despite an abundance of self-assured finger-pointing, the people involved rarely have any idea what actually went wrong. Half of children are now raised in a single-parent home. Ten to twenty percent of us are addicted to alcohol or drugs. One-third of all girls and forty-five percent of all boys have had sex by age fifteen (compared with five percent for girls in 1970 and twenty percent for boys in 1972). Twenty-one percent of ninth graders have had four or more sexual partners. Nine percent of adult males will spend some time of their life in prison.

The point is, overall we're not happy. We're looking for something that's missing in our lives, and most of us seem to be caught in an endless cycle of disappointment and unhappiness, blindly repeating the same mistakes. Thousands of people have found that "missing something" as they've implemented the principles in this book. And I have great confidence that you, too, will enjoy the same experience.

When we're unhappy, it seems natural for us to blame a partner—a spouse, a friend, a child, even a relative stranger—for our feelings, mainly because that's what everyone else does. All our lives we've heard variations of statements like "You make me so mad," or "He makes me so angry," until we've come to believe that other people have the power to determine how we feel. Because other people have often pointed out how *their* anger was caused by our mistakes, we have learned to justify *our* anger by pointing out the mistakes of others. And because people are always making mistakes, it's easy to find justification for our blaming and anger.

Sadly, it's a common pattern: If we become unhappy in our relationships, we turn our partners into scapegoats for everything we don't like, and we blame them for all the unhappiness in our lives, including the unhappiness we carried with us for the many years before we even met them. But we are mistaken to blame our partners for our negative feelings. It's just the excuse we use because we feel bad, we don't know why, and we need

someone other than ourselves to blame. Until we understand that, we cannot learn to have truly loving and lasting relationships.

The Missing Ingredient

We absolutely must understand that other people do not CAUSE our feelings, so let's prove that right now, using anger as an example of our many feelings.

Imagine that you have only two dollars left in the world, and you're starving. Putting the money on a table, you get ready to go out and buy some bread. Suddenly, I dash into the room, snatch the two dollars off the table, and run away before you can stop me. You'd almost certainly be angry at me and would claim that I made you angry.

Now imagine that the next day I do exactly the same thing—steal two dollars off the table as you're getting ready to go out and buy some bread—but this time you have twenty million dollars in the bank. How would you feel now? Compared to twenty million, two dollars is nothing, and losing it would be insignificant.

We just proved that I didn't make you angry when I took your money the first time. If my behavior caused your reaction the first time, then doing the exact same thing the second time would have made you angry then, too. But it didn't. Your anger was a reaction to your lack of twenty million dollars, and I wasn't responsible for that.

And so it is with all feelings, in and out of relationships. When we're unhappy, our misery is not the fault of our partner or of a situation. Blaming people and things is therefore foolish, wasteful, and destructive, because no matter how much we demand or insist, they cannot make us happy. We're unhappy because we're starving for the one ingredient that's most essential to genuine happiness, and it was missing long before we met any particular person or situation.

That ingredient—the one thing that creates happiness and fulfilling relationships—is Real Love, unconditional love. It's that simple. When we learn what Real Love is, and when we find it, our unhappiness disappears just as surely as hunger vanishes in the presence of food. Genuine happi-

ness and loving relationships then become natural and effortless. But most of us have not experienced Real Love. As a result, we're emotionally and spiritually starving and are unable to make each other happy, no matter how hard we try.

Real Love and Genuine Happiness

Real Love is caring about the happiness of another person without any thought for what we might get for ourselves. When we give Real Love, we're not disappointed, hurt, or angry, even when people are thoughtless or inconsiderate or give us nothing in return—including gratitude—because our concern is for their happiness, not our own. Real Love is unconditional.

It's Real Love when other people care about our happiness without any concern for themselves. They're not disappointed or angry when we make our foolish mistakes, when we don't do what they want, or even when we inconvenience them personally.

Sadly, few of us have either given or received that kind of love, and without it we experience a terrible void in our lives, which we try to fill with money, power, food, approval, sex, and entertainment. But no matter how much of those substitutes we acquire, we remain empty, alone, afraid, and angry, because the one thing we really need is Real Love. Without it, we can only be miserable; with it, our happiness is guaranteed.

When I use the word happiness, I do not mean the fleeting pleasure we get from money, sex, and conditional approval. Nor do I mean the brief feeling of relief we experience during the temporary absence of conflict or disaster. Real happiness is not the feeling we get from being entertained or making people do what we want. Genuine happiness is a profound and lasting sense of peace and fulfillment that deeply satisfies and enlarges the soul. It doesn't go away when circumstances get difficult. It survives and even grows through hardship and struggle. True happiness is our entire reason to live, and that kind of happiness can only be obtained as we find Real Love and share it with others. With Real Love, nothing else matters; without it, nothing else is enough.

The greatest fear of all for a human being is to be unloved and alone. As a physician, I saw that confirmed many times by people who knew they were dying. Those people were consistently more afraid that no one cared about them and that they would die alone than they were of death itself. We all have a deep yearning to feel connected to each other, and when that connection is missing, we are terrified.

When someone is genuinely concerned about our happiness, we do feel that connection to another person. We feel included in his or her life, and in that instant we are no longer alone. Each moment of unconditional acceptance creates a living thread to the person who accepts us, and these threads weave a powerful bond that fills us with a genuine and lasting happiness. Nothing but Real Love can do that. In addition, when we know that even one person loves us unconditionally, we feel a connection to everyone else. We feel included in the family of all mankind, of which that one person is a part.

Because so few of us have ever experienced unconditional love in our lives, and because the effect is so powerful, I want to give you a small taste of it. I encourage you to slow down right now and really take your time as you read the next four paragraphs. If possible, read them in a room by yourself and take the time to contemplate them deeply as you open your mind to the possibilities they suggest.

Picture yourself relaxing in the back of a chauffeur-driven car. You're on the way to a town two hours away. It's a small town you've never visited. In fact, no one knows about this place but you and the people who live there. Although it's a beautiful place situated in a lovely valley, you're not going there to see the sights. You're going because everyone there is genuinely happy. They're happy because they all feel loved. In this place there is no fear or anger. And you're going because they've invited you.

As you pull up to the house where you'll stay, dozens of people surround your car, touch you gently, help you into the house, ask about your trip, and look at you in a way you've never seen or felt before. You sense with absolute certainty that the only concern of everyone in that town is your happiness. Because they have everything that really matters in life—because they feel loved and happy themselves—they don't need you to do anything for them, and you know that. So you know there is nothing you can do to disappoint them or hurt them.

As you communicate with these new friends, you can see that it doesn't matter to them whether you're smart or pretty or handsome. You don't have to do anything to impress them or get them to like you. They truly don't care if you say something stupid or if you make mistakes. It finally and powerfully occurs to you that it's impossible to be embarrassed or ashamed around these people—because they love you no matter what you do.

That is the feeling of being unconditionally loved—and many of us simply can't imagine it, even as a mental exercise. We've been judged, criticized, and conditionally supported for so long that the idea of being unconditionally accepted is inconceivable. But I have seen what happens when people consistently take the steps that lead to finding Real Love, which I'll be discussing in the following sections. For now I simply want to assure you that you, too, can find this kind of happiness and that it will utterly transform your life. I ask you to temporarily put your doubts on the shelf and allow for the possibility that Real Love exists, and that you can find it. I make that suggestion because in an atmosphere of skepticism and fear, you cannot experience Real Love, even when it's offered.

Feeling loved and becoming unconditionally loving doesn't happen all at once. You won't lose your fear, pain, disappointment, and anger overnight. Experiencing Real Love takes time and patience, and you'll stumble and fall along the way, as I do every day. But the journey is well worth every effort. This is not a fantasy. Thousands of people have successfully used this simple process to find Real Love, genuine happiness, and fulfilling relationships.

At this point, you may be thinking, *But we can't just unconditionally love people when they're wrong. Somebody has to speak up when mistakes*

are made. And it's true that we sometimes do have the responsibility to teach and correct people—children and employees, for example. But that never has to be done with disappointment and anger, the two signs that always reveal that our true motivation is to get something for ourselves—and that is not Real Love.

You might also be worried that loving unconditionally would turn you into a doormat, to be used by everyone around you. But loving people unconditionally does not mean you have the responsibility to give them everything they want. That would just be indulgent and irresponsible. When we love people unconditionally, we accept them as they are and contribute to their happiness as wisely as we can. That does not imply that we respond to their every demand.

The Destructive Legacy of Conditional Love

Real Love is “I care how **you** feel.” Conditional love is “I like how you make **me** feel.” Conditional love is what people give to us when we do what they want, and it's the only kind of love that most of us have ever known. People have liked us more when we made them feel good, or at least when we did nothing to inconvenience them. In other words, we have to buy conditional love from the people around us.

It's critical that we be able to distinguish between Real Love and conditional love. When we can't do that, we tend to settle for giving and receiving conditional love, which leaves us empty, unhappy, and frustrated. Fortunately, there are two reliable signs that love is not genuine: **disappointment** and **anger**. Every time we frown, sigh with disappointment, speak harshly, or in any way express our anger at other people, we're communicating that we're not getting what **we** want. At least in that moment, we are not caring for our partner's happiness, but only for our own. Our partner then senses our selfishness and feels disconnected from us and alone, no matter what we say or do.

Most of us have received little, if any, Real Love. We prove that every day with the evidence of our unhappiness—our fear, anger, blaming, withdrawal, manipulation, controlling, and so on. People who know they're

unconditionally loved don't feel and do those things. But most of us have been taught since childhood to do without Real Love and to settle instead for giving and receiving conditional love. Let me use myself as an example. As a child, I was thrilled when my mother smiled at me, spoke softly, and held me, because I knew from those behaviors that she loved me. I also noticed that she did those pleasant things more often when I was "good"—when I was quiet, grateful, and cooperative. In other words, I saw that she loved me more when I did what she liked, something almost all parents understandably do.

When I was "bad"—noisy, disobedient, and otherwise inconvenient—she did not speak softly or smile at me. On those occasions, she frowned, sighed with disappointment, and often spoke in a harsh tone of voice. Although it was certainly unintentional, she clearly told me with those behaviors that she loved me less, and that was the worst pain in the world for me.

Giving or withholding acceptance based on another person's behavior is the essence of conditional love, and nearly all of us were loved that way as children. When we made the football team, got good grades, and washed the dishes without being asked, our parents naturally looked happy and said things like "Way to go!" or "I'm so proud of you." But when we failed a class at school, or tracked mud across the carpet, or fought with our siblings, or wrecked the car, did our parents smile at us then? Did they pat us on the shoulder and speak kindly as they corrected us? No, with rare exceptions they did not. Without thinking, they frowned, rolled their eyes, and sighed with exasperation. They used a tone of voice that was not the one we heard when we did what they wanted and made them look good. Some of us were even yelled at or physically abused when we were "bad."

Other people in our childhood also gave us conditional approval. School teachers smiled and encouraged us when we were bright and cooperative, but they behaved quite differently when we were slow and difficult. Even our own friends liked us more when we did what they liked. In fact, that's what made them our friends. And that pattern of conditional approval has continued throughout our lives. People continue to give us their approval

more often when we do what they want. And so we do what it takes to earn it.

Although it is given unintentionally, conditional acceptance has an unspeakably disastrous effect, because it fails to form the bonds of human connection created by Real Love. As a result, no matter how much conditional love we receive, we still feel empty, alone, and miserable. And although we like to believe otherwise, because we have received conditional love from others all our lives, that's what we tend to give to those around us. We naturally pass on what we were given.

We like to believe we're unconditionally loving, but in most cases we're not. We prove that each time we're disappointed or irritated with another person. We like to think we unconditionally love our spouse or children, but then we become annoyed when they don't do what we want, or when they're not grateful for the things we do for them. As we've discussed, the origin of our irritation is not what they've done (or not done), but the lack of Real Love in our own lives. Fortunately, you can now learn how to make decisions that will bring more Real Love and genuine happiness into your life.

If you're unhappy, don't look to your partner for the cause. You're unhappy because you don't feel unconditionally loved yourself and because you're not sufficiently unconditionally loving toward others. Both conditions have existed for a long time, usually from early childhood. Because your parents are responsible for the love you received as a child, and because any child who does not receive sufficient Real Love is necessarily filled with emptiness and fear, your parents are certainly responsible, to a large extent, for the way you feel and function as an adult. But you need to understand that as an adult you have become increasingly responsible for your own happiness. And so, exactly how much can you hold your parents accountable for your present condition? That would be impossible to quantify. But no matter what the exact extent of your parents' responsibility, it is definitely not productive to blame them for your present unhappiness—while it is useful to understand their role in your life. Understanding is a simple, realistic assessment of how things are, but blame implies anger, which can only be harmful to both yourself and others.

I've never met a parent who got up in the morning and thought, Today I could unconditionally love and teach my children and fill their lives with joy. But no, I think I'll be selfish, critical, and demanding instead. You need to understand that your parents loved you as well as they knew how and that they certainly didn't set out to cause you emotional pain. The fact is that if they themselves didn't have enough experience with Real Love, they couldn't possibly have given you the Real Love you required. Moreover, you are now responsible for the decisions that will make you loving and happy, and if you continue to be resentful and angry, you will not make wise decisions in the present.

When I talk to people about their unhappy lives and relationships, I don't dwell on the past. I don't make them victims of their past experiences. However, I find that it is occasionally useful to make them aware of what effect their past has had on their present unhappiness. Cheryl was very unhappy, and she blamed it all on her husband. I explained to her that her husband was not the cause of her unhappiness. "Your life was incomplete long before you met your husband," I told her. "You came to your marriage already missing something, and you hoped your husband would supply what was missing and make you happy. When he didn't do that, you blamed him for not fixing everything in your life. You were missing the one thing in life that we all must have in order to be happy and to have loving relationships."

"And what's that?" asked Cheryl.

"Real Love—unconditional love. When people don't get enough unconditional love as children, they feel terribly empty and afraid. People who feel empty and afraid can't be happy, and they can't have loving relationships, because they're too busy filling their own needs and protecting themselves. You hoped your husband would love you unconditionally, but he couldn't because he'd never been unconditionally loved himself. He, in turn, hoped you would unconditionally love him, but you couldn't, either, because you hadn't been unconditionally loved in your childhood. Neither of you had the love that's required to make a successful relationship. So you tried to make each other happy with other things: praise, sex, money,

control, things like that. But those things never last for long.”

“But I did feel loved. My parents did love me,” Cheryl insisted.

I’ve heard many people say that, and they’re always sincere. Who, after all, wants to believe his own parents didn’t love him? “How often,” I asked her, “did your father hold you and tell you he loved you? How many times each day was he obviously delighted when you entered the room? How often did your mother sit with you and ask what was happening in your life—just to listen, not to give advice?”

Cheryl was speechless. Although she’d been raised by parents who were as good as any she knew, she couldn’t think of a single time when any of those things had happened.

I continued. “What happened when you made mistakes and disappointed your parents? Did you feel just as loved then as when you were ‘good?’” As Cheryl described the details of her childhood, it became obvious that her father had mostly avoided her. Her mother had been kind when Cheryl was obedient, but she was critical and harsh when Cheryl “misbehaved.” Finally, Cheryl realized that she had never felt unconditionally loved. I then made it clear that there was no blaming in this, just an attempt to understand the real cause of the fear and anger in her life.

Once Cheryl understood that her emptiness, fear, and anger had been caused by a lifetime of feeling unloved, two very important things happened: First, she experienced a dramatic change in attitude toward her husband. She stopped blaming him for her unhappiness. That blame alone had nearly destroyed their marriage. Second, she began to take the steps necessary to find the Real Love she needed, and that changed her life completely. We often need to see that we were not unconditionally loved in the past, not so we can blame our parents or any particular person, but so we can *stop* blaming the partners we have now and begin to find the Real Love we need to create the genuine happiness we all want.

Some of you may believe that if our childhood was less than perfect, we just need to “get over it,” like a bad dream. You may think that what we

were given (or not given) so long ago couldn't possibly continue to affect us now. But look what happened to Cheryl because she'd failed to receive Real Love as a child. Without the most important ingredient for happiness, she grew up empty and afraid. As I spoke with her further, I learned that she'd reacted to her emptiness and fear by manipulating and controlling all of the people around her, not just her husband. She was destroying her life, and without Real Love that's what people continue to do, all the way into their seventies and eighties.

You can't build a solid house on a rotten, shifting foundation. But if you were not unconditionally loved as a child, that's the kind of foundation you have, and no effort you put into the walls, windows, and doors will ever be fulfilling. You have to fix the foundation. Fortunately, as you find Real Love now, you can heal all the wounds of the past, repair the foundation, and build the kind of life you've always wanted.

Drowning for Lack of Love

Imagine that you and I are sitting together by a pool, where we are enjoying a pleasant lunch, a warm tropical breeze, and the soothing music of a live band. But then someone in the pool begins to splash you—first on your shoes, then higher up on your pants or dress. You can't see who it is because there's a deck chair between you and the person in the pool. At first you ignore it, but eventually you begin to get irritated, and finally you get up from your chair to say something to this thoughtless idiot. As you stand up to look over the chair, however, you see that the man splashing you is drowning. He's only splashing because he's thrashing and kicking in the water to keep his head from going under.

How do you feel now? Are you still angry at the man? Of course not—who in their right mind could be angry at someone who's drowning? In fact, as soon as you see why he's splashing you, you not only lose your irritation, but immediately you try to help him out of the water.

With an understanding of Real Love, the way you feel toward other people in real life can change just as quickly and dramatically as your feelings changed toward the man in the pool. Without sufficient Real Love—without the single most important ingredient required for happiness—people feel

like they're drowning all the time, and then they'll use the Getting and Protecting Behaviors that allow them to temporarily keep their heads above water. Regrettably, as they're splashing about in the water with these behaviors, they often affect us in negative ways. When you understand that, your anger at others—or sense of hurt—disappears immediately and effortlessly, replaced by a desire to do what you can to help.

This understanding of Real Love makes immediate and powerful changes possible in relationships. People really don't do things with the principal goal of hurting you. When people hurt you, they're like the man who was splashing you—they're simply drowning and trying to save themselves. People who don't feel unconditionally loved are desperate and will do almost anything to eliminate the pain of their emptiness. Unfortunately, as they struggle to get the things that give them temporary relief—approval, money, sex, power, and so on—their behavior often has a negative effect on the people around them, including you. But that is not their first intent. Other people hurt us only because they're reacting badly to the pain of feeling unloved and alone. When we truly understand that, our feelings toward people, and our relationships with them, will change dramatically.

Without Real Love, we feel like we're drowning all the time. In that condition, almost everything seems threatening to us, even the most innocent behaviors. When people get angry or criticize us, we don't see them as drowning and protecting themselves. We become afraid, defensive, and angry, and we respond by using behaviors that may hurt them. Naturally, they react by protecting themselves and hurting us with even greater intensity, and until we understand that Real Love is the solution, we can only perpetuate this cycle of self-protection and injury.

Most relationships fail because we become angry and blame our anger on something our partner did or did not do. We need to remember that our anger is actually a reaction to the feelings of helplessness and fear that result from a lifetime of struggling to survive without unconditional love. Getting angry and assigning blame may give us a fleeting sense of power that momentarily relieves our fear, but those feelings originate within us, not with our partner's behavior.

When the man in the pool splashed you repeatedly, he did not cause your angry reaction. Your anger was the result of a series of many events that led to your not feeling loved. You did not become angry with the man in the water because of a few splashes. You were angry because you'd been ignored and hurt all your life, and his behavior was just the straw that broke the camel's back. His behavior only appeared to be the cause of your anger.

Similarly, the anger we feel toward our partners results from past events (whether or not we felt Real Love—mostly from our parents) and present decisions (whether we choose to be angry or loving with our partners). We're reacting to a lifetime of trying to survive without unconditional love, and anger is an understandable response because it makes us feel less helpless and afraid – for the moment. It protects us and briefly makes us feel better. But it never makes us feel loved or happy or less alone.

We need to learn a better response to our pain than blaming and anger, and we can. As we come to understand that our partners are not to blame for our unhappiness, we can better exercise self-control to curb our anger. Then, as we begin to find and experience Real Love, we'll feel whole and confident, and we won't be affected by people need around us who are splashing water everywhere. We'll no longer have to protect ourselves with anger—or any of the other unproductive behaviors we use in relationships, such as lying, acting hurt, and withdrawing. Our ability to form and maintain loving relationships will then come simply and easily.

Just as your perspective instantly changed when you saw the man splashing you, understanding Real Love will provide you with the ability to discern the difference between the “right” and “wrong” decisions you make in your life and in your relationships. First, I suggest that being genuinely happy is the ultimate goal in life and is therefore also the ultimate good. Second, because Real Love is absolutely essential to our happiness, I suggest that anything that interferes with our ability to feel and share unconditional love is necessarily “bad” or “wrong,” while anything that promotes our ability to feel loved and share that love with others is “right” and “good.”

SECTION TWO

GETTING AND PROTECTING The Many Faces of Imitation Love

Without Real Love, our emptiness is intolerably painful. We're starving to death, and we'll do anything to eliminate our discomfort—even if the relief we obtain is quite temporary and the overall effect of our behavior is destructive to ourselves and to others. We attempt to fill our emptiness with whatever feels good in the moment. We use money, the conditional “love” of others, anger, sex, alcohol, drugs, violence, and so on, all of which are variations of only four general things: praise, power, pleasure, and safety. When we pursue these things as substitutes for Real Love, they all become forms of Imitation Love.

Praise

Praise comes in many varieties—flattery, gratitude, approval, respect, sex, and money, among others – and we love them all. When people tell us how wonderful we are, we temporarily believe we're worthwhile. In the absence of Real Love, we convince ourselves that flattery is genuine affection instead of seeing it for what it really is: praise we have to earn. We spend countless hours and dollars on makeup, hairstyling, clothing, exercise, even plastic surgery, all in the hope of earning the words “You look great.” We work hard at school, in our jobs, and at home just so people will compliment our intelligence, creativity, and diligence. Our obsession with winning—in sports, business, and even everyday arguments—is also motivated by a desire to be flattered.

We tend to judge each other by our financial success, and we prove that with our endless curiosity about each other's jobs, incomes, investments, houses, cars, and boats. Even in conversations with relative strangers, we're almost always asked, "What do you do for a living?" If we say we're the chief executive officer of a Fortune 500 corporation, our companions tend to judge us worthy of further conversation, but their reaction is considerably less enthusiastic if we say we're a street sweeper. We hope that money and success will make us deserving of approval, which we then wishfully interpret as a kind of affection. It's only Imitation Love, but in the absence of Real Love, it feels pretty good, and many of us are quite willing to devote our entire lives to the pursuit of it.

When we don't feel unconditionally loved, our need for praise is unbounded, and much of that need is filled—however briefly—when other people find us sexually desirable. Most young men and women—and older ones, too—want to look like the models on the covers of magazines. We spend long hours worrying, scheming, and manipulating others so they will respect our strength, capability, and financial success—and all because we so badly want people to think well of us.

We love it when people say "thank you" to us, because we take it as a form of praise for our performance. It makes us feel important and worthwhile. In fact, we often do things for people just so we can receive their gratitude. We prove that every time we're disappointed and even angry on the occasions when we don't receive an expression of appreciation for something we've done for someone else. But people who feel unconditionally loving don't require gratitude for the things they do. Their concern is for the happiness of other people.

Power

In the absence of Real Love, we enjoy the sensation of power we get from manipulating other people. We use money, authority, sex, flattery, and personal persuasion to influence, control, and even hurt people. We actually feel some sense of connection to the people we control. The bond is shallow and fleeting, but it feels better than the pain of being completely

alone, and it gives us a momentary sense of emotional excitement.

If we're in a position of authority—in business, politics, the family, or in any organization—we can often make people do what we want, which makes us feel powerful, and then we feel less of the terrible helplessness that always accompanies the lack of unconditional love in our lives. As people follow our direction, we can also persuade ourselves that somehow they approve of us, which is something we want badly.

Money has always been a great source of power. We can really make things happen with money, and we like that. Money makes trucks move, planes take off, and people scurry to satisfy our desires. It can even buy temporary friends and sex. But it can't buy unconditional love, the only thing that will make us truly happy.

Imagine a young girl who gets little or no respect from her parents, teachers, or even her peers. She feels alone and helpless. But if she becomes sexually attractive, she quickly discovers that she can use her appearance and sexual behavior to influence and even control the thoughts and behavior of boys and men in a powerful way. It's an exciting and seductive experience. In the absence of Real Love, she's getting a lot of Imitation Love in the form of power.

Pleasure

The pursuit of pleasure is a way to distract ourselves from the emptiness and pain that always accompany a lack of Real Love. One of the most common ways we look for pleasure is through sexual gratification. To get an idea of the degree to which our society is obsessed with sexual pleasure, we need only make a brief scrutiny of our movies, magazines, television shows, and the Internet. Or we might pursue pleasure in the excitement of watching sports, watching television, traveling, even eating. All of these pursuits can be healthy and fulfilling, unless we're using them as a substitute for the infinitely more fulfilling happiness of Real Love or as a way to avoid facing our personal emptiness and our inability to find and maintain loving relationships. And if our pain becomes too great, we may try to distract ourselves in any number of progressively destructive ways,

ranging from playing too many video games and watching too many violent movies to drinking too much alcohol and taking mind-altering drugs.

Safety

Without Real Love, we're already in the worst kind of pain, and we'll go to great lengths to keep ourselves safe from experiencing more pain. If we can't have genuine acceptance, we can at least do everything in our power to avoid more disapproval. One way to minimize the risk of criticism and pain is to avoid doing anything unfamiliar. So we stay in the same boring, dead-end jobs, attempt to learn nothing new, and continue in stagnant, unrewarding—but predictable—relationships. When we're not being actively injured by something or someone, we confuse that safety with real happiness.

The Cost of Imitation Love

We love it when people say nice things to us. But we've all learned from considerable experience that most people praise us only when we're doing what they like. We then have to work hard to keep pleasing them and earning their approval. We're trapped. Earning praise becomes a never-ending burden, costing us far more than we get from it. And that's true with every form of Imitation Love.

In addition, no matter how much excitement or reward we get from the pursuit of Imitation Love in the beginning, the excitement always wears off. Remember how thrilling it was the first time you were paid a dollar for doing some chore? You got a feeling of praise from that dollar, and maybe a little power. But that feeling wore off quickly. And it wasn't long before it took a lot more than a dollar to give you the same thrill. Imitation Love is very much like an addictive drug. The effect wears off quickly, and over time we need more and more of it to get the same brief effect.

But we still haven't talked about the most dangerous cost of Imitation Love, which is that no matter how much of it we acquire, we never get the feeling of connection with other people that comes with Real Love, so we're still fatally alone. Unfortunately, Imitation Love does feel good—it

does feel better than nothing at all—and if we can convince ourselves that we feel “good enough,” we just might waste our entire lives pursuing this false sense of happiness instead of finding the Real Love and genuine happiness that are available to us. In the absence of Real Love, we often allow ourselves to believe that we’re actually loved and happy when we get enough Imitation Love. An ocean of Imitation Love lacks the power to create the happiness found in a teaspoon of the real thing, but if we don’t know about Real Love, we’ll gladly fall for the deception of the imitation. That is the ultimate tragedy of life.

I’m not saying, however, that praise, power, pleasure, and safety are always bad. They’re dangerous only when they’re used as substitutes for Real Love and genuine happiness. When two people really care about each other’s happiness, praise becomes nourishing and fun, not contrived and manipulative. Under those conditions, each partner experiences the real power that comes from being loving and happy. Both partners feel the genuine safety that comes from being cared for by one another. And sex – as one of many examples of pleasure – becomes healthy and delightful, because it’s a natural expression of Real Love instead of a substitute for it.

If Imitation Love leaves us feeling empty and miserable, why do we keep pursuing it? Because living without unconditional love and feeling alone are unbearable, and we’ll do almost anything to get rid of those feelings, however superficial and temporary the relief might be.

Chuck was fifteen years old. His mother told him every day — often without saying a word—that he was messy and a huge inconvenience to her. His father told him he was clumsy and irresponsible. Understandably, Chuck felt unimportant, unloved, empty, and alone. And then he discovered that Melanie, a fourteen-year-old girl down the street, thought he was cute and smart and actually enjoyed his company. Wow! Suddenly he felt important and powerful. He also enjoyed the excitement of physically touching her and eventually having sex with her. All this Imitation Love was the best thing he’d ever known, and he clung to it like a drowning man.

When Chuck’s parents learned he was having sex with Melanie, they

angrily forbade him to see her again. But, not surprisingly, he ignored them and continued to see her. He was not about to let go of the only thing he'd found that had ever relieved the intolerable emptiness and pain he'd felt all his life. That reasoning didn't justify his behavior, but it certainly explained it.

Getting and Protecting Behaviors

The absence of unconditional love creates an emptiness we cannot ignore. Because of that, our subsequent behavior is often completely determined by our need to be loved and our fear of not being loved. Without Real Love, we do whatever it takes—Getting Behaviors—to fill our sense of emptiness with Imitation Love. And we also use Protecting Behaviors to eliminate our fear. The Getting Behaviors include lying, attacking, acting like a victim, and clinging. The Protecting Behaviors include lying, attacking, acting like a victim, and running.

Lying

We've learned from countless experiences that when we inconvenience people with our mistakes, they tend to express their disappointment and anger toward us. We then feel less loved and more alone, the feelings that terrify us the most. To keep that from happening, we lie about our mistakes. We hide who we really are.

If you watch two people in conversation, you'll see that each of them is carefully and unconsciously studying the other for any hint of disapproval—a forehead wrinkling into a frown, an eyebrow lifting into an expression of doubt, a corner of the mouth turning down, a change in tone of voice—and when that happens, the speaker immediately modifies what he or she is saying until all those signs of disapproval disappear. In most cases we don't even know we're doing this. However, that modification of what we say and do to please other people is lying—because we don't tell our partners that we're trying to get them to like us (lying as a Getting Behavior) and protect ourselves from their disapproval (lying as a Protecting Behavior).

We lie in other ways as well. When we tell people about our accomplishments but not our flaws, hide our true feelings, change our physical

appearance to attract people to us, or tell people what we know they want to hear so they'll like us—we're lying. We're lying when we fail to take complete responsibility for what we do, when we tell only the partial truth about our mistakes, and when we shift the blame to as many other people as we can. We're also lying when we don't take responsibility for our own feelings, such as when we blame other people for "making" us angry. With our lies, we get Imitation Love in the form of praise, power, pleasure, and safety. We do this so often—and so unconsciously—we think it's normal.

Attacking

Attacking is any behavior that motivates another person through fear to behave in a way we want. For example, with anger—probably the most common form of attacking—we can make most people sufficiently uncomfortable (afraid) that they'll do whatever we want in order to stop us from making them feel bad. With our anger, we can get people to give us attention, respect, power, flattery, approval, even sex. But of course, if they're giving us these things not because they're genuinely concerned for our happiness, but simply to avoid our anger, all we're receiving is Imitation Love. We're using anger as a Getting Behavior—to win arguments, impress people, and make ourselves feel strong—and as a Protecting Behavior to prevent other people from hurting or threatening us and to keep ourselves safe.

In addition to anger, we attack by making people feel guilty, criticizing them, withdrawing approval, physically intimidating them, and using our positions of authority at work, at home, and elsewhere, all in order to get Imitation Love and to protect ourselves from fear.

Acting Like Victims

If we can convince people that we've been injured and treated unfairly, they'll often stop hurting us and give us their sympathy, attention, and support. That's why we act like victims. Victims are always saying variations on the following three sentences: (1) Look what you did to me. (2) Look what you should have done for me (and didn't). (3) It's not my fault. Victims have excuses for everything and blame everyone but themselves for their own mistakes and unhappiness. We've all acted like a victim at

some time in our life. Whenever we're confronted with a mistake we've made and say, "I couldn't help it," we're acting like a victim.

Running

If we simply move away from a source of pain, we're less likely to be hurt. Withdrawing, avoiding people, leaving relationships, and being shy are all forms of running. Drugs and alcohol are other ways to run.

Clinging

Clinging is obvious when a child grips tightly to his mother's skirt. But we also cling emotionally to those people who give us attention, hoping we can sometimes squeeze even more out of them. We may do this by flattering the people who do things for us, or by being excessively grateful. We can sometimes cling by telling people how much we love them and need them. Another way to cling is by giving gifts that we hope will obligate others to feel affection for us. These are all forms of manipulation that we use—usually unconsciously—to get more of what we want from people. Effectively, we're begging for more Imitation Love.

Getting and Protecting—Why Do We Do That?

At heart, we all know that lying, attacking other people, acting like victims, running, and clinging are not responsible and "right" behaviors. In fact, when confronted about these behaviors, we usually hide them. So why do we use them? Because we get a lot from them. In the absence of Real Love, these behaviors protect us from pain and fill our emptiness, and they usually produce an immediate response. When I get angry, for example, I can often get people to do what I want much more quickly than if I use gentle persuasion. That's a real inducement to use anger. As a child, I learned that it was faster and less painful to lie about breaking the window than to confess, listen to a long lecture, experience the horror of my parents' affection withdrawing, clean up the mess, pay for the window, listen to another lecture when the window was replaced, and hold my breath waiting for more lectures each time I hit a baseball around the house. Is it any wonder that children grow up to lie as adults? The rewards of using

Getting and Protecting Behaviors are great.

But the costs of using those behaviors are much greater. Lying, being angry, and manipulating people for attention take a lot of work. And after all that effort, the satisfaction is gone in an instant. The effects of Imitation Love are brief, and then we have to start earning it all over again. Still, most of us devote our entire lives to these hopelessly unfulfilling activities. And in the end, we never get the deep connection of Real Love we need and want.

In addition, the Getting and Protecting Behaviors drive people away from us and bankrupt the very relationships we want to enrich. We use them for short-term gain, but we cause enormous long-term damage. For example, you may use anger to win an argument with a partner, but can you remember the last time your anger made you feel more unconditionally loved by someone, or more loving toward him? You may get out of trouble by lying to someone, but you'll never deeply enrich your relationship by doing that. When we do things to get Imitation Love and to protect ourselves, our partners sense that and pull away from us emotionally.

The worst effect of Getting and Protecting Behaviors, however, is that they make it impossible for us to feel Real Love, even when it's actually being given to us. Whenever we manipulate people in any way for something we want, we know that what we receive is purchased, not freely offered. We're paying for what we get, whether we needed to or not. We'll be discussing why that is in the following section. For the moment, you just need to understand that when we use Getting and Protecting Behaviors, we exhaust ourselves, we spend our lives for nothing, we guarantee that we'll never feel loved, and we hurt the people around us. If that's true, if Getting and Protecting Behaviors are so terrible, why don't we stop using them? Because we're rarely conscious of them. A drowning man doesn't mean to hurt other people; in his state of mindless panic, he simply can't seem to stop himself from splashing and even grabbing anything or anyone that might help to keep his head above the water. His fear is so overwhelming that he doesn't think for a second about the harm he might cause others as he saves himself.

Without Real Love, our fear of being unloved and alone is overwhelming. We then use our Getting and Protecting Behaviors in a state of panic very similar to that of a drowning man. Our primary intent is not to hurt other people or do anything wrong; our real goal is only to eliminate our own emptiness, fear, and pain. When we really understand that, the way we see our own behavior and the behavior of others will change forever. We will no longer feel excessively guilty for our own behavior, nor will we be angry at others for using those same behaviors.

All our lives we've been taught that when we inconvenience and hurt other people, we're "bad," morally defective, even monstrous. We're supposed to feel guilty when we offend another person. And we all feel entirely justified in being angry at those evil people who dare to violate all that is right and good by inconveniencing and hurting us. Our society virtually revolves around the principles of guilt and anger. The guilty must pay. If we are the guilty ones, we must feel great remorse and wallow in our guilt. If others have transgressed, then we feel justified in venting our anger against them.

But all that guilt and anger turn to dust when we understand our need for Real Love and the reasons for our natural use of Getting and Protecting Behaviors when we don't have it. When we lie, attack people, act like victims, and run, it's not because we're bad or wish to hurt other people. We do those things because we're empty and afraid, and we hope they will protect us and fill our lives with Imitation Love. Those are the only behaviors we know—the ones we learned from our childhood. That does not justify our behavior, but it certainly explains it.

It's a huge waste of time, energy, and happiness to wallow in excessive guilt when we make mistakes. How much more productive it is to simply see our mistakes clearly and learn from them. In most cases, the problem is a lack of Real Love, which we can solve by taking the simple steps we'll describe later. In addition, we need to exercise our own self-control in changing our behavior, something we'll talk about in several subsequent sections.

Similarly, when other people make mistakes—even when they inconvenience and hurt us—we need to remember that they, too, are simply empty

and afraid. Seeing the mistakes of others in this way doesn't change the fact that their behavior may be selfish or counterproductive, but it does make it possible for us not to be angry and to give them what they really need—someone to understand and help them. They don't need yet another person to be angry at them and punish them, which only adds to their pain and actually increases the likelihood that they'll use even more Getting and Protecting Behaviors. Anger and punishment do not make people happier. That doesn't mean, however, that there's no place for negative consequences, even prisons, when people keep making poor decisions—but we'll be discussing the subject of consequences later.

Matthew's life provides a prime example of Getting and Protecting Behaviors. Although he had a great job, plenty of money, a beautiful wife, and all the things most people work all their lives to achieve, Matthew was not happy. He tried therapy, self-help books, and going to church, but nothing worked—he was still discouraged and depressed.

There had been nothing obviously unusual about Matthew's childhood. His parents weren't divorced, and they didn't yell at him or beat him. But they did what almost all parents do: When Matthew was a “good” boy, they smiled and spoke kindly to him; when he was noisy, messy, and inconvenient, they frowned, spoke harshly, and withdrew their affection. Without Real Love, Matthew could only feel empty and afraid, so he responded with Getting Behaviors to fill his emptiness with Imitation Love, and Protecting Behaviors to eliminate his fears.

As a small boy, Matthew learned to lie when he made mistakes. When he did that, he avoided the disapproval of his parents and others. When lying didn't work, he acted like a victim to get sympathy. He studied diligently in school to get good grades and win the approval of his parents and teachers. He learned to use anger to get what he wanted from his siblings and his peers. He was a master of Getting and Protecting Behaviors by the time he left grade school. He didn't consciously realize he was trying to earn or buy affection, but he was still living a lie in order to gain the praise, power, pleasure, and safety that would make him feel good. And because he was doing what everyone around him was doing, it all seemed quite normal.

As an adult, he continued the same behaviors that had served him as a child: He worked hard to advance his career in order to buy the respect of his family and peers. When he made mistakes, he covered them up or blamed them on others. He used his positions of authority, at work and at home, to intimidate people so they wouldn't confront him about his mistakes. And when he felt sufficiently threatened by a relationship, he simply withdrew.

Matthew was just reacting to his desperate need for Real Love and his fear that no one would ever love him. But with all his Getting and Protecting Behaviors, he never got any of the Real Love he badly needed. In fact, his behavior exhausted him, made loving relationships impossible, and left him empty and alone. For Matthew—as for all of us—Getting and Protecting Behaviors proved to be both fruitless and counterproductive. When we understand that, we can begin to consciously abandon them and make wiser choices in our lives.

Each time I tell the story of Matthew or of others like him, someone wonders aloud, “But what about the many times when Matthew’s parents did love him? Don’t those count? Why did he grow up empty and afraid just because there were a few times when they were critical?”

To answer these questions, I ask you to imagine that when you and I meet for the first time, we only have ten minutes to spend together. For the first nine minutes, our conversation is delightful and you feel warmly accepted by me. But during the last minute, I scream at you and chase you around the room with a butcher knife. What is the overall effect? Do you remember only our first nine minutes together and feel loved and safe with me? Of course not. The effects of fear and pain are overwhelming. Until a child—or an adult—is utterly convinced that he or she is loved unconditionally, even a small amount of doubt or fear is sufficient to destroy the effect of many moments of acceptance and safety.

All of us have received time, praise, and attention from our parents and others, but if that was conditional, it felt very unfulfilling to us, whether we realized it at the time or not. Only Real Love can create the connection to other people that makes us genuinely happy.

Again, I choose to believe that our parents gave us the best they had. If they didn't give us Real Love, it was only because they didn't receive it themselves and were empty and afraid. They were so preoccupied with their own needs and fears that they were unable to genuinely care about our happiness. But the result, intentional or not, is that we are then unable to give Real Love to our own children and others, and so the cycle continues, from one generation to the next, until we learn how to change our behaviors.

“I Love You Because . . .”

When two people fall in love, each one is likely to tell the other what it is about him or her that is so “lovable.” We all like to hear that we're intelligent or handsome or beautiful or witty or dependable, but ironically, those are just the kinds of statements that cause relationships to fail. We don't realize that when we say we love our partner because of some particular characteristic or behavior, we're also indicating that we expect him or her to maintain that characteristic or behavior in order to retain our love. Our expression of love is often an expression of expectation, and if our partner lets us down, we become disappointed or irritated and demonstrate the conditional nature of our love.

We have thoroughly romanticized the idea of falling in love. We hope that falling in love will magically rescue us from all our problems, without any real effort on our part. The truth about falling in love is much less romantic than the myth, but if we honestly examine the truth, we can avoid the inevitable pain of “falling out” of love.

When we feel empty and alone, we're desperate for something or someone to make us happy. If we find someone who possesses qualities we like, and if he or she shares those qualities with us, we feel wonderful and say that we “love” that partner. We have found in him or her a source of Imitation Love (praise, power, pleasure, safety). Unconsciously, we then use a variety of Getting Behaviors to ensure that our partner will continue to give us the Imitation Love we want. Of course, our partner wants a relatively equal supply of Imitation Love in exchange, and if we can work out a trade that's equitable and abundant, the two of us declare that we are “in love.”

It may not be very romantic, but that's what it means when most people say they're "in love." Inevitably, however, one or both of two things happen: First, one partner might fail to keep up his or her end of the trade. If you sense that you're giving your partner the same praise and pleasure as always, while he or she is contributing less to the relationship, that perception of inequality tends to cause contention and dim the rosy glow of romance. Second, the effect of Imitation Love always wears off, leaving both partners disillusioned. No amount of Imitation Love can ever give us the genuine happiness we hoped it would, and when it fails to live up to our expectations, we unfortunately place the blame on our partner. And because we don't understand what's happening when we fall in and out of love, we condemn ourselves to repeat the same frustrating and destructive pattern forever.

When two people are in love, they're quite sincere when they say, "I love you," but if they understood what was truly happening, they would say this: "Really loving you would mean caring about your happiness, but I care a lot more about how I feel. I like it when you do what I want. When you listen to me, I feel flattered and important. When you spend time with me, I don't feel as empty and alone. I feel good when I'm with you." When we don't feel unconditionally loved and we tell someone we love him, we're only expressing a selfish wish for that person to keep making us feel good. But when we say, "I love you," our partner hears us promise that we'll make him or her happy. Those conflicting expectations cause the failure of most relationships, which is what happened in the case of Diane and Frank.

When they met, Frank was a forklift operator in a carpet factory. He was a "guy's guy," who loved football, hated school, and avoided "sissy stuff" like dancing at all costs. But because he was attracted to Diane, he wanted to please her. So when she told him she loved to dance, and asked if he did, too, he lied. He told her what he knew she wanted to hear and made a date to take her dancing.

On their first date, Diane talked about how much she'd enjoyed college and valued intellectual pursuits. When she asked what kind of work he

did, Frank said he was a supervisor in a carpet factory and that he was planning to go back to school to finish his degree—more lies.

Although Frank and Diane were different in many ways, they might still have had a good relationship if it hadn't been for Frank's poor choices. His lies weren't intended to hurt Diane, but because he'd never felt loved unconditionally himself, he felt empty and afraid, and therefore he couldn't stop himself from trying to make her like him. His experience had taught him that love had to be earned, and that often means pretending to be what you think someone else wants you to be. As a result, he mistakenly thought he could build a relationship by pretending to be what she liked, and the results were predictable.

Diane hadn't felt loved unconditionally, either, and she hoped Frank would make her happy. So, even though she sensed that he wasn't really enthusiastic about school, and it was obvious that he rarely danced, she was flattered by his efforts to please her. In other words, she was aware that he might be lying, but because his lies benefitted her, she went along with them willingly.

Soon after Frank and Diane got married, they began to tire of trading Imitation Love, and as always happens, its effects began to wear thin. Frank never did go back to school and he never again took Diane dancing. She began to fear that she'd made a terrible mistake, and her initial reaction to that fear was to lie to herself by pretending it didn't matter. But eventually her disappointment became unbearable and she chose to attack Frank by angrily reminding him about his many broken promises. At least when she was angry she got his attention, which made her feel temporarily less helpless and ignored. But what she felt certainly wasn't love.

Then, when attacking didn't work, she unconsciously changed her approach and began to act like a victim. She'd burst into tears during arguments, and on those few occasions when her tears actually did get her what she wanted—for the moment—she became clingy and effusively grateful.

Eventually, all Frank and Diane's Getting and Protecting Behaviors failed to produce love or happiness, and they simply began to avoid each other, running from the relationship. When they finally divorced, neither of them was any the wiser about the reasons their relationship had failed, and so,

sad to say, they were doomed to repeat their mistakes.

Diane and Frank had both done the best they knew as they tried to make their relationship work, but because neither of them had experienced Real Love, they simply didn't know how to give or receive it. They didn't consciously want to make bad choices, but the choices they made were based on their own experience and were, therefore, the only choices available to them. As I've already said, you can't give bread to a starving man if you don't have any yourself. But fortunately, in the case of Real Love, it is possible to go out and get some, and as your own supply increases, you'll have more of it to give.

Making Choices

When some people hear that the lack of Real Love leads to the use of Getting and Protecting Behaviors—as in the case of Diane and Frank—they ask questions like the following: “Are you suggesting that just because Diane and Frank were unloved as children, they didn't have any control over their own behavior after that? If we didn't get Real Love as children, are we all doomed? Can we use the lack of Real Love as an excuse for every mistake we make? Don't we still have the ability to make our own choices?”

Many other authors have wisely written about our ability to determine our own feelings and behavior. They speak of our personal power, self-control, self-determination, and ability to be proactive. And they're quite right to say that we human beings do have a unique ability to comprehend, be self-aware, and make self-determining decisions; and they correctly point out that we tend to falsely blame our partners for feelings and situations that were largely of our own choosing.

Even with our wondrous capacity for comprehension and self-determination, however, it would be naïve to believe that our choices are not profoundly influenced by all the things that have happened to us. Let's suppose that a man is starving to death through no fault of his own—perhaps there is a widespread famine. Obviously, he can't run as quickly or work as hard as he could when he was healthy and eating well. It would be untrue—and unkind—for us to suggest that such a man chooses to run

slowly. It would be insensitive to tell him that if only he'd exercise more self-control or be more proactive, he would suddenly be able to run faster. He needs more from us than the encouragement to make a different choice.

Similarly, people who are raised with insufficient Real Love don't choose to be empty and afraid, but they are. And in that condition, they will choose Getting and Protecting Behaviors, because they're emotionally and spiritually starving, and they cannot be as loving or happy as those who have received sufficient unconditional love all their lives. Fortunately, however, we can all learn to change our feelings and behaviors. Helping us to do that is my entire purpose for writing this book.

During the process of that learning experience, we can to some extent exert simple self-control over our Getting and Protecting Behaviors even before we feel unconditionally loved. Because we have a conscience, the ability to see that we are causing harm, and the ability to make decisions, we can comprehend that lying and anger—I'm just picking two examples here of Getting and Protecting Behaviors—cause unhappiness for us and for those around us. Even without feeling loved, we can see that these behaviors are unproductive, and we can then make a decision to stop using them. In fact, making conscious decisions to stop using Getting and Protecting Behaviors and to be more loving toward people, even when we don't feel sufficiently loved ourselves, can contribute significantly to the process of feeling loved and being loving.

Why then do I emphasize the role of Real Love—as compared to self-control—for eliminating Getting and Protecting Behaviors? Because for many years I have watched people struggle with all their might to control behaviors that were destroying their happiness and their relationships. They've put their whole hearts and souls into their efforts, and still they have failed. Simply exercising their will was not enough. Like the starving man, they needed more than self-control. And I have then watched those same people completely change their lives with relative ease when they felt unconditionally loved. Real Love and self-control actually work together in a powerful way, which is something we'll discuss in a later section.

Years ago I had a problem with an unwanted vine in my yard that spread all over the place. When I pulled it out, it grew right back. In fact, it seemed

to grow faster than before. I discovered that I couldn't get rid of it permanently until I found a long, narrow shovel that eliminated the roots. Similarly, if we want to get rid of Getting and Protecting Behaviors, we have to eliminate the root cause, which is the lack of Real Love. We may have occasional success with pulling up the leaves and stems – using self-control and other techniques – but real success will come only when we treat the roots.

Changing Our Choices

I enjoy splitting wood, and for years I used an ax to do the job. An ax can easily split soft wood, like pine, but it gets stuck in hardwoods, like oak. Splitting some kinds of logs with an ax is actually impossible. One day I was in a hardware store and saw something that looked like an ax, but it was thicker and heavier. They called it a maul. I took it home and could not believe how easily I split oak logs that had thoroughly exhausted me before.

I initially chose to split logs with an ax. From the choices I could see at the time—a shovel, an axe, or my bare hands—the ax was clearly the best. A maul would have worked much better, but I didn't know it existed. After learning about it, I was able to choose a superior tool for splitting wood.

Similarly, it is true that we always have choices about how we feel and behave. But when we don't feel unconditionally loved, the choices we see may be severely limited. When we're empty and afraid, Getting and Protecting Behaviors may be the only choices we can see or have the ability to make. If we've never seen Real Love, we don't even know that being loving exists as a choice for us in a given situation. And even after Real Love has been described to us, we may see it as a choice but still be incapable of making the loving choice, because we don't actually have the love to give. As we find Real Love and feel it, we are able to make new choices—loving, happy choices.

Although I emphasize that the lack of Real Love causes the emptiness and fear that lead to our Getting and Protecting Behaviors, I intend that to be an explanation for our behaviors, not an excuse for continuing them. Even when we feel unloved and unhappy, it is always our responsibility to

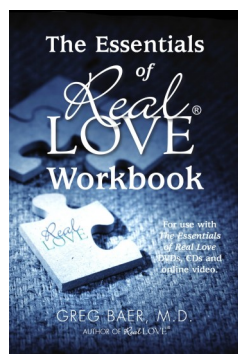
learn what we can do to change our choices. And as we make wiser choices in our lives, we will be able to avoid the unproductive decisions of the past and will find the love and happiness we seek.

LEARN MORE

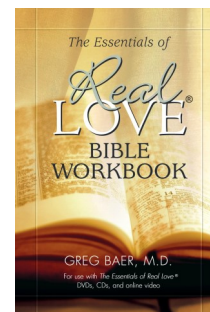
In this brief report, we have already discussed a great deal about human behavior and relationships. These principles are indispensable in the pursuit of personal happiness and fulfilling marriages. Hundreds of thousands of people all over the world have revolutionized their lives and families after learning these principles and how to implement them practically.

It simply is not possible in a report of this size to describe everything about eliminating all conflict and achieving a genuinely happy life and more fulfilling relationships. For that reason, I invite you to learn much more, both about additional principles and about application of the ones we have discussed.

[Click Here](#) to learn about the 6-DVD set, **The Essentials of Real Love**. This is the single most powerful tool available to introduce people to the principles of Real Love.

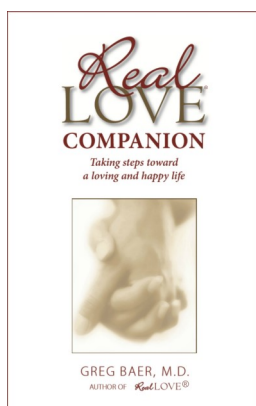
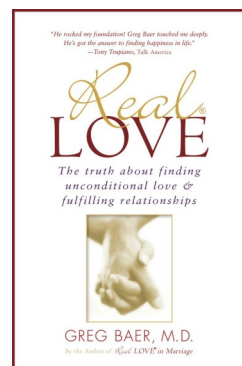


[Click Here](#) to learn about the book **The Essentials of Real Love Workbook**. This workbook is indispensable in the process of practically applying the principles of The Essentials of Real Love DVDs. This book and the DVDs were designed to be used closely together.



For students of the Bible, [Click Here](#) to learn about the book **The Essentials of Real Love Bible Workbook**.

[Click Here](#) to learn about the book **Real Love**.



[Click Here](#) to learn about the book **The Real Love Companion**.

This workbook is indispensable in the process of practically applying the principles of the Real Love book. Both books were designed to be used closely together.

**LEARN
MORE**

You will also find it invaluable to become a **Member of the RealLove.com community**, which will enable you to view thousands of pages and hours of written, audio, and video materials on personal happiness and other subjects.

Best of all, you'll be able to participate in weekly conference calls with Greg, where he will answer your questions live. This is a spectacular opportunity to learn and to FEEL the Real Love that will change the rest of your life.

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