



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
A
MARRIAGE
YOU WILL LOVE

by Greg Baer, M.D.

*Real*LOVE.com®

The perfect resource for anyone looking to learn new skills to create a loving and richly rewarding marriage.

Introduction

The Ultimate Guide to A Marriage You Will Love is full of insights for everyone who wants to understand how to have a [fulfilling marriage](#).

You'll learn answers to the problems below and discover that you can have a marriage with the sense of fulfillment and joy you've always wanted.

So IF:

- ✓ You miss how you felt when you fell in love with your partner.
- ✓ You are having sex less and less.
- ✓ You argue with your partner about money, children, sex.
- ✓ You sometimes think that your partner just doesn't listen to (or care about) what you say.
- ✓ You suspect your partner of being unfaithful (with another partner or porn).
- ✓ You feel alone in your relationship.
- ✓ You feel irritated just having your partner in the same room.
- ✓ You wish your partner would just shut up.
- ✓ If it weren't for [children](#) or financial concerns, you wouldn't stay with your partner.
- ✓ You find that little things about your partner irritate you out of your mind.
- ✓ You hate the critical little things your partner sometimes (or often) says about you.
- ✓ You find your marriage to be stressful.
- ✓ You dread having "discussions" with your partner.
- ✓ You dream of being with someone else.
- ✓ You argue with your partner about a lot of little things.

THEN I have some good news...

- ✓ Fighting—GONE. No kidding.
- ✓ You and your partner will listen to each other in a tender, intimate way that you never thought possible—in a way you've probably never seen.
- ✓ You will WANT to be with your partner as many hours as there are in a day.
- ✓ You will feel a connect to your partner that you have never known in any relationship. Not ever.
- ✓ You'll experience a kind of love for and from your partner that is on a level entirely higher than "falling in love".
- ✓ Sex will become a joyous expression of unconditional love, rather than a struggle, conflict or negotiation.
- ✓ You and your partner will lose all interest in ever looking at another person in a sexual way.
- ✓ Arguments about money, [children](#) or sex—GONE.
- ✓ You'll experience adoring moments for and from your partner that you've longed for all your life.
- ✓ You and your partner will find it a JOY to talk and listen to each other, instead of a chore or annoyance.
- ✓ Your home will be a refuge of peace from the noise and conflict out in the world.
- ✓ You'll learn to work out differences with astonishing ease.
- ✓ You will FINALLY feel like somebody really understands you and accepts and loves you.

Couples everywhere are in conflict—arguing, manipulating, controlling, and withdrawing. Conflict in marriage and other long-term relationships is so common that it has come to be accepted as normal, even unavoidable.

WRONG.

We just didn't know any better.

If you will follow the clear, simple principles in this guide, you will experience NO MORE STRESS—certainly no fighting in your marriage or relationship.

Really.

Chapter 1: The Great Secret

The real reason for marriage problems.

Learn about Real Love, the essential ingredient for happiness and success in every life and every marriage.

Chapter 2: The Effect of REAL LOVE®

Use this meditation to relax, visualize, and feel Real Love.

In this chapter you will go through an exercise to help you feel Real Love.

Chapter 3: Conditional Love vs Real Love

Without sufficient Real Love in your life, the pain and emptiness are intolerable.

Learn how to distinguish conditional love from Real Love and the substitutes you use for Real Love.

Chapter 4: What We Do without Enough Love—Getting and Protecting Behaviors

Insufficient Real Love creates an emptiness we cannot ignore.

Learn how you fill your emptiness with Imitation Love.

Chapter 5: The Destructive Effect of Getting and Protecting

What is the effect of Getting and Protecting Behaviors on others? They hear you say, “I don’t love you.”

Understanding why we use these destructive behaviors changes everything.

Chapter 6: The First Steps to Success in Marriage

When the head understands, the heart can follow.

Learn how to eliminate the mystery of human behavior and change your feelings about other people.

Chapter 7: Overcoming the Frustration of Trying to Change Other People

The ability to change your own feelings and behavior is real power.

In this chapter we will talk about the Law of Choice and your three choices.

Chapter 8: Identifying What We Need to Change About Ourselves

Until you understand the cause of your Getting and Protecting Behaviors, you are doomed to repeat them.

Learn how expectations cause a lot of problems in your marriage.

Chapter 9: The Five Steps to Eliminate All Conflict in Your Marriage

Real Love from any source is healing and energizing.

Learn the Five Steps that will eliminate all conflict in your marriage. Really.

Chapter 10: The Four Questions

We tend to make comments about what our partner is doing a lot more than we realize.

Before making a comment to your partner, ask yourself these four questions.

Chapter 11: What's Next

We have organized this Guide in a logical progression. Though you can jump around, learning the principles in whatever order you feel you need them, we recommend that you read through the chapters in order.

Take your time. Read and study one chapter at a time. Apply what you learn. And when you feel you've got a practical understanding, move on to the next chapter.

You'll be surprised at how quickly you can implement these principles if you focus on them one at a time. Then, with all this new understanding, you can focus on the skills that will take all the stress out of your marriage.

Ready to start?



CHAPTER 1

**THE
GREAT SECRET**

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The Great Secret

The real reason for marriage problems.

Learn about Real Love, the essential ingredient for happiness and success in every life and every marriage.

What's the secret to a great marriage? What can you do to make yours better? Because any relationship is a natural result of two people making independent decisions, we can't meaningfully talk about the relationship between two people until we first understand the nature and causes of

individual human behavior. (Understand that throughout this report, when I refer to "marriage," I'm including every kind of long-term, committed, exclusive relationship. "Marriage" is just a convenient term and not meant to refer to a legally binding relationship.)

How many times have you been irritated with your partner? For most people it's a LOT of times, and each time you can come up with a reason why HE is the cause of your irritation, right? What if I told you that your partner is NEVER the cause of your irritation. That would change everything, wouldn't it? Let me prove it to you.

It's All About the Burn

Imagine that you're standing in a doorway, talking to a friend, and as I walk by, I lightly bump you from behind. Turning to see who bumped you, you wish me a good morning and turn back to your conversation.

Now imagine that several days later you have a severe sunburn all over your back, and again I lightly bump you from behind. Turning suddenly, you slam your back into the edge of a door, and there is an explosion of pain. Angrily, you demand to know how I could be so thoughtless in hurting you.

Am I responsible for your [anger](#)? Of course not. If my behavior alone—bumping you

on the back—were responsible for your pain, your reaction would have been the same on both occasions. But you reacted quite differently the second time. Why? Because you were **already in pain**, and I had nothing to do with that. You **chose** to be angry at me instead of taking responsibility for your own pain—a result of **your** choice to fall asleep on the beach in the sun the day before.

The same thing is happening with you and your partner. Yes, I know that your partner does things that are inconvenient and inconsiderate, but your reaction to those events is still mostly to a lifetime of pain—to a lifetime of sunburn—and related only minimally to the behavior of your partner. Really. Trust me on this, after counseling with thousands of couples.

Other people are never responsible for how we feel. If we understood that, our marriages would change dramatically. How could we keep being angry at anyone after realizing that he or she is not to blame for our feelings?

So now we've arrived at the critical question: What DOES cause our feelings of irritation, disappointment, frustration, and more?

REAL LOVE—THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS IN EVERY LIFE and EVERY MARRIAGE

We cannot interact in a healthy way with other people—especially our partners—until WE are emotionally healthy ourselves. And we can't be emotionally healthy until we have what we need most.

Intuitively, you already know what we need. More than anything else, we all want to feel LOVED, and we can see proof of that as we realize that love is the most frequent subject of our music, novels, discussions, and often our behavior.

But not any kind of love will do. We need to feel loved UNCONDITIONALLY, what I call Real Love. **Real Love is caring about the happiness of another person** without any thought for what we might get for ourselves. It's also Real Love when other people care about **our** happiness unconditionally.

With Real Love, 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. We don't have to EARN Real Love. We've deserved it from birth.

When I use the word **happiness**, I do not mean the brief and superficial pleasure that comes from money, sex, power, and the conditional approval we earn from

others when we behave as they want. Nor do I mean the temporary feeling of satisfaction we experience in the absence of immediate conflict or disaster.

Real happiness is not the feeling we get from being entertained or making people do what we want. It's a profound and lasting sense of peace and fulfillment that deeply satisfies and enlarges the soul.

It doesn't go away when circumstances are difficult. It survives and even grows during hardship and struggle. True happiness is our entire reason to live, and it 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.***

Sadly, few of us have sufficiently received or given that kind of love—not just during our marriages—but for our entire lives.

From the time we were small children, we observed that when we didn't fight with our sisters, didn't make too much noise in the car, got good grades, and were otherwise obedient and cooperative, our parents and others smiled at us, patted our heads, and spoke kindly. With their words and behavior, they told us what good boys and girls we were.

But what happened when we did fight with our sisters, made too much noise, got bad grades, and dragged mud across the clean living room carpet? Did people smile at us or speak gentle, loving words? No—they frowned, sighed with disappointment, and often spoke in harsh tones.

Just as the positive behaviors of other people communicated to us that we were loved, the withdrawal of those behaviors could only mean that we were ***not*** being loved. Although it was unintentional, our parents and others taught us this terrible message: "When you're good, I love you, but when you're not, I don't—or certainly I love you a great deal less."

This conditional love can give us brief moments of satisfaction, but we're still left with a huge hole in our souls, because only Real Love can make us genuinely happy. When someone is genuinely concerned about our happiness, we feel connected to that 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.

Without sufficient Real Love, we can only feel empty and alone, which is our greatest fear. Without Real Love, we suffer from a severe, ongoing **sunburn** that we carry around everywhere. In any given negative interaction with your spouse, it is the longstanding lack of Real Love in **your** life—your sunburn—that determines how you feel, not the behavior of your spouse in that moment. No kidding. In any given moment, you react to the amount of love you feel from everyone, past and present, not just from the person you're interacting with.

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CHAPTER 2

THE EFFECT OF REAL LOVE

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The Effect of Real Love

Use this meditation to relax, visualize and feel Real Love

In this chapter you will go through an exercise to help you feel Real Love.

Before we can really understand the effect of Real Love in our lives, we need to actually **feel** it. Without that experience, the intellectual understanding is shallow—like trying to **understand** a strawberry without **tasting** it. Take your time as you read the following paragraphs. If possible, read them in a place where you won't be distracted, so you can visualize and feel the experience as you read.

Imagine that you're having a difficult day. Several people have confronted you about mistakes you've made or assignments you've not completed, and you're feeling both inadequate and irritated. The computer isn't working—again—and your car is in the shop for the third time in the past two months. You want to pound your fist on the wall and scream.

Amid your frustration, a man and a woman walk into the room and address you by name. Even though you've never seen them before, you feel as though they've known you all your life. Somehow you sense from their peaceful and inviting expressions that you can trust them completely. They ask you to go with them, and without hesitation you get up and follow them.

Side by side, you walk between this couple for some time, finally turning into the driveway of a beautiful home. Walking through the front entryway, you enter a spacious, well-lit room, where many people are talking to each other. After seeing you, several of them come over to greet you.

Although you've never met them before, you feel no anxiety, because you see in their faces and gestures nothing but a sincere and unreserved welcome. In a way you can't describe, you sense that everyone in this room feels loved and happy, and you know that no matter what mistakes you've ever made or what flaws you have,

these people accept you completely. As you sit and talk with them, you realize you don't need to do anything to impress them, nor do you have a need to hide anything from them.

Utterly relaxed, you begin to tell them the story of your life. You talk about your mistakes, your foolishness, your weaknesses, your fears, and your successes. They understand everything you're saying, and they accept you and care about you. You know there is nothing you could do that would disappoint or irritate them, nor would it be possible to feel embarrassed or ashamed around them. For hours you talk and laugh with these new friends.

Allow yourself to enjoy this feeling. Let it sink in and fill your entire being. Allow yourself to float in a calm, sweet ocean of the peace you feel. You'd like to stay in this place forever, but the day draws to a close, and eventually you must go home. As you leave, your friends invite you to return any time you wish, and you know they mean what they say.

Now come back to the real world and consider this question: While you were with those people, did you feel any inclination at all to be angry at them—or to lie to them or withdraw from them? The idea is ridiculous—how could you feel angry or otherwise react negatively toward people who unconditionally accept and love you?

Moreover, while you were with those people, did you feel any inclination to be angry at **anyone else**—at any of the people you know in real life?

Were you irritated about the dysfunctional computer or the car in the shop?

Were you irritated at **your spouse**? No, you weren't—even though she hadn't changed a bit—because while you were with those loving people, you felt unconditionally loved—what you've always wanted most—and lost all negative feelings.

Again, we've proven that it's NOT the behavior of our spouse that is irritating us. It's the lifelong pain of not having the love we need most.

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CHAPTER 3

CONDITIONAL LOVE & IMITATION LOVE VS REAL LOVE

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Conditional Love & Imitation Love vs Real Love

Without sufficient Real Love in our lives, the pain and emptiness are intolerable.

Learn how to distinguish conditional love from Real Love.

Conditional love is distinguished from Real Love by the presence of **disappointment** and **anger**. You can point out the mistakes of your spouse, for example, and still be unconditionally caring about her happiness. You can describe her mistakes so she can avoid the behaviors that affect her in a negative way.

The instant you become disappointed or angry, however, your primary concern is no longer **her** happiness. You're thinking about **yourself** and how she has failed to do what **you** want. We often try to justify our disappointment and anger by explaining that we're disappointed or angry at our spouses' **behavior** but not at **them**. That is rarely the entire truth.

Let's suppose, for example, that your wife fails to give you an important phone message. You might claim that you're irritated only at the inconvenience, but be honest here: After her mistake, do you feel any differently toward her?

Before you deny it, ask yourself whether you tend to avoid her—physically or verbally—or speak to her in a different tone. When she makes mistakes like this, you probably give off a hundred signals that something is different in the way you feel about her, and she **feels** that.

Almost all of us feel some disappointment and irritation when our spouses inconvenience us, and those feelings always indicate that we didn't get something **we** wanted. In those instances, we can't be unconditionally concerned about **their** happiness.

If you continue to have doubts about whether you often love your spouse conditionally, ask **her** if you treat her differently when she does something you don't like. When we're disappointed or angry, our spouses know that our primary concern is for **ourselves**. That's not Real Love, and the effect is uniformly damaging.

WHAT WE USE WITHOUT ENOUGH REAL LOVE—IMITATION LOVE

Without sufficient Real Love in our lives, the pain and emptiness are intolerable, and in order to eliminate or reduce those feelings, we're willing to do almost anything. Everything we use as a substitute for Real Love—to temporarily make us feel better in the absence of what we really need—becomes a form of Imitation Love, and all those substitutes are one or more variations of four things: **praise, power, pleasure, and safety**.

PRAISE

When people give us their approval, we feel praised and worthwhile, and if we can't get the Real Love we need, we'll do a lot to win that approval. Regrettably, we almost always have to **earn** it.

For people to smile at us, compliment us, and want to spend time with us—all signs that they accept or "love" us—we must be talented, beautiful, wealthy, witty, cooperative, grateful, successful, or otherwise worthy of acceptance.

That kind of acceptance is conditional, because all the signs of it—the smiles and kind words, for example—disappear when we make mistakes, inconvenience people, and fail to live up to the expectations of others.

The problem with praise is that it's a LOT of work to earn—exercise, clothing, make-up, plastic surgery, long hours at work, and more. And when you do finally get that precious morsel of praise from a spouse or anyone else, how long does it last? In just a moment or two, the feeling is gone, and then you must work to earn it all over again. It's a frustrating and hollow cycle.

Another reason praise is often unfulfilling is that when most people praise us, they're rarely saying something about **us**. They're saying that when we're cooperative and perform according to their expectations, they like how we make **them** feel—but we're quite willing to keep on doing whatever it takes to earn the sensation of praise, gratitude, and acceptance, because it's still much better than the emptiness that accompanies a lack of Real Love.

POWER

Although it's mostly unintentional, any time we successfully manipulate or control someone, we enjoy a sensation of power over that person. We use money, authority, sex, flattery, and personal persuasion to influence, control, and even hurt people.

When you control someone, you actually feel more connected to him or her in a brief, shallow way. It's not Real Love, but when you control the people around you, you feel less powerless; you feel less of the emptiness and helplessness that are always associated with a lack of Real Love.

We tend to deny our efforts to control our spouses—it's not a flattering behavior to admit—but whenever we try to **get** people to do anything, we're controlling them and using power as a form of Imitation Love.

If you doubt that you control your spouse, consider how you feel when he **doesn't** do what you want. Your disappointment or anger indicate that you want to control his behavior—however unconscious your efforts may be.

PLEASURE

When we don't feel unconditionally loved, we often use pleasure—food, sex, drugs, and many forms of entertainment and excitement—to feel better temporarily. Certainly, there's nothing inherently wrong with pleasure, but when we compulsively seek it, we're using it to fill a deep emptiness.

SAFETY

Without sufficient Real Love, we're already experiencing an insufferable pain, and we'll go to great lengths to keep ourselves safe from anything that might prolong or worsen our pain.

To minimize painful disapproval, we stay away from unfamiliar situations, tasks, and relationships, and then we confuse that feeling of relative safety with real happiness. I've known many couples who believed they had a "good marriage" until they discovered that their "happiness" was only an avoidance of conflict, not a sharing of Real Love.

Falling in Love—The Nature and Effect of Imitation Love

Once we understand Imitation Love, we can understand why relationships start off so well in the beginning and then fall apart. One of the big problems with Imitation Love is that it ***really does feel great***. That doesn't sound like a problem but falling in love is rarely anything more than simply finding someone with whom we can have an abundant exchange of Imitation Love.

Doesn't sound very romantic, does it? But it's true. Picture a guy looking across a crowded room and seeing a woman for the first time. He turns to his buddies and says, "I think I'm in love." I hate to break the bad news, but he does NOT mean that he has suddenly fallen into a sudden unconditional concern for her happiness (Real Love). Not a chance.

People fall in love because of the abundant and relatively equal exchange of Imitation Love, and the enormous problem with that is that the effects of Imitation Love ALWAYS wear off.

So, two people marry—or move in together—because the feeling of Imitation Love is so wonderful, but then they expect those feelings to continue. When they don't—when the feelings of Imitation Love fade—the disappointment is HUGE. We even feel betrayed, and then the disappointment, irritation, and blaming begin. THAT is why relationships start off great and then go downhill.

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CHAPTER 4

GETTING AND PROTECTING BEHAVIORS

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What We Do Without Enough Love (Real or Imitation)—Getting & Protecting Behaviors

Insufficient Real Love creates an emptiness we cannot ignore.

Learn how you fill your emptiness with Imitation Love.

Insufficient Real Love creates an emptiness we cannot ignore, especially when we also don't have enough Imitation Love to make us feel better temporarily. Our subsequent behavior is then often 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. To eliminate our fear, we use Protecting Behaviors. 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 use lying as a Protecting Behavior when we make excuses, shade the truth, or do anything else to avoid the disapproval of others. We don't lie because we're bad; we lie because we've learned from countless experiences that it **works**. People really do disapprove of us less when we hide the truth about our flaws, and we'll do almost anything to keep from feeling that withdrawal of acceptance.

We use lying as a Getting Behavior when we do anything to get other people to like us—when we tell people about our accomplishments but not our flaws, communicate positive feelings that are not true, change our physical appearance to attract people to us, or tell people what they want to hear so they'll like us. We don't

think of these behaviors as lying, but they are, because we don't tell other people we're manipulating them. We lie so often that we don't even realize we're doing it most of the time. Your partner, for example, does not lie to hurt YOU, but to protect HIMSELF. This understanding is critical.

Falling in love is a process of lying. We hide our flaws and exaggerate our virtues, all to attract a partner. It's not intentional, but the results are disastrous. Dating is little more than institutionalized lying. However unconscious our lying is, however, it creates a foundation for a relationship that cannot be healthy.

ATTACKING

Attacking is any behavior that motivates another person through *fear* to behave in a way we want. We attack people when we criticize them, physically intimidate them, withdraw our approval, make them feel guilty, and use our positions of authority at work, at home, and elsewhere, all to get Imitation Love—usually in the form of power—and to protect ourselves from fear.

With anger, for example—the most common form of attacking—you may be able to make your wife sufficiently uncomfortable (afraid) that she'll do whatever you want in order to stop you from making her feel bad. With your anger, you can get her to give you attention, respect, power, flattery, approval, even sex. But of course, if she's giving you these things not because she's genuinely concerned for your happiness, but simply to avoid your anger, all you're receiving is Imitation Love.

Although we may temporarily get what we want from anger, it ALWAYS has a negative effect on relationships. Have you ever been angry at your spouse and at the same time felt more loving toward him or her? Or more loved? Or enjoyed your relationship more deeply? Of course not, and yet we continue to get angry at our partners. We must learn to eliminate it from our lives, and with an understanding of Real Love, we can do that.

ACTING LIKE A VICTIM

If we can convince people that we've been injured and treated unfairly, they'll often stop hurting us and may even give us their sympathy, attention, and support. That's why we act like victims. Victims communicate—verbally and with their behavior—with variations on the following three themes: (1) Look what you did *to* me; (2) Look what you should have done *for* me (and didn't); and (3) It's not my fault. Victims have excuses for everything and blame everyone but themselves for their own mistakes and unhappiness.

We all act like victims at times. Whenever we're confronted with a mistake we've made and say, "I couldn't help it," we're acting like victims. When we complain that we've been treated unfairly by our spouses, we're acting like victims.

Again, however, acting like victims has the same detrimental effect as the other Getting and Protecting Behaviors. Have you ever acted like a victim and felt unconditionally loved by anyone? Does that behavior lead to a more richly rewarding relationship? Never. Acting like a victim is an attempt at manipulation, and what we get as a result cannot feel like Real Love.

RUNNING

If we simply move away from a source of pain, we're less likely to be hurt. Withdrawing from conversations (verbally and physically), avoiding people, and leaving relationships in a state of fear or anger are all forms of running.

When people say they're shy, what they're really saying is, "I've felt empty and afraid all my life, and I've learned that when I allow people to see who I really am, they criticize me or laugh at me, making me feel even more unloved and miserable. So to minimize that pain, I simply stay away from people or avoid speaking."

Drugs and alcohol are other ways to run. All running is injurious to relationships, because when we withdraw, the other person feels the withdrawal of our attention and affection.

CLINGING

Clinging is obvious when a child grips tightly to his mother's skirt, but as adults we also cling emotionally to the 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.

Sometimes we're clinging to people when we tell them how much we love them and need them—we hope our words will encourage them to stay with us and return our expressions of love. Effectively, we're begging for more Imitation Love. Just one example of clinging would be saying to your partner, "Do you really have to go out tonight? You never stay home with me anymore."

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CHAPTER 5

THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF GETTING & PROTECTING

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The Destructive Effects of Getting and Protecting

What is the effect of Getting and Protecting Behaviors on others? They hear us say—accurately—“I don’t love you.”

Understanding why we use these destructive behaviors changes everything.

When you lie to your spouse, get angry at him, act like he’s hurting you, withdraw from him, or cling to him, you are not primarily concerned about **his** happiness—the definition of Real Love. You use those behaviors—mostly unconsciously—because you want to protect **yourself**, or get something for yourself, or both.

When we use Getting and Protecting Behaviors, our primary concern is for **ourselves**. On these occasions, the people around us can’t possibly feel like we unconditionally care about **them**, and they’re quite right—we **don’t**. That has a terrible effect—on us and on others.

What is the effect of Getting and Protecting Behaviors on others? They hear us say—accurately—“I don’t love you.” And they’re right, because all those behaviors benefit **US**, even if we use them unconsciously.

When we use Getting and Protecting Behaviors, the effect is just as negative on **US**. All these behaviors can succeed only in manipulating people for Imitation Love, so when we use them, we cannot find the Real Love that will make us genuinely happy. We cut our own throats. Tragic.

Getting and Protecting Behaviors Are Always Wrong

Our primary goal in life—our very reason to exist—is to be genuinely happy, and we achieve that condition only as we feel unconditionally loved and share that love with other people. Whatever contributes, therefore, to feeling loved, loving, and happy is right, while anything that interferes with feeling loved, loving, and happy is wrong.

When you're angry at your spouse—to use just one example of getting and protecting—do you ever feel closer to him or her? Do you ever feel loved, loving and happy? All the Getting and Protecting Behaviors are selfish and destructive.

From extensive personal experience we've all learned that when we're lying, angry, acting like victims, and withdrawing from relationships, we're never happier, nor do we contribute to the health of our marriages.

Because the Getting and Protecting Behaviors detract from feeling loved, loving, and happy, they are always wrong. Instinctively, we even know they're wrong, because when we're confronted about them, we usually deny them.

Anger, for example, is always wrong. I am not saying you **shouldn't** be angry, nor am I suggesting that you can't talk about your anger. I'm only stating in the strongest possible terms that anger—along with all the other Getting and Protecting Behaviors—is destroying our happiness and our marriages. With Real Love, we can learn to eliminate those behaviors and replace them with joy.

So Why Do We Use Getting and Protecting Behaviors?

If Getting and Protecting Behaviors have such a consistently destructive effect, why do we use them? Because they **work**—at least temporarily. In the absence of Real Love, these behaviors often produce an immediate and predictable relief from our pain and emptiness.

When, for example, you drop hints here and there about your husband doing something for you, you may wait years without getting the desired result. When you get angry and make a fuss, however, you can sometimes get him off the couch in seconds or minutes.

We're seduced by the immediate rewards of anger, and we've experienced that since childhood. Our parents effectively used anger to motivate us, so we tend to do the same with our spouses.

We also use Getting and Protecting Behaviors because we simply don't know anything better. **Everybody** around us uses them—our own parents used them with us during our entire childhoods—so they become **normal** to us. We don't know any other way to behave, even though these behaviors are killing us and our relationships.

All this could sound quite discouraging, but it's not. If the **LACK** of Real Love is the cause of Getting and Protecting Behaviors—as well as all our unhappiness—then **FINDING Real Love** is the solution. And I have seen absolute proof of that so many thousands of times that I can state with absolute certainty that Real Love will eliminate these behaviors and give us the joy we want and deserve.

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CHAPTER 6

THE FIRST STEPS TO SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE

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The First Steps to Success in Marriage

When the head understands, the heart can follow.

Learn how to eliminate the mystery of human behavior and change your feelings about other people.

When we lie, attack, cling, run, or act like victims, we hurt our partners and ourselves, but because we don't understand why we do those things, we keep repeating them and causing more injury.

Although most of us have been stuck in this destructive pattern all our lives, there is a way out—Hallelujah!! With an understanding of Getting and Protecting Behaviors, we can:

- eliminate the mystery and frustration of human behavior.
- change the way we feel about the behavior of others—including our spouses—which dramatically changes the way we react to them.
- eliminate our own unproductive feelings of guilt.
- overcome the frustration of trying to change other people.
- identify what we need to change about ourselves.

ELIMINATING THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

When we understand our need for Real Love and how we're affected by its absence, we can see that all the lying, anger, withdrawal, whining, and other manipulations used by ourselves and others, are just Getting and Protecting Behaviors that result from feeling empty and afraid. Never again wonder *why* your spouse is behaving badly. Don't make it complicated. Just remember that he or she is empty and afraid.

Once you see that, the mystery of these behaviors vanishes, and then you can change forever the way you feel about your partner, as well as how you behave toward him or her.

CHANGING OUR FEELINGS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF GETTING AND PROTECTING BEHAVIORS

Imagine that you and I are in the Bahamas, enjoying a pleasant lunch, a warm tropical breeze, and the soothing music of a live band as we sit together by the side of a pool. We're having a perfect day, but then someone in the pool starts splashing you—first on your shoes, then higher up on your pants. 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 wet and irritated, and finally you get up from your chair to say something to this idiot who's being so thoughtless. As you stand up, however, to look over the chair that's in your way, you see that the man splashing you is **drowning**. He's only splashing you 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 this 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 you try to help him out of the water. Let's ask some important questions about this event:

- How long did it take for your feelings of anger to be replaced by a feeling of complete acceptance? It happened in an instant. As soon as you understood that the man was drowning, your anger vanished.
- After seeing the truth of the situation, how much effort did you exert to control your anger? None. When you saw that the man was splashing you only in an effort to save himself, your anger simply disappeared. You didn't have to **control** yourself or **work** to make your anger go away.
- What did the drowning man have to do to persuade you to help him? Did he have to pay you? Apologize to you? Beg you? Of course not. You offered him your assistance without any conditions. With a simple flash of understanding, your feelings of anger were replaced not only by acceptance, but by an unconditional concern for his welfare (Real Love).

With an understanding of Real Love and Getting and Protecting Behaviors, the way you feel toward other people in real life—notably your spouse—can change just as quickly and dramatically as your feelings changed toward the man in the pool.

You now realize that 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, the effect is powerful:

- Your feelings change immediately. When you understand that every time your spouse uses Getting and Protecting Behaviors, he or she is simply drowning—not trying primarily to annoy *you*—you can't stay angry at him or her for one minute longer.
- You don't have to work at controlling your anger. It will usually go away on its own.
- Your negative feelings are actually replaced by a desire to help your drowning spouse.

When your head understands, your heart can follow. I can't tell you how many thousand emails and phone calls I have received from people who have described how dramatically their feelings have changed when they've finally understood the real reasons for their partner's behavior.

Every time your spouse lies, attacks, acts like a victim, clings, or withdraws from you, he or she is saying that he doesn't have enough of the Real Love that makes life worth living. He's drowning and using the behaviors he's used all his life to protect himself and to get the Imitation Love that temporarily distracts him from the pain that always results from a lack of Real Love.

When you don't understand that picture, you naturally want him or her to stop those behaviors, which are inconvenient and even painful to you. Unfortunately, that's like telling a drowning man that he should stop struggling, stop bothering you, and just drown.

How foolish is that? Even worse, you often jump into the water with him and demand that he save **you** from drowning. So now there are two of you drowning, and you're both choking the other as you demand help. It's an impossible situation.

When you understand Getting and Protecting Behaviors, you can stop jumping in the water with your spouse. You can stop yelling at him or her from the sidelines and actually help him out of the water instead.

\$2 vs \$20 Million

As I tell people that their Getting and Protecting Behaviors are a result of a lifetime of not feeling loved, not just a response to something their spouse did in a given moment, many people still object, and they explain—in great detail—how their partner’s behavior really did cause their subsequent feelings.

They commonly say—in a variety of ways—“He (or she) makes me so angry.” Every time we get angry **at** someone, we’re implying that **she** is the cause. After all, we reason, we wouldn’t be angry if she hadn’t done what she did, so it must be her fault.

Because we’re all flawed and frequently do inconsiderate things with each other, other people will always give us plentiful opportunities to blame them for our anger. We absolutely must understand, however, that other people do not make us angry, so let’s absolutely prove that—right now and for all time.

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.

Every time your spouse, or anyone else, does something inconsiderate—she’s late, he gets angry, she withdraws her affection—he or she is taking two emotional dollars from you. If that’s your last two dollars—which is how you feel when you don’t have enough Real Love—the loss is a big deal.

When you have enough Real Love, however, you feel like you have twenty million dollars, and then the loss of two dollars seems relatively meaningless. With enough Real Love—with twenty million in the bank—other people can’t “make” you angry

anymore when they take two dollars. Their behaviors become minor inconveniences, not major catastrophes.

At this point you may think this sounds like a fairy tale, but it's not. When we understand Getting and Protecting Behaviors, and when we have enough Real Love, our feelings and behavior really do change.

If you can put aside your skepticism—understandably born of a lifetime of experience—and take the steps described in this report and subsequent teaching materials I'll soon describe, you'll learn for yourself the effect of feeling Real Love and having an accurate understanding of human behavior.

ELIMINATING YOUR OWN UNPRODUCTIVE FEELINGS OF GUILT

We've already established that your spouse behaves badly only because she is drowning. The rules are no different for you, so when you treat your spouse badly, you're drowning too and simply trying to protect yourself or get something from her. That doesn't *justify* your behavior, but it does explain it.

A little guilt can be good—it can motivate us to change—but excessive guilt only makes us feel bad. In fact, if you feel guilty enough, you'll likely hide the behavior that makes you feel bad, and then you'll never change it.

You don't need to beat yourself when you make mistakes in your marriage, but you do need to *recognize* your mistakes and take the steps necessary to avoid making them in the future.

It can be especially difficult to avoid feeling guilty when your wife is telling you—with her words and behavior—that you *are* responsible for her anger, sadness, pain, and so on. Certainly, you need to be compassionate and not dismiss her pain—you need to do whatever you can to accept and love her—but in the same way that she is not responsible for *your* feelings, you are not responsible for *hers*.

If your spouse is drowning, almost everything you do will become threatening, and she'll react badly to you. Although you can certainly make things worse for her when you're thoughtless and uncaring, you are not responsible for her drowning, which is a result of a lifetime of insufficient Real Love.

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CHAPTER 7

OVERCOMING THE FRUSTRATION OF TRYING TO CHANGE OTHER PEOPLE

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Overcoming the Frustration of Trying to Change Other People

The ability to change our own feelings and behavior is real power.

In this chapter we will talk about the Law of Choice and your three choices.

Almost every day I speak with married people whose complaints boil down to this: How can I GET my partner to stop being critical, angry, neglectful, and so on—in other words, how can I get my partner to stop using Getting and Protecting Behaviors?

Imagine again that you're standing by the side of a pool and watching a man who's drowning. You wouldn't say, "Stop it. You're getting me wet. Why don't you just put your hands at your sides and slip quietly under the water?"

But that's just what we're doing when we insist that our partners change their behavior. They're using the Getting and Protecting Behaviors they believe will keep their heads above water, and we respond by insisting that they stop it and simply drown.

No wonder our demands for change are ineffective and cause so much frustration for ourselves and our spouses.

The Law of Choice

Drowning people are not primarily trying to hurt us, just doing whatever it takes to save themselves—and they have the right to do that, even if their efforts inconvenience **us**. That doesn't make their behavior right, but they must be allowed to make their own choices about what they do. **Everyone has the right to choose what he or she says and does.** That is the Law of Choice, and it's the most important principle in any relationship, including marriage.

On many occasions—each of which can seem so very justifiable—you may want to control the choices of your spouse, but the results would be awful. Where would it end? If you have the right to control what **he** does, it's only fair that he gets to control what **you** do. Without the Law of Choice, everyone would become a puppet dangling from strings controlled by others—an intolerable thought.

If you control me in any way, I'm no longer myself. I've become an extension of you, like your shoes or gloves. But when you're with your shoes or gloves—or anything else you control—you're still alone, the worst condition of all.

You might think you want to control what your spouse does, but if you succeed in that effort—if you make all the decisions and do all the thinking—you'll only guarantee your own loneliness. You won't have a partner but a prisoner. Is that what you really want? To be in control but alone? Or do you want to have a relationship with a real person as you allow your spouse to make his own choices?

What you truly want is a real relationship with your spouse, and ***a relationship is the natural result of people making independent choices.*** In the process of making independent choices, we all make mistakes, and as we do, it is simply unavoidable that the people around us will be inconvenienced, even hurt. If **you** expect to make mistakes, how could you expect that your **spouse** would not make mistakes, including those that inconvenience you?

We have that expectation because when we're suffering from the intolerable condition of being empty and afraid ourselves, we naturally expect that everyone around us—especially our spouses—will avoid hurting us and even give us something to fill our emptiness. When they don't fill those expectations, we're disappointed and angry.

Now, this does not mean you can't make a **request** that your partner do something, but be careful: If you're not feeling loving, your "request" will come across as a demand or attack. We'll talk more about requests shortly.

In every situation or relationship, you have three choices:

- Live with it and hate it. This is never a smart choice, since it guarantees only that **you** will be miserable.
- Live with it and like it. This doesn't mean you can't do anything about the way things are. You can make requests, negotiate agreements, take action on your own, and make decisions that change the way you feel and behave.

- Leave it. Sometimes it's not possible for us to be happy—to feel loved and loving—in certain situations or relationships. It may then be best to walk away from an individual interaction or even a relationship.

We try to control other people—including our spouses—only because we are empty and afraid, and we believe that as we control others, we will feel safer and less helpless.

The truth is, we already have great power. We can **always** make decisions that will enable us to see the world differently and which will bring into our lives more of the Real Love that will make us truly happy. **That** is real power—the ability to change our own feelings and behavior—not the ability to control the behavior of others.

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CHAPTER 8

IDENTIFYING WHAT WE NEED TO CHANGE ABOUT OURSELVES

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Identifying What We Need to Change About Ourselves

Until you understand the cause of your Getting and Protecting Behaviors, you are doomed to repeat them.

Learn how expectations cause a lot of problems in your marriage.

When we see our Getting and Protecting Behaviors as signs of our own emptiness and fear, we don't focus any longer on the mistakes and flaws of other people. We can take the steps to find Real Love and begin to change the way we feel and behave. Until we understand the cause of our Getting and Protecting Behaviors, however, we're doomed to repeat them.

THE LAW OF EXPECTATIONS

Imagine that you're starving in the middle of the desert. In that condition, you'll do just about anything to get food and to protect yourself from losing what little you have. When a man walks by with a backpack full of food, you naturally expect him to help you. After all, if he has what you desperately need, how could he possibly refuse to help?

Being without Real Love is like being without food. Without sufficient Real Love, we have enormous expectations of other people—for Real Love if they have it, and for Imitation Love if they don't.

It's from your spouse that you usually have the greatest expectations of all, and for two reasons: First, it's very likely that he or she actually did fill your expectations for "happiness" in the beginning of your relationship—but filled them with Imitation Love. **That** is why you fell in love with your partner, because he or she gave you

enough Imitation Love that you temporarily felt pretty darned good.

But then the effect of Imitation Love wore off, and you wondered why you weren't happy anymore. "When I fell in love with my partner," you thought to yourself, "he made me happy." We like to think that someone else can **make** us happy—for one thing, it relieves us of the responsibility we have for our own happiness. And we like it when people tell us that we make **them** happy, because then we feel worthwhile and important.

But giving this responsibility to our spouses has awful consequences—we then have huge expectations that they will **continue** to make us happy, and if we do become unhappy, we can only conclude that our partners are responsible for that condition.

The second reason we have huge expectations of our spouses is that they actually **promised** to make us happy. Regardless of the words actually spoken at the wedding ceremony, what we **hear** our spouses say is this:

"I promise to make you happy—always. I will heal your past wounds and satisfy your present needs and expectations—even when you don't express them. I will lift you up when you're discouraged. I will accept and love you no matter what mistakes you make. I give to you all that I have or ever will have. And I will never leave you."

Neither partner is consciously aware of making this bushel of promises, but each partner still hears them and insists that they be fulfilled. When both partners lack sufficient Real Love, however, they can't possibly make one another happy, and then their efforts to do that yield only disappointment and anger, no matter how hard they try.

Expectations can only kill the potential happiness in a marriage, as illustrated by Rachel, a woman who complained to me that her husband, Kevin, never gave her flowers anymore, didn't look at her with affection as he once did, and didn't talk to her when he came home from work. She was in the process of listing more of his failings when I said, "It sounds like you expect Kevin to do a lot of things."

She looked at me like I was stupid. "Why **wouldn't** I? He's my husband."

"What if I **expected** you to give me a dozen roses on my birthday," I said, "and you only gave me nine? I'd only have one thing on my mind, wouldn't I?"

"The three roses you **didn't** get," she said.

“In fact, even if you did give me a dozen roses, I wouldn’t be thrilled by them—I’d only be **satisfied** that you filled my demand. It can’t feel like a gift when I’m essentially **making** you give me something with my expectations. But if I expect **nothing** from you, even a single rose from you will feel like a delightful gift, real evidence that you care about me. I’ll love it.”

“With your expectations,” I continue, “you make it impossible for anything you get from Kevin to feel like a gift. Everything he does seems like nothing to you. He can never do enough to please you. In addition, he **knows** he can never do enough, and eventually he gets to the point where he doesn’t **want** to do anything with you or for you.”

“I’d never thought of that.”

The Law of Expectations states that we never have the right to expect anyone to do anything for us. That makes sense when we understand the Law of Choice. If we understand that other people really do get to make their own choices—and mistakes—how could we possibly expect them to change their choices to please us? Rachel doesn’t have the right to expect Kevin to give her what she wants.

After I explained the Law of Expectations, Rachel said, “But if I don’t have any expectations, Kevin won’t do anything. How do I get what I want?”

“You can always *ask* Kevin for what you want—nothing wrong with that—but you haven’t been making **requests** of Kevin. You’ve been making **demands**.”

“How do you know that?” she asked.

“When Kevin doesn’t give you what you ‘ask’ for, do you feel either disappointed or irritated?”

Throughout our discussion, Rachel had made it clear that she was experiencing both of those feelings, so she could hardly deny it. “I guess I do,” she said, “but isn’t that natural?”

“Sure, it’s natural, but it also shows that you’re making demands and having expectations, and it’s killing your happiness and your marriage. Kevin is empty himself, so he feels your expectations as a huge burden to carry and as an accusation that he’s not acceptable. He responds with Getting and Protecting Behaviors, and those never make the two of you feel closer.”

Each time we're angry, we demonstrate that we have expectations that are not being filled. When we understand the Law of Expectations, it's much more difficult to remain angry at anyone.

There is an exception to the Law of Expectations. If your spouse makes a promise to do or not do something, you have a right to have expectations about his or her behavior. Promises, requests, and agreements will be addressed in additional educational materials described at the end of this guide.

Realizing the selfishness of expectations is often quite a blow to married people. The very reason most of us get married is to have someone we **can** expect to love us and make us happy. When we hear that those expectations are unreasonable, we wonder, why should we bother to get married at all? Indeed, if our goal is primarily to get what we want from our spouses, marriage often will be unfulfilling and even unfair.

When we understand, however, that marriage is really an opportunity to learn how to love our spouses, our perspective on marriage changes considerably.

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CHAPTER 9

THE FIVE STEPS TO ELIMINATE ALL CONFLICT IN YOUR MARRIAGE

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CHAPTER
9

The Five Steps to Eliminate All Conflict in Your Marriage

Real Love from any source is healing and energizing.

Learn the Five Steps that will eliminate all conflict in your marriage.

We've already learned that anger might motivate people to give us what we want—or think we want—in the short term, but it's always hurtful and therefore “wrong.” It communicates the deadly message, “I don't love you.” I recommend that you write these five steps on a three-by-five card and put it in your pocket or purse. Pull it out and read it several times a day, especially when you're angry. If you'll do that, you will change your life.

1. Be quiet
2. Be wrong
3. Feel loved
4. Get loved
5. Be loving

Be Quiet

When you're angry, there is nothing you can say that will make you or your spouse feel loved, loving, and happy. Nothing. In the presence of accusations and misinformation, it may sometimes be necessary to point out inaccuracies and injustices that involve your spouse, but if you're irritated, you will make the situation worse, no matter how cleverly you respond and how *right* you believe you are.

I've tried hundreds of ways to express my anger at people in a productive way, and I've watched hundreds of others do the same. I can say with absolute certainty that when we're angry at people, we cannot communicate as effectively with them.

This does not mean you can't talk about your anger, but **while** you're angry at your spouse, do not express your anger **to him or her**. You'll damage your relationship and your happiness, and you'll make it very difficult to arrive at the best solution to any specific conflict. You **can**, however, express your anger **to another person**, not to someone who will only sympathize with you and thereby perpetuate your anger, but to someone who can help you see the selfishness of your anger and then **accept you**.

This also does not mean you have to agree with or give in to your spouse when you're angry. That's just being a doormat, which isn't healthy. Throughout the chapter we'll discuss many things you **can** do to resolve conflicts, but all these principles and actions are more effective when you're not expressing anger at your spouse.

When I say you need to be quiet when you're angry, I don't mean that you just need to stop **talking**. You also need to avoid the innumerable non-verbal forms of communicating a lack of acceptance, since it has been estimated that 85+% of our communication is non-verbal. Obviously, you can't avoid all these forms of expressing anger unless you're actually **not** angry. If you're angry, you **will** express it in some way. You won't be able to fake it for long, if at all.

Be Wrong

Earlier I suggested that any feeling or behavior that detracts from feeling loved, loving, and happy is wrong. When you're angry, you're trying to protect yourself and get what **you** want. You're unloving, blind, trying to control your partner, and expecting him or her to make you happy. Because anger always detracts from feeling loved, loving, and happy, it is always wrong, and once you recognize that, it's much more difficult to stay angry or insist on whatever course of action you're pursuing.

When I say anger is wrong, I am not saying you **shouldn't** be angry, nor that you should hide the anger you feel—we've already talked about expressing anger to other people in order to create opportunities to feel accepted. Anger is wrong because it simply doesn't work—it's not a loving way to live, and it keeps us from achieving our greatest goal, which is happiness.

You can always find something wrong with the behavior of your partner. That's easy, but it's also irrelevant. It simply does not matter how wrong your spouse is if YOU are angry. You cannot change the interaction or the relationship in a positive way until you admit the error of YOUR anger.

Every time we're angry, there are two ways we can go. First, we can blame our partner and demand that he or she change. Or, second, we can admit that we're wrong and do what's necessary to find the Real Love that will eliminate our anger.

We often choose blaming because it **seems** easier in the moment. But does it ever work? Does it ever eliminate the anger that poisons our happiness and our relationships? When we see the utter futility of blaming and anger, it's much easier to admit that we're wrong and to take truly productive steps to change ourselves.

Feel Loved (Remember That You're Loved)

Feeling unconditionally loved really is like having twenty million emotional dollars. With Real Love nothing else matters; without it nothing else is enough. Sometimes, however, we do have a few million in the bank but simply **forget** we have it when confronted by a particularly stressful situation, like when our spouses are vigorously attacking us. On those occasions, we have what we need, but we temporarily lose access to it.

If we make a conscious decision to **remember** that there **are** people who genuinely love us, we can often gain immediate access to our millions, lose our emptiness and fear, and thereby lose our need to use anger as a Getting and Protecting Behavior. It is not possible to feel loved and angry at the same time. Of course, this step is only effective if we've previously found people to unconditionally love us.

Get Loved

Sometimes you may take the three steps above, but you still won't have enough Real Love in the bank to handle a situation with your spouse. On those occasions, you'll need to beef up your supply of love. Again, this process is described in additional educational materials on our website [here](#). I'm not trying to be evasive by alluding to "additional materials." It's just an extensive subject but allow me to give you an example right here of finding Real Love, as well as an illustration of the use of the three-by-five card I mentioned a few paragraphs ago.

Late one evening, as Richard angrily confronted Linda about something she'd done, she began to feel increasingly irritated. She thought of a dozen brilliant, biting

things to prove that she was right, and he was wrong, but she remembered how badly conversations had always gone when she'd said those things, so she made a decision to practice being loving rather than insist on being right.

Quietly, she pulled from her purse a three-by-five card, upon which she had written the five steps to eliminate anger.

First, she resolved not to express her anger verbally at Richard, although she recognized that she was probably showing it in many non-verbal ways.

Second, she realized that no matter what Richard was saying, no matter how unkindly he was behaving, **her** anger was selfish, unloving, and wrong.

Third, she remembered the many occasions where she had felt unconditionally accepted and loved by friends as she had told the truth about HER OWN mistakes, flaws, and fears.

Despite all those efforts, however, she was still irritated, so she took the fourth step. She said, "Richard, I have to make a phone call right now, but I'll be back in just a few minutes. Is that all right?"

Then she went into the next room and called her friend, Elise. "Sometimes I just want to scream," she said. "He can be so demanding and critical—about everything."

"When Richard gets angry at you like that, what is he really telling you?"

"That he doesn't care about me."

"Right. At least in that moment, he cares a lot more about what **he** wants than about what **you** need. Anger is a Getting and Protecting Behavior, and we use it to get what we want and to protect ourselves. Anger is always selfish. So, you're right, he's telling you he doesn't care about you. But he's also telling you something about **himself**, unrelated to you. What is it?"

"I'm not sure."

"Why do people use Getting and Protecting Behaviors?"

"Because they're empty and afraid?"

"Sure, and why would Richard be empty and afraid?"

Linda sighed and smiled. "Because he doesn't feel loved."

“So, when he’s angry, he’s not only telling you he doesn’t care about you. He’s telling you he needs to be loved himself. And then how do you respond to that need?”

Chuckling now, Linda said, “I get angry at him, which only makes him feel worse. Then he protects himself by getting even more angry. It doesn’t make much sense, does it?”

“No, it’s kind of crazy, really,” said Elise.

“So how can I love him if I don’t feel loved myself.”

“Do you feel less angry at him right now?”

“I don’t feel angry at all.”

“That’s because you’re getting the love you need. I’m not doing anything fancy here. I’m just accepting you and caring about you while you’re being angry and unloving, and you can feel that. Nice feeling, isn’t it?”

When Linda went back to her conversation with Richard, she was carrying with her the love she had received from Elise, and with that love, she was able to listen to Richard and respond to him in a loving way. This is a very important concept.

Be Loving

One morning, Richard asked Linda to mail a package for him at the post office. She agreed, but when he got home that evening, he was furious to discover that his package was still on the dining room counter. Pulling from his pocket a three-by-five card tattered at the edges, he was reminded to be quiet—he didn’t call her on the cell phone and say the unkind things running through his mind—and he understood that he was wrong to be angry. He also remembered that there were people who cared about him, but he was still angry, so he called his friend, Glenn, and said, “Dang it, I needed that package to go out today, and she knew that. But she didn’t do it.”

Glenn briefly acknowledged that Linda had been inconsiderate and had inconvenienced Richard, but then he talked to Richard about the selfishness of *his* anger, and he was accepting and loving toward Richard as they spoke.

Still Richard couldn’t let go of his fixation on the inconvenience of the situation and the offense he felt. So Glenn finally said, “Are there any dishes in the sink?”

“What are you talking about?” asked Richard.

“Go look and see if there are any dishes in the sink.”

Richard took the portable phone into the kitchen and said, “Sure, a few.”

“Wash them and put them away,” said Glenn.

“Is this like a joke? What does this have to do with her not mailing the package?”

“You can see that your anger isn’t helping you or your relationship. Right now, you’re getting the acceptance you need, and you’re remembering that you have other people who care about you. But you’re still angry, so I’m suggesting that you’d feel more loved and loving if you did something loving for Linda.

“As you wash the dishes—as you consciously choose to do something for her—you might be able to start thinking about **her** happiness and remember the importance of a loving relationship with her instead of fussing about what you didn’t get for yourself.”

Richard washed the dishes. He also cleaned up the rest of the kitchen, and by the time Linda got home, he wasn’t angry at all. As soon as she walked in the door, she gasped, both because she realized she hadn’t mailed the package and because she saw what Richard had done in the kitchen. They had a wonderful conversation, quite different than they would have had if Richard hadn’t taken the five steps to eliminate anger.

Doing something loving for your spouse when you’re angry at her may be the last thing you feel like doing but sharing love with others can often have the miraculous effect of multiplying the Real Love we have, even if the people we love give us nothing in return. If, therefore, you make a conscious decision to behave in a loving way toward your spouse when you’re angry at her, you’ll often find that the resulting love you feel will eliminate your anger.

Sometimes you don’t have to do something loving for your spouse to eliminate your anger at him or her. You might, for example, be a hundred miles apart and have no immediate way to demonstrate your love. But if you do something loving for **someone else**, the love you subsequently feel can eliminate the anger you feel toward your spouse. Real Love from any source is healing and energizing.

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CHAPTER 10

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

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The Four Questions

Stop the comments before they become arguments and resentments.

Before making a comment to your partner, ask yourself these four questions.

We tend to make comments about what our partner is doing—usually a lot more than we realize. I've watched couples comment—which usually means offer criticisms—about each other several times a minute for hours, and they don't even recognize it.

These comments often lead to arguments, and if not, at least resentments that simmer and cause much more destruction than anyone knows. I therefore suggest that before we offer ANY comment to our partner about HIM/HER, we must be able to answer YES to ALL FOUR of the following questions.

First Question: Is this any of my business?

Most of the time, other people do not like us meddling in affairs that are none of our business. They feel violated. They sense that we're suggesting that they're simply not competent enough to handle a situation without our interference. When you're tempted to make a comment about what your partner is wearing, or eating, or doing (most of the time), ask yourself whether it's *really* your business. The answer is almost always NO.

It doesn't matter that you are "just trying to help," or that you're "right." Mostly people do not want our opinion about what they're doing. If they did, they'd ask for it.

Second Question: Does this really matter?

Suppose your answer to the first question is yes. Your wife is driving, for example, and she's about to take an exit that you KNOW will delay your arrival by at least two minutes. Is her decision your business (First Question above)? Yes, a little. After all, you're a passenger, and any decision she makes about driving will affect you.

BUT does a two-minute delay really matter? Think about it. Are you willing to make a comment about her decision and save two minutes at the cost of undermining her confidence and almost certainly causing some element

of resentment toward you? In short, are you willing to damage your marriage for a two-minute gain? Please. Most of the comments we make about other people just don't matter, and we need to simply shut up. People are eager for our wisdom to a far smaller degree than we might suppose.

Unfortunately, we have seen very poor examples from others all our lives when it comes to this issue. People have simply not weighed the consequences. They have just given advice because they wanted to, whether it was their business or not, or whether it mattered or not.

From the time we were small children, we saw people offer advice about almost everything: the clothes we wore, how we combed our hair, our posture, the way we sat in a chair, and so on. So now we tend to do the same. We open our mouths and say whatever pops into our heads. Not wise.

Third Question: Am I being unconditionally loving?

If you are the least bit impatient or irritated as you offer a suggestion—if you think you can hide it, you're dreaming—it will be received as a criticism, and your interaction will go badly. Be quiet.

Fourth Question: Can the other person HEAR what I'm about to say in a loving way?

There are occasions when we can actually answer **yes** to the first Three Questions, but our partner is simply not in a position where they can HEAR what we want to say.

- They may just not be in the mood to hear a comment that could be remotely perceived as critical, even if you don't intend it that way. How can you tell? Look at their face.

- It might be a subject that that they indicated in the past that they just don't want to talk about.
- They might be completely concentrating on something else and doesn't want to be interrupted. How can you tell? Again, look at their face. Not complicated.

When your partner is not in a place to hear what you have to say, the answer to the Fourth Question is **no**, and you get to shut up again.

Offering comments is productive only when you can answer **yes** to all Four Questions. I encourage you not to test this statement. Why? Because you already have mountains of proof—from your own experiences—to confirm the need for all Four Questions.

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CHAPTER 11

WHAT'S NEXT

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What's Next

You've completed *The Ultimate Guide to a Marriage You Will Love*, which means you are part of an exclusive group who understand that their own and their partner's behavior is motivated by pain, fear, and emptiness.

Simply by applying the understanding you have gained in this Guide, you will already be able to feel more peace.

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We can say with utmost confidence you'll likely see improved reactions in yourself and improved marriage.

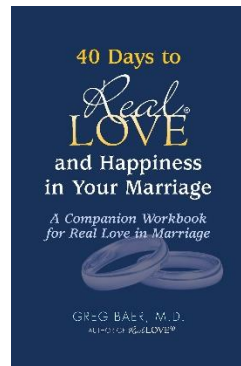
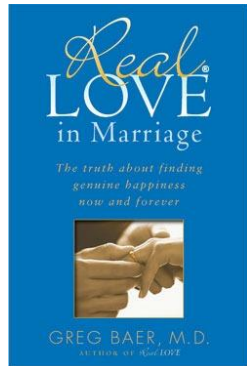
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