



**The things you need to
know about men, love
& relationships**

Understanding Men

Dedication

To my parents, whose love has
made this book possible

Acknowledgements

I could not have written this book without the profound teaching that I received from my friends in the *Psychology of Vision* organisation. Particular thanks go to Chuck and Lency Spezzano, founders of the organisation and originators of the *Triangle Relationship Model*, on which much of this book is based. Their dedication in applying their principles and sharing these with the people around them is truly inspiring. I must also thank Jeff & Sue Allen, Julie Wookey and Ian Haugh for passing on so much of what they have learnt and supporting me through my own learning. A great many people have helped me on my own healing journey - too many to mention personally, but you know who you are - thank you.

The idea for the stages of a relationship originally came from Dr. Susan Campbell in her work, *The Couples Journey*.

I would like to express a special appreciation to Claire, my partner, for bringing so much love into my life, supporting me in writing this book, and working tirelessly with me to make it more readable and engaging.

Finally I must thank my two sons for their continual inspiration in my life - they remain my best teachers.

Copyright

Copyright P. J. Granger 2011
All rights reserved

Chapters

About This Book	Page
1. Love, But Not As We Know It <i>Turning everything you know about love on it's head</i>	9
2. Big Boys Do Cry <i>Men and their emotions</i>	20
3. Hopelessly Dependent On You <i>The origins of fear, needs and low self-esteem</i>	28
4. Naughty Little Boy <i>The feelings that men hate to experience</i>	45
5. Your Hero <i>Why a man has a need for control</i>	64
6. Fading Love <i>How a fear of emotions will eventually destroy a relationship</i>	80
7. Caught In A Trap <i>Why the relationship with our opposite sex parent is so important</i>	94
8. The Wise Women Speak <i>Communicating about the things that matter in a relationship</i>	111
9. Bringing Back The Love <i>How to become the leader in your relationship</i>	124
10. Making Love <i>How to have the best sex of your life</i>	142
11. Love On A Higher Plane <i>Bringing spirituality to your relationship</i>	158
12. Everlasting Love <i>How to create the relationship of your dreams</i>	178

About This Book

This is a book about one of the greatest challenges a woman will ever face - finding true and lasting love with a man. It is written for women who love men and want to share their lives with them, but feel that they have been let down, disappointed or betrayed by them. It is also written for women who would simply like to understand men better so that they can improve their relationships. I want to explain why men can drive you to distraction and why we often struggle to love and be loved. Once you understand us better, I will show you how to build a relationship that is full of love, joy and wonderful sex – a relationship that has great physical, emotional and spiritual connection and grows ever stronger with time.

Unfortunately this type of relationship is rare. Nearly every woman I meet in my work as a relationship coach has a story about lost love, heartbreak and disappointment. They speak of how distant their men are, how disengaged they are from the family or how they bury themselves in their work. Many of these relationships only survive through compromise or convenience. Do you recognise any of this?

I'm sure it wasn't always this way. At the start of your relationship I would imagine that you were full of hope for the future. You probably had a dream of discovering true love with a man and spending the rest of your life with him. Perhaps you found a man and fell in love, but then something began to go wrong. Did the feelings of love fade or disappear altogether? It can seem that the man you loved has changed forever and that the distance between you can never be bridged.

It is true that after the early romantic phases of a relationship, men are not always easy to love. We can struggle with commitment, hide from our emotions and distract ourselves through work. We may become distant, irritable and emotionally unavailable. We may even stray. For many women these are huge disappointments and our withdrawal stops the two-way flow of love that is essential for a good relationship. Eventually the relationship will fail in conflict or move into the deadness of two people cohabiting, but living separate lives.

Sadly, this scenario is being played out in millions of relationships around the world, leaving a trail of human misery and suffering for this generation and the next. The divorce statistics speak for themselves. If you are in such a relationship you may want to leave because you feel that your situation is hopeless, and while for some this is the right decision, for many others it would be a mistake. Your partner hasn't changed – he is still the guy you fell in love with and the same guy who fell in love with you. With a little understanding and a

willingness to deal with the issues that have created your problems, it is possible to rekindle and sustain the powerful feelings of love that you had when you first met.

Relationships fail because we are unable to deal with the deep-seated fears and insecurities that inevitably rise to the surface when two people intimately share their lives. Far from being fatal flaws, I will show you that by looking at your relationship problems in a new light, you will discover what it is that prevents you from becoming really close to your partner. As you heal these insecurities and help your partner to do the same, you will build a relationship that is full of love and connection.

A great deal has been written about romance and love from a woman's point of view but virtually nothing exists from the male side. There is a very good reason for this. We don't want you to know what we are feeling! This isn't because we want to protect our privacy, or that such things don't matter to us, it's because we are terrified of revealing our innermost fears and insecurities. In fact, a lot of the time we are so out of touch with these feelings that we are completely unaware that we have them. This denial of our true feelings means that few men are able to express themselves adequately in the area of emotions or to communicate their innermost feelings to the women in their life. It is hardly surprising that women do not understand us. It is this lack of awareness that I would like to address in this book. It is time to let you into the secret of what your man is *really* thinking and feeling.

To understand why men hide from their emotions and withdraw when the going gets tough, I will take you beneath the surface veneer of these behaviours so that we can explore the deeper levels of human consciousness – a level at which we discover fundamental emotional and spiritual needs that are shared by men and women. I believe that we can only find sustained happiness in our relationships by recognising our common needs and understanding how these may be played out differently between the sexes. I shall be explaining how our needs create our beliefs and attitudes and how in-turn these are manifested in a wide variety of behaviours, both positive and negative. This understanding is the key to successful relationships.

I will show that most of the problems that we see in the world today can be traced back to unmet masculine needs and their attempts to suppress the emotional pain that these create. The unmet needs are a direct consequence of our misunderstandings about the true nature of love and

relationships. I will redefine love in a way that will probably turn everything you know about it on its head. Some of what I will tell you may challenge you deeply and some of it may even shock you. It will certainly ruffle a few male feathers. Such is the extent of the denial of male emotions that to begin to reveal them is usually met with disbelief, ridicule and even anger. I will explain why we protect ourselves from our own truths, even to the point that we damage our lives and the lives of the people around us.

A small number of men become aware of the way that they have emotionally separated from their partners and begin the process that brings the relationship back together. Unfortunately most of us need a bit more help with our emotions, and this is where women come into their own. You are generally more in touch with your emotions. Your natural nurturing skills, which are full of compassion and empathy, are exactly what is needed to help a man to reconnect with his emotions. I will explain how this can allow you to become the leader in your relationship, not in a way that tries to control, but in a way that responds to your partner's fear and allows him to let go of the self-beliefs that keep him emotionally unavailable. We love women who understand us and touch our hearts and you now have an opportunity to do that with your boyfriend or husband. I will show you that no matter how negative his behaviour may seem to be at the moment, the wonderful man you first fell in love with, is waiting to be rediscovered.

You will be amazed at how quickly you can help your partner become more emotionally expressive, begin his own healing and enhance your relationship. One of the most wonderful rewards of this type of personal development is that those often distant memories of falling in love and the wonderful sensations that go with it, can quickly return to the relationship. In fact, those 'honeymoon feelings' can get stronger and stronger and become ever more fulfilling, provided that you learn to recognise the danger signs and have the courage to address any emotional pain that appears. I will be showing you how to spot these signs and handle the fear that rises up for healing in any healthy relationship. If you are currently single I will show you how these ideas can help you find a true partner and then how you can extend your 'honeymoon' throughout a long-term relationship.

My intention in writing this book is to bring the sexes together in the spirit of love and partnership. I do not want to blame men for all the problems and equally I do not want to put all

the onus on women to save and improve their relationships. In a successful relationship both parties work together. Nevertheless, there are times when one of the partners is in a better position to lead the healing than the other. Surprisingly, I will show that just one person in a relationship has the power to transform it. It was Gandhi who said, “*Be the change you would like to see in the world*”. What he meant was that we cannot change anybody else, but we can effect change in our world by being willing to *change ourselves*. I will show you how to gain self-awareness and how this is the basis for transforming the quality of your relationship. Although women are often better placed emotionally to lead the healing in a relationship, this need not be exclusive. I hope that the book will be picked up and read by more enlightened men who are trying to improve their relationships and searching for meaning in their lives. If you are such a male reader then I hope that my words will give you inspiration and direction in your own healing.

When we focus on our own accountability and seek personal change we will inevitably have to look within. The process of self-discovery I will take you through may trigger some quite difficult thoughts and feelings. Please don't be alarmed by this – it is a sign that you are on track! Try to feel into your emotions and trust the healing process. Emotional pain is simply a sign that we need a change of mind and a change of heart. There may be times when you want to stop reading or even throw the book in the bin, but try to resist this temptation. When I first went through this process I too found it challenging, but I am so grateful that I persevered. I promise you that finding the courage and willingness to own and heal your issues and to help your partner is the route to a fabulous relationship and great happiness.

In writing this book, I appreciate that it will be read by women with a wide range of experiences; of all ages, who are both single and in longer-term relationships. I have therefore tried to speak to the specific issues you might meet in your various relationships, but also highlight the common threads of understanding that are true for all successful relationships. It is always dangerous to generalise, so please adapt what I say to your individual circumstances and relationship experiences.

Most relationships evolve with time through a number of natural stages. I will be describing these and showing you how the earlier stages contain within them a number of traps that can

easily derail a relationship. Having described some of the pitfalls of a typical relationship, I will then show you how to navigate through the various stages, so you can build a successful partnership.

Ultimately, this book is about achieving *equality* in a relationship – an equality that allows two people to connect and communicate in a wholehearted way, with complete honesty on both sides. This happens when we heal our personal fears and insecurities and stop playing them out in our relationships. The key to a successful relationship is understanding, and through this comes healing. Let me help you to understand men and transform your relationship so you can experience the most wondrous part of being human – true and lasting love.

Chapter 1 Love, But Not As We Know It

Turning everything you know about love on its head

This is a book about building a loving relationship with a man, so I was wondering what this means to you? Is it about finding somebody special who will whisk you off your feet and shower you with romance? Do you expect a man to care for you and cherish you forever? Or do you want to be with a man who supports you and looks after your every need? If so, these are not unreasonable desires. Most of us have an idea of what would make a good partner and good relationship, and these are often built around our fairy-tale dreams. But there is a problem. The dreams contain within them a fundamental flaw. They assume that our partners can *make us* happy.

In the next few chapters I will show you that this assumption is at the core of *all* our relationship problems and that it comes out of a *misunderstanding* about the true nature of love. Any emotional unavailability in your partner or lack of intimacy in your relationship can be traced back to this unfortunate misunderstanding.

Left unchecked it will certainly damage your relationship and could even destroy it altogether. I can say this with some conviction because it was my own lack of awareness about love that destroyed my marriage. I would like to share with you how this

**Misunderstandings
about love can
damage or destroy our
relationships**

happened and what it taught me about myself and the problems that many men have with love.

I had been married for nearly ten years and I had a lovely wife and two wonderful children. My career had been successful and I was proud of the way that my life had turned out. We lived in a handsome house and enjoyed a good standard of living. On occasions we had been described by our friends as the perfect couple. Although I remember feeling a little uneasy about these comments, I began to believe them and became complacent about our marriage.

At the time I considered myself a reasonably empathic and caring man, with a sensitive personality. I know my friends considered me something of a ‘nice guy’. However my level of emotional awareness was limited – while I was interested in other people, I didn’t really *know myself*. On the surface I felt fairly happy, but was completely unaware of the negative self-beliefs

and fear that I was hiding deeper down. This lack of awareness could not last, and one fateful evening I was forced to face my insecurities.

We were about to sit down to eat. It was one of those romantic rituals that you settle into within a marriage – a candle on the table, a nice meal and bottle of wine, perhaps a video and then up to bed. I was cooking that evening and being in a rather lazy mood had heated-up a ready-meal. I will always remember the dish - it was Salmon-en-Croute from Marks & Spencer. Until that evening it had been one of my favourites but now, even the thought of it, makes me feel sick. Having prepared the meal and set the table, I was at the point of serving it when my wife popped upstairs to check on our children, who had just gone to bed.

I remember noticing that she took an unusually long time to come downstairs. Eventually I heard her footsteps descending our creaky stairs. As she sat down opposite me, I could see that she was distracted, unable to make eye-contact. She looked up, gave me a tortured glance, and then spoke those terrible words, *“Peter, I’m leaving you.”*

Even now, many years after the event, it is painful to recount my feelings as my life suddenly collapsed around me. It was like a pack of cards and it came tumbling down in an instant. At the moment of loss, I remember the sensation of falling into an abyss, a grey haze enveloping me. For an instant I had the image of myself as a foetus, being crushed and extinguished of life. I felt I was dying. I couldn’t believe the words she had uttered because I had no idea that she was unhappy. My mind was filled with unbearable visions of life without the woman

**My life suddenly
collapsed
around me**

I loved, of being parted from the children and never being a family again.

After the moment of loss, came the disbelief and the denial – this just wasn’t happening to me, it couldn’t be true. I told my wife she was mistaken, that there was no way we could split up. In our nearly ten years of marriage we had experienced little more than the odd irritable exchange and yet here I was facing the total loss of everything that I held dear. Once again, she repeated that it was over, we were finished. There was a cold certainty to her words that told me there was no turning back. I thought of the children upstairs, now soundly asleep and my heart screamed for them. I imagined their confusion and fear when we told them that we were

splitting up. I was losing two of the most precious things in my life – my wife and my family, and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. I pleaded with her. We were a great family, we were meant to be together. But deep down I knew it was over.

That night proved a turning-point in my life. I could never be the same again, and with retrospect, I wouldn't want to go back to being the person I was before that terrible shock. It was an awful experience and the pain was to last for several years, but it had the effect of waking me up and forcing me to face my innermost fears and insecurities. That night I began to understand who I really was and how I had been hiding for most of my life. It was also the first time I realised that I had completely misunderstood the true nature of love.

To me love was something I *lacked* and therefore had to bring into my life from the *outside*. When I met my future wife and fell in love, I believed that my search was over. As we

**There was a terrible
flaw in my plan for
happiness**

built a family and a home together it all seemed so easy - I had everything I needed to make me happy. But there was a terrible flaw in my plan. My belief that I was personally lacking in love made me *dependent* on my wife for my happiness. I had

everything, but only as long as she remained in my life. When she suddenly left me, my life fell apart and I was devastated and heartbroken.

My experience as a relationship coach and my observations in daily life have shown me that most people have a belief that they are lacking in love. Virtually everyone I meet starts from a position of *scarcity* when it comes to love. In this book I am going to show you that although it is a terrible mistake to believe that we are lacking in love, it is extremely difficult to stop this belief taking over our lives and ruining our relationships. In fact its hard to avoid taking on this belief because it is everywhere in our culture. Our films, books, plays and music are full of stories about love – the joy of finding it and the heartache of losing it. We treat it as a commodity, a transient emotion that comes and goes. We are deliriously happy when we find it, but suffer terribly when we lose it again. We end up assuming that love is fickle and that it has the potential to *hurt* us.

Our relationship problems just reinforce these beliefs. The vast majority start well, with two people falling in love and delighting in each other's company. Initially the relationship seems very successful and is usually full of love, tenderness and great sex. Then something begins to

go wrong. The feelings of love start to fade and we begin seeing our partners' failings. Quirky habits that we found charming in the early days now irritate us. We notice an increase in selfish behaviour, our partner becomes unloving and they withdraw from us. We might work out our frustrations and annoyance through arguments and rows, but these then rob the relationship of pleasure, or we might compromise and settle for less love and connection. If things get really bad, one or both partners might choose to end the relationship and try to find someone better. Even if we find another partner and the new relationship shows great promise, as time goes by the old patterns invariably repeat themselves. After a number of these disappointments we can become disillusioned and cynical about love.

These negative relationship experiences are so common that few of us ever question them. When the feelings of love fade in a relationship we may assume that either we or our partner has changed. Perhaps we weren't so compatible after all, or perhaps we chose the wrong partner? Although there may be some truth in these explanations, we rarely consider that there could have been a problem from the start and that we might have fallen in love for the *wrong* reasons. To explain how I can make such a radical suggestion we need to look at why we are so driven to find romantic love.

It is not unreasonable to want to share our lives with another person. There are many pleasures that are best enjoyed together! Eventually we might want to settle down and have a family, or find companionship with a like-minded individual who shares our values. Although we may think that our reasons for finding a partner are entirely positive, the chances are that we are being driven by our need to fill the *emotional hole* that we feel inside. A feeling that we lack love is so painful that we will do almost anything to bring it back into our lives, and finding somebody to love is our favourite way of doing this.

Have you ever wondered about your own motivations in finding a partner? Cast your mind back to the time when you were single - what sort of emotions did you experience? Can you remember a feeling that *something was missing* from your life? Have you ever felt an aching *loneliness* and or maybe a feeling of *emptiness* or *incompleteness*, even within a current relationship?

**Our need for love
sabotages our
relationships**

Emotionally, this is the starting point for most of us on our search for romantic love. We look for somebody to bring love *into* our lives, to take away our pain. There are plenty of men and women out there who are searching for the same thing and that is why, for most of us, it is fairly easy to find a partner and fall in love. The trouble is that fulfilling our lack of love through somebody else, is the worst possible reason to fall in love! I will show you that our *need for love* and the *dependence* that it creates, eventually sabotages the very relationships that we long for. The sad truth is that if we expect our partners to replace the love that we cannot feel for ourselves, we will be doomed to failure in our relationships.

Like most people, you have probably experienced the heartbreak of a lost love or a failed marriage or relationship. If you have tried to win a man's love or tried to love him from a place of dependence, this will have left you *vulnerable* to emotional hurt. Unfortunately, very few of us are aware of our mistaken beliefs around love, and this is why so many relationships end in disappointment and misery. Although it can feel like your world has fallen apart and lost all meaning after such experiences, I want to show you that it is not only possible to recover from them, but it is also possible to use them as a springboard to learn about yourself and build a really successful relationship in the future. In subsequent chapters I will be showing you how you might have fallen into the trap of believing that you needed to find somebody to love you, and how you can reverse this belief and transform your relationship. However, before I can explain these things, let's explore the *true* nature of love.

If you have ever fallen in love, then you have already experienced *true love*. Although I have described how you might fall in love for the wrong reasons, once it has happened, for a short while you have an opportunity to experience love that is without *need* or *fear*. Can you remember what that felt like? Think back to those heady days when you couldn't stop thinking about your partner. Do you remember how perfect he seemed, how totally in tune he was with

**You allowed yourself
to fall in love**

you and how connected you felt? You probably spent hours looking into each other's eyes, talking endlessly and making love. You felt like a new person. It was all so easy.

The process of falling in love allowed you to experience your *potential* for successful relationships and even more importantly, your *capacity* for love. Although the decision was

made subconsciously, there would have been a moment when you *allowed* yourself to fall in love. During that time you let go of all your fears and negative ideas about yourself and the world. You opened yourself up to all the love that was available and your partner did the same, making it easy for you to feel huge amounts of love for each other. These romantic experiences show just how much love and joy can be experienced in a committed relationship. As you work through this book and try some of the things I suggest, remember that if you have been down this path before, you can go down it again. If you are in an existing relationship, I want to help you retrace your footsteps and relive that amazing honeymoon experience, over and over again, and if you are waiting to meet a partner, I will show you how to build these ideas into your next relationship.

The key to understanding the beautiful experience of falling in love is to realise that *nothing new* comes to you. The love and joy is *already* present within you and it shows up when you *let go* of your fear and negative self-beliefs. When you fall in love it seems that your partner is *making* you feel happy, but what really happens is that you *give yourself permission* to be happy. This is a hugely important distinction and one that can transform your understanding of love and relationships. As you fall in love you make a subconscious choice to feel good. It is critically important in your understanding of relationships to appreciate that, no matter how much love your boyfriend gives you when you fall in love, the good feelings are already present in you, *before* you meet. That isn't to say that your boyfriend's loving behaviour isn't important. He is the key to unlocking the best in you and reminding you of your natural capacity for love.

I hope that you can see that the experience of falling in love is a gift we are given to understand what love really is. Love isn't an experience that comes and goes or that you need to search for. It isn't even an emotion. It is a description of your very *essence*. Love is who you are!

**Love is your essence -
it's who you are!**

Perhaps this idea seems far removed from the experience of your life, especially if you are in the midst of a relationship crisis or breakdown. I appreciate that you might be having all sorts of difficulties and problems, both within your relationship and in the rest of your life, and

these may be creating anxiety and emotional pain. Some of you may have even wondered if *fear and pain* is your normal state of existence. If this is what your life is like at the moment, I want to show you that it is not the *truth* for you or for the people around you. I can assure you that love is your natural state and that it is possible to let go of the fear and other negative feelings that have been dominating your life. A happy relationship and life is within your reach once you can remove the barriers to love.

When I first came across the idea that love is our essence, I too was very sceptical. At the time I was not enjoying life and was still feeling great sadness following the end of my marriage. I had been lucky enough to experience love on many occasions in my life, but at that time it seemed to have deserted me. Over a number of years I worked to understand my own psychology and gain more emotional awareness, and I began to see how I had allowed fear and negative self-beliefs to creep into my life. As I let these go, I began to notice that I didn't have to *learn* how to love myself or go out searching for love - it was always present when *my* fear and negativity subsided. This is what convinced me that love is our natural state. Much of what I will share with you in this book is about removing fear from your mind and your partner's mind, so love can shine through and bless your relationship.

Defining love as our *permanent* state, rather than as fragile emotion, turns everything we know about it on its head. No longer do we feel lacking in love or have to go out and search for it, because we have a *limitless* store of it ourselves. We will become less dependent on our partners to love us and take away our fears. It also challenges our ideas about *falling in* and

**We are choosing our
experience of love**

out of love. When we fall in love we have assumed that our partner brings us love, but if it's been there all along, this can't be true. What changes must be our *willingness* to experience the *feelings of love*.

During those wonderful experiences we are embracing the love that is us. Of course, the opposite is also true. When we fall out of love, we must make a decision to shut off our feelings of love and deny our essence. What makes this such a powerful and potentially life-changing idea is that it means that we are *choosing* our experience of love, rather than feeling that we are at the mercy of what is happening around us. Can you see how empowering this idea is? It is within your power to choose more love and a happy relationship.

Once you understand that love is your essence and that you are designed to be in a loving relationship with your partner, you will understand why denying these things will create problems. If you think about any relationship difficulty that you have had in the past, or that you might be having now, you will always be able to find a place where love has been denied or withdrawn, by either you or your partner. In fact, a *scarcity of love* can always be found at the root of all human problems.

Due to our misconceptions about love, we can easily reach the conclusion that love can hurt us. Some people even assume that the pain they are feeling in a relationship is love. It is important to realise that love itself can never hurt you, it's the *absence* of love that hurts and creates all the difficulties we experience in our relationships. If you are experiencing any pain in your relationship, it is an indication that love is being withheld - it is a warning sign that something needs mending. If you can see where and why love is being denied, you will be well on your way to bringing it back again and solving your relationship problems.

By now you are probably beginning to see that these radical ideas about love are something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand embracing our loving essence takes away our neediness and frees us from our dependence on other people for our happiness, but on the other it means that we are *responsible* for the emotional quality of our lives. This idea isn't new - it was Aristotle who pointed out that "*happiness depends on ourselves*" This means that we have to stop looking to somebody else to make us happy and bring us love. It also means we become more *accountable* in our relationships. While it is tempting to believe that your partner is the one who is denying love, it is worth remembering that it always takes two people to have a problem in a relationship. After all, if it was only your partner who had the problem, and you were full of love, you would be able to immediately bring it back to him and the relationship.

Accountability is one of the most challenging ideas that I will be introducing, but it is also one of the most powerful because it will give you the best chance to improve the quality of your relationship. The key is to realise that if you or your partner have shut out feelings of love, you can just as easily invite them back - you have total control over what you feel. Of course, at this stage you might be a long way from believing that you can make these positive emotional choices or that you have any influence over your relationship. Don't worry about this, because I will be returning to the idea of accountability several more times in this book and showing you

how you can take charge of your emotions and be a force for positive change in your relationship.

The amount of love that we embrace is really a measure of how much we love ourselves - it determines our level of *self-esteem*. We know that high self-esteem is the single most important factor in emotional well-being and in forming successful and long-lasting relationships. It is often said that we can't love another person until we love ourselves and that is why I am going to put so much emphasis on building self-esteem in this book.

**We cannot love
somebody else until we
love ourselves**

For a moment I would like you to stop reading and try a small exercise. Shut your eyes and bring into your mind the five people you most love. You might want to jot their names down if you have pen and paper at hand. Who was on that list? Was it your children, your partner or your parents, or maybe even your pet? These are typical responses to this question, but did you remember to put your *own name* on the list? Be honest, do you love yourself enough to include it? This isn't a trick question. Many of us will forget to include ourselves because we don't rate ourselves highly enough. We can be so lacking in self-love that we would never think of placing ourselves on such a list. You may already be aware that your self-esteem is not as high as you would like, because women are usually more in tune with these things. Your partner, on the other hand, may be much less aware. You might want to try this exercise with him, but beware of him placing himself at the top of the list for narcissistic reasons! The sort of self-love I am talking about is one that comes from the heart rather than the ego.

What I would like to show you in the next few chapters is that the sometimes difficult and unloving behaviours that you see in your partner are not some built-in personality flaw - they are simply a response to his own low self-esteem. If your partner is behaving badly, I can guarantee that he feels in some way, *lacking on love*. At some point in his life he must have turned away and doubted his capacity for *self-love*. In recognising that he has self-esteem issues you will be in a much better position to help him. In the course of this book, I will explain how you can raise your own self-esteem and help your partner do the same.

In the next chapter I want to start doing this by helping you to understand your partner's personality, particularly how he handles his emotions. An important part of this will be to recognise that your partner is likely to handle his emotions in a way that is different from you. 17

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

I will also explain why men often struggle to feel and express their emotions adequately and describe the damaging behaviours that result from this denial.

Learning points from Chapter 1 - Love, But Not As We Know It

- *Love can never hurt - it's fear and our unmet emotional needs that hurt.*
- *When we start a relationship, most of us feel lacking in love, and this makes us dependent on our partners*
- *Love is our essence - it's who we are!*
- *All of us are connected by love to other people*
- *Relationship problems are caused by the denial of our loving essence and our loving connections*
- *We do not need to bring love into our lives via a partner because we have it already*
- *Building self-esteem is the key to a happy relationship and life.*

Is it love or fear?

When we start looking with more emotional awareness at our relationships, we see that much of what we had assumed to be acts of love, are in fact a response to fear and neediness. Here are some ways that fear can masquerade as love. If you find that you are experiencing some of these things, don't be discouraged - these behaviours are very common in relationships. As the book progresses, I will explain the origins of these behaviours and show you how you can return your relationship to a truer form of love.

It's not love if...

- *There is any pain, fear or hurt in your relationship*
- *You look to your partner to make you happy and feel loved*
- *Your partner says he loves you, but it doesn't feel that way*
- *You feel terribly lonely and struggle to function when your partner goes away*
- *Your partner is jealous when other men are giving you compliments or attention*
- *You are always giving to others but don't get anything in return*
- *You believe that love is only something you only feel for special people in your life*

Chapter 2

Big Boys Do Cry

Men and their emotions

One of the most obvious differences between men and women in relationships is the way they handle emotions. Men can be notoriously out of touch with their emotions, but it would be a mistake to assume that they didn't have any. I can assure you, that men have just as many emotions as women, but it usually takes a significant trauma, loss or moving experience to bring

Men have just as many emotions as women

them to the surface. In this chapter I will help you to understand why a man hides his emotions and the effect this has on his behaviour. To improve your relationship you will need to help your

partner express his emotions more authentically, and in subsequent chapters I will show you the best way to do this.

I have already described the ending of my marriage and the emotional outpouring that followed. It was like opening the floodgates. All the hurt and pain that I had hidden away for my whole life was released over a matter of hours. I cried more tears than I thought was possible. Most of these were on my own, but some were with support of good friends. It wasn't a pretty sight, but there was a considerable relief in being able to express myself so honestly. Later I was to discover that this release of emotions is a very healthy way to heal and mourn a loss, but at the time I was consumed by grief. As the shock subsided, I became desperate to understand where I had gone wrong in my relationship and why I was so devastated when my wife left me.

Over the months and years that followed my separation and eventual divorce I learnt a huge amount about myself. I discovered that my marital problems could be traced back to my reluctance to feel and express the things I was most *afraid* of. In suppressing these feelings I had shut down many of my other emotions and was living from my *head* rather than my *heart*. I was certainly not a monster, but I can see that I was not fully available to my wife. There were aspects of my personality that I was hiding from her – not deliberately, but because they were just too painful for me to acknowledge consciously. These negative feelings caused me to withdraw and created an emotional distance in our relationship - a separation that made it

impossible for us to share our feelings in a way that would have allowed us to help each other and rescue our relationship.

My own experiences not only showed me where I had gone wrong, but also why men often struggle to embrace love within their romantic relationships. Before my divorce I had no idea that I was suppressing certain important emotions and it took a major crisis to show me where I had been going wrong. Now, with increased awareness, I look around and see so many men falling into the same traps as I did. The problem is that they are completely *unaware* of how this is damaging their lives and hurting the people they love. Millions of women across the world are suffering heartbreak and pain because of our *emotional denial*. The tragedy is, that all this misery is unnecessary. Through a deeper understanding of ourselves, each other and of love itself, we can discover what unites us. I wish that men could tell the women in their lives why they think, feel and behave as they do, but most are not yet ready or able to do so. I can at least help you to work out what is happening in your partner's mind and how this affects his behaviour.

Let's begin by looking at one of the biggest frustrations that women experience, often on a daily basis, within a relationship. Have you noticed that when you share your problems with your boyfriend or husband that he tries to provide you with a practical solution rather than simply listening to your concerns? Instead of receiving the consolation you need, you can be left feeling that he hasn't listened or that he doesn't care about you. This behaviour comes from his unconscious desire to steer the conversation away from *feelings*. He probably assumes that by solving the practical aspects of your problem, the emotional issues will go away. Of course he has missed the point! You didn't want him to solve your problem, you were probably just trying to let him know that you weren't feeling great and that you wanted his understanding and support. This failure to meet your need for understanding comes across as a lack of empathy and concern. At worst, it can seem that he doesn't love you.

**Men have an
unconscious desire to
steer conversations away
from emotions**

Of course the ability to show empathy and compassion is a critical part of a good relationship, but this comes with emotional awareness. At this stage your partner may lack this

awareness but it does not mean that he has lost his love for you. Difficult situations in a relationship trigger a man's most fundamental fears and this causes him to close down his emotions in the belief that this will protect him from further pain. He also genuinely believes that a more practical and therefore less emotional response will protect *both* of you from having to experience pain. He is trying to make things better, but in doing so he withdraws into himself, closes his heart and creates an emotional distance in the relationship. It is this distance that makes you feel un-cared for and unloved.

Clearly there are differences in the way that men and woman handle emotions. Women are generally more willing to talk about their feelings than men. I often see groups of women in pubs and restaurants having a 'girls' night out'. There is an obvious emotional and energetic bond in these groups. On the occasions I have overheard snippets of conversation, much of the talk is about men, sex and the emotional ups and downs of relationships. Although men do go out in groups, the conversation more typically revolves around work, cars or sport, rarely moving into the territory of emotions. I have heard it said that this is an evolutionary hangover that we inherited from our stone-age ancestry, where strength and courage would have been more important for survival than the skills of empathy and compassion. It seems that little has changed in modern times, with the man often taking on the role of hunter-gatherer. His emphasis is still largely on the practical aspects of life - the doing and getting, rather than the softer skills of empathy, nurture and childcare.

Although our gender roles may lead us to certain behavioural styles, as I have already mentioned, it is a mistake to assume that men are somehow lacking or deficient in emotions. Don't be fooled by our confident words, stoicism or arrogance - these are designed as a smokescreen to hide deep and painful feelings. When my wife left me, it was these buried feelings that erupted and overwhelmed me. They had been in there all the time, just waiting for a big trauma to bring them to the surface.

I saw another example of the release of pent-up emotions recently when I was watching a television programme about a group of young people who had been deliberately 'shipwrecked' on a tropical island. After several months away from home they were sent letters from their families. When they opened them, all the participants became emotional, but it was the young men, who had up to that point seemed the most macho, who shed the

most tears. There was something deeply touching to see this genuine expression of emotion when they read the words of love and appreciation from their parents and siblings. Those emotions had been there all along, but camouflaged by male bravado.

An older man might find it even harder to get in touch with his emotions because he has been suppressing them for most of his life. No matter how emotionally unavailable your partner seems to be, I promise you that his emotions and a great deal of love are hiding beneath his protective layers. Just like those young men on the tropical island, your partner is probably hiding his emotion and pretending he is big and strong, when inside he feels the exact opposite. I will show you how you can help him reveal his emotions safely and win him back as a wholehearted lover.

The first thing you can do is to get inside the mind of your partner and see how he handles his emotions and reacts to the people around him. It is not easy being a man in the modern world. On the one hand he will be striving to demonstrate his strength, courage and masculinity but on the other he may feel pressure to be more in touch with his emotions and ‘feminine side’. The trouble is that in our society emotions are often seen as a *weakness*,

**In our society emotions
are often seen as
a weakness**

particularly in men. From an early age boys are discouraged from showing their emotions with comments like “*Big boys don’t cry*” and “*You are such a cry baby*”. This is a terrible mistake because it is psychologically damaging to suppress our emotions. They are a natural part of being

human and our problems come when we avoid feeling them. In fact we become mentally and physically ill when we stop feeling our emotions. Unfortunately men can end up believing that an expression of true emotions is a sign that they have *failed* and they will therefore fight to keep them down.

Thankfully it is becoming increasingly acceptable for men to show their emotions in public. Sportsmen and politicians now feel able to be more honest about their feelings and they are discovering that whereas in the past they saw emotions as a handicap, they now see them as characteristics that can enhance their performance and appeal. However, while our society is becoming more emotionally mature, it is still early days, and many men still struggle to feel and express their emotions.

This suppression happens subconsciously so most men are largely unaware that they are doing it. Without good emotional awareness we resort to our intellectual, thinking skills, which takes us even further away from our hearts - we become *emotionally blind*. Therefore the first and really important thing to understand about a man is that his lack of empathy and ability to express his emotions is not something he is doing to *deliberately* hurt you. The

**Men become
emotionally blind**

chances are that he is completely unaware of his own hidden emotions and that his emotional denial creates difficulties for you. He will also have no idea how this avoidance of emotions makes it difficult for him to form successful relationships. Although he can hold down a job and make money with relatively low levels of emotional engagement, his relationship-forming skills will be lacking. This ability to be good at practical things and have a materially successful life without too much emotion kids a man into thinking his logical approach to life is the only way to be happy. Of course, you know differently!

Emotions are a critical part of our make-up and if we suppress them we then have to find ways of compensating for them. This creates a whole series of negative behaviours that can easily hurt and traumatise the people around us. Later in this book I will explain in more detail how this comes about, but for now here is a list of the ways a man might behave when he is trying to suppress his emotions.

- He becomes angry and aggressive.
- He regularly escapes to the pub or the sports club leaving you lonely and bored.
- He always makes you feel that any relationship problem is *your* problem
- In his presence it can feel like you are walking on eggshells
- He does not help you around the house or with the children.
- He is only interested in money and material things.
- He shows you little or no affection in public or at home.

- He cannot commit to the relationship.
- He is unfaithful and you cannot trust him.
- He takes little interest in your work or hobbies.
- He doesn't seem to understand you, value you or care for you.
- He manipulates and controls you.
- He has lost interest in sex.
- He is not willing to discuss anything to do with emotions or the problems you are experiencing in the relationship.
- He puts in hour after hour at work and when he comes home he is stressed, exhausted and irritable.
- He is basically a good man but he is distant, lost or unavailable

Do you recognise any of these from your own relationship? If your partner is behaving in any of these ways, at the core of the problem will be a range of unexpressed emotions. There is something he just doesn't want to *feel* and his difficult or withdrawn behaviour is a direct consequence of this avoidance.

This brings us to an important psychological principle. All of us *behave because of*

**We behave because of
how we are feeling**

how we are feeling. In other words, it is our emotions that create our behaviours. For instance, if you feel upset and angry you might react with control and aggression. If you feel happy and good about yourself, you are more likely to be pleasant

and kind. In both cases your emotions have *preceded* your behaviour. This is a really important principle in our understanding of relationships because if a person behaves badly, we can learn so much about them by considering what it is that they *must be feeling* for them to be acting in that way.

If your boyfriend or husband is behaving badly or unreasonably, it is not because he is intrinsically bad or evil, it is because he cannot cope with the feelings that are coming up. To avoid his emotions he will have one of two choices - to withdraw from you so that there is less potential for his emotions to be triggered or control you or the relationship to prevent them from emerging. In order to do this he may become angry or aggressive or alternatively he may refuse to discuss anything to do with emotions. These both have the same desired effect of *protecting* him from his most painful emotions. Unfortunately it also stops him from becoming aware of any emotional issues in your relationship. Most of the time he will be completely unaware that he is doing this. To you his behaviour will be painfully obvious, but he will be blind to it. He is trying to protect himself, but in doing so will have become unaware of how he is affecting you.

So what is it that a man is so afraid to feel? On the surface it can seem that men just avoid the *sentimentality* of emotions. They might have a fear of the embarrassment or ridicule that

**Men are afraid of
themselves!**

they feel they would suffer if they were to allow their feelings to flow. Some men might tell you that emotions are a human weakness and must be controlled if you want to have a successful and happy life. What they won't realise is that their emotional avoidance is hiding a number of much more fundamental fears that touch the very heart of *who they are* and what they *believe* about themselves and the world. In the next few chapters I will describe these fears in more detail, explain where they come from and show how they create problematic behaviours. I will show you that men are afraid of many things, but mostly they are afraid of *themselves*!

Learning points from Chapter 2 - Big Boys Do Cry

- The important things you need to know about men and their emotions

- *Big boys do cry, but most of the time the tears are suppressed.*
- *Many men are deeply heartbroken but will defend these feelings at almost any cost.*
- *Men have just as many emotions as women - they are just better at hiding them.*
- *Men are usually unaware that they are suppressing their emotions because it is an unconscious process.*
- *A man's emotions will pour forth when a sufficiently traumatic event forces him to open his heart.*
- *If a man is behaving badly it is because he is frightened of his emotions surfacing. It means he is hurting inside.*

How you can help your man with his emotions

- *Make it OK for him to express his emotions.*
- *Remind him that women are attracted to men who are in touch with their emotions.*
- *Appreciate what must be going on emotionally for him to behave in negative ways. If he is behaving badly, something must be frightening him or upsetting him. This understanding is the first step in being able to show empathy.*
- *Everyone has a right to say how they feel within a relationship, but take care to do this sensitively and find out what your partner is feeling.*
- *Talk about feelings rather than just thoughts. Most men like to hide in their heads, so this is an opportunity to help them open their hearts.*
- *Ultimately it is through emotional openness and honesty that we create partnership, but of course we can only be as honest as we are aware. At this stage your willingness to unearth your own fears and insecurities will help you gain this awareness and this will encourage your partner to do the same.*
- *Tell him that you think it is courageous, not weak, to express his emotions.*

Chapter 3

Hopelessly Dependent On You

The origins of fear, needs and low self-esteem

In this chapter I am going to help you understand what a man is afraid of and how this affects his personality and behaviour. However, rather than describing a catalogue of fears and insecurities that are specific to men, I am going to broaden the discussion and describe the basic fears that are common to both men and women. Understanding this shared *human experience* is the key to improving your relationship because it the basis of *empathy* - knowing what is going on in your partner's mind. It is a truism in psychology that we can only gain an understanding of another person when we understand ourselves, and that is why I am going to take you on a journey into your mind. By understanding the origins of your own fears and self-beliefs you will find it much easier to understand what is going on for your partner.

I will not pretend that what I am about to ask you to do is going to be easy. Looking honestly at yourself takes a great deal of courage and can bring up all sorts of painful feelings. Please don't stop reading now or throw this book away! I promise you that the process of understanding your emotions and letting go of your fears will transform your life and bring much more love to your relationship.

I can make this promise because I went through this process myself when my marriage failed. Yes, on several occasions it brought me to my knees, and it forced me to face my inner demons, but eventually I emerged a stronger and happier person. I am now in a wonderful relationship and know that this has been possible because of my inner reflection and healing. I want to share with you what I have learnt and hopefully save you from some of the turmoil that I went through. If you struggle with some of the ideas or if you feel like quitting, please remember that you are not just doing this for yourself. Every time you find the courage to look within and deal with some of your fears, you are also helping the people around you.

There is another huge benefit in understanding your own personality and taking responsibility for your emotions. It is by far the best way of bringing *change* to your

**We gain an
understanding of
others by understanding
ourselves**

relationship. When we discover that there are things about our partner that we don't like, it's tempting to try to change them. Be honest, have you ever wanted to do that with the men in your life, and how successful was it? The truth is that although you can't change somebody else, you can change *yourself*. When you do this you will discover something remarkable. Almost magically the issues that had been a problem in your relationship will fall away and your partner will change. Many of us think that a relationship problem can only be solved if *both* partners cooperate in the healing, but this is not the case. If you work on and heal your personal issues within your relationship, *both* of you will benefit.

As you become an expert in your emotions, you will *automatically* pass this skill on to your partner. Your willingness to be open and honest will set the scene for better communications in your relationship. You can also use your growing emotional awareness to understand your partner better. What is it in the relationship that he is afraid of? Where have these fears come from in his past? For instance, if he finds it hard to talk about his emotions could it be that he picked this up from his father? Many of the needs and negative emotions that I will describe are common to both sexes, but your partner may play them out very differently from you. I will highlight these differences in behaviour and help you to see that they are usually driven by the same fears and insecurities.

Some of you might not be in a relationship at the moment. This isn't a problem because what I am about to describe will help you to bring a partner into your life, and give you a head start when a new relationship begins. Your increased emotional awareness will help you to spot any early-warning signs and prevent problems from developing in the relationship. It will also help you to attract a truer partner. Perhaps you have noticed a pattern in the type of men you have dated or had relationships with? Do they always disappoint you or let you down in the same way? The type of person you attract into your life is closely related to your emotional state and therefore identifying and healing your insecurities gives you a much better chance of bringing in somebody who is better for you and who is more likely to make a good, long-term partner.

To understand any fears or insecurities that you might be holding on to, it is obvious that you must first become *aware* of them, but this isn't quite as simple as it sounds. Our emotions can easily overwhelm and confuse us. Have you ever been in a situation where you were

swamped by negative emotions and felt that you had little or no control over them? Even if you wanted to stop the bad feelings, you might not have known how to. This is a typical response to stress or a difficult situation and is something that you will need to tackle, if you are to take charge of your emotions. The trick with gaining emotional awareness is to keep things simple. Start by identifying the primary emotions that you are experiencing. Even in the midst of a relationship problem it should be possible to distinguish between emotions that are a response to *love* and those that come from *fear*.

So why not try this now? What is your over-riding feeling as you read these words? Are you excited, inspired or intrigued? Or are you nervous, frightened or doubtful? The first three emotions are positive and are coming from the loving side of your mind and the second three from the fearful side. It is also possible that you felt little or no emotion or that you were unsure about what it was you were feeling. If so, relax and be patient. Even feeling nothing is a feeling, and if you give yourself time you should become aware of a more distinct feeling that lies underneath. Emotions lie in layers in our mind, so be prepared to dig down into them to find those that are the most important in any situation. If you practice monitoring your feelings in this way, you will soon gain more emotional awareness and find it easier to decide if you are in a state of love or fear.

**There are only two
fundamental human
experiences - love or
fear**

Becoming aware of the underlying motivation for your emotions is an essential first step in improving your relationship. It will allow you to take charge of your emotions and eventually make more positive emotional choices in your relationship - the essence of *emotional intelligence*. The important thing to recognise about love and fear is that it is impossible to experience both at the same time. If you are feeling love, then fear cannot be present, and if you are feeling fear, then any feelings of love will disappear. This allows us to simplify life into two fundamental experiences - *love* or *fear*. All the hundreds of other emotions have their origins in either of these two states. Sometimes it might appear that you are in a neutral state, but when this happens, it means that you are suppressing your emotions, either positive or

negative. Although you might not be consciously aware of doing it, you are deliberately choosing *not to feel*.

I would encourage you to get into the habit of monitoring your emotions in this way because it is the basis of a really powerful healing technique. As soon as you realise that you are in a state of fear, you will also know that it is *obscuring* your natural state of love. The route to healing is therefore to find out where the fear is coming from and let it go. The love and positive feelings will then come through naturally. Improving your relationship or the emotional quality of your life really is this *simple*!

You may already be asking, “If it’s so simple, why do so many millions of relationships end in failure and misery? What I hope to show you is that although the solution to all our relationship problems is indeed very simple, it is not necessarily *easy* to achieve! This is because we are often caught up in a vicious circle of fear and pain that hides us from our true state of love. The only way to let go of our fear is to bring it to the surface for healing, but most of us find this too painful to do. Instead we try to ignore our fears and in doing so create all manner of problems in our relationships. What makes this even worse is that as soon as we hide the fears, we forget we have done this and they end up in our subconscious mind. We then become completely unaware that we are still holding on to them. This is why I want to show you and your partner how to become aware of your fears and insecurities in a way that is safe, and support you in the process of understanding them and letting them go.

If, as I have been suggesting, love is our natural state, an immediate question springs to

Our parents help us to hold on to the love that we were born with

mind. Why would we ever turn away from it? To answer this we need to look back to the earliest period in our lives because it is here that we developed our personality and took on our beliefs about ourselves and life. Psychologists tell us that our

emotional wellbeing is greatly influenced by the relationship with our parents and the experience of growing up in a family. They say that much of our personality is formed between birth and four years of age, and that we learn about love by being loved by our parents. This is true, but thinking about our new definition of love, we need to modify this slightly. Instead of teaching you anything new about love, you can think of your parents helping you to *hold on* to the love that you were born with. This works well when there is lots of love and attention, but problems set in

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

if we experience any fear.

As an infant there would have been plenty of reasons why you might have become afraid. As a tiny speck of life in a vast and potentially dangerous world, your instinct would have been for *survival*, and anything that threatened this would have certainly created fear. As human beings we cannot escape our physical *vulnerability* and sense of *mortality* and the fears that come with these subconsciously direct much of our lives. We might not spend our daily lives dwelling on such things as abandonment and death, but they are ever-present in the back of our minds. Anything that threatens us will tend to trigger these fears and create both an emotional response and a series of actions that are designed to reduce our personal risks.

Our parents are of critical importance in those first weeks and months of life because they protect us from our greatest fears by caring for us and giving us love. Love is a wonderful thing because it is the perfect antidote to fear. Can you think of a time when you were frightened as a child and your parents came to your rescue? Do you remember how wonderful it felt? That was love. It took away your pain, it protected you from fear and made you feel safe. But this was not all.

The experience of love when you are growing up would have also primed your self-esteem.

Imagine being born into a perfectly bonded family.

Your first and only experience of the world would be

warmth, safety and love. The experience of total love from your parents and siblings would make sure that you never *doubted* or *turned away* from the love that you were born with.

Growing up in such a loving family, with an absence of fear, would give you incredibly high levels of self-esteem.

**Our experience of love
primes our self-esteem**

Now imagine growing up in a dysfunctional and unbonded family where the amount of expressed love is very limited. Your parents would probably be suffering their own emotional difficulties and struggling with their own relationship. They might have little time for you. It is inevitable that your early experiences will be dominated by fear, stress and a lack of love. Not surprisingly you might take on the belief that the world is a *frightening* and *dangerous* place and turn away from your gift of love. Such an upbringing is likely to leave you with very low levels of self-esteem. In some unfortunate cases a family may be so fractured that a child

struggles to hold on to any self-love and this will have a disastrous effect on their teenage and adult relationships as well as their emotional experience of life.

The chances are that your own childhood experiences lay somewhere between the two extremes I have just described. You might have had a happy and loving childhood but there would probably have been times when you felt that your emotional needs were not *fully* met by your parents. As children we can be very demanding of our parents and our egos can run wild. We can have very high expectations of the way we want our parents to love us and take care of us. If you are a busy parent yourself, you will know how difficult it is to consistently meet the needs and demands of your children. There is *never any doubt* about how much you love them, but it isn't always possible to express this adequately. If you have any disappointment around your upbringing, don't forget that your parents would have had their own challenges in life. They would have done the best they could for you, given their own circumstances.

**Your parents would
have done the best
they could for you**

There are many situations that can disrupt bonding in a family and make it hard to fulfil a child's emotional needs. Physical and mental illness, death, separation and divorce or continual arguing, are all potential causes of trauma and broken bonding. The death or serious illness of a sibling can haunt a child for a lifetime. Some people suffer terrible abuse, cruelty or trauma in childhood and it is not surprising that they may suffer so much later in life. These are obvious examples, but there are many more, less dramatic things that can traumatise a young and vulnerable mind. The birth of a sibling can be a huge shock for a first-born child. Parents can be very busy with their work or preoccupied with their other children so that love appears to be scarce. Children might be brought up with old-fashioned ideas about being 'seen and not heard' and held at an emotional distance. Others might be shipped off to boarding school at a tender age or be put under pressure to succeed academically or on the sports field.

These are just some of the many situations that can cause fear and trauma in a child and I am sure you can think of many more. Psychologist Chuck Spezzano, author of the book, "*If It Hurts It Isn't Love*" stresses the critical importance of these early experiences in his groundbreaking relationship model. He calls them *heartbreaks* to remind us of the depth of pain that is

buried within these experiences. When working with his coaching clients he can always identify one or more key heartbreaks that usually occur within the first few years of life. He has shown that if we do not get over our childhood heartbreaks, they have a profound impact on our psychological development. From these painful experiences we draw conclusions about the people around us and about ourselves. These often contain negative self-beliefs and attitudes that rob us of self-esteem and harm our relationships.

Of course I have looked back at my own childhood experiences and wondered how this might have affected my personality. When my marriage failed I was catapulted into great pain and I had to accept that I had some self-esteem issues. I could not remember any specific trauma from my childhood and so I began to wonder what it was that had lowered my self-esteem. Over the last few years I have been able to talk to my parents about my childhood and what was happening for them as I was growing up. I discovered that although my parent's marriage was sound, my mother had a number of serious medical complications and suffered from considerable anxiety and depression when I was growing up. She told me that this made it difficult for her to give me and my brother as much love and attention as she would have liked. Clearly, this was a possible source of heartbreak. Although I have no conscious memory of the trauma, it does appear that it caused me to doubt myself and turn away from self-love.

I am so grateful that my mother and father could talk so honestly to me about my childhood. I know that these conversations were not easy for them. As parents they feel a huge responsibility to me and my brother and it is hard for them to think that their own problems could

**Your negative feelings
today have their
origins in your past**

have affected the quality of our lives. Difficult as they are, such conversations can have a massive healing effect because they bring all the pain, guilt and resentments into the open where they no longer have any power to damage lives.

Of course, if your parents have passed away you cannot have such conversations, and some parents are unwilling or unable to talk about the problems they might have had when raising their children. In these situations you can still infer a great deal about your childhood and the beliefs that you took on at that time by becoming aware of the emotions you are feeling *today*. Any negative feelings you have today will have their origins earlier in your life, often during

infancy. Virtually everything that happens to us in the present is coloured by our experiences earlier in life. As an example, think of something you are frightened of - perhaps a phobia that you have. You should be able to find an incident in your past that created this fear or reaction. If this happened when you were very young, you might have forgotten the original incident, but your unconscious memory of it is still having a powerful and damaging influence on your life. The same is true for any heartbreaks that you experienced during your childhood. Without being able to remember the original incidents, you could be reliving their emotional effects, over and over again in your adult relationships.

You are probably beginning to wonder about your own childhood and how your personality might have been affected by what was happening around you while you were growing up. Many people find it hard to cast their minds back this far because their memories are blurred and can seem unreliable. If you struggle in this way, don't try to create false memories to justify any emotional issues that you might have. Simply be willing to gain more emotional awareness - then be patient. The process of searching in our past does take time, because a great deal of our thoughts and feelings are buried at a subconscious level of the mind.

**Many of our thoughts
and feelings are buried
subconsciously**

Think of your mind as an iceberg. The part above the water represents your conscious thoughts and feelings, but most of them lie beneath the waterline in your subconscious mind. This means that a huge amount of what is going on in your mind is hidden from you. While some of your subconscious will contain positive thoughts and feelings, other parts will be dark and painful. Unfortunately, even if you can keep these thoughts and feelings hidden within your subconscious mind, they can still affect your relationship because they are still working away under the surface. In all relationships there will be a number of subconscious issues that have the potential to create problems, so I would encourage you to find out what these are before they can damage your relationship.

Some people find the process of looking into their unconscious mind unnerving because they are frightened of what they might find or wonder whether it is a safe thing to do. In my experience it is perfectly safe if we look into our minds with the *positive intention* of healing

anything that is negative or dark. It seems that our mind is very clever when it comes to healing and will not deliver us up anything that is *too frightening* or that we cannot handle. It is in our best interests let go of the negative aspects of our subconscious mind, because left to their own devices, they will create problems in our lives. It might be a bit scary to unearth our negative, unconscious feelings but it will be even more painful if we let them damage or destroy our relationships.

If as a child you did experience some trauma or heartbreak, you might remember some of this consciously or more probably, you would have hidden away the memories in your subconscious mind. The problem is that you will now have no recollection of doing this and yet the pain is still inside you. While it is satisfying to be able to pinpoint specific incidents in our childhoods that might have affected our self-esteem, it is not essential. Even though the subconscious is a hidden part of your mind, you can still bring some of its contents to the surface. For instance, you might get a flash of inspiration when you are doing the washing up or having a shower, or remember something from a dream that gives you hint of what is going on in your subconscious.

The process of looking back into our childhood for examples of trauma and heartbreak can makes us feel uncomfortable because it implies criticism of our parents. If you are a parent yourself, you may be feeling uneasy as you think about the way you have raised your own children. As a parent I feel an enormous responsibility to my children for their welfare and happiness - it is a natural instinct of all parents. Let me assure you that

**This process is not
about finding fault or
apportioning blame**

this process of exploring your past is *not* intended to find fault or apportion blame. Rather it is about bringing *understanding* and *acceptance* to your earliest experiences, so that you can see what might have created your personality and emotions. In the next few chapters I will show you that blame and guilt are two of the most damaging emotions in a relationship. Removing them will become a central part of the healing process. If you are a parent, guilt can become a trap to healing any self-esteem issues, so try not to attack yourself for the way you have brought up your children. Remember that children want their parents to be happy, and your guilt and remorse will not bring this about. It is much better to work at understanding yourself

and to heal any insecurities that have come from earlier parts of your life. As you become happier, your children will reap the benefit too.

In any situation where we are disappointed or heartbroken there is always a *need* that isn't being fulfilled, the most important of which will be our need for love. There are also many other physical, emotional and spiritual needs that must be met if we are to be happy. It is our needs that make us dependent on other people, especially our parents when we are young. If we believe that our needs were not adequately met as children, we will go out into the adult world to try and fulfil them, usually by finding a partner to love and care for us. In the early days of a relationship this is usually successful, but sooner or later our partners fail to meet our needs and then we start feeling resentful.

To better understand your own needs it is useful to identify those that are important to you and that you feel are not being fully met by your partner or your relationship. To help you do this, here is a list of some typical needs. If you are single, have a think about a relationship you have had in the past and identify the needs that were important to you then.

The most important needs I have in my relationship are...

Value	Trust	Acceptance
Understanding	Care	Compassion
Recognition	Inclusion	Listening
Respect	Fun	Sexuality
Support	Help	Partnership
Learning	Growth	Laughter
Honesty	Openness	Inspiration
Meaning	Hope	Peace
Safety	Gratitude	Forgiveness
Commitment	Vision	Sincerity
Cooperation	Tenderness	Touch
Freedom	Sensuality	Excitement
Creativity	Fairness	Equality

Beauty	Spirituality	Comfort
Belonging	Sharing	Ease
Friendship	Appreciation	Nurture
Health	Choice	Authenticity
Reassurance	Courage	Confidence
Adventure	Passion	Strength
Security	Money	Purpose
Authority	Fitness	Giving
Romance	Kindness	Warmth

LOVE

The list could go on, and you might want to add some more needs of your own. The length of this list shows just how many needs we have in a relationship. If any of these are not met to our satisfaction we are likely to become unhappy. You can see why relationships can be such a challenge!

Once you have identified your key needs, try to understand why they are important to you. Notice how the needs that are not being met in your present relationship, will be exactly the same needs that were not met in your *original* heartbreaks as a child. For instance, let's say your need for honesty has not been met because your partner has lied to you. This hurts you a great deal and you find it virtually impossible to trust him again. In fact the lack of honesty and distrust is eating you up. You may be surprised at just how powerful your feelings are and wonder why you can

What you are feeling today is an echo of something you felt in the past

cope much better with other serious issues in your relationship, but not this one. It is because in your past, probably when you were a child, something happened to shatter your trust. What you are feeling now is an *echo* of the feelings that you had all those years ago. The original incident, when somebody significant in your life was dishonest, hurt you greatly and it is still haunting you today. Your need for honesty in a relationship *today* is your way of protecting yourself so you don't have to relive those unpleasant feelings of broken trust from your *past*.

What I have just described could be applied to any need. You may want to think about the needs that you highlighted from the list and see if they relate to anything that happened in your past. Ask yourself how long have you had a particular need and when it started to become important to you? These types of question can help you to pinpoint the origins of your needs.

There is nothing wrong with needs themselves, they only become a problem when you expect somebody else to meet them for you. If you are putting the onus on your partner to meet your needs, you are making him responsible for your happiness. Not only is this unfair, it will also prevent you from fulfilling that need yourself and letting go of your dependence. In the worst cases an unmet need might stop you functioning altogether because it reminds you so much of the pain from your past.

I hope you are beginning to see that your emotions aren't just controlled by what is happening in your relationship today, but are greatly affected by

what happened to you in the *past*. That is why I am spending quite a bit of time helping you to explore your childhood and early life experiences. It is important to free yourself from the past, so you can enjoy the present. To do this you must gain emotional awareness and recognise when your needs are driving your thoughts, feelings and actions. This will help you to stop any knee-jerk emotional reactions to your partner's behaviour.

**You need to free
yourself from the past
so you can enjoy the
present**

Once you have identified any important needs for yourself you can begin to think about your partner. Identifying and responding to your partner's needs is one of the most powerful ways to develop empathy and to quickly improve your relationship. Fulfilling your partner's needs will have an immediate and positive effect on your relationship because your partner will become happier and will be much easier to live with. Of course, in an ideal world he would have been able to identify and let go of his needs himself, but he probably doesn't have enough emotional awareness to do this yet. By *giving* to him in this compassionate and loving way you will help him to start his own healing process.

So what is it that he needs most from you? Use the list from the last exercise to help you identify any needs that he has in your relationship. You may be aware of some of his needs straight away because he has talked about them in the past, or you can tell what they are from

the way he behaves. The most obvious will be behaviours that come out of a high level of *dependence*. Have you ever wondered how dependent your partner is on you? What would happen if you were no longer around? Could he function without you? I am not just talking about the practical things you do for him like cooking dinner or looking after the children, but also the emotional and perhaps spiritual support you give him. When my wife left me I was shocked by how dependent I had become on her. I was completely unaware of how much I was living my life through her.

This kind of emotional blindness is common in men. We deny our dependence and pretend that we don't have needs because we seem them as weaknesses. If your partner is more emotionally aware he may be honest enough to tell you how much he depends on you, but most men will be afraid to show you this much vulnerability. Nevertheless, you can still spot their dependence from the sort of language they use. Your partner might say, "*You make me so happy*", or more negatively, "*You make me so angry*". Of course such phrases are not exclusive to men. Most of us use these phrases and think nothing of them, but they show just how much we believe that our partner's attitudes, moods and behaviour determine the emotional quality of our lives. That is why we end up making our love *conditional*. We decide that we can only be happy if our partners behave in certain ways. When they fail to do this we become frustrated and feel let down. As our *resentment* grows we may try to *control* them, but if this also fails we begin to wonder if we are with the right person.

Now consider your own dependence. How much are you relying on your partner to bring you happiness? Be really honest about this. What would it feel like to lose him from your life? These can be disturbing questions because, you have to face the pain of potential loss, but they are very important for your self-development. If you have suffered the breakdown of a relationship or lost someone very close, you will already know what it is like to come face to

**Neediness is very
unattractive**

face with your dependence. It can feel that everything that you value and is important to you has been taken away, and it can be difficult to carry on with your life. The effects of loss and broken relationships are fairly obvious downsides of being needy and dependent, but there are many others.

Neediness is very unattractive because it tries to *take* love from another person, usually in a demanding and grabbing way. If you have experienced it in your relationship, you will be familiar with the feelings of irritation, frustration and sometimes claustrophobia that it can create. At first somebody who is needy can be quite attractive. They show you lots of attention and may shower you with gifts, but this can soon wear thin. The over-closeness and attempts to make you love them can feel as if they are sucking energy from you. This is why we don't like needy people – they trigger the part of us that is also needy, which we have judged and repressed.

Behaviour that has its origins in feelings of dependence and heartbreak is usually tiresome and antisocial. I'm sure you have met men who love to be in the spotlight and try to seek attention at every opportunity. They dominate conversations and turn them around so everything is about them. If you are in the company of such a man, he will hardly ever ask you a question and will have little interest in you as a person. If your partner behaves like this, it means he has got caught up in his ego and is trying to *win* your love by showing off. He is trying to impress you because he feels so insecure. If you can recognise his low self-esteem, you will be able to respond to him more effectively.

Although it is less common, some dependent men may indulge in their emotions and become overly dramatic. It is easy to tell the difference between genuinely outgoing men and the *attention-seekers*, as the natural ones will refresh and inspire you, while the needy ones will quickly become annoying or boring. Although this sort of behaviour is very tedious, the trick with such men (or women who do this) is to recognise the lack of self-worth that underlies the behaviour. Avoid withdrawing or ignoring them, as this just makes them even more needy, and instead look past the behaviour and try to value and love them.

Sometimes dependent men become manipulative and highly *possessive*. They can start cheating and turn to criminality. At worst they could become *abusive* and *violent*. When the behaviour becomes this antisocial it shows severe levels of heartbreak as a child and very low levels of self-esteem. If you are experiencing such behaviour in

**Dependent behaviour
is always a cry for love**

your relationship you will need to find considerable emotional maturity to handle it and there

may be times when you need to protect yourself from abuse and seek outside help. Do not hesitate to do this if you feel yourself at risk.

The important thing to remember with somebody who is acting dependently, is that their behaviour is a *cry for help*. The trouble is that the cry is often ineffective because it triggers *impatience, anger* and *fear* in the people around them. We are likely to move away from the behaviour or attack the dependent person, rather than react with love or understanding. If your partner behaves like this, try to remember that the only reason he would do this is because deep down he also feels afraid and lacking in love.

As we have seen, all dependent behaviour comes out of a sense of *unmet needs*, which start when we are young. In London there is a charity call *Kids Company*, run by an amazing woman called Camila Batmanghelidjh. The charity helps young people who have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. In many cases the authorities have tried to control and punish the children as a way of making them behave better and when this fails, have given up on them. Camila and her team are able to see through the behavioural problems to the heartbroken child underneath and then provide the love that has been so lacking in their lives. With such understanding and love, a very high percentage of these young people turn their lives around.

This inspiring example shows the way through any problems that might come out of dependence in a relationship. Our childhood heartbreaks came about because although love was always present, we

**Do your best to love
your partner
unconditionally**

became confused and frightened by what was going on around us, and this damaged our self-esteem. Later in life we expect our partners to love us in a way that we have failed to love ourselves and this always damages the relationship. The way forward is to first recognise your own needs and make sure you are not playing them out in your relationship. Then recognise where your partner is playing out his own needs with negative behaviours. If you can look past these behaviours and love him *unconditionally*, your relationship will move forward, sometimes spectacularly. These principles are true for any relationship problem and are the basis of the healing approach I am describing in this book.

In this chapter I have looked in some detail at our emotional needs and considered what happens to us psychologically when they are not met. Here is a really effective way using them to improve your relationship. Firstly, identify which need you feel is not being met in your relationship. Then *give* that very thing to your partner and watch what happens. Your partner will begin to fulfil your need in that area! For instance if you feel that he doesn't appreciate you enough, start to appreciate him. If he never compliments the way you dress, try to compliment him when he has made an effort. Just one golden rule – make sure that your compliment is genuinely *heartfelt*. If you can do this, you should find that he naturally returns the very thing you have given to him. You may want to try this with the needs you identified earlier in this chapter. I think you will be amazed at how effective this simple technique is in returning feelings of love to your relationship. It works because in any relationship difficulty, both partners *share* the same unmet need, and so it only takes one person to start fulfilling it.

Although I have focused on your own needs in this chapter and encouraged you to think about your partner's needs, it is very useful if you can talk to your partner about these fundamental issues. Hopefully he will be willing to discuss these things, but don't pressurise him. Many men are frightened of this level of emotional honesty and any attempt to cajole or pressure them into this can result in either an aggressive denial or a belittling of your own issues. In the following chapters I will give you more information about the way men handle and react to their emotions, and also the best way to communicate with them, so you might want to delay any discussion until then. Having said this, I recognise that you are the best judge of your partner and I will leave it with you to decide when you are both ready to start talking about the issues and emotions that are important in your relationship.

Being able to recognise the calls for love in your partner and then being able to provide that love is a very quick and effective way of helping your relationship. Just becoming more aware of your partner's hidden fear and needs may be enough for you to rejoin him in love. However, if your partner is behaving badly, you might find it difficult to achieve this level of understanding. In the next chapter I will explain why it is so difficult to give love unconditionally and even if you do, why your partner may be reluctant to receive it.

Learning points from Chapter 3 - Hopelessly Dependent on You

- *There are only two fundamental human experiences - love or fear*
- *Needs come out of the experience of fear, usually formed during our childhood heartbreaks and traumas when parental bonding is disrupted*
- *Our needs create dependence on other people and this can become very destructive if left unchecked*
- *If your partner is unhappy it means that he is unable to have one or more of his needs met.*
- *All bad behaviour is, at some level, a cry for love*
- *Self-esteem is restored through love*

How to help your partner with his dependence

- *Be willing to explore and understand any dependence in yourself. Identify your unmet needs and try to discover where they might have come from.*
- *Use the emotional awareness you gain from this self-exploration to consider what might be going on for your partner. Begin to share what you have learnt about yourself and sensitively help him explore his own needs and insecurities. As you do this you will usually discover that you both have exactly the same needs, but may have been playing them out in different ways.*
- *Take responsibility for your own emotional issues and try not to make your partner responsible for your feelings. Being able to do this is a sign of emotional intelligence.*
- *At first this process of self-enquiry can be disturbing for men. Your willingness to enter into it yourself and work on your own needs will allow you to build your confidence as a leader in your relationship. This will become important in the later stages of healing.*

Chapter 4

Naughty Little Boy

The feelings that men hate to experience

If you have lived with a man for any length of time you have probably noticed that there are some things that really upset him. He may show enormous courage in the face of danger, be able to meet the most amazing challenges in his work or raise his game to winning levels on the sports field, but when he is humiliated or seen as a failure, he will react badly.

Take for example the situation where your partner is driving a car and you are the passenger. You are trying to get somewhere that you have never been before. At first your partner is confident about navigating and finding the destination, but when things go wrong and he realises that he is lost, his mood changes. His relaxed confidence is replaced by a frustration and annoyance. At no point will he want to ask anybody for directions – he wants to do it all himself. He is beginning to feel bad about failing in his task and failing in front of you. The situation he is facing triggers something very deep inside him and creates a reaction far bigger than is justified by the problem.

When a man is humiliated or seen as a failure, he will react badly

This reaction tells you a great deal about the sort of emotions that threaten men. On the surface he is annoyed and embarrassed because he has got lost, but at a deeper level, it is triggering a more fundamental belief that he has about himself – that he is a *failure*. In getting lost he feels that he has *let you down*. The situation reminds him of a painful time in his life when he believes that he let somebody significant down, probably one or both of his *parents*. These feelings are so painful that a man will do almost anything to avoid failing or being *seen* as a failure. This explains why men would rather get lost than ask for help! If you want to understand and love a man you will need to be aware of his *fear of failure* and how this directs much of his behaviour. I'm sure you can think of many other situations where men try to protect themselves from feelings of failure and inadequacy.

In order to understand where a man's fear of failure comes from, we need to look once

more at his childhood disappointments and heartbreaks. In the last chapter I showed how these could have left him with a feeling that his needs had not been adequately met. We saw how, in adult life he will try to fulfil these needs through his relationships, usually by becoming

Men can take on a number of negative self-beliefs

dependent on his partner. During their childhood heartbreaks, men also take on a number of *beliefs* that have a profound effect on their sense of *self-worth* and ability to form successful relationships. It is these beliefs that I will focus on in this chapter.

Once again I will be asking you to consider the origins of your own beliefs and then apply the same understanding to your partner.

I have already explained how our early experiences of fear in childhood make it hard for us to love ourselves. In the absence of love, fear creates a number of destructive beliefs that can destroy a relationship. The first of these is easy to understand, but may be painful to think about. It is the idea that our parents *let us down* during our childhood. This can create *resentment* because we believe that they *failed us* and in some way *hurt us*. I appreciate that this is a controversial statement that some of you may find difficult to accept, so I would like to explain it in more detail.

Most of us have a natural instinct to protect our parents, so it is not surprising that you may feel uncomfortable about any suggestion that your parents let you down. I would like to stress once more, that this process is *not* about blaming your parents. It is about understanding why you might think and feel in certain ways. Whether we like it or not, most of us harbour negative *subconscious* thoughts and it is possible that some of these could be critical of our parents. Therefore try to be as honest as you can about your feelings around your upbringing and if nothing pops into your mind, remain curious about any negative thoughts that you might be holding on to. Of course some of you will have experienced more difficult childhoods and you may be very conscious of disappointments and resentments towards your parents. If this is the case, your awareness of these feelings is a useful first step in eventually letting them go and releasing yourself from their negative influence on your life.

Perhaps the best example of childhood heartbreaks is found in the tantrums of the so-called ‘terrible twos’, a common developmental stage for toddlers. It can be a very stressful

time for a parent because children of this age can make big demands and continually *seek attention*. When they don't get their way they make it very clear that they are unhappy by throwing tantrums and becoming angry. We probably all went through our own version of the terrible twos as we tested our boundaries and began to develop our personality. It's also possible that we have some resentment left over from this period of our lives.

Resentments cause havoc in a relationship. If you or your partner have them (and most of us do) you will need to unearth them and work to let them go. Let me give you an example of why this is important. Let's imagine that as a child, your parents worked very hard to earn enough money to keep the family afloat and give you and any brothers or sisters, the best opportunities they could. Your parent's work commitments meant that a lot of the time you were looked after by child-minders. Although you were not desperately unhappy, this left you with a feeling of resentment towards your parents because they didn't give you enough time or attention. You may not have dwelled on these feelings but as an adult you have noticed that you are always busy and that there never seems to be enough time. Worse still, now that you are in an adult relationship, you find that your partner doesn't give you enough time. It seems that a lack of time has become the *pattern* of your life.

This is a very common situation. The very thing that we feel was lacking in our childhood, seems to revisit us over and over again as an adult. The most frustrating thing is that we will tend attract partners and friends into our lives who have exactly that same issue. If the very thing that you crave is time, then this will be what your partner fails to give you. This happens because without realising it you have attracted someone into your life with the same set of unmet needs as you into your life. Why would you do something like that? The answer to this teaches us a great deal about the power of our emotional needs and the process of romantic attraction. In life we are drawn irresistibly towards people who *understand* and *value* us. This happens because they have the *same* needs as us and therefore *know* what we are feeling. We also understand and value them for the same reasons.

The 'honeymoon' in a relationship invariably comes to an end

I'm sure you can remember how easy it was to fall in love. It's a wonderful feeling to be

with somebody who understands your fears and concerns and thinks in the same way as you. In this ‘honeymoon’ period you fall deeply and madly in love with a person who seems to be your *soul-mate*. The only trouble is that this experience of euphoria invariably comes to an end. This happens because, over time, the original needs begin to resurface and with them comes fear and pain. It is a critical change in a relationship that I will focus on in more detail in the next chapter.

Any feelings of resentment and hurt that is left over from a childhood heartbreak will usually surface in adult relationships. The negative energy that they contain has to go somewhere and this tends to create demanding or unpleasant behaviours. In men this often leads to some form of aggression. A man who is behaving like this is cannot stand the feelings of hurt that he experiences, so he tries to *off-load* them onto the people around him. I witnessed a disturbing example of this recently during an aeroplane journey.

That day, there had been a big snow storm and our plane was diverted to another airport where we had to wait on the tarmac for several hours. Although the airline staff were exemplary in the way they handled the difficult and potentially dangerous situation, there was one man on board who reacted very badly to his disappointment. As the hours ticked past he became increasingly anxious and aggressive, first with the cabin staff, then the pilot and later with other passengers. He wanted to *blame* everybody for the problem, even though it was obvious that the situation was caused entirely by the weather. His behaviour was extremely childish, but at the same time frightening for his fellow passengers. He was having a tantrum - an adult version of the ‘terrible twos’.

What was interesting about this incident was the way that this man completely switched off his *awareness* about what was a happening around him. He stopped *listening* to the instructions and information given by the pilot and the cabin crew and became totally *selfish*. When his demands for action were not met, he became verbally abusive, at one point threatening another passenger who had been quite happy to wait patiently. When we eventually got to our destination he miraculously recovered (just like a child does, once an incident has passed) and wanted to be everybody’s friend – he laughed and joked as if nothing had happened. I would guess that at some point in his childhood he must have experienced great disappointment and hurt. The flight delays must have triggered those feelings of hurt and of

being let down by his parents. Unable to cope with them, he started to attack other people as a way of showing his pain.

On the flight I did my best to understand this man. His childish behaviour was an

We end up doing to others what was done to us

indication that he has never really grown up. He was still harbouring the resentments from his childhood.

The sad thing about all dependent behaviour, of which this was an extreme example, is that we end up doing to others, what we believe was done to us. I wouldn't

mind betting that the fellow on my flight was doing to us exactly what his parents did to him. If your partner is aggressive with you or tries to hurt you, do your best to understand what he must be feeling to act in the way he does. Talk to him about his feelings, but bear in mind that when somebody is full of anger and aggression, they are unable to converse in a civilised way. Sometimes it is better to say nothing until they have calmed down.

It is an unfortunate fact that negative behaviour and dysfunction is often passed down family lines. No matter how much we try to hide it, any emotional pain will be inherited by our children unless we make a conscious effort to heal it. Encouragingly, the opposite is also true. Every time we heal some resentment or other emotional issue, we experience a benefit to ourselves and this automatically extends to our children. What better incentive could there be for healing?

I hear many people say that they become more and more like their parents as they get older. Perhaps you have noticed this in yourself? Be curious about any needs or fears that you have taken on from your parents. What about your partner? Does he take after his parents in any way? For instance, if he can be domineering or aggressive, was it because his parents behaved in the same way? I've come across many men whose father's were angry and intolerant who struggle to avoid slipping into the same behaviours. If you have met your partner's parents, perhaps you can see other traits that he has picked up, both positive and negative. One word of caution here. Most people are very sensitive to criticism of their parents, so be sensitive if you talk about any of these inherited traits. It is much better if you can encourage him to make the observations himself and to balance any criticism by helping him to appreciate the more positive aspects of his personality that he has inherited from his parents.

At this point it is a good idea to think about your own positive qualities and to feel gratitude to your parents for handing these on to you. If you appreciate them for all the love and the gifts that they gave you, it will be so much easier to let go of any disappointments that you may still have about their parenting. In recent years I have felt a great appreciation for my parents and what they have given me in my life and I know this has helped me come closer to them. I would certainly not have been able to write this book without the enormous amount of love that they have given me throughout my life. If you still have some resentments left over from your childhood, I will show you how you can release these later in this chapter. However, before you can do that effectively, I need to show you how your resentments are always associated with other negative emotions such as inadequacy and guilt.

The resentment that we feel around our unmet needs is fairly easy to understand - we felt let down by the people who were supposed to be looking after us. What is harder to understand is that our resentments also make us feel *guilty*. Whenever there is a heartbreak and a sense of unmet needs during our upbringing, not only do we believe that we were *failed by our parents*, but we also believe that we *failed them*. Understanding this is the most important thing you can learn about relationships. If you can grasp this idea and recognise its implications to your own psychology as well as your partner's, then you will take a massive step forward in your relationship.

To explain why we have such a tendency to take on guilt in our relationships we need to return to the idea that love is our natural state. Somewhere deep within all of us is a memory of this state and the loving bonds that unite us. If we ever turn away from those gifts, as we do in our childhood heartbreaks, two things happen. First we blame our parents, but then we decide to shoulder the *blame* ourselves. As human beings, our tendency to take on guilt for our failed relationships is a terrible flaw, but nearly all of us do it. The guilt and shame is so painful that we rapidly bury it subconsciously, in the hope that it we will never have to feel it again. Unfortunately, it will continue to damage our lives until we are able to bring it to our awareness again and let it go. If we dig deep enough into any relationship problem, we will always find the 'smoking gun' of guilt. I met one lady in her late seventies who had struggled

**We have a terrible
tendency to take on
guilt**

throughout her life with a whole range of emotional and relationship problems. When she was able to open up her deepest feelings she found a huge layer of guilt that she had held since her parents divorced when she was a child. The tragedy is that even though her parents divorce was not her fault, she had blamed herself so much that it had ruined her life. This is a very common experience in children whose parents have separated or divorced. If they are able to express their feelings, they often speak of their guilt for having caused the problems in their family or of being unable to keep their parents together. For those unable to express themselves, these feelings become deeply suppressed, only to be acted out in their behaviour. Many social problems in our society can be traced back to guilt that has come out of this type of family trauma.

It is at this point in our story of psychological development that the paths of men and women begin to diverge. The difference comes in the way we handle guilt. As a woman you may have felt guilt at various times in your life. Many women I speak to who have been through divorce, speak of the guilt they have for the hurt that they believe they have caused to their children. I was speaking about this to a divorced friend recently and she gave me a good example of this. Her central heating had failed during the night in a particularly cold snap. When she went downstairs in the morning and discovered the problem she broke down and became very upset. She told me how this relatively minor incident triggered all her guilt around her divorce. She felt guilty that her children would wake to a cold house and have no warm water and blamed herself for this.

Do you have any similar examples from your own life? Although it can seem like a burden to feel guilt and other negative emotions, it is nevertheless an essential ability in the healing process. Gaining more self-awareness does need a certain amount of courage to unearth painful emotions, but the rewards in terms of healing are usually enormous. Later in the chapter I will show you how you can let go of your guilt. First though let's consider your partner, who is likely to much less in-touch with his emotions. If you were to ask him about guilt he would probably deny that he has any at all! It's not that he doesn't have guilt, it's that he is probably unaware of it. The chances are that he is carrying a large amount of guilt but is able to hide it very effectively. It usually takes some kind of *crisis* to bring it to the surface, and even then he will need to have good emotional awareness to recognise that he is reacting to guilt.

I have already described the emotional reaction I had to my divorce. Once I became

51

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

more aware of my deeper emotions, I realised that I was carrying a large amount of guilt and this was one of the hardest emotions to cope with as I tried to build a new life. A couple of years later I had another chance to learn about guilt during my work as a management consultant. With a couple of colleagues I had been facilitating a team-building workshop for a senior management team from a well-known commercial organisation. I was pleased to get the work and had put a great deal of effort into the design and delivery of the workshop. When we got to the final wrapping-up session I was in a buoyant mood because I felt the day had gone very well. I had been expecting a very positive feedback from the CEO and her team, so I was extremely shocked when it turned out to be the exact opposite.

Due to my enthusiasm and frankly, self-congratulatory mood, I completely misread the mood of the CEO. In my review of the team dynamics I was very honest about some of the problems that remained in her team, but was also positive about the progress they had made. There was some muted discussion and the workshop came to an end. Then I had to face the music. A very angry CEO came up to me and complained at length about what I had just said. My first reaction was fairly typical for a man, and I assumed she was wrong! I argued with myself that she was getting angry because she was unable to take my honest words. Although I could have gone away with this story I knew that there was something else going on for me.

As the CEO left the room I busied myself with clearing up the audiovisual equipment but I could feel a growing panic inside. I felt nauseous and absolutely awful. I was beside myself with remorse. I left the venue and had a brief drink with my colleagues before driving home. It took a further two or three weeks to settle my mind and to feel good about myself again. Now when I look back on this incident I can see that I was attacking myself because of my guilt. At one level I felt that the workshop was a failure, and this hurt quite a bit, but at a deeper level, I felt I had failed the CEO personally. I found it very hard to take the CEO's anger because it made me feel like a *naughty little boy*. As I look back to that workshop I can see myself standing there feeling very small and very timid. I felt like a complete *failure*. It illustrates how much guilt I was holding under my confident and self-assured exterior. Of course I have since wondered where all this guilt came from. I have already described the

**I was attacking myself
because of my guilt**

physical and emotional challenges that my mother and father went through when I was a child. I think that my inability to help them at the time left me feeling guilty. I can now see that this guilt was present and has caused me problems throughout my early life. I was a fairly happy child but I have always felt nervous and been sensitive to criticism. At school I was conscientious and worked hard, because I was scared of getting in trouble. I suppose I always felt that I had done something *wrong* and deserved to be punished. On the occasions that I did get in trouble I remember feeling huge embarrassment and guilt. Interestingly, feelings of guilt also appear in my nightmares, so it seems that they are deeply buried in my unconscious mind. As I grew older I think I buried all the guilt and pretended it had gone away. This seemed to work for many years, but as I shall explain in the next chapter, this strategy is doomed to failure in the long run.

Guilt is, to a greater or lesser extent, something that is deeply buried in most men. Even if they are aware of some guilt, they will not want to show it to you or other people because it makes them feel weak and inadequate. However with some emotional awareness we can see the effects of guilt in men's behaviour. Soldiers returning from war zones often suffer post-traumatic stress due to the awful incidents that they have experienced. Although it is easy to dismiss this as the effects of extreme stress, the soldiers always talk about the guilt they feel for being unable to help their injured or dying comrades. Some will even feel guilty for surviving. For the rest of us, job loss, injury, illness or relationship failure can be the catalyst for an outpouring of guilt. Personally, in the months following the failure of my marriage I was overwhelmed by huge waves of guilt. Much of this was about letting my boys and my ex-wife down and the sense of failure for being a bad father and husband. This was a terrible feeling in itself, but as I got deeper into my emotions I realised that I felt guilty for failing just about everybody in my life!

My divorce was taking me back to relive my childhood heartbreaks

I can now see that my divorce was taking me back to relive my childhood heartbreaks. Interestingly though, I still don't have a clear memory of a specific time when I thought as a child, "*I have just failed mum or dad*". You might be having a similar problem in identifying specific incidents

in your childhood that may have been critical in the formation of your self-beliefs. While it might be satisfying to be able to pinpoint such traumas, it isn't critical to the process of healing. It is more important to be able to identify any negative self-beliefs that you are holding onto today. To do this, have a go at this simple exercise. You will need a pen and paper to jot down your thoughts.

First relax and then answer the question below, as honestly as you can. Don't think logically about it. Write down the first word or feeling that comes into your mind, even if it seems a bit silly. Here is the question:

"The world is....."

Now ask the same question and write in your answer again – whatever pops into your mind.

"The world is....."

Keep asking this question 5 or six times, and jotting down your answers.

When you have answered the question several times, look at the list. What sort of words did you write down? Of course there are no correct answers but your response will tell you something about your self-beliefs. If you replace the words “The world.....” with “I am.....”, you will get an idea of how you see yourself! For instance, a few years ago I did this exercise and came up with these responses.

The world is dangerous becomes:		I am dangerous
The world is unfair	“	I am unfair
The world is rubbish	“	I am rubbish
The world is greedy	“	I am greedy
The world is competitive	“	I am competitive

At the time I was in a very dark place and as you can see this created some very negative responses. Hopefully answers aren't so bleak and maybe some of them are positive. If you do this exercise honestly, and take the first thoughts or feelings that come into our mind, you will learn a great deal about your current state of mind. Of course you will need to be mature about what you discover, particularly if it is negative.

Let me show you how to use the results of this exercise by taking my own example. My belief that the world is dangerous would suggest that I have a deeply held belief that *I am dangerous*. It means that subconsciously I will project this fear out into the world. Recently I have been able to ask my friends how they see me and invariably they describe me as shy, at times a bit distant, and with a tendency to hide my gifts. This seems to make sense. If I feel dangerous I will try to protect people by *withdrawing* and keeping them at a safe distance, but this then makes me emotionally unavailable and prevents me from helping them. Presumably, at some point in my life I came to the conclusion that I had hurt somebody or believed that my natural gifts could harm people. For many years I have had a recurring nightmare where I am being blamed for not saving people from a building that has collapsed in an earthquake. I am sure these can be traced back to a reluctance to help people in case I hurt them.

How did you get on with the exercise? Do your answers tell you anything about your personality? Don't worry if some of the answers are confusing, because there is a great deal going on in your subconscious mind. Be curious about your answers and be willing to explore them further as you progress through this book. Any positive answers are indications of your gifts and talents, while the negative ones are self-beliefs that you could usefully heal. It is worth embracing your positive gifts as much as you can because they will be the things that help you to gain confidence and build self-esteem.

You may have identified several negative self-beliefs from this exercise, but there may be others. Here are a few more examples:

I am unworthy	I am too fat/too thin	I am unintelligent
I am unlovable	I am silly	I am blonde!
I am too tall/too short	I am neurotic	I am unemotional
I am poor	I am not sexy	I am a poor dresser
I am boring	I am a failure	I am ugly
I am useless	I am inadequate	I am unreliable
I am always late	I am always busy	I am afraid
I lack self-esteem	I am a loner	I am moody
I'm too emotional	I am useless	I am lacking in femininity

This is not an exhaustive list, because there are a great many ways in which we can have negative beliefs about ourselves. Have you ever felt any of these things about yourself?

**Our level of self-attack
can be unmerciless**

Unfortunately we can be very hard on ourselves and this lowers our self worth. You should be able to trace these beliefs back to a difficult relationship in your past or a situation where you felt judged or attacked.

Many of these will contain an element of guilt, which means that you may believe that you deserve to *suffer* or be *punished*. It is then only a short step to attacking yourself as a way of trying to pay off the guilt. Of course this doesn't work because your self-attack makes you feel even worse. If you do attack yourself, you might think that only you suffer, but unfortunately

you also attack the people you love. They want to see you happy and fulfilled, and your self-attack takes this away from them. The level of self-attack in both men and women can be unmerciless. A friend of mine made a very good point about this – if we did to others what we are doing to ourselves, most of us would be sent to prison!

It is vitally important that you become aware of the places that you are attacking yourself and work to let these go, otherwise the negativity will stop a man loving you fully and damage your relationship. You will end up projecting your negative self-beliefs onto your partner and he will almost certainly react badly. Once you can see where you are attacking yourself, you will also be able to see where your partner is attacking himself. If you strip away his surface layers of confidence and bravado, what do

you see underneath? Have you ever seen chinks in his armour, and the vulnerable little boy who lies

Men hate to fail

within? As with guilt, it can take a crisis for a man to lower his emotional defences. It might be through a bereavement, discovery of a serious illness or perhaps a tragedy, but all men have a point at which they will feel their emotions. When this happens you will see the *real man*, with all his vulnerabilities and insecurities. Although he may see this as a sign of weakness, for you it will probably be a breath of fresh air. At last he is being *authentic*. I am told by my female friends that there is nothing more touching than a man who is able to show his true emotions. Most men do not realise that women find this attractive, so please let your partner know this. It could be the incentive he needs to join you in the healing process!

Until your partner is better able to express his emotions, he is likely to hold on to a *fear of failure*. As we have seen this can be usually be traced back to an original belief that comes out of his childhood, that he failed somebody significant, usually one or both of his parents. He just can't stand the possibility of revisiting those feelings again so will behave in ways that he believes will prevent failure. This will normally be visible as a strong need to be *successful*, particularly at work or on the sports field. It is possible that his fear of failure has been passed down from his stone-age ancestors, whose main role would have been to provide food for the family. Failure in this role would have meant letting his wife and children die from starvation – something that would have created huge feelings of responsibility as well as guilt. Today we

may not need to go out hunting on the plains for wild animals but our minds still tell us that the emotional consequences of failure are *intolerable*.

If you want to know how independent a man is watch how he reacts when failure itself or the potential for failure comes into his life. This might happen to him in the course of the day as it did in my example of the man getting lost, but it might also be triggered by other people accusing him of failure or causing him to fail. Does your partner ever react badly when you suggest he has failed or isn't very good at something? Probably the worst thing you can say to an independent man is that you are disappointed with him and that you believe he has let you down. You can now see why this is - it will trigger his most painful self-beliefs.

The feelings of inadequacy and the guilt that come out of the belief that we have failed somebody, creates a whole range of negative behaviours. The most obvious is the tendency to *judge* people. Many men are particularly prone to this, as you may know to your cost, if have been at the receiving end of your partner's judgment! You will see this in the way he makes you wrong about everything. Some men can have an air of *righteousness* about them and stand in judgment on anybody and anything that they believe is wrong. Even if your partner does not fit this picture, I'm sure you have met many men who are like this. Men behave in judgemental ways to take the heat off ourselves – they are trying to *offload* their guilt.

**All judgment is
self-judgment**

The important thing to remember if your partner often judges you, is that he is really judging *himself*. What he is judging in you (or anyone else he is judging) is the very same characteristic he hates in himself. To give an example, let's say that you have been in an argument about money with your partner and he judges you for being selfish and inconsiderate. He is doing this because subconsciously he feels selfish and inconsiderate himself, but rather than admit this, he judges you for the same things. Understanding that all judgement is self-judgment, will prevent you from feeling criticised and dominated by your partner, because you know he is talking about himself!

If your partner is judgmental, it means that he is feeling insecure and has low self-esteem, but of course he is not conscious of this. He may come over as *confident* and certain in his view, but he is acting like this to hide deep layers of guilt and feelings of inadequacy. This

is a really important principle in your understanding of men. They can seem very confident and assertive, but if their behaviour is anything less than loving, it means that they are reacting to fear and guilt. Have you ever felt afraid, inadequate or unequal around men? If their behaviour is triggering these feelings in you, it must be coming from a place of inadequacy in them. Recognising this will help you to feel more equal and allow you to move into a truer relationship with them.

Some people believe very strongly that judgment is a *good* thing because it is the only way to create high standards in society. This usually takes the form of a polarised distinction between *right* and *wrong*. Somebody who makes such strong judgments will always be trying to prove that they are right and will attack those that do not share their views. The problem with these judgments is that they are driven by fear and are intended to place the blame for a problem or situation onto the other person. There is nothing wrong with knowing the difference between good and bad behaviour, but as soon as it becomes a judgment of a person or a group of people, it becomes destructive to the relationship. Think about what it feels like to be judged - your immediate reaction will be to find fault with the person who has just judged you!

There are no bad people, just bad behaviours

If you are living with a man who is aggressive or shows a lot of negative behaviour you may find it hard not to judge him as a *bad* person. Most of us have this tendency when we meet difficult people. The problem with seeing them as intrinsically bad is that we will then condemn them and make it hard to forgive them. It is more helpful to separate the *person* from the *behaviour*. A useful principle here is that there are no bad people, just bad behaviours. If you have reached a point where the love has faded in your relationship and you don't particularly like your partner as a person, then try to look past the behaviour to the pain that he must be hiding. Finding this much compassion is often enough to return love to your relationship.

Guilt will manifest itself in a man's behaviour in other ways. A sense of unworthiness may mean that a man will throw himself away. If you are living with a man who is doing this to himself you will know how frustrating and painful this is. He will *sabotage* anything positive and

refuse any advice or help that is offered to him. He is *sacrificing* himself in the belief that this will take away his guilt. You will also have noticed that he often feels sorry for himself and can act like a martyr. He is deliberately trying to fail so that you feel sorry for him and show him *sympathy*. It is his way of gaining your love and attention. The trouble is, that even if you give him love, he can't *receive* it, because he doesn't feel *worthy* of it. The less love he accepts, the more empty he feels, and his spirits sink ever lower. He will feel as if he is in a trap that is impossible to escape.

This is where you can help him most by understanding where he is emotionally. It is *hard* to love a man who is so unhappy, but your own self-awareness and growing understanding of psychology should allow you to see through his pain. Most people will move away from somebody who has gone into sacrifice because they will judge their behaviour, but this is your chance to move *towards* him and let him know that you understand how he is feeling and that you still love him. You can then help him understand why he might be feeling the way he does. Together you should be able to identify his own heartbreaks and any guilt or belief in failure that he took on during these experiences. Eventually you can help him to let go of the guilt and move forward in his life.

Guilt is also the root cause of *addictive* or *indulgent* behaviours. Of course these behaviours can appear in both men and women. I suppose, at one time or another, all of us have had our indulgences. I am conscious of times when I have indulged in food or drink as a way of comforting myself. It was a way of distracting myself from something that was disturbing me. If I could have seen deep enough into my mind I would have found the layer of guilt that was driving this behaviour. Perhaps you've done a bit of indulgence yourself! You may be familiar with the short-term high that something like alcohol, drugs or even chocolate can give you. At first you enjoy it, but then you eat or drink too much and begin to feel unwell. You will dread the extra pounds that you have put on, or suffer a terrible hangover in the morning. You begin to feel guilty for your lack of will power and indulgence and the cycle of guilt starts again.

This *vicious circle* is what causes addiction. Take alcohol as an example. A small amount helps us to relax, but a larger amount acts as an anaesthetic, numbing us from our pain. So successful is it in doing this that we get hooked on it and then cannot survive without it. If we become addicted then we are using a drug to suppress our feelings of guilt and failure. Sadly

this has become a very common issue in our society. Food, drink and drugs are readily available and we are seeing an alarming increase in addictive behaviour, especially amongst the younger generation.

Using any substance or situation to bring us happiness from the *outside* is always going to fail in the long-term. Our indulgences work in the short-term because they give us an instant fix. If we are feeling needy and lacking in love we will readily turn to anything that will bring us some immediate gratification. This is why we can become addicted to almost anything - sex, food, drugs, shopping, fitness, computer games, betting and even work. Living with addiction can be terribly distressing and can easily destroy a relationship, so if you or your partner have such an issue I would recommend you seek help from support groups such as *Alcoholics Anonymous* or *Alonon* (or equivalent support groups for other addictions).

**To let go we must be
able to forgive**

As you can see, the feelings of resentment and guilt that come out of our heartbreaks cause huge problems in life. They create all sorts of negative behaviours, make us unattractive and drive people away from us. If these feelings are present within your relationship, they will stand as a barrier between you and your partner and will create an emotional gulf that is hard to bridge. The only way forward is to find the heartbreaks and layers of guilt and then let these feelings go, so that you and your partner can release the love that is waiting underneath.

If you or your partner are holding on to guilt, consciously or subconsciously, the way forward is through a process of *forgiveness*. This will always come in two parts – forgiveness of *others* and forgiveness of *ourselves*. These counteract the two destructive self-beliefs that originate from our heartbreaks - that we were let down by our parents and that we let them down. As well as our parents, we may also need to forgive other people in our lives, like brothers, sisters, ex-partners, friends and colleagues. There's no two ways about it - if you really want to learn how to love a man, you will have to become an expert in forgiveness! I will not pretend that this is easy – in fact it will probably be one of the hardest things you have ever done, but if you can achieve it, you will be rewarded with a wonderful relationship and sense of personal freedom.

Forgiveness is a much *misunderstood* subject and something that many of us struggle to

do in a relationship. Let's say your partner has behaved badly and upset you. After calming down you decide to forgive him, but you do this from a position of moral superiority. You make it clear to him that you will forgive him providing that he never behaves in the same way again. Unfortunately this is not forgiveness because you are still holding onto resentment and hurt and are making your love conditional. True forgiveness is the ability to see through any bad or negative behaviour to the underlying person and to *love* them in spite of this. It is being able to see your partner's bad behaviour or failings as a *call for love* rather than a reason to judge him. The reason that we may fail to forgive somebody is that their behaviour triggers our own pain and guilt, so true forgiveness comes when we are able to forgive this same part in ourselves.

Reaching a place of true forgiveness is probably not something you will be able to do quickly. It will only be possible to forgive your partner for his behaviour when you have been able to forgive yourself for any sense of failure or guilt in your own upbringing. I will be coming back to the subject of forgiveness several more times in this book because it is so important for healing.

By now you should be becoming better at understanding what is happening psychologically for your partner. Have you noticed any tell-tale signs of guilt in his behaviour? Just watch how he reacts to the possibility of failure, as this is the best clue as to what is going on in his mind. Sometimes guilt is more obvious. Have you ever been brought flowers or chocolates as a peace offering following a row? This is how a man reacts to guilt. It's his way of saying sorry. Admittedly he might be trying to pay off his guilt, but it is a positive gesture – it does show he has feelings and how much he loves you.

My hope is that by the time you have applied some of the suggestions in this book that your partner will buy you flowers spontaneously! Some of you may already have a man who does this, but others of you may still be waiting. Many men are powerfully defended against their emotions, particularly the inadequacy, guilt and feelings of dependence that I have described in this chapter. Your partner's love is still present but hidden under a defensive shield. In the next chapter I will describe this shield in detail and how this affects your relationship. This will give you an insight into how you can help your partner get back in touch with his emotions so that he can express himself better and bring more love into your relationship.

Learning Points from Chapter 3 Naughty Little Boy

- *When our needs aren't met as children, we feel we have been failed by the people around us (usually our parents) and that we have failed them.*
- *The sense of failure creates resentments and guilt which we can carry through life.*
- *Feelings of failure, inadequacy and guilt create many antisocial behaviours that try to offload or deflect these unpleasant feelings.*
- *The way through Dependence, feelings of failure and guilt is to forgive others and to forgive ourselves.*

How to help a man who is dependent on you for his happiness

- *If your partner is very dependent you will need to recognise that this is because he feels lacking in self-love and is trying to get love from you.*
- *Be aware that his neediness could trigger your own dependence and prevent you from helping him or yourself.*
- *Work to build your own self-esteem through letting go of your needs and negative self-beliefs. Try to find forgiveness for anybody you still have resentments against in your life and also find self-forgiveness.*
- *Help your partner to understand his own needs and self-beliefs and work with him to let them go.*
- *Men can find this process of gaining emotional awareness and healing difficult. Make sure you appreciate your partner as much as possible and encourage him as goes through this process.*

Chapter 5 Your Hero

Why a man has a need for control

I sometimes wonder why women are so patient with men. So much of the time we are in denial and putting on an act. We pretend that emotions aren't important and close down our hearts. We let our relationships wither and then bury ourselves in our work. We put on an air of confidence and yet deep down we are frightened and insecure. I guess we have done a pretty good job in making you think we are happy and sorted, when actually, the opposite is often true.

The sad thing about all these behaviours is that they are terribly damaging to our relationships and yet most people never question them. I believe that this is because we live in a male-dominated society in which the norms are set by men. As a woman you may have assumed that many of the things that frustrate and disappoint you about men are part of their genetic make-up and are therefore unchangeable. You may have even tried to adapt, perhaps hiding your femininity so that you are appreciated and valued by men. This is a terrible mistake because what we need most in our society today, and what your partner needs, are your natural feminine gifts of emotional awareness and connection – gifts you have in abundance.

**We live in a
male-dominated
society**

In the last chapter I described how some men can act out their dependence through a series of fairly obvious *attention-seeking* behaviours, but in this chapter I want to show you how the majority of men have developed a much more sophisticated set of behaviours that make it appear that they have few if any emotional issues. I will show you how to spot the tell-tale signs of this more *independent* behaviour before it can damage your relationship. If your partner has already slipped into independence, I will show you how you can help him to recognise this and avoid its worst excesses. Most men fall into the trap of independence from an early age, and once in place, it is very difficult to escape. This is certainly what happened to me. I feel I have a certain authority in describing this type of psychology because I would describe myself as a recovering independent!

A man's emotional independence begins sometime in his childhood and early adolescence. He learns ways of relating from role models such as his father, friends and peers. These behaviours allow him to function and often prosper in work, but they are dangerously lacking in one critical ingredient – the *heart*. Human beings are designed to have emotions and when we shut them down, we do so at our peril. Our hearts allow us to communicate and work through the problems that we face in life. If we close our hearts, we become emotionally cold, isolated and out of touch. We lose empathy and compassion and this makes it impossible to relate successfully with the people around us.

The quality of *open-heartedness* is often sadly lacking in men, and yet I suspect that

**Your heart is your
greatest gift**

this is the quality that you crave the most in your partner. Over and over in my coaching work I hear women talk of how hurt they are by their partner's emotional unavailability. As a woman, your heart is

your greatest strength and it is therefore not surprising that you suffer when your open-heartedness is not matched in your partner. The tragedy is that in the vast majority of cases the last thing your partner would want to do is to hurt you or the other people around him. On the contrary, if he knew how his behaviour affected you, he would be appalled. He wants to be your provider, protector and saviour and he wants you to recognise him for this. What your boyfriend or husband really wants to be is *your hero*.

The mistake he makes is to try and do this using his *head* rather than his *heart*. As you know, this doesn't work. All the brilliant logic and analysis in the world will leave you cold without some emotion. It is only through a wholehearted expression of love that we can connect fully with another person. I want to explain to you how a man's positive intentions go amiss and why he is often unaware that this has happened. Most importantly, I want to show you why a man often devalues his heart and builds an emotional fortress around himself.

When we become independent, we stop relying on other people and start do things for ourselves - we go it alone. You will often hear men saying things like – “*if you want a job done properly, do it yourself*”. This is classic independence. Such thinking and attitudes are highly regarded in our society. In fact they are so entrenched that most of us take them as the norm and enthusiastically aspire to them. Independent attitudes are also encouraged by

governments in the way that they urge us to stand on our own two feet. In our schools great measure is placed on teaching children to become independent learners and to be able to go out into the world and fend for themselves. In this sense, Independence is a good thing because it allows us move away from our families, gain confidence and progress in life.

Can you remember the time when you left home and went to college or took your first tentative steps in your career? Perhaps you took advantage of the opportunities that were available to advance your education and further yourself at work. Do you remember how exciting it was to be making decisions for yourself and doing new things? You may have met a partner in this early phase of independence and fallen in love. If you were still quite young, you may have drifted into a long-term relationship or marriage without thinking too deeply about what you were doing. Perhaps you got married, went on to have children and built a family home with your husband or partner. Things were probably going really well for you and it is unlikely that you ever considered that there was anything wrong with this approach to life.

Our desire to be independent is the biggest trap we face in life

There is a dilemma at the heart of independence. It is a necessary step that we must take to allow us to move on from a state of dependence but it tricks us into thinking that we have found the magic formula for happiness. Our early successes as an independent, lull us into a *false sense of security* and make it very difficult to see that it is only a stepping stone in our development. Our desire to be independent is the biggest trap we face in life and yet most people are completely unaware of it.

Although both men and women can become independent, men seem to favour this style because it matches their idea of how a man should behave. We value stoicism and courage and will tend to see emotions as a weakness. We will have an urge to solve practical problems as quickly as possible, rather than delve deeper into the root causes. Independence is the perfect style for a man who wants to be an action-based hero and just get on with things! If you have shared your life with a man, you will probably be familiar with the many different types of independent behaviour that I am going to describe in this chapter. It is very likely that the things

that disappoint, frustrate and irritate you about your partner will be coming from his independence.

To explain how independence becomes a trap for a man and damages a relationship, I need to recap on what we have learned so far about dependence. Earlier I described how our sense of unmet needs, mainly taken on as a child, create a whole range of unhelpful and sometimes downright unpleasant behaviours. These dependent traits are pretty easy to spot because they continually try to seek attention, usually with anti-social, aggressive or withdrawn behaviour. You will know if your partner is acting from a place of dependence because he will either be unloading his hurt onto you or desperately trying to get you to love him.

While some men will remain stuck in a state of dependence for much of their lives, the vast majority of us will move on to independence. In doing so we assume that we have left behind our feelings of dependence. With all the excitement and new opportunities of independence it can seem that those unpleasant feelings of fear, inadequacy and guilt have gone forever, but unfortunately they still lurk in our subconscious mind. Not only are those dependent feelings still present beneath our conscious awareness, but to keep them buried, we have to create a whole *new* set of behaviours.

In the next few pages I will be describing the range of behaviours that come out of independence. In the short-term, independence can help a man to gain confidence and be successful but in the long-term it always damages relationships.

He will make sure he doesn't have to rely on you for his happiness

This happens because the confidence and strength is something of an act. If your partner has an independent mindset he will have one very simple objective in life – to make sure he never has to *rely* on another person, including you, for his happiness. The irony of this is, that his independence shows that he remains *very dependent* on you, but he has suppressed these feelings.

A man's independence is his way of avoiding emotional pain and it drives all his behaviours. What started out as an effective way to move forward in life, contains within it a terrible flaw. In order to suppress a negative emotion, a man has to suppress *all* his emotions, including the positive ones. This makes it hard for him to feel your love or any other good

feeling. If this wasn't bad enough, he will also avoid *intimacy*, because being that close to you might trigger his feelings of dependence and heartbreak. This is why he might move away from you in the relationship, both physically and emotionally. Finally, he will make sure that he doesn't fall too deeply in love with you, in case that love is ever taken away and he is forced to face his feelings of dependence.

These are painful things for a woman to experience in a relationship, but unfortunately they are very common. Do you recognise any of these independent characteristics? Of course, the extent of his independence will vary depending on the severity of any heartbreaks and disappointments he experienced as a child. To help you recognise these I will move on to describe in detail how independence develops and the key behaviours that he might exhibit.

When a man first enters his independent phase, usually as a teenager or young man, he is likely to be very positive about the future. He has a clear goal and probably has a great deal of opportunity. These are exciting times. If you are in a relationship with such a man, you will probably both be working hard and enjoying the challenges of life. Virtually everything your partner does will be driven by a need to experience success and prove that he is a successful person.

This drive for success means that he will have a *plan*. He knows what he needs to do to be successful and he knows what everybody else should do to make this a reality. This creates a long list of *expectations* that he will apply to everything he does. You will know if your partner is independent if he uses the words *should*, *ought* and *must* a lot. For example, does he tell you the house should be tidier or you ought to spend more time with the children? Sometimes these expectations will not be voiced directly but may be expressed through a shrug of his shoulders or subtle digs at you. He imposes his expectations in this way because he is *afraid* that unless you and other people behave in certain ways, his inner fears will be triggered. Of course you will feel controlled if he starts placing demands on your behaviour.

What happens next is pretty obvious! If his expectations and demands are not met, then as an independent person, he will begin to get *frustrated* and upset. He will feel let down and ignored. All this creates *stress*, for him and for you, and it can feel like you are walking on eggshells. Is this what happens in your relationship? It may be that you feel intimidated by your partner's expectations and have, over the years, given in to them to keep the peace. Although

this works in the short term, you will know that if this subservient behaviour goes on too long, it robs you of *confidence* and *self-respect*. Unfortunately, some men will take advantage of your willingness to please them and this creates a damaging inequality in the relationship. It can seem that the man always has the final say in decisions and dominates the relationship.

The odd thing about all these expectations and demands is that while your partner is making life difficult for you, he is genuinely trying to help you to find more happiness! He is trying to bring success to the relationship even though he could be pushing you away as he does

**An independent man
often becomes
materialistic**

it. Remember that he is trying to avoid the feelings of failure for *both* of you. He wants to save you from pain - that's what heroes do. So he has created a plan for success, but unfortunately emotions do not figure very highly in it. Instead he will compensate for them by becoming more materialistic. This is why men like

cars, machines and other inanimate objects - they don't have emotions. The other big focus can be money. Does your partner measure his success by how much he earns, the type of car he drives or the size of his house?

Maintaining a high-quality life style can place a man under enormous pressure to earn and succeed at work. It also means that he may spend long hours in the office. Of course this has an impact on you, if you are left at home to look after the children and the home. Perhaps you are in a dilemma because you enjoy all the money and comforts that his hard work and long hours bring, but you also long for him to come home to be with you. Have you ever wondered if he values work more than his home life? Do you ever feel lonely and unsupported and wonder what is the point of the relationship? These are a typical questions that you might ask if your partner is very independent.

The reason that independent men often bury themselves in their work is because most workplaces are emotion-free zones and this suits their style. Although on the surface it may seem your partner is working hard simply to provide a high quality of life for you and the family, there may be other reasons for his long hours. It could be that he prefers to work late because he does not want to face the relationship issues at home. Spending more time at home would bring him face-to-face with the very things that he is trying to hide from - his emotions.

Unfortunately many workplaces have independent cultures (because work is still dominated by men!) and this means that such behaviours are not just condoned but are actively encouraged. It could be that your partner works in just such a culture and he may have adapted his behaviour to succeed in such an environment. He may come home to you tired and stressed by the demands of his workplace and want to tell you about all the difficult and demanding people he has to work with. Or he may just ignore you and bury himself in his hobbies or favourite television shows. At no point will he ask you how your day has gone!

I do not want to paint independent men as *unfeeling* monsters. I can assure you that our desire is to support and protect the people we love. The challenge we face is that we are not normally *aware* of how our independence is creating problems for our partners, families and colleagues. When independence takes over, we become blind to the effects of our behaviour - we switch off our emotional radars. While this protects us from our unhealed feelings of dependence, it also means that we are no longer aware of what the people around us are feeling. We have lost our *empathy*. If your partner is independent, he will end up behaving in ways that he thinks are helpful, but will fail to notice that he is hurting you. If you can become aware of this emotional blindness, you will find it easier to understand and forgive his behaviour.

**Independence destroys
empathy**

With more extreme levels of independence men can become *autocratic* and *dictatorial* and cause misery to everybody around them. When this happens they have become completely blind to the impact they are having on other people and often become *selfish* and *greedy*. I'm sure you have met men like this! It seems incredible that they are so unaware of how they upset other people, but this shows just how isolated they become. We can understand this level of independence by realising how deep their pain must be for them to have become so *insensitive*. So distant are they from their feelings that they will begin to do things that are damaging to their own self-interest, or if they are in positions of authority, damaging to the organisations they work in. To outsiders it is obvious what they are doing, but it is invisible to them. The same is true in a relationship – you may be able to see your partner hurting himself and your relationship, but even if you explain this, it still remains a mystery to him.

If you find yourself in this situation, try to understand what is happening for him and do your best not to judge him. As you work through the next couple of chapters you will probably pick up more clues as to why he behaves as he does and some ideas about how you can help him. The most important thing to remember is that his behaviour is coming from his low self-esteem. Anything you can do to accept and forgive him will help you and your relationship. This is really hard thing to do, but you may be the only person who can help him.

Men pretend they are superior when they feel inferior

Many women I talk to feel inadequate when they compare themselves to their boyfriends or husbands. They see their men as successful and confident, particularly at work and this makes them feel inferior. Often, it is clear that their partners believe that they are superior and show this through their *arrogance*. This inequality is very damaging for any relationship. If you have ever felt inadequate when comparing yourself to a man or felt undervalued by him, I want to give you some pointers as to how you might understand what is happening and allow yourself to feel more valued and equal.

If men were more emotionally aware and honest, they would tell you that much of their male posturing is in fact a smokescreen for *insecurity*. A man who is acting arrogantly, over-confidently or aggressively is trying to hide considerable amounts of fear. These are common traits with so-called alpha-males, and are sure sign that they are desperately insecure! So if you come up against a man whose behaviour frightens you or makes you feel inferior, just remember that there is small, frightened boy inside that apparently strong and confident exterior. If you can see him in this way, your feelings towards him will change and you will be in a much better position to form an equal relationship.

As you can see, we can put on a very good act and give the impression that we have no needs or emotional issues. This can be a real trap for anybody seeking to find a partner because independent men are generally very *attractive* because of their dashing, self-confident behaviours. I am conscious that many readers will be currently single and wondering how they can spot independent men when they are dating. Admittedly it can be hard not to be swayed by a man's looks and style - chemistry is a critically important thing in a romantic partnership. So what would be more reliable traits to look out for if you are searching for a partner and how can

find a man who is more in-touch with his emotions?

If you are on a date with a man who is very independent, initially he is likely to be charming and very romantic - he will be able to put on a good act to hide his underlying lack of self-esteem. Nevertheless there are some key warning signs to look out for. An independent man will have a big *ego* and therefore will want to tell you about *himself*. Because he seems so impressive you may be in awe of him and not notice that he is showing little interest in you. He will tend to talk about material things rather than anything meaningful like emotions or relationships. He will also be vain and this might show up in the way he dresses or grooms himself. If you do have a few dates with him you will probably notice his controlling behaviours appearing – he will tend to make the decisions about where you meet and what you do together, instead of asking what you would like. If you are feeling brave you could ask your prospective partner about his emotional needs and insecurities. What is it that frightens him or makes him feel insecure? Very independent men will run a mile from this sort of conversation. The way he answers your questions will tell you a huge amount about his level of emotional intelligence and could save you a lot of heartache in the future!

Perfectionism is another tell-tale sign of independence. Have you ever felt that no matter how much you do for your partner, no matter how much you succeed as a mother or in your work, that he will never be satisfied? Does he fail to acknowledge your huge efforts to look after the children, keep the house together and juggle a mind-boggling list of tasks? Does he strive all the time for the highest standards and once he achieves them move on to the next project without pausing to enjoy his success? These are all direct consequences of his need for *perfection*.

**Perfectionism is
another tell-tale sign
of independence**

Perfectionism has its origins in dependency. Having high standards is not a problem in itself, but it does become so when it is driven by a personal sense of inadequacy. If your partner is a perfectionist it means that he is trying really hard to succeed today to make up for the time he believes that he failed in the *past*. It is an echo of a time in his original family where he felt overwhelmed by a situation and believed that he just couldn't succeed. His guilt from those original heartbreaks made him feel bad and so today he wants to prove he is good by achieving perfection in everything he does.

A man can never be truly happy while he has a need for perfection. It means that he will never be satisfied with the results of his efforts, no matter how successful he becomes. This is a terrible trap because it drives him on to work ever harder for diminishing rewards. The stress and pressure to succeed can threaten both his mental and physical health as well as his relationship.

Children can also come under pressure from parents who are perfectionists. Perfectionist parents often expect their children to succeed in ways that had alluded them. In our high-pressure society, many parents get caught up in a rat race where they feel their children must go to the best schools, achieve the highest exam results and always play in the first team at sport. Unmet parental expectations, usually around behaviour, academic qualifications or careers can create significant heartbreaks, to the extent that a child can enter their adult life feeling like a failure. The cycle of inadequacy and guilt then starts all over again and is often passed on to their own children.

If your partner has a tendency to perfectionism then consider what pressures he was under to succeed as a child. This might not have been a direct pressure but it may have been an atmosphere of very high standards that he grew up in. As a young child he might have picked up insecurities from the people around him. If, for instance, one of his parents was extremely tidy and had an obsessive attention to detail, then it would have been very hard for him not to be influenced by this as he grew up. I believe that many of the negative aspects of our personality are picked up in this subliminal way. It seems that we automatically take on our parent's insecurities. It is rather like a baton in a relay race. Our parents hand on the issues that they have not been able to deal with in their own lives to us. We pick them up and then hand them on to our children. This carries on down the generations until somebody decides to heal the issue.

The feelings of 'never enough' are commonplace in our society because it is built on independent values. This might show up as never enough money, beauty, sex, power, youth, or health. This eternal dissatisfaction makes us continually wonder if there is something better over the horizon. It might be a better car, a bigger house or a larger six pack! It also explains why some men are

The feelings of never-enough are commonplace in our society

tempted to search for a new partner.

As we have seen already, a fundamental belief in *scarcity* (never having enough) lies deeply buried in most of us. It comes originally from a belief that we *lack love*. This emptiness creates an aching need for love, so we go shopping to make us feel better! Joking apart, this is a really important point – we try to make up for our feeling of lack by searching for things in the physical world that we believe will make us happy. The problem is that this can never address the core issue because they can never replace love.

Examples of scarcity are all around us, including the financial crisis that engulfed the world in 2008. The seeds of this were sown many years before with a collective slide into independence. With increasing commercialism we measured success by our financial wealth and buying power rather than the quality of our relationships. Self-interest, greed and a near total blindness to the mounting risks of unsecured loans fuelled a boom that proved to be unsustainable. Eventually the bubble burst and there was a huge price to pay. This is independence at its worst - selfish, unaware and focused on short-term gain. It is no coincidence that this turmoil was presided over predominantly by men!

The truth is that money and consumerism can never bring back feelings of love.

You probably know this already, but it is very hard to stop wanting more stuff! Have you ever felt like you are on the conveyor belt of consumerism? This might be a simple ‘keeping up with the Jones’s’ at

**Consumerism can
never bring back
feelings of love**

one extreme, right up to feelings of complete personal inadequacy and failure when you start comparing what you have with your peers, siblings and friends. *Envy* and *jealousy* can easily set in and you may believe that you can only be truly happy if you have the same things as them.

The beauty, grooming and fashion industry has grown up to feed off these insecurities. Our media is obsessed with what we look like and bombards us with reasons why we should feel inadequate. How much are you or your partner affected by this pressure to conform? Have you ever sensed that you are trying to make up for your insecurities by focusing on how you look or dress? Lots of women tell me that they can’t face the world in the morning without make-up. Of course, having pride in your appearance is a good thing because it can lift your

self-esteem, but be aware of using it to avoid the deeper issues of self-worth and self-esteem. If your partner is preoccupied by his looks or his physique, could it be because he is trying to compensate for some negative self-beliefs?

By now you are probably realising that independence could have an impact on your sex life, because it will tend to keep you at an emotional and physical distance from your partner. This is true, but a man's sexuality can be high through the early stages of independence because he feels good about himself and in control of his life. You probably like him this way and find the sex satisfying. However, as a man becomes more independent, the lack of emotional engagement during sex will begin to take its toll. The warning signs are when a man begins to treat sex as a way of *gratifying* himself rather than an act of love. He may become demanding around sex and you may feel more like an object rather than a lover. The sex, which was an exciting part of your relationship in the early days, may become *boring*, predictable and infrequent. If the quality of your sex life has deteriorated it can become the source of great disappointment and stress in a relationship. I will be devoting a whole chapter to this important subject later in the book, and will explain how you can make sex a central part of the healing process in a relationship.

Control is a classic sign of independence and one that is easy to recognise. With a strong set of expectations about how to achieve success, an independent man will have no

**Control is a classic sign
of independence**

choice but to control the people around him to make sure that he gets what he wants. This may begin as a mild form of persuasion but then it can escalate into full-blown control. Is this something you have experienced in your relationship? How controlling is your partner? Does he always want his own way? It can be very hard to live with somebody like this, but try to remember that his control is his way of avoiding feeling *out of control*. At some point in his earlier life he must have felt that he lost control, probably during his childhood heartbreaks. If you can reach a point where you can talk together about feelings, then you can help him to understand where his need for control might have come from. This isn't easy with an independent man and in later chapters I will explain how you can start the communication process and make it an important part of your relationship.

Control is almost always accompanied by *anger*, or even *rage*. Anger is used to frighten people and make them do what the controller wants. It is also a *cover emotion* – it is always hiding another more fundamental emotion. If your partner gets angry with you, ask yourself what feeling he is trying to avoid by this behaviour. Whatever is happening in your relationship, it is triggering some painful feelings for him and rather than experience those, he is getting angry with you. Is his underlying feeling one of frustration, hurt, loss, sadness or perhaps guilt? In fact it could be all of these feelings because our emotions sit in layers within the mind. Here is what some typical layers might look like, going from the surface to the deeper, hidden feelings.

Anger (surface)

Hurt

Loss

Sadness

Failure

Guilt

Fear

Love

Notice that all these negative emotions can be traced down to fear and that if you go even deeper you will always find love. Although an independent man will do his level best to appear confident and unmoved by events, deep down he is *frightened*. If your partner is independent he will resort to control to keep all those deeper feelings hidden, including his fear. In a power struggle he will do one of two things - he will either get angry or frustrated with you, or he will withdraw from you. This is the '*fight or flight*' response created by the hormone adrenaline. In spite of this seemingly aggressive behaviour, your partner's underlying emotion is more likely to be sadness and hurt. If you can remember this, his domineering behaviour will seem less threatening.

Sooner or later a controlling person will come up against another controlling person and the scene is then set for a *power struggle*. In a relationship this becomes a fight to see which partner's needs are the most important. If you and your partner argue regularly, it shows you

that both of you have one or more needs that is not being met. You want your partner to meet your needs, and he wants you to meet his! As you can see, this is an ideal recipe for a row.

If you do find yourself in fights or stand-offs with your partner, ask yourself what need is not being met for you in the situation. This will be exactly the *same* need that your partner will be trying to have met by you. For instance, let's say you have had a row about whether or not you could afford a new car. Your partner was keen to buy a new car, but you felt that you are short of cash. Instead of discussing it with you, he went out and bought the car and you come home to see it sitting on the drive. You then ask him why he went ahead and bought the car, and he becomes angry. After some heated words you get upset and leave the room. For the rest of the day you hardly exchange words with each other.

A power struggle is a fight about needs

Let's look in more detail at what was happening emotionally in this incident because it shows how unmet needs can create problems in a relationship. On the surface the argument is simply a difference of opinion about buying a new car, but at a deeper level it touches a much more basic nerve. While it seemed that your partner was selfishly treating himself to a new car, he was actually using it to hide that fact that he doesn't feel that great about himself. He used the car to make himself feel better and *compensate* for his feelings of low self-esteem. What he was really after was love, and he assumed that the car would provide that!

You felt hurt because your partner didn't bother to check with you before buying the car. He totally disregarded your opinions and feelings. You felt unvalued and unloved. Notice how both of you had a need for love, but the inconsiderate behaviour and anger hid the true feelings and made it impossible to talk maturely to each other in a way that would have solved the problem. This is typical in any power struggle – you can change the details but you will always find that the fighting, anger and withdrawal is an avoidance of deeper, more fundamental emotions.

A row or an argument is therefore never about what we think it is. In fact fights within a relationship are a bit ridiculous because they are about trying to get needs met without actually defining them. We dance around the real issues and then get cross because our needs have not been met. You will also notice that in my example above, the same need was present for each

partner. At its core this will always be the need for love, but is often disguised in all sorts of other needs, expectations and demands. We want to be loved in certain ways and when this doesn't happen we become unhappy. If you can find out what that need is at the heart of a problem you then have a chance of solving it in a way that adds to your relationship. It is therefore essential to find out what it is that you *need from your partner* and what he *needs from you*. Eventually you will reach a point where you can discuss these needs and invariably you will discover that you and your partner are looking for exactly the same thing!

**A problem can always
be traced back to a
shared unmet need**

So far my description of independence has taken us from the earliest stage of expectations and demands, through the control stage and into the power struggle. This is a typical progression for an individual or a relationship and we can come across problems in any of these stages. Later in the book I will explain how you can work through many of these problems by creating a relationship that is full of honest communications. I'm sure you are keen to find out how to achieve this, but please bear with me for a little longer because our journey through independence isn't quite over. There is one final, important stage that I need to describe. In the next chapter we will look at what happens if a man stays too long in independence and the consequences of this to your relationship.

Learning points from Chapter 5 Your Hero

- *Independence is a psychological state that is caused by a suppression of emotions*
- *A man wants to save and protect you, and give you a happy life, but he tries to do this without his heart*
- *An independent man will have many expectations about how you should behave and when you fail to do this he will be disappointed, frustrated and may become angry.*
- *Perfectionism is a tell-tale sign of independence and is a response to the fear of failure*
- *Men who act arrogantly or who are superior, are trying to hide the fact that they feel insecure*
- *In any relationship problem there is a shared need that is not being met.*

How to help your partner with his independence

- *Before trying to help your partner with his independence become aware of your own tendencies in this area. By being aware of your own issues you will be in a much better place to help him because you will understand him better and he will feel less judged.*
- *Look out for his tell-tale behaviours. Is he a perfectionist? Does he become dominant or withdraw from you? How much do you feel valued by him?*
- *Try to understand what fears he is trying to hide and if you are able, find out from him what he is feeling.*
- *Express your own feelings about the relationship and how his behaviour affects you. Remember to do this sensitively because he is probably blind to how you are feeling.*

Chapter 6 **Fading Love**

How a fear of emotions will eventually destroy a relationship

It can be a terrible disappointment for a man to discover that the way he has been living is not the answer to a happy life. Independence can take him a long way but eventually it will let him down. This I discovered when my marriage failed. I can remember the moment of shock when I realised how much I had invested in my independence and how much this had damaged my relationship. I had tried so hard to be a good husband and father, but where I went wrong was in believing that I could do this without my heart. It was impossible for me to have a successful relationship or find lasting happiness when I was so out of touch with my emotions. Looking back now I realise that through the years of my marriage I had gradually drifted into the final and most damaging stage of independence – the *dead zone*. Many men, particularly later in life, find themselves in the dead zone, and unfortunately they often drag their partners down with them.

**The dead zone is where
many relationships
come to a end**

In this chapter I will focus on the dead zone because it is where many relationships stagnate or come to an end. I need to describe this dense and difficult psychological stage because it is so common and is often a necessary step in finding more happiness in our relationships. The surprising thing about the dead zone is that, despite its obvious challenges, it is also the *gateway* to a loving partnership. If we can navigate it successfully, we have an opportunity to bring much more love and connection to our relationships. Over the next few chapters I will show you how to do this.

Unfortunately, not all relationships will make it to the dead zone because they end in either the manipulation and mind games of dependence, or the control and power struggles of independence. A relationship can survive these two stages, but this usually means that both partners have ignored the growing emotional and physical separation. Eventually these problems will eat away at the quality of the relationship and take it into the dead zone.

Recognising when your relationship is in the dead zone is easy because, as it's name suggests, there will be feelings of *deadness*. This will usually be apparent for both partners -

you will lack energy, enthusiasm and a zest for life. You will tend to isolate yourselves and look inwards. Communication levels will be poor and you may suffer from stress, anxiety or depression. You will probably feel trapped in the relationship and have no idea how you could rescue it. In the dead zone, some people become very busy, competitive and work ridiculously hard until they burnout. As you can see, once a relationship has reached the dead zone, it has lost most of its feelings of joy and love.

Do you recognise any of these characteristics in your relationship or in your partner? It can be very distressing to watch somebody you love gradually drift away from you and lose all emotional connection. You may find that you are living with your partner but that there is hardly any quality to the relationship. It can reach a point where you feel desperately *lonely* within the relationship and lack any sort of *tenderness* or *intimacy*. When a relationship has become so dead, it is not surprising that your sex life might lose its excitement and pleasure, or may have ended altogether. Many couples stay together in the dead zone through convenience rather than love, or because they are afraid to end the relationship and be on their own.

What I have described may be more common in middle-aged men or long-term relationships, but it is worth being on the look out for deadness appearing at any point in a relationship. Once the wonderful feelings of ‘falling in love’ begin to fade and a few power struggles appear, the first stages of the dead zone are just around the corner. It is fairly easy to notice this happening because complacency begins to set in and the buzz between you and your partner will fade. What were once opportunities for romance and celebration, such as Valentine’s Day, anniversaries or birthdays become routine events. You no longer talk so much and when you do it is about the practicalities of life rather than anything meaningful. In the earlier stages of the relationship you might have had more disagreements and the odd row, but now the emotional landscape has become flat and boring. Your sex life, originally one of the best parts of the relationship is becoming dull and predictable. These are the first signs that your relationship is heading towards the dead zone and if you see these things happening it is a cue to take action to save your relationship.

**In the dead zone your
sex life becomes dull**

Although both men and women can fall into the dead zone, men are particularly prone to it because they tend to be more independent. You can see how easily your partner could slip into the dead zone if he is already showing signs of independence. By avoiding his emotions and separating from you in the relationship, he shuts himself off from love. His independent strategy was designed to protect him from emotional pain, but now nobody can reach him - he has built an emotional fortress around himself. With his heart closed down, he will get little pleasure from his relationships or any other aspect of life. Without love, fear and negativity will take over, which can lead to depression as well as mental and physical illness .

You can see how destructive independence can be to a relationship, if it is allowed to continue for too long. The fact that men are generally blind to its negative effects means that they will not recognise that the dead zone is creeping up on them and will therefore do nothing to stop it. The encouragements and rewards for independence in our society are so great, that once it sets in, it will generally run its course into the dead zone. I don't want to disillusion you, but you need to know how *powerful* a grip it can have on men. The way to help a man through the dead zone is to help him end his independence and reconnect with his heart and his emotions.

The problem is, that if your partner is independent, by the time that he has reached the dead zone, he will have become an expert at suppressing his emotions. In fact he will pretend that he has no unmet needs or emotions. This isn't his natural state, so he will have to create a new personality as a way of keeping his real emotions down - his life will become an *act*. This is why it can seem that he has changed from the man you first fell in love with. After a number of years you may even forget what the 'original' man was like because you become so used to the man who is grumpy and withdrawn. Some of you may have even reached a point where you dislike and have fallen out of love with the man that he has become.

If your partner has drawn away from you, it can be difficult to imagine that the attentive and loving man you first fell in love with can ever be rediscovered. Although he may be currently acting in ways that you find difficult, the good news is that deep down he hasn't changed! The man that you see today has taken on a *role* to protect himself from the feelings of *guilt* and *inadequacy* that he took on earlier in his life. Underneath, his loving personality is still present, so you can help him by refusing to be taken in by the role he is playing.

To show you what I mean, consider the example a man who has had a very successful career and risen to a high level in an organisation due to his hard work and diligence. On the surface he seems very successful and full of confidence. He is the pillar of his local community, sits on all sorts of committees and is respected by everybody he meets. Perhaps he is a very contented man who is in touch with his emotions, but there is another possibility – that he is deeply *unhappy*, but feels he can't lose face and show this to the people around him. Through my work I have met a number of powerful men who are like this. Once I get to know them better, I can see beneath the outward confidence, self-control and success to the considerable pain and hurt that they have been hiding for most of their lives. Some of these men are able to recognise that they were living unauthentically and do something about it, but others just can't bear to let down the facade.

To help a man like this you would need to show him that he is not being *true* to himself. The problem is that a role is very difficult to drop because when we are in it, we are doing the

**A role is doing the
right thing for the
wrong reason**

right thing for the *wrong reason*. Take my last example. Everything the man does is seen as good by the people around him and his achievements are very honourable, but it is not true for him to behave in this way. He is afraid to drop the role because that is how

other people *know* and *respect* him. If he were to let the role go he would have to admit he was being unauthentic and risk the disappointment and judgment of the people around him. Often men have worked very hard to reach a position of authority and respect and they are proud of what they have achieved. How could they possibly admit that their life and work has been a sham?

If you recognise that your partner has taken on a role, the thing to remember is that while it is self-imposed, he has taken it on gradually over a number of years and probably doesn't realise how unauthentic he has become. As well as trying to protect himself, he will also be trying to protect you and the family. It is the only way he knows how to be. Being in the dead zone is a bit like hanging by your fingers on the edge of a dangerous cliff – you can't let go because the consequences would be unthinkable but you haven't the strength or inspiration to

pull yourself up either.

Roles come in a variety of personality styles. The example I have just used, the *good boy* or *hero* role, is the most common in men. In this role the man will strive to be a good person and succeed in everything he does. He wants to save the day and make everything OK for him and the for the people around. We also see this same role in women as the *good girl*. You'll recognise this type of person because they always worked conscientiously at school, never got in to trouble and seemed to have a charmed life.

Try to spot the role, or sometimes couple of roles that your partner is playing. The good boy/hero works hard to achieve success, firstly for himself and then for the people around him. His focus is on success because that makes sure that failure and its emotional consequences are kept at a safe distance. The good boy/hero role usually starts in our original families around the time of our first heartbreaks, and becomes a drive to succeed at school, college, on the sports field and in work. The strong focus and diligence that goes with this role usually means that men who adopt it achieve highly in anything they do. The recognition and material rewards that come with this role convince them that it is a good one and that this is the best way to have a successful and happy life.

You are probably wondering how you can tell the difference between a man who is in the hero role and one who is genuinely successful – what we might call a *true hero*. The way to tell the difference is to notice how *easy* it is for him to achieve success. If there is any feeling of pressure, or stress with it, then it is not authentic. Notice also, how he reacts to his successes. Does he feel emotionally rewarded by them and or does he rush on to the next project or goal straight away? Finally, is there anything about his style that seems to be seeking attention and recognition from others for his achievements? This need to be liked and acknowledged by the people around him is a sign that his success is driven by an underlying insecurity.

**The good boy role
hides a feeling of being
naughty or bad**

All of these behaviours are characteristics of somebody who is trying to be heroic, when inside they feel the exact opposite. Their heroism is also designed to bring status and all the

advantages that success brings, not only to themselves but to the people they love. The problem with this is that the good boy role hides a feeling of being *naughty* or *bad* and having let people down in the past. If your partner is in this role he is trying to pay off his guilt with good deeds. Unfortunately this only works for a short time because it doesn't address his core feeling of low self-worth.

I know the good boy role well, because this is what I took on for a large part of my life. I always wanted to do well at school and at work, and I wanted to be acknowledged for this. In fact, so successful was my role so that nobody knew that I was in it - everybody assumed I was happy and emotionally sorted. My achievements were the result of a great deal of hard work and at first they did take away some of my feelings of low self-worth. Unfortunately the self-consciousness and anxiety soon returned and then I then had no choice but to go back into the role and work even harder. This vicious circle is typical when we are living from a role - we fall into a trap of our own making that becomes almost impossible to escape.

You may recognise the good boy/hero role in your partner or other men that you know, but it is also possible that they favour other roles. The *martyr* like the hero role, feeds off low self-worth. We see it in somebody who acts like a *victim*, feels sorry for themselves and is always looking for sympathy from the people around them. Take for instance a man who was looking forward to watching his favourite football team on television. His partner had set her heart on watching a romantic film and so the man reluctantly agrees to let her watch it. Later he begins to regret his decision and through his mood and body language makes it clear to his partner that he has had to make a big *sacrifice*.

If your partner behaves in this way you will know how tedious and irritating this can be. The '*poor me*' attitude is designed to seek attention and sympathy, but in a very negative way. Sometimes we respond to this type of behaviour through kindness but our partners stay in the martyr role and become ever more demanding. Sooner or later we will push them away because their behaviour feels so needy. At a deeper level it could be that their neediness triggers our own neediness – something that we desperately want to hide. If your partner is acting like a martyr he will have some serious dependent issues that are dragging him down.

The martyr role is built on feelings of sacrifice and is often seen in the related role of the *caretaker*. This is where a person seeks out and helps people who have problems in an

apparently selfless way. Of course there are examples of true helpers, but the role becomes a problem where it is used to pay off guilt or to win praise. Beware of falling into this role yourself, especially if your partner is struggling with his own emotional issues. You will know if this has happened because you will always be the person helping others, and yet there is never anybody to help you. If you have become the caretaker, ask yourself what it is that you think you will gain from looking after other people and what might have caused you to take up the this role. If you look within you will probably find a layer of guilt that is making you sacrifice yourself. Recognise that this is untrue and work to let go of the guilt and the role.

Another role that is based on self-sacrifice is the *scapegoat*. In this role a person may deliberately behave badly or unsociably so that they become the focus of attack. By becoming the victim, they believe they are paying off their guilt. Of course people will pick on the scapegoat because they are an easy target, unloading their own guilt in the process. We often see this happening in situations of separation or divorce. When a relationship breaks down one partner is often *blamed* for all the problems - they are the guilty party and the other partner is seen as blameless. They become the scapegoat for all the pain and disappointment that was present in the relationship. Have you ever been treated like this or wanted to blame your partner when a relationship failed? At first it can make us feel good to off-load our guilt but unfortunately it will always catch up with us in the end.

It is easy to see that the last two roles I have described are negative, but there is one that appears positive - it can quite literally, fool us. This is the *comic or charmer*. You will know the sort of man I am talking about. He is the life and soul of a party or social gathering, has all the jokes and has a charming personality. Everybody wants to be his friend. It seems that he has everything - he is confident, carefree and full of fun. But there is a problem. All of this humour and lightness is an act – it's another role and it usually hides a deep *self-loathing*. After being the centre of attention and feted by their friends, these people often go home alone to feelings of intense sadness. It is a problem that plagues celebrities and performers because they are attracted to the attention-seeking opportunities of working in front of the public.

We don't want to be honest about our true feelings

At some point in our lives, all of us have put on a jolly face and pretended we are happy

when in fact we are feeling wretched inside. Part of this is good manners, but part of it is that we don't want to be *honest* about our true feelings. Notice how much of a fraud you feel if you do this. I have come away from parties hating myself for putting on such an act and being so unauthentic. Have you ever done this? If so, ask yourself why you didn't feel that you could be more honest? Did you put on a happy face because you wanted to be *accepted*? This might create a good impression initially but because it's not authentic, it can't be sustained. This is true for all roles and it means that ultimately they will always let us down.

There is one more role that a quieter man might take on. If he is very withdrawn emotionally he may try to become *invisible*. In a group of people he would be the person that nobody notices. He has withdrawn his energy to such an extent that nobody sees him. This is something he has done deliberately so he doesn't have to interact with other people. If you asked him, he would probably say he is happy with his own company, but this hides a deep *loneliness*. Men like this are like lost children and will have often experienced feelings of *abandonment* in their upbringing, or they may have a belief that they were *not wanted* by their parents. They are trying to be less trouble for the people around them by disappearing into themselves. They do this because they feel their presence will be a burden – it is another role that feeds off low self-worth.

By now you have probably spotted one or more roles that your partner favours. Think about what sort of self-beliefs he might be hiding with the role. This will help you to see underneath the role and understand him better. It is also worth thinking about any roles that you may use. Did you recognise any roles from the descriptions I have just run through? A typical female role would be the *good mother* and *organiser* (the hero role). You would probably see this woman doing the washing up at parties and organising everyone around her. Another might be the very bubbly woman who spends her time around men laughing at their jokes and flirting

**Taking on a role comes
at a cost**

outrageously (the charmer). There are many other roles that we might take on, but they will all slot into the five key roles that I have described above.

Although the male and female roles can present themselves differently, they are hiding very similar insecurities.

Taking on any role comes at a cost. The most obvious is that it hides the *real us* and feeds the

insecurities that we might hold about ourselves. Roles store up problems for the future in relationships. Take for example a new relationship where the man is very confident and protective, presenting himself in the hero role. You might fall in love with him, unaware that you are not seeing the real person. After a while, when his insecurities start to show themselves, you might find yourself confused and disappointed. He no longer seems to be the person you first met. Faced with this apparent change in character, it can be hard to commit in a relationship. So what can we do to help ourselves and our partners when we slip into a role?

The trick with any role is to become aware of when we are using it. This is difficult to do because a lot of the time we forget that we are in a role. We tend to take on a role as a way of presenting our ‘best self’ to the people around us, but then it becomes a habit. Our families, friends and colleagues get used to us that way, and so do we. At first the role brings us benefits but later it becomes a trap, because it hides our true gifts. The problem is that when we are in a role we can’t *receive* any reward because all the success goes to the role, rather than to us. To break this pattern we first need to become aware of the role, and then realise that it is not serving us. You might want to talk with your partner about the various roles that you both use and how you could start to drop them and become more authentic.

Along with our roles come a set of *rules* that we use to live by. We believe that the rules will help us to be happy and successful, but subconsciously we use them to *control* ourselves and the people around us. They are designed to stop situations arising that will trigger the pain of our unmet needs and heartbreaks. While a rule might bring some order to our lives, it also means that we have fixed ideas and become inflexible, which robs us of our creativity. Do you have any rules in the way you lead your life, or the way you expect your partner to behave? Here are a few common ones.

Rules that you might live by...

I must always be in control

I must always look smart and well-presented

I must be honest

I must always support my partner

I must always put on a brave face

Rules you might expect your partner to live by...

You must never be dishonest

You must support me

You must value and respect me

You must be confident and strong

You must be faithful

You can add some of your own rules to this list if you wish. The interesting thing about rules is how often we tend to break them, often without even realising that we are doing so! For instance, thinking about honesty, have you always answered truthfully when your partner has asked you “How are feeling?” Have you ever said “I’m fine”, even when this was not the case? You may have been less than honest in your answer because you were trying to protect your partner, or perhaps you were *afraid* to tell him exactly what you were feeling. Although this might seem an insignificant example, the lack of honesty about your feelings, sets up a pattern that can damage a relationship.

If you are hiding your feelings, then your partner is probably doing the same. For example, take a man who likes to stay at home in the evenings, rather than going out. If you ask him whether he minds your ‘nights out’ with the girls every Friday, he may tell you that he is happy about them when in fact he finds them really difficult. He may be afraid to tell you his true feelings for fear of disappointing you or creating a scene.

Sooner or later your partner will break your rules

Some rules in life are useful because they give us boundaries and keep us safe, but when we place rules on our emotions and relationships they nearly always spell trouble. If you are trying to use rules to control your partner so you don’t have to face your own insecurities, this will always fail. People hate being controlled and they hate rules being imposed on them. Sooner or later your partner will break your rules and start ignoring you. If your partner is independent he will have his own set of rules about your behaviour and the relationship. If this is the case you will know what it feels like to be controlled and just how ineffective this is.

If your relationship is full of rules it will have lost its energy and life. It is much better to have *principles* rather than rules. A principle sets your positive intentions for your relationship and unlike a rule, is *flexible*. In the example I have just used, we could have a principle of honesty in the relationship. This would allow us to forgive ourselves or our partner for failing to be completely honest, but at the same time it would provide us with a *goal* to aim for. If each partner sets an *intention* to be as honest as they can, there is no need for a set of strict rules.

**We feel duty-bound to
behave in
certain ways**

If you and your partner are living by a set of rules, it means that you will be doing things from a sense of *duty* - you will feel that you *have to* behave in certain ways. This is a trap that many men fall into in long-term relationships and later in life. Think about this for your partner. Does he feel that he is *supposed* to behave in certain ways, even though he doesn't enjoy it? Perhaps he drags himself to work each morning to do a job that he finds tedious or unfulfilling; a job which he feels doesn't match his talents or personality. Does he feel obliged to work long hours to bring home enough money to pay for the lifestyle that you have become accustomed to? You will know if your partner is living with a sense of duty because he will lack *energy* and *inspiration*. Everything will seem like hard work and a *burden*.

A feeling of duty comes from a *lack of choice*. If your partner is living a life of duty, he will feel that he has little or no power to change things. Although he is creating this rule for himself, he doesn't see it this way - he will feel as if the duty is being imposed on him by the situation he finds himself in and the people around him. The solution is to help him to see that the dutiful role is something *he* has chosen and therefore *he* has the power to let it go. The reason he doesn't do this is because he is afraid of being his true self.

All the roles, rules and duties become very heavy for a man and as his independence grows, he loses the ability to *receive* love. This means that he receives little or no emotional nourishment and explains why the dead zone is so draining. He has probably worked very hard to be successful throughout his life and yet he is unable to feel the reward for all this effort. It takes a huge amount of energy to stay in a role, because he will be using it to hold back large amounts of pain and negative emotion. Nobody can keep up this level of defence forever and eventually he will run out of steam, become *stressed* and risk *burnout* or a *nervous breakdown*.

In the dead zone, men usually hit a *mid-life crisis* where they begin to question everything. Perhaps their youthful hopes and dreams have not been realised and as they get

**Independent men
usually hit a mid-life
crisis**

older they begin to feel time running out. They may have been successful at work and have created a comfortable lifestyle but they have a nagging sense that *something is missing* from their lives. They will hate the way that they feel lacking in energy and inspiration. Life will have become very dull and boring so it is not surprising that they will want to change this. Most men in a mid-life crisis therefore try to inject some *excitement* back into their lives. They might suddenly want to go bungee jumping sky diving or do something equally exotic that is in a total contrast to their normal life. Some men might decide they need a complete change of career, move house, or buy a sports car. More worryingly they might begin to look for excitement and passion in an affair.

If you are living with a man who is going through a mid-life change, or whose behaviour is becoming erratic, you may feel very concerned. You may have got used to a fairly quiet man and suddenly he wants to start doing unusual things. You may also be worried that his new plans will not involve you. It is true that in mid-life, many men begin to wonder about their relationships. If a relationship has slipped into the dead zone, it has probably lost much of its love and connection, so it is not surprising that they may want to spice their lives up. Of course this can be a very disturbing time for a woman because her partner's odd behaviour will trigger all sorts of fears and insecurities. If you find yourself in such a position, it is important to remember why your partner and your relationship has ended up in the dead zone. At the core of your problems will be a *fear of intimacy*.

You and your partner have become afraid to get too close to each other in case your most painful emotions are triggered - most notably *guilt*. In fact the dead zone is a monument to guilt. You can both try to suppress your guilt by becoming independent, but it will still do its dirty work in the background, and slowly but inexorably create an *emotional separation* in your relationship. The guilt eventually starves you both of love. To heal the dead zone you will need to look within and search out and heal any guilt that you might be holding, and when your

partner is ready, help him do the same. Earlier I described how our guilt grows from the heartbreak of unmet needs in childhood. You can use these ideas to look back with your partner into your earlier lives and identify any heartbreaks or situations in which you might have taken on guilt. If you can let go of this guilt through a process of understanding and forgiveness, this will help you to build your self-esteem and come closer to your partner.

Anything that you can do in a relationship to let go of guilt will have an immediate and positive effect on it, but sometimes it can seem as if there is an impenetrable amount of negative emotion that is damaging your self-esteem. Guilt usually lies in many layers in our minds and therefore you will need to be willing to keep healing them as they appear. As we have seen, we take on guilt when any relationship has problems or fails - we tend to blame ourselves for what has gone wrong. The most important relationship we ever have is with our parents and this is why our childhood heartbreaks can leave us with so much guilt.

In the next chapter I want to explore our family relationships in more detail because they can create a damaging pattern that can *sabotage* our adult relationships. I will explain how *triangular relationships* form within families and how, once again, they are fuelled by guilt. I will then show you how breaking these relationships triangles is often the key to a successful romantic relationship.

Learning points from Chapter 6 - Fading Love

- *If we stay independent too long, we end up in the dead zone*
- *The dead zone comes about as a result of the suppression of emotions - we stop feeling anything, including love.*
- *In the dead zone we take on roles to compensate for our negative self-beliefs*
- *Men are particularly prone to living from a sense of duty because they are afraid to be emotionally authentic.*
- *If we are living by rules we rob ourselves of spontaneity and creativity*
- *Men often have mid-life crises as a reaction to the dead zone - they are trying to wake themselves up again!*

How to recognise the dead zone in yourself, your partner or your relationship

- *There is a feeling of deadness and lack of life energy*
- *It feels like you are trapped in your life and cannot escape*
- *Everything feels pointless*
- *You find it hard to get up in the morning*
- *You stay with your partner out of convenience rather than love*
- *You feel inauthentic and rather fraudulent*
- *You or your partner are very busy and competitive*
- *You are often stressed and close to burnout*
- *You live your life in role with a strict set of rules*
- *You are frightened of change*

Chapter 7 **Caught in a Trap**

*Why the relationship with our opposite sex parent is
so important to our adult relationships*

The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud made a detailed study of family relationships and gave us a powerful and sometimes controversial model to help us understand our psychology. It is known as the Oedipus Complex and describes the relationship we have with our opposite sex parent. I want to explain how these ideas can help you understand the relationship your partner has with his mother and how this directly affects you. You will also need to think about your relationship with your father because this could have a huge impact on your relationship with your partner. At first, most people find these ideas challenging because they trigger many of our taboos, but I would encourage you to keep an open mind because they can explain so much about the problems that we encounter in our relationships.

Psychologist Chuck Spezzano has worked with many thousands of people in his relationship workshops and he reckons that a very large

proportion of issues can be traced back to Oedipal heartbreaks and the traps that they create.

**A large proportion of
issues can be traced
back to Oedipal
heartbreaks**

Freud took his inspiration from the classic Greek tragedy about Oedipus, the son of the King and Queen of Thebes. Oedipus was adopted at birth, so he never knew his parents. As a young man, he met his father on a road, got into a brawl and ended up killing him. He then met his mother, fell in love and married her, becoming King. A few years later his mother discovered that Oedipus was her son and that he had killed his father. She was so devastated and racked with guilt, that she committed suicide. Oedipus then suffered terrible guilt for his part in the death of both his parents. A plague fell on the Kingdom of Thebes and Oedipus stepped down as King. In a battle for the throne, Oedipus's sons, who he had with his mother, killed each other.

This dramatic story contains many of the issues of loss, betrayal, competition and guilt that we often face in our romantic relationships. Most importantly, it shows how guilt can be handed around a family and passed down to children, and how destructive this is to

relationships. As I guide you through the psychology of the Oedipus Complex, consider if these ideas might explain what is going on in your relationship. Although I will describe the complex in terms of a son and his mother, you can easily adapt it for a daughter and her father.

In Freud's explanation of the Oedipus Complex, at a very early age, a son falls deeply in love with his mother. This is his first romantic experience and brings with it powerful sexual feelings. The Oedipus Complex is full of guilt and a sense of repulsion because it triggers deeply held taboos, and it is this that eventually drives a mother and son apart. Both of them then feel an intense heartbreak for the lost relationship. Freud believed that this is such a painful and shocking experience, that many men are subconsciously haunted by their Oedipal heartbreaks for the rest of their lives. Women can also experience similar heartbreaks in the relationship with their fathers, which I shall describe later. The pain and guilt contained as subconscious memories after these heartbreaks, makes it hard for a couple to form and sustain an intimate relationship.

When they first hear about it, many people find the idea of an Oedipal relationship difficult or disturbing because it brings up deeply held unconscious feelings. You may feel pain in your gut or feel nauseous when you think about these things. These reactions are completely normal and usually show that they have some relevance to you and your relationships. Even if you have a strong resistance to these ideas, I urge you to keep reading, because it could be that this understanding is exactly what you and your partner need for a better relationship.

**The Oedipus Complex
creates
relationship triangles**

The easiest way for you to identify the presence of the Oedipus Complex is to look for *relationship triangles*. They occur when three people compete for love, and are very common in human relationships - look around your own world and notice how many there are at home, at work and in your friendship circles. These triangles will be an echo of unhealed childhood Oedipal issues. They are formed when the loving bond is disrupted between two parents, and a child is able to come between them and form a special relationship with the opposite sex parent. This always creates an element of competition within the triangle because there will be two apparent Oedipal winners and one Oedipal loser. In fact, despite appearances, everybody loses

in an Oedipal triangle because the relationships within it are all based on fear.

To understand the Oedipal Complex we need to understand *guilt*, an emotion I have focused on at length in previous chapters. Oedipal triangles are sustained by subconscious guilt which is held by *everybody* involved. As an example, consider what will be happening for the three people in a typical family triangle, where the mother and son have entered into an Oedipal relationship.

The Mother - would feel guilty for having formed an Oedipal relationship with the son. If she eventually breaks the relationship, she will feel terribly guilty for this too. She will also feel guilty for betraying the father.

The Father - will feel rejected and unloved by his wife and guilty that he is competing with his son. He will feel like an Oedipal loser and will probably become either more dependent or independent to compensate.

The Son - will son will feel guilty for damaging his parents relationship (imagine what he might feel like if they eventually divorced) and competing with his father. He will also feel guilty if he moved away from his mother during any Oedipal separation.

As you can see, an Oedipal Triangle is a disastrous conspiracy that is fuelled by guilt and it will carry on until it is healed. Nobody likes feeling guilt, so rather than dealing with it, the tendency is to off-load it onto other people in the triangle, creating an Oedipal *trap* that is almost impossible to escape. This is why resentment and hurt can last so long in family relationships. Many family feuds that have lasted lifetimes, have their origins in Oedipal heartbreak. As we saw with the original Greek myth, if we don't heal it in our own relationship, the guilt and dysfunction will be handed down to our children.

If you and your partner are having relationship difficulties, you will need to see if it is caused by an Oedipal heartbreak. We tend to bury these issues very deeply in the subconscious mind because we associate them with so much guilt and pain. Nevertheless, by understanding the types of behaviour that the Oedipus Complex creates, you should be able to identify if it is present in your own relationship.

**Your partner may not
have let go of his
mother**

One consequence of your partner having an Oedipal issue will be that he plays out his *unfinished* business with his mother, in his relationship with you. It means that neither of them

96

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

has got over the trauma that happened during their Oedipal separation and your partner is therefore not fully available for you. This could manifest itself in an emotional unavailability or a disinterest or lack of arousal during sex. A man may go off sex because he is unconsciously reminded of his Oedipal relationship with his mother. In extreme cases this might bring up feelings of disgust and repulsion and could lead to impotency.

These are not pleasant things to think about, but if there is an Oedipal issue creating problems in your relationship, it is important to become aware of the dynamic, so you can begin to do something about it. I wonder if your partner has ever said that you are becoming like his mother? Or perhaps you have noticed him becoming like his father. Remember what they say - we end up marrying our mothers and fathers! From a Freudian point of view, if your partner has an Oedipal issue, he has been trying to heal the pain and heartbreak that remains with his mother, through his relationship with you. As you become more familiar with the Oedipus Complex, you will be able to help your partner complete the process of letting his mother go and joining you fully in the relationship. You may also need to work to let go of your father, if you have any remnants of an Oedipal relationship with him.

So, consider for a moment your relationships with your parents. Start with your partner. How close is he to his mother or father? The Oedipus Complex creates a specific style of relationship called *fusion*, and you will be able to spot this relatively easily. Fusion feels like love, but it is really a relationship formed around dependence and guilt. It occurs when we lose our psychological *boundaries* during an Oedipal heartbreak and become emotionally dependent on one or both of our parents. This is why the most obvious fusion will be with the opposite-sex parent. You will know if your partner is fused with his mother if he behaves in one of two possible ways.

Firstly he may adore her in a way that *excludes* you. This *over-closeness* brings an exclusivity to their relationship. We often see this with men who get married and leave home later in life – the fusion makes it hard for them to form a good relationship with another woman because they feel guilty about leaving their mother. One really irritating feature of fusion is that your partner may value the opinions of his mother more than yours, particularly if it concerns your family life or children. If she clicks her fingers, does he come running? Another way you can spot fusion is to watch how he reacts to his mother's moods. If she is happy, then he will be happy, and vice versa if she is unhappy. A mother may also be very protective of her son and

critical of his girlfriend or wife. Equally a father is often very protective of his daughter, often to the point of jealousy of her boyfriends. Fusion gives the impression of a very close loving bond, but after a while you can see it has a smothering, almost claustrophobic feel.

The other way that a man may show fusion to his mother is much more negative. In this style, men will tend to *reject* or *devalue* their mothers. They will find their mothers irritating and won't enjoy their company. They will visit or call their mother as a matter of duty, but there will be no pleasure in doing this. The relationship becomes one based on *sacrifice*, which has grown from guilt. This happens when a person does the right thing but resents it. The rejection and emotional distancing is designed to protect the man from having to feel all the pain that he has hidden away from his original Oedipal heartbreak.

You may also be able to spot Oedipus at play in your partner's relationship with his father. If it is present he is likely to be in competition with him and this could lead to conflict or a surrendered withdrawal. If there is a strong Oedipal heartbreak in your partner (or yourself) you may unconsciously try to get as far away as possible from your parents, even going to live on the other side of the world. It can seem that the physical distance will protect you from your Oedipal issues, but this never works because the feelings will travel with you around the world.

You may be wondering what a true, loving relationship would look like between your partner and his mother. Unlike a fused relationship, there will be strong feelings of love without any sense of *sacrifice*. He will be close to his mother, but not dependent on her for his happiness. Equally, she will not be dependent on him. Most importantly, there will be no competition with his mother for his love, and you will have a good relationship with her yourself.

Parental fusion and unhealed Oedipal issues can stop you from meeting a partner in the first place or make it hard to sustain a relationship.

Perhaps you have had many short-lived and unsatisfactory relationships or your relationship today never quite brings you the feelings of love and connection that you desire. All these difficulties can be caused by Oedipal issues.

**You will need to
consider the
relationship with your
father**

If your relationships with men have been less than successful, you will need to consider your relationship with your *father*. Can you remember a time when it changed from being

one that was full of fun and love to one where he became emotionally distant? Did he once treat you like his little princess, but then one day, or over a period of time, did he become less affectionate? Perhaps something happened to force you apart. If you experienced such a heartbreak, you would have probably tried to protect yourself from the pain by pulling away from him or pretending he wasn't very important to you. Do you have any memories like this or a sense that you have separated in your relationship with your father?

If you have struggled in your relationship with your father, he will have struggled with his relationship with you. If your father was once very close and then moved away from you, he did this because he became *frightened* of how much love he felt for you. Perhaps with such powerful feelings he was afraid that he would not be able to stay in integrity or that his closeness to you would be judged by others. This is the central tragedy of the Oedipal Complex and one that you must understand if you are to heal it. Your father did not move away because he didn't love you - he moved away because he *loved you so much*.

Your father's decision to move away from you would have been terribly painful for him and he would have tried to hide his feelings. To protect himself from the heartbreak he would have had to *close down* all his emotions, but this also means that he will have shut out his feelings of love. This is why you may struggle to feel your father's love or find that his expression of love to you is erratic. You may feel that he has let you down or *abandoned* you,

Oedipal guilt can make you feel unworthy of a partner

but the truth is that he is confused and harbouring deep heartbreak and guilt for what he has done. He will either play these feelings out in the *attention-seeking* behaviours of dependence or the *emotionally dissociated* behaviours of independence. So painful are the feelings of lost love for their daughters and the guilt for causing the separation, that some men may sabotage their own relationships and struggle to find any happiness in life.

The problem with the Oedipal Complex is that you will have tended to pick up your father's pain and guilt, and the danger is that you will carry this into your relationships with other men. The painful subconscious feelings that remain from the damaged relationship with

your father can easily stop you meeting a potential partner or sabotage your current relationship. This happens in a number of ways, which I will explain.

Firstly, Oedipal guilt can make you feel unworthy of a relationship, so you send out the negative messages to potential partners. You may also be frightened to enter into another relationship with a man in case it ends in the same painful feelings that you experienced in the heartbreak with your father. Although you may consciously want to be with a man, subconsciously you may have a belief that a man will abandon or hurt you. It can feel safer to remain single and avoid the emotional ups and downs of a relationship. .

Secondly, even if you are successful in meeting a potential new partner, the Oedipal guilt can mean that you attract unsuitable men, leaving you with a string of painful, short-lived relationships. If you repeatedly find yourself with men who don't value you or who deliberately hurts you, it is essential that you find out what is causing you to suffer in this way. One possibility is that Oedipal guilt is making you feel *unworthy* of having a good man in your life. If you are holding onto unconscious guilt, you might feel that you deserve to be punished by bringing in emotionally immature men who will then hurt you.

Finding a kind and loving man can seem a real challenge, especially if you have a negative unconscious script running, so before you give up on relationships altogether, I want to give you some encouragement! I promise you that it is possible to let go of the guilt and low self-worth that is preventing you from meeting a loving partner and building a long-term relationship. As you've just seen, the subconscious mind can have a very different idea of what will make you happy than your conscious one. With the subconscious in charge it can seem that you have little or no control over meeting somebody new or finding happiness with a man. It doesn't have to be this way. If you can look inside and find the place in you that is reluctant to enter into a relationship and find out why this is, you will be well on the way to healing this resistance. You can have a loving partner in your life if you want one with your *whole* mind and heart.

This was something I discovered after my divorce. Earlier in my life, I spent many years as a single person and I know how lonely this can be. It took me a lot of disappointments and false-starts and even a failed marriage before I discovered the relationship ideas that I have been introducing in this book. These helped me to understand where I had been going wrong and in particular the part of me that was resistant to being in a committed relationship.

100

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

As I looked within, I could see that I had suppressed a great deal of fear, guilt and belief in failure from some of my childhood heartbreaks, particularly with my mother. I was also terrified that if I discovered love, I could lose it again and I wasn't sure I could stand that much pain. Ironically this is exactly what happened anyway when my marriage failed! All this

I was terrified of losing love

fear and guilt meant that I never took any emotional risks and retreated within - which made me seem controlling and unattractive to women.

Once I had healed some of the guilt and started building my self-esteem, relationships appeared very quickly and although the early ones did not last forever, the negative pattern had been broken. I soon gained confidence and while it was hard to look within and reveal my hidden fear and pain, I knew that the process was improving my life. I now find myself with a lovely partner, who I have no doubt came into my life because I had let go of my resistance to being in a relationship.

If true love has eluded you so far in your life or if your relationships have not turned out as you would have hoped, it is important to ask yourself if this is caused by Oedipal guilt, and if it is, to set about letting it go. Towards the end of this chapter I will explain how to heal an Oedipal issue and help your partner do the same, but before that I want to explain how it can create some severe problems within a longer-term relationship.

One of the most destructive effects of the Oedipal Complex is an *affair*. As I know from experience, to be betrayed is one of the worst things that can happen to us in life. If you been through such an experience you will be aware of the difficult feelings that can emerge, such as sadness, rage, worthlessness, desperation, and jealousy. You may have felt powerless to change things, because you believed that your partner was controlling everything – calling all the shots. It can leave you shocked and struggling to ever love a man again. Some partners will return after having an affair but the depth of hurt and your shattered confidence can hold you back from rebuilding the relationship. Trusting somebody again who has strayed can be extremely difficult. If your partner has started a new life you may still hold on to the hurt for many years, making you emotionally unavailable to other men and jeopardising future relationships. Clearly you don't want this and will want to know how to move on after such a horrible experience. The process of letting-go will first involve you understanding why your partner might have strayed in the first place.

There are two ways to understand an affair, and both may be useful in different circumstances. The first and simplest is to realise that partners stray when they believe that their *needs* are not being met. An affair allows a man to fulfil the emotional, sexual and sometimes spiritual needs that are not being met with his partner. A man is most likely to stray if he is in the dead zone where a significant emotional distance has developed in the relationship. The dead zone is a place where love, in all its forms, is being withheld. Without feelings of love both partners might be tempted to find it outside the relationship.

The second way to understand an affair is that although, on the surface, an affair is a cowardly act committed by a weak and selfish person; at a deeper level it is *a cry for help*. I

**An affair is a cry
for help**

know that this can be a difficult idea to grasp, because if you have been betrayed, surely *you* are the one who is hurting and needs the help! If you are in such a situation, at the moment you may not feel much compassion for your partner, but I promise you that this is the way for you to move on with your life and for you to let go of the pain that you are currently feeling. Even if your partner returns to you and you want to rebuild your relationship, it is essential that you appreciate why he felt the need to have an affair in the first place.

To reach this understanding we must return to the Oedipal Complex. If your partner had an affair, he will almost certainly have an unhealed Oedipal heartbreak. With his mistress, he is trying to replace the love that he believes he lost in his *original* Oedipal separation with his mother. He believes that his mistress will give him the love that he does not feel for himself - in other words, heal his lack of *self-love*. Of course, in the long-run this can never be successful because only he can heal this aspect of himself.

Understanding an affair in this way explains why so few of them are sustained into full-blown relationships. The immediate excitement and sexual thrill of the affair makes a man feel as though he has found the 'love of his life', but the underlying needs are still present, in him and his mistress. Eventually these needs rise up for healing, as they do in all relationships, and then the power struggle sets in. At this point the man will often have a rude awakening and find his mistress much less attractive than she was at first.

So you can see that a man becomes unfaithful because he is fundamentally lacking in self-love. All independent people (and that i'm afraid is a great deal of men!) are hiding significant feelings of heartbreak and dependence, and it is this insecurity that brings on an affair in the first place. An unfaithful man is unlikely to be aware that his behaviour is being driven by unmet needs and feelings of guilt because they are present at a subconscious level in his mind. His betrayal may seem like the behaviour of somebody who is strong and confident, but the truth is that he is *hurting* inside. His affair is a cry for help but he will probably have no idea that this is his underlying motivation. This will only become apparent to him when the euphoria of the affair has died down and he realises what he has thrown away. At this point huge amounts of regret, remorse and guilt can surface.

That is why a returning partner is a cause for *hope* in a relationship. The affair and its aftermath will have got him back in touch with his emotions and gives you an opportunity to communicate with each other honestly and wholeheartedly, perhaps in a way that you have never been able to do before. For many men, an affair is a *wake-up* call where they realise the errors of their ways and begin to appreciate the true qualities of their partner and what they value about their relationship. Take advantage of your partner's willingness to talk about all the issues that you were too afraid to raise in the past. Talk about your shared needs, as well as any disappointments you have had.

For many men, an affair is a wake-up call

If you can understand the causes of an affair and use this to find enough compassion to forgive your partner you will be able to turn what was a disaster into a positive, healing experience. Even if your partner never returns, the same process will release you from the hurt of betrayal and allow you to restart your life. I promise you that there is life after betrayal. Of course you will need some time to mourn the loss of the relationship and work through the challenging forgiveness process, but eventually you will emerge a stronger, happier person. You will then naturally attract more emotionally mature men into your life, who value and care about you. Next time around you will understand your new partner better, trust him and be able to react to the danger signs of independence in a more positive way so that betrayal never becomes an issue.

If you have been tempted to stray in your relationship or are having an affair,

103

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

you can use the same understanding that I have just given you to make sense of your own feelings and motivations. My guess is that you are looking for the love that you feel is currently lacking from your partner. Realise that you must have become *dependent* on him and that this has made you doubt your own inner resource of love. Anything you can do to raise your self-esteem and reconnect with your partner will reduce your temptation to look for love outside the relationship.

Affairs are obvious examples of Oedipal issues at play in a relationship, but there is one other telltale sign that can be easily spotted in men. They will tend to be very *competitive*. You might see this in your partner's approach to work or through his support of a sports team. He may also compete with you! Does he have to be *right* about everything or does he show very little interest in your successes? When you do succeed, does he rubbish, minimise or ignore your achievement and compare it with one of his own accomplishments.

At a physical level, competition can be seen as a survival strategy in a world that is short of resources. Perhaps it's not surprising that all of us will have an instinct to compete to get our fair share of things. But why are some people more competitive than others? To answer this we need to look at the emotions of competition. If we have belief that love is in short supply we will tend to compete for it, especially in our families. This is exactly the dynamic that is set up in an Oedipal triangle where we will *compete* with our parents and siblings for the love that we believe is in short supply. The greater the original Oedipal heartbreak, the more lacking in love we will feel and therefore the more competitive we will become. If we have got caught up in such a trap, the competition for love will tend to transfer to competition in all areas of life, such as work, sport or lifestyle.

**Winning replaces
feelings of emptiness
and loss**

If your partner is competitive it shows that he is independent and is probably harbouring an Oedipal heartbreak. If he needs to win at all costs, he is trying to make sure that he never has to experience feelings of *failure*. He won't want to

be reminded of those terrible feelings of failing his *mum and dad*. You can get an idea of the strength of the feelings contained in his heartbreak by noticing how he reacts to failure. Some men invest a huge amount of emotional energy in their work or their favourite sports team. If

your partner does this, notice how devastated he is when something goes wrong at work or his team loses a match.— his world falls apart, probably leaving him irritable and depressed for several days. The problem is that winning is replacing feeling of emptiness and loss from his original heartbreaks. It's not that there is anything wrong with competition when it is about *self-improvement*, but it becomes a problem if the motivation is to *win over* somebody else to make him feel better about himself. When this happens there might be an immediate feeling of gratification, but guilt soon builds up again, because for every winner there is also a loser. People who win regularly, dread the day when they become the loser.

Another form of Oedipal competition can be more common in women and happens when a father has a preference for boys, tending to undervalue his daughters. A father may undervalue his daughter as a way of denying his Oedipal feelings towards her, or it may be that he wants to live his life through his sons because he feels so inadequate himself. Whatever the cause, it makes a woman feel *unwanted* and lacking in *value*. To try and compensate for this she may work very hard to prove she is worthy of her father's love and will tend to *compete* with any brothers. She may take on masculine traits, sometimes denying her femininity, as a way of impressing her father.

Have you ever felt the need to compete with men on their terms? This is sometimes more obvious at work. You may have succeeded in your career but has it left something missing? To compete, you may have sacrificed relationships, having children or put other aspects of your life on hold? If you feel undervalued by your father, it may show up in a romantic relationship as competition. Your partner may be threatened by your success or earning power and be jealous of your achievements. Remember that a successful relationship thrives on *equality* and this will be damaged if you feel you need to compete to prove yourself to your partner.

To escape this particular aspect of the Oedipal Complex you will need to learn to value yourself without trying to gain validation from men. You will be subconsciously trying to prove yourself to your father, whether he is alive or not. Clearly you will need to end this unconscious pattern and celebrate your unique gifts as a woman. You do not need to compete with men to be successful because you can be successful in your own right. If you have a partner, talk about your feelings surrounding competition. Men love to be the hero of a relationship or family and for many this is about being the main breadwinner. Your partner may feel inadequate and

that he has failed you. These feelings of failure can run very deep for some men, so they need to be brought into the open before they damage a relationship. Assure him that you love him just the way he is. In the next section I will show you how to heal an Oedipal issue, however it may show up in your life. You can then adapt the principles for your partner and his relationship with his parents.

To heal an Oedipal issue it is necessary to go back to the root cause - your original family. Let's take the example of where you are in an Oedipal relationship with your father, and you mother forms the other corner of the triangle. As I have described, relationship triangles are held together by guilt so if you can let it go, then the triangle will collapse. Given the huge

It only takes one person to heal an Oedipal relationship

amount of pain contained in an Oedipal triangle, most people will avoid dealing with the underlying causes and this is why they are so hard to heal. You might think that everybody in a triangle has to cooperate to break the dynamic, but thankfully this is not the case.

It only takes *one person* to start the healing. Think of an Oedipal triangle as a stool with three legs – as soon as you take one leg away it will fall over. This happens in a triangular relationship when one of person decides to *forgive* the others and *let go* of their guilt. When this happens the other members of the triangle will automatically do the same. Would you be willing to lead the healing by doing this in your own relationship?

To do this you will need to show considerable emotional maturity and find the courage to take responsibility for your part in the Oedipal relationship. Unfortunately this is not quite as easy as it sounds because your relationship with your parents has formed over many years and there is probably lots of emotional baggage left along the way. You will find that you have got used to relating to them in certain ways and now you will have to find new ways of relating. As you change, you might find that the other members of the triangle resist your efforts or even attack you. If this happens, do not be put off. The advantage you now have is that you are more aware of what is happening emotionally in your relationships and this places you in a position where you can lead the healing. The incentive for stepping into this leadership position is that you can take control of the relationship and create the experience that you desire.

You will need to start the healing process by focusing on the relationship with your father.

I hope by now that you can see that although your relationship with him might have been troubled, or that you might have slipped into a fused relationship with him, that essentially you are both experiencing the *same* feelings. The key to ending an Oedipal relationship is to understand that your father is *still suffering* from the loss of his relationship with you. It is likely that this Oedipal heartbreak is a repeat of one that he experienced with his own mother, so the pain is very old and entrenched. Even if he is successfully hiding his feelings or behaving in an unhelpful way, he is in subconscious pain and therefore he needs your compassion and help. If you wonder what he is feeling, think about how you feel - it will be the same.

Once you have reached this level of awareness you will also need forgive yourself for your part in the Oedipal breakdown and any judgments that you continue to hold about your father. As I mentioned earlier, when a relationship breaks down, the guilt is always shared between two people. This is true even if you were very young when the original heartbreak occurred. As you forgive yourself and feel empathy towards your father, you will find it much easier to forgive him. You will then feel the huge amount of love that he has for you, and that you have for him. It has been there all along, but hidden by all the fear, resentment and guilt.

If the relationship with your mother has been strained in any way, you will also need to work to understand how this relates to possible Oedipal issues and carry out a similar forgiveness exercise with her. Remember that if you had an Oedipal relationship with your father, your mother would have felt left out and lacking love from your father. This would have brought her into competition with you, and this could have made her seem emotionally cold and distant. Although it is important to heal the relationship with your father, it is also essential that you work to improve the relationship with your mother, because this will allow you to have an *equal* relationship with both your parents.

**Equality is what
creates
successful relation-**

Equality is what creates successful relationships. If we do not value people equally we will tend to judge them and either make them better than us or worse than us. When we do this, we can no longer feel love for them or accept their love in return. This is true for the relationship with our partners but it also true for the relationship with our parents. The way to build our self-esteem, have good relationships and a happy life is to value our parents and love

them equally. In fact I would go further and say that, if our relationship with either parent is disrupted, then it is impossible to find true happiness in life. This is certainly the case with an Oedipal triangle which thrives on the fact that there are unequal feelings of love between its members. To heal any Oedipal issue we must therefore focus on bringing back equality to our relationships, especially the one with our parents. This must go beyond the idea of *dutiful* love and become a *felt* experience in our heart. All too often we assume we are experiencing love, but it is really a *thought* in our heads. You will know when it is love because there will be a *warm glow* in your heart for both of your parents and you will find yourself smiling inside and out.

Here is a visualisation exercise that will help you heal an Oedipal triangle. You can still do this if one or both of your parents have died because it all happens in *your* mind – they do not need to be physically present. Make yourself comfortable and relax. Close your eyes if you wish. Start by feeling love for your father, by understanding his own pain and forgiving him in the way I described earlier. Then do the same for your mother, looking past any resentments or disappointments that you have with her. If you find this hard with either parent, think of a happy time you once had with them and try to bring the feeling you had at that time to your awareness. Grow the feelings of love in your mind until they are really powerful. Then visualise yourself taking your father by the hand and gently giving him back to your mother. See them smiling and coming together in a partnership of love. Then make your exit, feeling equal amounts of love for them both as you leave. Then slowly come back to the room.

This is a powerful exercise because it means that you are releasing yourself and your father from the Oedipal triangle and blessing your parents in their re-bonding. In the same way you can help your partner identify his own Oedipal issues and then let them go. You will be breaking the hold that guilt has had on both your lives and if you can do this successfully, you will see the quality of your current relationship take a huge step forward. If you are currently single healing any Oedipal issues should open the door to new romantic opportunities. You will also notice that your relationship with your parents visibly improves and that they become happier.

In the last two chapters I have concentrated on the problems we experience within the dead zone. Many of these can be traced back to Oedipal issues, but some will come from the

turning away from life that characterises this psychological stage. I am fully aware that if your relationship is in the dead zone you probably feel terribly lonely and hopeless at the moment. It can seem that it is impossible to get yourself out of this place and find joy again in your relationship. But let me give you some encouragement here. The dead zone does not have to be the end of the road for a relationship. On the contrary, with more awareness we see that it is the final stepping stone and gateway to *true love* and *partnership*. Let me explain that a bit more.

Independence comes about because we are afraid to express our emotions, particularly our fears and insecurities. In a relationship that means that we are afraid to get too close to our partners in case they see our faults and weaknesses. We also become afraid to share what we are withholding from each other - our worries, concerns and fears about ourselves, as well as our concerns about our partner and our relationship. When two people do this it is inevitable that the relationship ends up in the dead zone.

If you want to move into partnership and true love you will have to take some *risks* and begin to communicate about the very things that scare you the most. If you find yourself in the dead zone, it means that you are afraid to take the *next step* in your life that would transform it and allow you to become your true self at last. So, in the final few chapters of this book I would like to show you how to communicate with your partner in an open and honest way, so you can talk about those sensitive and difficult issues. Let me show you how two hearts and minds can meet in a partnership that is full of healing and love.

Learning points from Chapter 7 - Understanding Oedipal Relationships

- *An Oedipal relationship is one where a child falls in love with the opposite sex parent*
- *Oedipal relationships happen when there is a lack of bonding between two parents*
- *The Oedipus Complex creates triangular relationships*
- *In a relationships triangle, everybody is holding on to guilt*
- *It only takes one person in an Oedipal triangle to heal the guilt and then the triangle collapses*
- *Aim to have an equal, loving relationship with both your parents*

How to recognise Oedipal issues in your partner (Note: not all of these need to be present, and some of these issues can be caused by other forms of heartbreak)

- *He is in an overly-close, fused relationship with his mother*
- *His mother interferes in your life*
- *Following an Oedipal heartbreak, he might have rejected his mother*
- *He is in a fight with his father*
- *He has gone off sex*
- *He is in the dead zone*
- *He is very competitive*
- *He is prone to infidelity and affairs*

Chapter 8 The Wise Women Speak

Communicating about the things that matter in a relationship

I would like to start this chapter with an ancient Hopi saying because I believe it shows the best way for you to build a happier relationship with a man.

“The world will not be saved until the wise women speak”

The world needs the wisdom of women more now than perhaps at any other time in its history, and so do our relationships. It is your natural gifts of nurture and open-heartedness that your partner needs to help him escape from his dependence and independence. In this chapter I want to show you how you can lead your relationship into partnership using your natural feminine gifts. Some of you may be single, in which case I will show you how you can attract a

**Your partner needs
your natural
feminine gifts**

man who is much more likely to join you in a relationship that develops and grows emotionally. If you are in the early stages of a relationship I will show you how to avoid the traps of independence through more effective communications, and if you have already fallen into these traps I will show you how to escape them and rescue your relationship.

In the previous chapters I have shown you how a man's psychology might evolve from a state of dependence to one of independence. I explained how experiences of fear, trauma and disappointment early in life can create feelings of inadequacy, failure and guilt, which in turn play out as negative behaviours within a relationship. I described how men are particularly prone to becoming independent, closing down their emotions and disconnecting from the women they love, and who love them. As we have seen, if this carries on too long, they end up in the dead zone, which then inflicts pain on everybody around them.

The way out of all these relationship challenges is to move into *partnership* and to do that we need to revisit the fundamental idea that I introduced at the beginning of this book. I said that our natural state is one of love. If we *forget* this and turn away from self-love, we end

up bringing fear into our lives and as we have seen, this damages our relationships. Therefore the way to a happier relationship is to *remember* who we are, and embrace our true, *loving state*. The solution to all our problems is to open our hearts.

Although this sounds simple enough, it is extremely hard to achieve in practice, because we are often overwhelmed by fear. Over the course of our lives we have got used to feeling

The solution to all our problems is to open our hearts

fearful and inadequate and have little idea of our true, loving power. As we have seen, it is resentment and guilt that keep us small and afraid and it is these feelings that we must identify and begin to let go of, if we are to transform our relationships. This can seem

like a monumental task, and although we may be out of touch with our loving essence, we can never *lose* it altogether. Deep within us all is a distant memory of our true state of being and our unconscious mind continually reminds us to *return to love*.

These reminders often come in the form of problems within our relationships. Issues will always rise to the surface for healing, when you get close to your partner. At first this seems disastrous for your relationship, but it need not be. Think of your problems as a *message* that something needs fixing. If you heal the problems, your relationship will take significant steps forward. In fact this is what your relationship is waiting for, so it can move to a higher level of love and connection. This attitude change will allow you to look at your relationship in a completely new light. Instead of shying away from problems, you will become curious about what they are trying to tell you about yourself and your partner. I would encourage you to see your problems in this way and start thinking about any difficulties you might be having in your relationship. What is it that is causing you the most concern in your relationship? What might this problem be trying to tell you?

As an example, consider a situation where you and your partner have had a series of rows that started over some trivial matters, but have recently escalated into more fundamental disagreements. These have been going on for some months and you are losing your feelings of love for your partner. You may have begun to doubt your relationship and wonder if you are with the right person. These are normal reactions to the pain of a power struggle, but they do not signal the end of a relationship. If you look closely at the arguments you will find that there

is a core need that is not being met. It is this need that has come up for healing, and it has appeared because your relationship was *ready* to deal with it. Let's say the need was about *being heard*. How much has your partner been listening to you? Why is being heard so important to you? Where in your past, probably as a child, were you not listened to or told to shut up? By asking these sorts of questions, you will begin to understand the origins of your needs. If you can, do this with your partner. You will almost certainly discover that you share the same basic needs and have been expecting your partner to meet them. He will have been expecting you to do the same for him! Once you gain this understanding, the power struggles will fall away and your relationship will take a step forward.

As you become more aware of what is going on in your relationship you will begin to see patterns in the way you and your partner think, feel and behave. You will also notice that nothing happens in isolation. Everything that you do affects your partner, and everything he does, affects you. You will soon become adept at reading the patterns in your relationship and in your life, and be able to use this understanding to avoid problems. This is enormously empowering and I hope that you are already beginning to realise how satisfying this can be. It will give *meaning* to all your experiences. Instead of seeing life as a random series of unrelated events, you will notice that there is always a *reason* that things happen and that you have *influence* over the outcome. This makes life a lot less frightening and will allow you to feel more genuinely in control of your life.

By now you will have realised that it is a *mistake* to try to change your man. None of us want somebody to point out our faults and then try to change us. In fact if somebody tries this we are more likely to dig in our heels and do the opposite. Remember that if your partner has become independent, he will be prone to control and will therefore react badly to your attempts to control him. If you do so, you will always end up in a power struggle. To bring about lasting change you will need a very different approach – one which avoids all temptation to judge, blame or control him.

**It is a mistake to try
and change your man**

This can be a very challenging thing to achieve, but it is the key to improving your relationship. It begins by understanding that in any relationship, the two partners are continually

reacting to each other's moods and behaviours – each partner is responding to the behaviour of the other. In your relationship, notice how your partner's negative behaviour upsets you, but also notice how much better you feel when he is happy. If you could ask him, I bet he would say exactly the same thing about your behaviour! This gives you a clue as to how you can bring about change in your partner without trying to force him to see things your way. You have a much greater influence over him than you imagine, simply through the attitude and energy that you bring to the relationship.

If you are positive and loving towards your partner, he will be much more likely to be positive and loving in return. This is how a relationship works – we tend to *give what we receive*. Therefore, if you want a better relationship, make sure you are feeling loving thoughts all the time. If only it was that simple! The truth is that most of us struggle to give unconditional and sustained love to our partners. Although we have every intention to do this, their behaviour can trigger feelings of irritation, frustration and disappointment, that makes us feel anything but loving. If we judge them for their behaviour, we are effectively attacking them, and they will either fight back or withdraw from us. A vicious circle of attack and counter-attack then damages the relationship.

The only way to break the cycle of a power-struggle is for one partner to do something *different*. One of you, and it will probably be you, given your interest in improving the relationship, needs to take the *lead* in the healing. You will be consciously choosing not to get caught up in the power struggles. To do this you will need to take ownership of your feelings and actions in the relationship. By owning them, I mean realising that *you* are responsible for *your* feelings. No matter how badly your partner behaves you must accept that what you feel is your *choice*. This is quite different from how most of us react within a relationship, where we make our partners responsible for how we feel. Although it may seem that your emotional responses are automatic and beyond your control, it is absolutely crucial that you change this belief, otherwise you will always be at the mercy of your partner's behaviour.

The way forward in your relationship is therefore to find the willingness and maturity to *take charge* of your feelings. When you can do this, something extraordinary happens – your partner will start to do the same. As you begin to own your issues you will notice that he changes in front of you, because you have removed your dependence on him to make you happy. This releases him and gives him the emotional space to be himself. Your relationship will

be transformed because you have become *accountable* for your own emotions. This is the single most important thing that you can do to improve your relationship. Ironically your partner will have changed, not through control, but because *you* have changed! Your partner will have noticed a softening in you and any judgments or negative feelings will have been replaced with more loving feelings. What has really happened is that you have been able to *forgive* him. As he feels less judged, he will feel better about himself, his heart will open and he will be able to get in-touch with his emotions.

**Your partner will
change in front of you**

This is such an effective way to improve a relationship, the obvious question is - “*Why don’t we do this all the time?*” The answer is very simple – most of us hate being this accountable because it triggers our guilt and frankly it is pretty scary to take on this much responsibility. It requires considerable emotional maturity to accept that we might be responsible for our own feelings and that we may also have some responsibility for our partner’s feelings! It is much easier to blame them for any problems in the relationship and take the heat off ourselves. Healing our needs also requires us to look deep within ourselves and let go of painful emotions that may have been stored for many decades. Understandably, this can be a daunting task, so we are often tempted to hide from this responsibility. I would strongly urge you to take this step towards accountability in your relationship. As a way of helping you to see how valuable it is I am going to describe two very different ways that you might respond to a problem in your relationship.

The Non-Accountable Way: Let’s say your partner is being grumpy and is he is irritated with you. His behaviour feels unreasonable to you and being with him is like walking on eggshells. It seems obvious that he has the problem and needs to sort himself out. You tell him how disappointed you are with his behaviour and how he makes you feel. You give him a stern ultimatum about his behaviour and the consequences of any failure to change. You notice that his behaviour then worsens and you judge him even more. Soon you get into a big row and he storms off in a huff. Both of you then feel awful.

The Accountable Way: Your partner is grumpy and easily irritated, but rather than assuming that your partner is the one with the problem, you accept that you *both* have the problem. You accept that your attitude to him has not been very positive. Rather than judging him for his behaviour, you realise he must be in some sort of pain to be acting in this way, even if he is not consciously aware of what this is. You start a conversation with him and ask him what he is *feeling* and why you have been irritating him. He tells you that he has had a very stressful situation to deal with at work and feels that you just don't understand the pressures he is under. You explain how you feel about his behaviour and he apologises. You then apologise for your lack of patience with him and you have a hug.

This accountable way of dealing with a relationship problem may not solve all the underlying issues, but it does begin the process of *mature communication* that is essential in all good relationships. It works because as soon as you become willing to look at how your thoughts and feelings might be affecting your partner, you will be less likely to judge him and make him *wrong*. The energy of the relationship will change from negative to positive and almost miraculously, this will open the door to healing.

When confronted with the idea of accountability, many people become angry, frustrated and defensive. You may have felt this yourself as you read the last few paragraphs. Did it seem that I was suggesting that you were to blame for all the problems in your relationship and I was letting your partner off the hook? I assure you that this was not my intention. Your partner is equally accountable for his own feelings and behaviours, but might not be as *ready* as you are to take the step into leadership. Accountability is not about fault or blame, it is about realising that we all have the power to *influence* our relationships, for better or worse. However difficult you find these ideas, I urge you to give them a chance, because they are your best chance to improve your relationship and find more happiness. If you can begin to accept your accountability with willingness and good grace, and then trust the natural healing process, I promise you that the quality of your relationship will leap forward.

Of course, to be truly accountable in a relationship requires a good deal of *emotional maturity*. You will need to become aware of your own emotions and notice when you are at risk of being triggered by your partner's behaviour. It is the same awareness and understanding that I have been encouraging you to gain throughout this book. By increasing your emotional

awareness you will be able to see the bigger picture and understand the complex interplay of emotions that happens in all relationships. Once you have done this, your next step is to close the emotional distance that has formed between you and your partner, so that you can start to communicate more meaningfully.

As we have seen, a breakdown in communication is typical when a relationship runs into trouble. This can always be traced back to a *fear of emotions*. All of us will tend to avoid experiencing our deepest emotional pain, so we will steer clear of any situations where these

At the heart of all relationship problems is a fear of emotions

might be triggered. I think that men have an extra challenge here due to their social conditioning. The extent of this was brought home to me when I attended a particularly emotive relationship workshop.

One of the participants was telling her life story and it touched a place of deep sadness in me. I can recall fighting to hold back my tears. As I struggled to stay in control, my eyes began to sting and my heart started thumping. I was embarrassed about showing my feelings in public and didn't want people to see me as a weak, emotional man. Eventually I could hold back no longer and allowed my tears and pain to flow freely. The relief was wonderful, but even then I remember being frightened that I would open up a bottomless well of sadness. It felt as if I had been holding on to this '*ocean of tears*' for most of my life.

I don't think I am alone in storing so much pain. Everywhere I look I can see men who are holding back huge amounts of grief, sadness and guilt. They are putting on a very convincing act, but their independent, controlling behaviours give them away. A man becomes independent as a way of hiding from his worst fears and negative emotions. That is why most people think that independent, unemotional men are strong, but this is a terrible mistake. The strongest and most *courageous* men are willing to express their emotions honestly, without imposing them on the people around them. One of your greatest challenges is therefore to see through your partner's independent behaviours and help him to express his underlying pain in a way that allows him to let it go. This requires the accountable style of communications that I described earlier.

Ideally you would have begun to communicate in this way at the start of your relationship, when the level of intimacy would have been high, but this rarely happens because

you were probably swept along on a tide of romance. Sadly, this type of communication is rarely taught to us in schools and we are unlikely to learn it through experience. Unfortunately, when the honeymoon period ends, the first power struggles start around unmet needs and the damage is already beginning to occur. It is important to feel the buzz of a new relationship, but you also need to be on the lookout for the first signs of independence in your partner and in yourself. The first thing you will notice is a loss of *tenderness* and *intimacy*. When things get difficult, you or your partner might withdraw and become moody. All those wonderful feelings of being in love will start to disappear and will be replaced by *anxiety*, *confusion* and *doubt*. The other tell-tale sign is that the quality of your communication deteriorates. You may suddenly become too busy to talk, and when you do, it is only about practical things. If you are not living together this may be a missed phone call or sudden change in the number or style of text messages. Although these issues can seem quite trivial at the time, if they are not dealt with straight away, they can mark the beginning of an *emotional separation* in the relationship.

It seems strange that when everything is going well at the beginning of a relationship, that it should run into trouble, but this is part of a natural evolution.

**It means that there is
an issue that is too
painful to share**

An issue comes up because it needs to be dealt with for your relationship to develop. There will be something that is *too painful* for you and your partner to share. From your point of view, perhaps there is something that upsets or irritates you about your partner, but you just cannot bring yourself to say anything in case it creates a scene. You may be concerned about some aspect of your relationship but are afraid to raise the issue, and your partner will almost certainly have his own concerns. This mutual avoidance of the important issues can set up a damaging pattern of non-communication early in your relationship, which will tend to get worse with time.

Although avoiding being honest about our emotions and fears can feel like the kindest thing to do, it gradually eats away at the quality of the relationship. Bit by bit, both partners become independent and drift apart, with all the resulting problems that I have described in previous chapters. By becoming more independent it may feel that you are protected from the emotional pain that is hidden in your subconscious mind, but all the time the level of guilt is

increasing and your self-esteem is falling. As you and your partner move further and further apart, it gets harder to broach the emotional issues that have created your problems in the first place.

This growing separation in a relationship is why feelings of love often *fade* with time. Many people I speak to when I am coaching believe that this loss of love is a *normal* part of a relationship and that we must learn to live with this. This speaks of how common the problem is,

**It's what you don't
say that ruins a
relationship**

but also about how little they understand about love and relationships. I can assure you that love does *not* need to fade. As we progress through the final chapters of this book I will show you how it can be returned to any relationship and then sustained into

the future.

I hope you are beginning to see that it's not what you say that ruins a relationship – it's what you don't say! Understanding this paves the way to building a partnership that is based on *emotionally honest* communications. Start by considering your own fears around communicating with your partner. What is that you are so afraid to reveal to him? What aspect of yourself would you rather he didn't see? Sometimes you will have to search very deeply inside to find the answers to these questions, and sometimes the answers don't come straight away because there can be things that we believe about ourselves that are deeply buried in the subconscious.

You may want to look back to the list on page xxx where I asked you to identify your negative self-beliefs. Once you have some answers, ask yourself, *why* you would be so afraid to show these things to your partner? How do you think he would react and what might happen to you and the relationship? On the surface you might be embarrassed by appearing weak or sentimental, but at a deeper level you may fear that your honesty will cause your partner to *judge* you, *reject* you or *leave* you. For many of us, such eventualities are too painful to imagine because it would trigger our worst fears. All sorts of terrible thoughts might shoot through our minds. Could we survive emotionally on our own? What would our parents and friends think? Will anyone else want us? With such potential for pain, it is not surprising that we

might feel reluctant to be truly honest in our relationships.

Have you ever avoided telling your partner the truth about how you feel in the relationship? You probably love him dearly, but at the same time you are hiding a number of *worries* and *concerns* from him. There may be some issues that are still buried in your subconscious mind that you are not yet aware of, but for now trust that these will rise into your consciousness when it is appropriate. The most important thing is to be willing to be more *honest* about your current feelings and to express these *sensitively* within your relationship. Do you have the courage to be yourself and express these things, without imposing them on your partner or blaming him for them? If you wonder whether you can do this, think about the consequences of living in a continual power struggle or in a compromised relationship. This is not a good way to live, and you owe it to yourself to bring some truth to your relationship. When you do this you will find that the honesty opens your hearts and immediately makes it easier to deal with the more challenging issues that you face. It will have started a process where you can move closer to your partner and talk more freely about your needs and fears.

Now think about your partner - what feelings is he afraid to bring into the open? Could he be afraid to face his feelings of failure and guilt that came out of his original childhood heartbreaks? He might hate these feelings, but what really frightens him is the thought that you might see him in the negative way that he sees *himself*. He fears that you might judge him and *reject* him as the person if you were to know him that deeply. As we get down to the core of any relationship problem we see that *both* partners are hiding important feelings from each other. Underneath all the surface issues, such as resentment, hurt, disappointment and sadness is a terrible fear that our guilt and inadequacy might be *found out*, at which point we believe that our partners will no longer love us. That is why we suppress all our negative self-beliefs and the emotions that go with them. The only way forward is to start communicating with our partners about our fears and insecurities.

If your partner is denying something, you have probably hit a sore point!

I can imagine that some of you are wondering how on earth you are going to do this with a man who is *reluctant* to talk about anything to do with feelings. It is true that your partner may have been independent for most of his life, so it is probably best to assume that he will not

change overnight. You will also need to be sensitive to the fact that he is probably terrified to go into the feelings that he has been so carefully defending. In fact, your willingness and enthusiasm to feel into *your* own emotions will probably put him under pressure to be honest about his emotions. He might then try to *sabotage* the communication process by pouring scorn on your efforts or by attacking you. He may also fervently deny that he has such things as a sense of guilt or failure.

When you are confronted with such *denial* you may feel that the communication has completely failed. It can seem that way, but if your partner is vehemently denying something the chances are that you are on to something! The more certain he seems in his denial, the more likely it is that he has something to hide. After all, if your comments didn't have any truth in them, he would be happy to discuss them with you – it would be no big deal. You might find your partner's attitude to your attempts to improve the relationship very disappointing, especially if you are excited about your own healing progress. Denial is a highly effective way of closing down the communication and healing process, so you will need to *persevere*, even if you have some initial setbacks. Most men will not move as fast as women with their healing because of their more limited emotional awareness. As the leader in the healing you will need to be patient with your partner and appreciate that, in the first instance, your attempts to help the relationship might seem to make it worse. If this happens, don't see it as a failure, but take some more time to focus on your own healing. As you let go of your own fear and needs, your partner will gradually become more willing to join you on the healing journey.

The trick with healing any relationship problem is to concentrate on your own issues first, working to let go of any negative self-beliefs. By building your self-esteem and by learning how to *love yourself*, you will then naturally bring love to your partner and everybody else around you. Then watch how they react. I think you will be amazed at the positive impact that this will have on all of your relationships. You will have let go of your negative self-beliefs and any resentment or guilt that you might have been holding onto from heartbreaks earlier in your life. Ironically, as you develop and grow in confidence, you will have less need for your partner to show his love to you, because you are finding more and more love from within yourself. As your need for love subsides, you will become *irresistible* to your partner, and he will then give you his love in ever increasing amounts!

Becoming accountable for your own issues in a relationship requires courage and emotional maturity, but it is the quickest and most effective way to open the door to healing. Emotions can easily become shut down in a relationship and men are only too willing to slip into a state of independence. By using the emotional wisdom that you have as a woman, you can show your partner how to start feeling again and lead him out of his emotional dead end. Your willingness to work on your own issues and your emotional honesty will have set the scene for better communications with your partner. In the next chapter I will show you how you can open your heart even further and help your partner do the same, so that you can fill your relationship with inspiration and creativity.

Learning points from Chapter 8 - The Wise Women Speak

- *We are designed to be in loving, communicative relationships*
- *A problem in a relationship is a message that something needs fixing*
- *If you want to change your partner, change yourself first*
- *We must be accountable for our own emotions and our effect on our partner*
- *At the heart of all relationship problems is a fear of emotions*
- *We must be willing to talk maturely about our concerns, disappointments and fears with our partner*

Communication tips for a successful relationship

- *Aim for complete honesty in your relationship*
- *Think about what it is that you are withholding from your partner - it is these things that will damage your relationship*
- *Communicate about your fears and concerns in a way that shows that you are owning your emotions and not trying to make your partner responsible for them*
- *Avoid blame and judgment in any communications*
- *Set a positive goal for what you want to communicate before you start*
- *Always aim to increase the amount of love when you are communicating*
- *Do not interrupt your partner if he is talking - interruptions show that you are resisting the information and making the conversation about you*

Chapter 9

Bringing Back The Love

How to become the leader in your relationship

Becoming the leader in your relationship can be a daunting task. It can feel unfair to have to take on the responsibility for the healing. You might not feel strong enough or brave enough to broach the issues that need discussing. You may doubt that you have the ability to bring the love back to a relationship that has been in the doldrums for many years. If you have such feelings, rest assured that they are quite normal. In my own relationships I have shied away from such responsibilities, but I have also noticed how I then pay a price when I do this.

Leading your relationship is about guiding it back to a place where there is more *truth* for

**Leadership is about
guiding your
relationship back to its
truth**

both of you. Your partner may not be currently able to provide this leadership, but you can. As you step up to this challenge, you will discover that you have all the gifts you need to help your relationship and take it in a healing direction. In doing so you will be

rewarded with a much more fulfilling and happy relationship.

One of the most difficult things is to overcome the *doubt* that your relationship can change for the better. You and your partner may have got out of the habit of talking about the things that really matter and of believing that it is possible to re-kindle the feelings of love that brought you together in the first place. Put aside your doubts and cast your mind back to the time you first met and fell in love. You had no difficulty communicating with each other because it happened naturally and effortlessly. The love would have flowed just as naturally, because you were both so open to it. If you were able to experience those feelings then, there is no reason why you cannot return to those same feelings today.

The simplest way to bring back the love is to remember what it is that you *appreciate* about your partner. What was it that made you fall in love with him in the first place? What does he do for you and the family that just fills you with admiration and pride? What would you miss desperately if he wasn't in your life? Now find some way of telling him or showing him how much you appreciate and love him. Do this as regularly as you can and you will find that he starts doing the same in return. Also set a long-term healing *goal* and *intention* for your relationship. If you focus on bringing more love to the relationship, you will automatically find

124

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

the appropriate words and actions that will bring you back together. Eventually you will regain trust in the *power of love* to heal your issues and problems.

In my own relationships, I have noticed one aspect of female communication that can easily lead to misunderstandings. When you are upset, it seems that you expect us, almost psychically, to know what you are feeling. Most of us are hopeless at reading our partner's feelings because we are so out of touch with our own feelings. I think the problem comes from the fact that most women are much more intuitive when it comes to reading subtle emotional clues and therefore assume that their partners are the same. We aren't! We need you to spell out, in simple language, what you are feeling and how you would like us to help you. It may seem unnatural at first, but tell your partner what you need from him and how you would *like to be loved*. Most men are only too pleased to help their partners, once they *know* what is required. You can then ask your partner about his own needs and how he likes to be loved. Communicating in this way clears up misunderstandings and allows us to give and receive in a way that is most likely to fulfil each other's needs.

**Tell your partner what
you need from him**

It is important to choose an appropriate style of communication with your partner and this will depend on his psychological state. If your partner is in some sort of a tantrum and trying to gain your attention then you will communicate differently with him than if he is in a depressed state within the dead zone. Before you start any communication think about what it is you want to *achieve* through your communications and adapt your approach to your partners mood and behaviour. Sometimes you might realise that it is better not say anything, when for instance, your partner comes home from work in a foul mood. Waiting for a more appropriate opportunity can be the key to discussing a sensitive issue. Even if you choose to hold back on discussing something, you can still pour love into your partner and the relationship. This 'energetic giving' will always help a situation and it will make you feel better as well.

Listening is also an essential skill for the emotionally intelligent communicator. Sadly it is a skill that is often lacking in men! In our society there is a strong encouragement to speak our piece, but much less importance placed on listening. If we can't listen properly, we miss many of the messages that are being sent to us. We need to listen with *all our senses* in order to

remain fully aware of what is going on around us. I have found it very satisfying to improve my listening skills because it has given me much greater awareness. In the past I was more focused on *myself* and didn't notice the information that was coming from the people around me, that could have saved me from a great deal of pain. Gradually I realised that I could use my emotional awareness to spot patterns in my own behaviour and in other people. This ability to read the psychological *process* that is unfolding around us, is a powerful and enjoyable skill. If you can learn to do this in your relationship, it will allow you to be one step ahead of problems. It will also show you that what happens in relationships isn't a random series of events, but part of a predictable pattern.

Let's move on and look at some ways in which you could communicate with a man who is either reluctant to do so or is acting in a way that makes it difficult to discuss anything. If he is acting from feelings of dependence, he will be exhibiting unsociable and attention-seeking behaviours. As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, these can be very difficult behaviours to deal with. He will be trying to win your love in ways that will feel manipulative and needy. He may also try to make you *feel guilty* as a way of exerting his authority over you. He may also become judgmental and domineering. A dependent man feels that he has been *victimised* at some point in his life, and will then tend to victimise the people around him. Therefore, to be able to help him it is essential that you do not slip into feeling like a victim yourself or allow him to *abuse* you either emotionally or physically. Make it clear that you are willing to talk to your partner about the relationship and what is happening for him, but only if he treats you with respect.

You will notice that dealing with a dependent man is the same as dealing with a badly behaved child! You may need to set boundaries for him because he is unable to do it for himself. Although you will need to take up a position of leadership with a dependent man, make sure that you do not do this with a sense of superiority, because this will trigger his *authority conflict*. By retaining a sense of equality, you can show your authority, but also feel love for him. This should allow you to have a reasonable conversation with him, where you can help him to understand why he might be feeling angry and victimised. Men who are dependent are normally very aware of their negative feelings, but are not aware of the link between these and their childhood

**A dependent man will
behave like a child**

heartbreaks. Anything you can do to explain this is likely to be useful. Above all, a dependent man wants to be understood and loved and so striving to do this and making it clear to him that you understand his issues will be the best way you can help him.

If your partner is more independent, you will need to adopt a different style of communication. An independent man is deliberately, though inadvertently, hiding his true feelings and is therefore avoiding *honest* communication. In becoming independent he believed that he could succeed and be happy using his *thinking* skills rather than his emotions. He is trying to communicate from his *head*, without the help of his *heart*. Your job is to show him how to re-open his heart. As a woman you are already an expert in this, but you may need some more encouragement because independent men can be in a lot of denial. Even though your partner may have locked himself in an emotional prison, he has not thrown away the key. There is a way to every man's heart, if you know how to find it!

The trick is to learn how to navigate through the power struggles that normally come up when independence appears in a relationship. In chapter 5 I described how a power struggle is a fight about needs. I also showed you that if you look deep enough into any disagreement you will find that everybody has exactly the same need, even if it plays out in very different ways. The quickest way to end a conflict is to *talk* until both parties understand they are fighting for the *same* need - history is continually trying to teach us this! An argument continues because both sides feel that they are *right* about something. If you are in a power struggle at the moment, what is it that you feel you *have to be right* about, and what is it that your partner has to be right about? Ideally you would discuss these things maturely, but unfortunately in most power struggles the behaviour is anything but mature!

The quickest way to stop a power struggle and to begin communicating is for one partner to *choose* to stop fighting or withdrawing. If you back down in this way, it's not a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength. You are not letting your partner off the hook, you are choosing to *surrender* your position because you know that holding on to your need to be right is damaging the relationship. You are making your relationship more important than the fights. If you can do this and maintain feelings of love, you will send a powerful message to your partner about emotional choice.

We try to control people and situations when we are afraid of getting *hurt*. We do not

trust that if we just let things happen naturally, that things will turn out for the best. Deeper down we are terrified of ever returning to the sort of pain we felt in our childhood heartbreaks. If your partner has a controlling personality, what is it that he doesn't trust? Is it that there will be enough money, that he will keep hold of his job or that his health will hold up? Or is it that he doesn't trust you to stay with him forever? Although your partner may have trust issues today, try to help him understand where these may have originated in his earlier life. Something must have happened where he felt terribly *out of control*, and ever since he has made sure that he never has to re-live those feelings.

**Make your relationship
more important than
the fights**

If you also find it hard to trust your partner or other people, it is important for you to bring these fears into the open and work to heal them. If you don't do this, the control and the lack of trust has the effect of making the very things that you are most afraid of, appear in your life. For instance, if you are afraid of being abandoned in the relationship, you may try to control your partner to make him faithful and prove to you that he can be trusted. You might stop him going out or give him a hard time if he speaks to other women. This amount of control and the implied lack of trust is very unattractive and you will push him away. If you keep controlling him in this way, you will increase the chances that he will leave you, and then you will have to face all the pain that you had been trying so hard to avoid. If you can show trust in your partner, it makes it much more likely that he will be faithful.

If your partner is behaving badly, you might find that this upsets you so much that you can no longer help yourself or him. I have already explained how important it is to remain calm and emotionally centred if you are going to be the leader in the relationship. The problem is, that his behaviour may be triggering some deep insecurities in you. In fact, over the course of your relationship he will have learnt where your Achilles Heel is and may deliberately press your buttons. These vulnerable areas of our mind are called *shadows*. They are the aspects of our personality that we *hate* the most and have worked hard to hide. The trouble is that although they may be hidden from our conscious awareness and will sit quietly in our minds for much of the time, they will spring to life when we come across somebody who shows the very personality traits that we have suppressed.

In your relationship, there will probably be some aspect of your partner's behaviour or attitude that you find hard to accept. What is it that *irritates* or *frustrates* you the most? These are the shadow behaviours that always get to you. The annoying thing about a shadow is that once it is triggered we will often regret our behaviour and feel embarrassed if we have over-reacted. We might also have shadow figures in our life in the form of people, sometimes at work or in the public eye, who get on our nerves. We will tend to criticise and judge these people because they annoy us or bring up unpleasant feelings. In doing this we are trying to distance ourselves from them and make them wrong, but deep down they have this powerful affect on us because they remind us of aspects of *ourselves* that we don't like.

The best way to deal with your shadows is to be willing to look at what they are saying about *you*. It's easy to judge the person we have as a shadow figure, but the real value comes when you realise that their behaviour is reflecting a suppressed belief in yourself. If your partner is triggering negative feelings in you, what is it about their behaviour that upsets you? What feelings are coming up? For example, if your partner becomes arrogant and superior

Does your partner's bad behaviour remind you of anybody from your past?

when you are having a conversation, how does this make you feel? Perhaps it brings up feelings of inadequacy and of not being valued. Does this behaviour remind you of anybody in your past who used to behave like that and brought up similar feelings? This could be a parent or somebody else

who was very significant in your life. If so, it means that you are still holding on to those issues from that earlier relationship and will need to work on letting them go.

If you have identified a few shadows, it is useful to try to talk to your partner about them. If you accept responsibility for your shadows and the way you react to them, there is a good chance that your partner will start to tell you about his own shadows. As you become more comfortable with these types of conversation, you can ask him if there is anything about your behaviour that he finds difficult. Sometimes it is appropriate to *apologise* if you have reacted in ways that hurt him or damaged the relationship. This *non-judgmental* stance is incredibly powerful in a relationship because it diffuses power struggles and allows a couple to communicate on an equal footing.

I described the importance of *equality* in a relationship in Chapter 7 when I described the Oedipal Complex. I would like to return to it now and focus on it in more detail because it is of such importance in a successful relationship. Without equality, you will feel either superior or inferior to your partner, which will make it impossible to communicate in a way that will allow healing in the relationship. The idea of equality is often misunderstood. It doesn't mean that you are exactly the same as your partner, it means that you value each other equally. All of us are unique individuals and have a variety of skills and talents, but we all want to be *valued* and *loved*.

Unfortunately, in life we don't always act in this way. We often place people either above us or beneath us. They may be wealthier, better looking, stronger, happier or more powerful. Or we may see them as poorer, uglier, weaker, more miserable and less powerful than us. By seeing people in these ways we will look up to some people and look down on others – it's a social hierarchy. We may also do this in our relationships. Where do you stand relative to your partner – do you feel superior or inferior? Be really honest. There are probably some areas of your relationship where you feel better than him, and others where you feel worse. For instance you might feel that he is cleverer than you intellectually but that you are more in touch spiritually.

**We all want to be
valued and loved**

If you believe you are inferior to your partner, you will be placing yourself as the dependent one, and you could then easily feel victimised. If, on the other hand you feel superior to him, you will tend to keep him dependent and victimise him. Due to the masculine dominance in our society, men often take on the superior role in a relationship. They become independent and then *inadvertently* victimise their partners. I know that this is terribly difficult for many women because they don't want to feel subservient to their partners. Unfortunately this superiority is not always in the open – the man just assumes that his views and judgments are more important than his wife or girlfriend. Obviously, any inequality like this has a disastrous effect on the quality of a relationship. Even if a woman brings up an important point, her partner might dismiss it because he feels his views are more valid.

So how can you bring equality back to your relationship? Much of what I have been describing in this book is intended to do just this. Equality is a state of mind and we can *choose*

to feel equal with our partners, even if they are acting in a superior or negative way. Remember that you always have choice about how you feel. It takes *two* people to maintain an unequal relationship, therefore if your partner is feeling superior he needs you to feel inferior to keep it that way. You will therefore need to notice the situations where he is trying to be superior and make a conscious effort to maintain your sense of equality. Anything you can do to build your self-worth will help, particularly recognising your natural feminine gifts and the fact that you have a lot to contribute to the relationship. On occasions, you might need to give yourself a good ‘*talking to*’ and become more assertive with your partner. Of course, at first he might feel threatened by this, but if you can do it with love and with the intention of helping your relationship, you will be able to move towards equality.

Unfortunately, many couples do not have sufficient awareness, understanding or the self-confidence to avoid the control and power struggles of independence, and their relationship fails at this stage. Usually this happens with much bitterness and recrimination because all the buried pain and stored hurt erupts when the relationship comes to an end. If this has happened to you, try to use the understanding I have given you to *let go* of any resentment for how your partner behaved and any guilt that you are still holding on to about the failure of the relationship. Bear in mind that it can take several years to move on and start living your life fully again after the ending of a significant relationship.

Letting go of somebody from the past can be one of the *hardest* things we have to do in life. If you have lost somebody important through a failed relationship, an affair or through bereavement, you will know how painful this can be. Feelings of devastation and sadness can dominate your life for many years after the event. I know that some of you who are reading this book will have found it hard to build or sustain a relationship. Others of you may have come out of painful divorces and are having difficulty meeting a new partner. All these issues could be caused by a failure to let go of somebody significant from your life.

I can remember how hard it was to let go after my marriage failed. All sorts of painful feelings came up for me. There was the immediate loss of somebody for whom I still felt enormous love. Then there was the fear of being on my own again and having to go out and date other women. For a long time I didn’t believe that anybody would want to spend their life with me or that I could ever find somebody to replace my wife. Then there was the terrible

thought of never again being together as a family. This was made much worse at times of birthdays, Christmas and holidays. Everything seemed to scream at me that it was not right to split up and go our separate ways. Perhaps you know what I am talking about if you have suffered the loss of a partner or gone through separation or divorce.

It can take several years to overcome the ending of relationship, especially if there has been an element of betrayal or we have lost a partner through illness or tragedy. While all of us need time to mourn, we might choose to hold onto the feelings of loss as a way of *getting back* at our ex-partners. I can remember becoming aware of the way I was doing this with my ex-wife. For a couple of years I felt desperately sad and didn't hide this

**Sometimes we suffer
to get back at our
ex-partners**

from her. Although I didn't attack her verbally, I'm sure she was aware that I was unhappy and suffering. I was effectively saying to her, “ *Look how miserable you have made me - it's your fault I am so unhappy*”. In retrospect I can see that I hadn't come to terms with my loss and was trying to *punish* her for my suffering. At a deeper level, my behaviour was a cry for help. I suppose I hoped that she might come back to me.

Clearly I had much letting go to do after my marriage failed. I was missing all the positive things about my wife and family and this created an obvious need to let these things go when the relationship failed. This failure to let go of the good things is a fairly obvious reaction to a lost relationship, but there is another way that we hold on. For many people, a separation leaves them with feelings of *resentment*, *bitterness* and *betrayal*.. They may carry on fighting or complaining about their ex's, long after the relationship has ended. In the worst cases, the fall-out from a broken relationship can last an entire lifetime, having a disastrous effect on future relationships. It is just as important to let the hurt and negative feelings go after a failed relationship, as it is to let go of the positive things that we miss about our partners. If you find yourself in a continuing battle with an ex-partner you need to let them go for your own sake and the sake of your children.

A failure to let go is really a *refusal* to move on with our lives when something has gone wrong. Our expectation of how our lives should have panned out has not been met, and our plan for happiness has been shattered. Although we may focus on the immediate loss, a difficulty in

letting go normally indicates that there is somebody significant, often a parent, who we are still holding onto in some way. If you have struggled to let somebody go, ask yourself if there are **any unresolved** issues with somebody from your past. You could still be hankering after an ex-partner or an unrequited love. As we saw earlier, you may also be holding on to your father in an unresolved Oedipal heartbreak. The problem is that if you are holding on to another man, you will not be fully available emotionally for your current or new partner.

When we are trying to let go, it can seem that the only way forward is to end our feelings of love for our ex-partner, but this is actually the *worst* thing we can do. It isn't love that we struggle to let go of, it is *guilt*. When a relationship ends, we might feel an immediate relief because the fighting or deadness has come to end, but we may have ignored the huge amount

**It isn't love we
struggle to let go of, it
is guilt**

of guilt that we have stored up. If you look underneath all the sadness and recrimination that happens with separation, you will always find this layer of guilt. It comes originally from our state of dependence and childhood heartbreaks and is then reinforced by subsequent relationship failures. Given that our natural state is one of loving connection, every time we fail to connect with our partner, we feel some guilt and add this to whatever is already there. It is the presence of guilt, mostly stored in our subconscious mind, that forces us apart in our relationships and haunts us even if we separate or divorce. Until we let go of the guilt, we will either fight with our ex-partners or pine after them forever.

If you have lost your partner through bereavement, it is not surprising that you will have to work hard to let them go. All your hopes and dreams would have been dashed and you may have been left, not just with sadness and grief, but also with feelings of anger, resentment or confusion because your partner left you too soon. Life can feel so *unfair* when somebody we love is taken away suddenly. Once again, all these difficult feelings can be traced back to a layer of guilt. It might be guilt for the way you behaved when they were alive, or for having failed to save them or help them in some way with an emotional problem or illness. Many of these things might have been out of your direct control, but such is your natural instinct to help, that if you believe you failed to do this adequately, you will feel inadequate and guilty. This can

happen if our parents pass away without us having been to heal any misunderstandings, disappointments or heartbreaks that occurred with them in the past.

The way to let go is to feel the pain of loss and at the same time deal with any guilt that is present. First you will need to identify where and when it started. Think back to your earliest heartbreaks, in the way I have encouraged you to do throughout this book. If you can identify who it is that you still have issues with from the past, you can carry out the healing process now. Once you have worked out who it is you need to let go of, the next step is to find sufficient *acceptance* and *forgiveness* for what happened in the past. You may need to forgive them, and you will certainly need to forgive yourself. As you do this you should feel a sense of relief and renewed energy.

If the person you need to let go has passed away it is still possible to heal the sense of loss and any underlying guilt. Bring them into your mind and feel their presence. Say the things that you would to them if they were still with you. Feel your love for them and ask for any forgiveness that you need. Forgive them if you have been holding on to any disappointments or resentments.

One powerful way to let a person go is to write a letter. In it explain how you feel about them, how you want to release them and how much love and appreciation you feel for them.

Say everything that needs to be said in this letter, but ensure that it is written with love. Writing such a letter can bring up considerable amounts of emotion.

Don't be afraid to feel into any pain, anger or sadness – it is much more harmful if you defend it

and hide it away in your subconscious mind. By bringing the emotions that you have buried away for so long into the open, you will be dissolving the guilt and actively healing issues that have held you back in your life. This allows you not only to forgive the person you are letting go, but also forgive yourself for any of your shortcomings. If you have any spiritual belief, you will also gain comfort that the person you are thinking about will be receiving your love and forgiveness, simply because you are focusing on them and 'sending' the message.

The letter writing technique is also a powerful way of letting go of an ex-lover, but don't send it unless you know for sure that he will receive it positively. Write to him from the *heart*

Write a letter and say everything that needs to be said

and tell him everything that needs to be said. You can express the hurt and sadness, any feelings of betrayal, but also describe any guilt that you are feeling. Also tell him all the things you loved about him and really feel into this as you write. Then, and only if you feel it truly, write the words that forgive him and ask for his forgiveness. If you can complete the forgiveness process for anybody that you are holding onto from the past, whether it is a parent, a family member who has passed away, an ex-partner, a lost friend or even a well-loved pet, you will feel a huge relief and notice your relationship take a big step forward.

If you are still struggling to let an ex-partner go, particularly if it feels that to do so will leave you bereft and empty, ask yourself the question, “*Do I love him enough to let him go?*”

**Do you love your
ex-partner enough to
let him go**

This might seem like a silly question, but it contains the key to letting go. When you hold on to somebody, after a relationship has finished and sacrifice your life as a result, you are subconsciously *attacking* them and making them *responsible* for your problems. You are using them as an excuse for not moving on.

Letting someone go is an act of love and releases them so that they can live their life freely. Sometimes we have to let them go so that they can discover their own path in life and this might include more mistakes and problems. The best thing we can do for them in these circumstances is to wish them success, as genuinely as we can. If you can let an ex-partner go in this way, you will still feel love for him and both of you will feel grateful for the happier times you had together. Unlikely as it might seem at the present, one day you can completely let go of your ex partner and become good friends. If you have had children together, imagine how much they will learn about love and healing when they see you and your ex. forgive each other, and move on positively with your lives. Remember that for a child, the most important thing in their life is for their parents to be happy, in whatever form that might take.

The end of a relationship is often full of doubt as to whether we have done the right thing. Have you ever left somebody and then immediately regretted it? This can lead to a period of pain and confusion as you or your ex-partner have second thoughts. In these situations it is still important to let go of your ex. because only this will reveal the *truth* of your relationship. When you let go of the need of having him in your life, one of two things happen. You either

both move on separately with the rest of your lives with no more pain or your partner comes back to you in a way that allows the healing of the issues that caused your break up. I know it sounds paradoxical to let somebody go as a way of bringing them back into your life, but it really does work! The letting go takes away the *neediness*, which makes you much more *attractive*. It also places you in a much better emotional state to heal any issues that stand between you.

For those of you who are currently single or in the early phases of dating, this letting go technique is also very powerful. I'm sure you are familiar with that anxious period when you have met a man you like and are wondering if he will ring you back or arrange another date. All relationships are vulnerable in these early stages and any neediness at this time will tend to drive a man away. The trick is to let go of the *need* of having a relationship and just enjoy the experience of meeting this new man. Be yourself on the date and have fun, but then wait for the truth to be revealed naturally. Let him know you are keen and interested but don't chase him or send him too many texts or phone messages. Try not to obsess about him or fret when he doesn't immediately call, as these are other forms of neediness. Your ability to let go and trust in the natural unfolding of the relationship is very attractive and if you can do this, he will call you when it is appropriate. If he still doesn't call, you will know he is not the right guy for you!

Let's look for a moment at the difficulty some of you might be having in finding a partner or sustaining a relationship over a longer period of time. You might be making all the right practical moves in terms of dating and meeting men, but you never seem to end up in a relationship. If this is happening, it is worth checking to see if you have any *subconscious resistance* to a relationship. On the surface you may be really keen to find a partner and crave the intimacy and tenderness that this can bring, but deeper down you may prefer to be independent. One tell-tale sign of independence is if you have become very accustomed to your own company and feel some resentment about losing your freedom. A

**Do you have a
subconscious
resistance to a
relationship?**

typical characteristic of this would be if you really look forward to returning to the peace and quiet of your house or flat after you have been away socialising – it feels like a safe haven where you can indulge yourself without anybody else's permission. Another might be if

you get irritated by men and their bad habits when you have been with them for a while. Maybe you have devoted a great deal of effort to your career, leaving you little time and energy for relationships.

All these things can show a reluctance to commit to a relationship. Most of us want to be in a good relationship, but there can be deeply hidden fears that stop us from finding a partner or *sabotage* things even if we do. If you recall, our independence is about trying to protect ourselves from feeling painful emotions from the past. If you are failing to bring a man into your life or you keep having short-lived relationships, it suggests that there is a significant issue that you are avoiding. Are you afraid of relationships and maybe even men, because they might trigger feelings that you would find difficult to handle? This is a challenging idea to consider, but you will need to ask these types of question in order to move your life forward and find the partner that you deserve. To meet and have a successful relationship with a man, you will need to place the values of *partnership* above those of *independence*. This will always involve you facing your fears and realising that you have the power and gifts to heal them.

As we saw in the previous chapter, unless we heal our independence it will eventually take us into the dead zone with all its physical and emotional isolation. Think of the dead zone in a relationship as two people living in fortresses, defending each other and their feelings. Bringing the dead zone to an end is about dismantling the fortresses so that the love, that has been there all along, can flow freely again. When you lack energy and inspiration, this can seem a terribly difficult thing to do because you both feel so stuck, but you have one huge advantage on your side - the dead zone is not your natural state.

If your relationship has ended up in the dead zone is because you and your partner have closed yourselves down emotionally and stopped *giving* to each other. At the same time you would have stopped *receiving* love from each other. It is the exact opposite of when you first fell in love, when the giving and receiving was *unconditional*. Therefore the most effective way to get out of the dead zone is if you start giving from their heart and receiving any love that is on offer. You might think that both of you need to do this but interestingly, while it takes *two* people to create a relationship problem, it only takes *one* to heal it. This is useful because it means that you do not need to wait for your partner to catch you up emotionally, if you are keen to improve your relationship. You can start the process yourself if you have the willingness and

dedication to see it through. Your giving will touch your partner's heart and his natural response will be to give back to you in return. This natural *law of reciprocity* will always work if your giving is *true* and from your heart. This sets up a positive cycle of giving and receiving which starts the emotions flowing again, especially feelings of love. So what is it you can give to your partner to re-light his fire?

The simple answer to this is *passion*! By that I don't just mean the physical variety (although that would help too!) - I mean that you can help him re-ignite his passion for *life*. In the dead zone both of you will have run out of ideas and this means that you will have lost your sense of *inspiration* and *creativity*. Many of the hopes and dreams that fired you up when you first met may have eluded you or life may not have turned out the way you had planned. Or perhaps you have moved on and your values have changed.

**In the dead zone you
will have both run out
of ideas**

Your partner probably feels *stuck* and having closed down his emotions, he will be struggling to feel any love or happiness. Although he may not tell you, he probably feels like a *fraud* because he is not living authentically or being honest with himself or you. As he progresses further into the dead zone, he will gradually begin to realise he is unhappy, but have no idea how to escape his negative feelings.

Once you have become aware of the underlying psychology of the dead zone, you need to reach out with the hand of love to your partner. You know him better than anyone and you can use this knowledge to find ways of inspiring him and re-opening his heart. If you have felt negative about your relationship and yourself, you will first need to find your own passion and inspiration. Working through the healing process I have described so far will help you do this. Just remember that you are designed to be full of love and positive energy and that this is available in abundance if you can let go of any negative self-beliefs. As you build your self-esteem you will be in a much better place to help your partner through his own dead zone.

Think about what it is that really *excites* your partner – what is he passionate about? What turns him on? If he is in the dead zone, there will be something that he would love to do in his life that he has not managed so far. What does he *dream* of doing? Some of this might seem bizarre and impractical, but it does point to the real person who is present underneath all the

fear and deadness. Don't discount anything, no matter how crazy it seems. If he has had a dream to own a vineyard in deepest France or train to become a football referee, then start to talk to him about this. Find out what it is that *excites* him about his dreams and aspirations. Steer him beyond the practical or material aspects and find out how the dream makes him *feel*. Share your *own* hopes and dreams and notice that although the practical details may differ, you have much in common. The reason you fell in love in the first place was because you share similar values and beliefs.

Conversations about dreams and desires, and the feelings that go with them are an excellent way to begin communicating about emotions because most people like to talk about the things that interest them. This will pave the way for deeper and more meaningful conversations about your partner's emotions and your relationship. Armed with the knowledge I have given you in this book, you will be in a powerful position to share your own issues and help him to do the same.

If you find yourself in the dead zone, it can feel as if you have failed in your relationship, but you shouldn't forget that it is just one stage within your psychological evolution. Painful and life-sapping as it can be, it is the gateway to a truer form of *partnership*. Think of the dead zone as the last place you camp out before moving into a closer, more emotionally bonded relationship. If you have got stuck in this place, it is because you are afraid to *take the step* to a greater level of intimacy. Therefore, the way through the dead zone and any fear that it might throw up, is to find the courage to take this step.

**The way through the
dead zone is to find
the courage to take
the next step**

If you think your relationship is in the dead zone, what is the next step for you and your partner? Ask yourself what is it that you have been avoiding doing? There will be something that seems really frightening, impossible to achieve, or feels way out of reach, that would catapult you out of the dead zone. It is time for you to take some *emotional risks* and break the hold that the dead zone has had on your relationship. Even if you are full of doubt about taking the next step, the decision to do so will be enough to start your emotions flowing again. You will begin to feel excited and probably a bit frightened, but the deadness will have gone. You will also feel much more *hopeful* about the future. There will be a huge amount of

relief as you release yourselves from the straight jacket that is the dead zone. If you can break through the fear of moving on and open your hearts again, you will find that your relationship improves dramatically. In fact, as you leave the dead zone, the chances are that you will have a brand-new honeymoon!

One of the big casualties within the dead zone is our *sex life*. The emotional dissociation eats away at the feelings of love that are present in the relationship and this makes sex dull and loveless, or kills it off altogether. In the next chapter I will focus on the subject of physical intimacy and show you how to make sex a joyous part of a healing relationship.

Learning points from Chapter 9 - Bringing Back The Love

- *Leadership in a relationship is about understanding your partner's needs*
- *The communication style you use will differ depending on if your man is dependent or independent*
- *To end a power struggle make the relationship more important than the fight*
- *When we react badly to another person they are triggering our shadows - the parts we dislike about ourselves*
- *We must let go of people from our past to be fully available for our partners today*
- *Guilt is what prevents us from letting go*
- *To escape the dead zone it is important to reawaken passion, inspiration and creativity*

How to awaken passion and inspiration in yourself and your partner

- *Think about the things you love to do - why do you love them? - find ways of doing these things even if it means taking some risks*
- *What was it that brought you and your partner together in the first place? Re-discover these things and you will re-discover your passion*
- *What do you and your partner dream of doing? Talk about these things and see if you can start doing them together, even if this is just taking the first steps*
- *Have some fun together - go to a comedy show, a musical or an uplifting film. Sing, dance or act - whatever it is that brings out the best in you*
- *Make time for each other - have a romantic meal together, go for a country walk or have a weekend away (in the next chapter I will give you some tips for bringing back the passion to such a weekend!)*

Chapter 10

Making Love

How to have the best sex of your life

At its best, sex is the most natural and beautiful way that a couple can show their love for each other. It is a time when passion and tenderness combine to bring two bodies together to feel like one. A time when giving and receiving are generously shared without selfishness or judgment. So why is it so difficult to get it right? Sex is all around us, fills countless magazines, is freely expressed in film and television and has thousands of sites dedicated to it on the internet. If having a satisfying sex life was dependent on having the right information, then we would all be experts! But clearly this isn't the case.

There are many ways that our sex lives can frustrate and disappoint us. Sexual appetites may differ, one partner may want a different type or style of sex, the sex might be dissatisfying and boring, or it could have come to an end altogether. The reason that having the sex life of our dreams can be so difficult is that it mirrors what is happening in our relationships. In my experience, couples who have problems communicating and feeling love in their relationship will also struggle to sustain a good sex life. The way to a better sex life is therefore to improve your relationship in the ways I have been describing in this book. Find out what fears and needs are at the root of your relationship and sexual problems by opening the channels to communication, and then set about healing these issues.

**Our sex lives mirror
what is happening in
our relationships**

For the vast majority of couples, having a well-balanced sex life is a critical part of their relationship. This might change from the hormone-fuelled frenzy of youth to a slower more tender appreciation of each other in later life, but it is vital to have some form of *physical connection* in a relationship. Whatever the style, sex has the power to create powerful emotions. When sex is an extension of the love within a relationship it will carry those feelings way beyond the bedroom into daily life. Sex will then be helping to cement a relationship together. If, on the other hand, sex is coming from a place of fear or guilt, then the sexual experience will be negative and the relationship will be damaged.

I have heard it said that men think about sex every three seconds! I'm not sure if this is

true, but it is reasonable to assume that for men, sex is a very important part of a relationship. Some men can seem preoccupied, almost obsessed with the female body and the physical pleasures of sex. Not surprisingly, this can disappoint a woman if she is looking for a more

Men often confuse the physical act of sex with love

meaningful relationship. Men behave like this because they often *confuse* the physical act of sex, with love. They are assuming that the sensual pleasure that they experience while having sex is the same as love, and therefore can become overly focused on the

immediate endorphin release that sex can bring them. Unfortunately, and as you may know to your cost, this can leave a woman feeling used and unloved.

A man who uses sex in this way is usually independent and therefore out of touch with his emotions. The more independent he is, the more he will focus on the physical sensations of sex. Love is less important to him because his independence has made it difficult to feel it. Contrast this with your own approach. As a woman you are probably more in touch with your emotions and for you sex is likely to be as much about a true expression of feelings as it is about the physical sensations that come with it. For you, sex will be literally about *making love* and having the chance to join at an emotional, physical and perhaps even a spiritual level with your partner. Of course, you also enjoy the immediacy and physicality of it, but without some love and connection, these experiences will become empty. If you sense that your partner is only looking for sensual pleasure and has little interest in your feelings, it is not surprising that you could feel disappointed during sex. I suspect that this is a very common experience for women and one that is rarely talked about because it creates so much pain. If this style of sex becomes a pattern in a relationship, it will not be long before deadness and boredom take over. At worst you may develop feelings of revulsion around sex and a repulsion towards your partner.

Another common experience for many couples is that the quality of their sex life deteriorates with time. Many people assume that it is inevitable that boredom will set in if they sleep with the same partner for many years, but I want to show you that this not necessarily the case. Sex can get better and better with time, just as the relationship does, providing that both partners work to heal any emotional barriers that stand between them. Let's look back again at the early stages of a relationship to see how sexual desire and appetite might change.

At the beginning of a relationship the sex is normally very good. I'm sure you can remember how amorous you both were in those early days! Many couples just cannot get enough sex when they first fall in love. When you were that much in love, the sex was easy and natural and yet as the relationship matured, the desire and the pleasure might have faded away. You probably assumed that you had become too familiar with each other and that the sex was bound to become dull.

Sex will lose its excitement and potential to bring us joy if it relies too much on physical gratification. You can avoid this trap by thinking back to the time when you started your relationship and the sex was easy and wonderfully satisfying. By removing your judgments from your partner and falling in love, you saw each other as *perfect*, and even more importantly experienced your own sense of perfection. Not only did this fill you with more love than you could have imagined, but it also allowed you to discover your *sexuality*. Sex is life energy, some would call it spirit, and it provides us with our *vitality*. That is why you felt so alive and happy in the honeymoon stage of your relationship – you were revealing your *true self* and your sexuality is an important of that.

As I have shown in this book, the honeymoon rarely lasts forever and soon the individual needs that have lain dormant, begin to assert themselves. Before you know it, the power struggle stage begins and the emotional distance begins to grow between you and your partner. As the feelings of love begin to fade, the quality of the sex also begins to change as it gets caught up in the power struggles. Instead of sex being about a joining in love, it becomes a way of having your needs met, and this will soon take away its potential to bring you joy and fulfilment.

Clearly, sex without love is disastrous for the long-term quality of our relationships.

**Sex without love is
disastrous for our
relationships**

Nevertheless, many couples continue to have good sex even when they are having other problems with their relationship. It is also common for couples who have separated or divorced to keep having sex until they meet new partners, even though their

relationship is over. I believe this points to the amazing *healing potential* of sex. On the physical level, sex is a way of releasing tension and giving us a surge of 'happy' endorphin

hormones, but at a deeper level it is a way of *joining* with another human being. We are designed to be in close, loving relationships with the people around us and this includes our sexual relationships. Once we understand how our fears and needs create a physical and an emotional separation in our relationships, we can set about healing them and embracing our full sexuality. If you are wondering if you can re-awaken your libido or rejuvenate your sexual relationship, remember that if you had good sex in the past, you can return to it any time. If the sex has become boring, rare or non-existent it means that there are emotional issues or needs that have arisen between you and your partner. If you can work to remove these barriers in the way I have been describing in this book, you will automatically see an improvement in your sex life.

Whatever the quality of your sex life is at the moment, it is important to understand how your insecurities and needs might be playing out between you and your partner. I have already stressed how important it is to be accountable for your own emotional issues and how this can give you a much greater awareness of your partner's issues. If your partner finds it difficult to feel or express his feelings, this will show up in a number of specific sexual issues. Keep a look out for the situations that I am about to describe, as they will help you to understand your partner's sexual needs and how you can help him to meet them in a way that brings you both more pleasure.

A common problem in a relationship is when the appetite for sex is out of balance. This could be when you or your partner wants a different amount or style of sex. Let's take the situation where your partner is always looking for sex and you are not so interested. Perhaps he is the one who always initiates sex, leaving you feeling pressurised. Or it could be that he likes to be more dominant or aggressive when he has sex. All these behaviours are coming out of his confusion between sex and love. If your partner feels lacking in love and is dependent on you for that love, he will try to *take* from you both emotionally and sexually. The greater the level of dependence, the greater the demand there will be for sexual gratification. The way to help a man who is this dependent is to recognise his underlying needs and realise that they come from unresolved heartbreaks in his earlier life. By working together on the emotional issues in your relationship you will find that his demands in the bedroom begin to subside and lovemaking will become a more enjoyable experience for you.

If you want more sex than your partner, then it is worth looking at your own needs. Is sex a substitute for something else that is lacking in your relationship or your life? You will know if this is the case, if the good feelings that you get when you have sex, soon *fade*. There will be times when all of us need sex to make us feel better, and this is OK, but it will become a problem if we use sex like a drug to take away our pain. Some men are prone to this more *addictive* approach to sex because of their hidden layers of pain around failure and unmet needs. As always, the key to healing these types of issue is to become aware of their origins and to let go of the underlying fears and needs that drive them. Of course, there are some positive reasons why you might want more sex! It is one of the best ways of getting closer and more intimate with your partner and is an essential element of a successful relationship. The challenge then is to inspire your partner in a way that leads to relationship-enhancing sex.

It would be wonderful if you and your partner had exactly the same sexual needs at exactly the same time, but this isn't always going to be the case. As you become more sexually 'in tune' this will happen more and more, but for now you may need to take the lead initiating sex. Sometimes a bit of romance can do the trick. Finding the time for a candlelit dinner, a nice bottle of wine and wearing some sexy underwear may be enough, but often the problem goes deeper than this. You may have to open up the lines of *communication* with your partner so that you can discuss your individual sexual needs and any barriers that you might have to intimacy.

Many of us find it difficult to talk openly about our sexual needs, desires and insecurities, because we have hang-ups about expressing what we want in bed. Sex is an area of our lives where there is a lot of *guilt* and many sexual problems can be traced back to this emotion.

**Many of us find it
difficult to talk about
our sexual needs**

We tend to model our sexuality on our parents. If they were physically demonstrable and affectionate, the chances are that we will be just the same. If on the other hand they thought of sex as being *dirty* or *embarrassing* then we are likely to follow suit and experience guilt whenever the subject is mentioned or when we are making love. In the same way we may take on all sorts of cultural taboos and beliefs from schools, colleges, religions and society as a whole. How was your upbringing in terms of what

you learnt about sex? Have you ever felt guilty during or after sex? Have you ever felt inhibited from exploring or expressing your sexuality? I have met many women who had a strict religious upbringing or education which encouraged them to feel guilty about their sexuality. These women have struggled with this sexual guilt throughout their lives and in many cases it has sabotaged not just their sex life, but also their relationships. Men can also have significant amounts of sexual guilt, but are often better at hiding it through their independence. The tragedy with all this guilt, is that it stops us being our true selves.

As I have shown in earlier chapters, the best way to let go of guilt is to bring it into the open through open and honest communication. In fact the more you can talk with your partner about sex and any guilt or insecurities that you have with it, the better. A good place to do this is in bed, with pillow talk, because it is naturally a more intimate environment. Ask yourself- is there anything that concerns you about your sex life that you are not telling your partner? Have

**A good place to talk
about sex is in bed**

you told him where you like being touched or caressed, or your favourite sexual position? Does he know what your fantasies are? You might be blushing at the thought of discussing such intimate sexual desires with your partner or you might be afraid that he will think that you are over-sexed or depraved! At first you might be shy about talking so openly about your sexuality, particularly if you have not done this before, but once you have started the process, you will find that it is an enjoyable and arousing way to communicate with your partner.

One of the problems with sex in our society is that we have created huge expectations around it. By placing it on a pedestal we can easily feel sexually *inadequate*. This can be a particular issue for a man. Many men want to be considered strong and heroic and a sexual confidence will be part of this. In the bedroom they may feel that they have to perform in a certain way and may feel lacking compared to other men. Remember that most men have a deep *fear of failure* and so succeeding in the bedroom will be really important for them. They will also want you to admire them sexually. Unfortunately all this pressure to perform sexually or to confirm to a certain stereotype can stifle him in bed and make him reluctant to enter into any conversations that might question his sexual prowess.

If your partner has these types of insecurity, you will need to be sensitive about how you discuss his sexuality. Some men, particularly early on in a relationship, may shy away from sex because they are nervous or *inexperienced*. In a new relationship there is a huge amount at stake and both partners can feel afraid that their sexual behaviour or performance might be *judged*. Although nowadays there is a lot of education about sex, much of this is of a practical nature and does not include much emotional advice. Sexual knowledge is important, but a man also needs to gain *confidence* in bed. You can help him enormously with this by understanding any insecurities he might have about his sexuality and

boosting his confidence by giving him *positive feedback*. Remember to compliment him on what he does well in bed, and the things that he does, that you enjoy. There is nothing your partner wants more than to know he has *performed* well sexually and that he has *given* you *pleasure*. You

might think that your sensual reactions are enough, but it is so much more powerful if you tell him and show your gratitude with words. Not only will he feel great about himself, but he will know what to do next time to arouse you.

**There is nothing a man
wants more than to
know that he has
given you pleasure**

This brings me to the question of *orgasm*. It seems that more has been written about the female orgasm than about any other aspect of sex! I'm sure you have read the women's magazines about this, and I hope you have gained some awareness and even expertise in this area. Your partner may need some education to, so you can tell him about your own preferred style of orgasm and how he can best help you achieve it. Some of this might seem like a biology lesson but that is not a bad thing. Your partner needs to know the places where you are most easily aroused so he can stimulate you in these areas. Don't assume he already knows where these are.

In a successful relationship it is important that each partner is aware of the other partner's needs and strives to place them ahead of their own. In a really good sexual relationship both partners will talk about their needs and help each other to discover new *sensual* experiences. Find out from your man what turns him on and what you do that makes him feel good. Where does he like being touched and caressed? Sometimes it is not the most

obvious places! Don't underestimate the power of a simple touch on the skin - it can take on an almost *electric* quality. Talk to each other as you try different things and different positions and bring as many of your senses as you can to these enjoyable 'experiments'. The more you can do this, the more knowledgeable you will become about each other's bodies and sexual preferences. As the intimacy grows, you will learn to *trust* each other completely and this will have a hugely beneficial effect on the rest of your relationship. Sex then becomes an ever-unfolding sensual adventure as well as a powerful healing opportunity.

Talking about your sexual needs and desires is the easiest way to find out what you both want, but here is a little trick that will make your partner think that you are psychic! Keep an eye out for how he likes to *give to you* during sex. Give to him in the *same* way and notice how he reacts. For example if he likes to softly stroke your face, do the same for him. Most men, even those who seem very masculine, crave *gentleness* and *tenderness*, but may be a bit embarrassed to ask for these things, so if you give these to your partner, he will be a very happy man indeed.

You may be surprised when I just mentioned that it is your *feminine* qualities of gentleness and tenderness, that men most admire in a woman. After all, don't most men *lust* after women's bodies, ignoring their minds and personalities? In some ways this is true, particularly if a man is using sex as a way of gratifying himself. I'm sure there are all sorts of

**We need you to show
us our feminine side**

biological and evolutionary reasons why we might have these lustful responses. As a man I can attest to the power of sexual lust and it is important to stay aware of it in any relationship with a man, but there is a deeper truth in our attraction to women. As we have seen, most of us are out of touch with our emotions and this leaves us with a feeling of emptiness in life. Subconsciously we therefore look to our relationships with women to help us re-discover our *hearts* and to get back in touch with our emotions. Being in an intimate relationship with a woman allows us to reveal our feminine side and become more whole as human beings.

Rather than judge your partner, if it seems that his lust is getting the better of him, you can turn it to your advantage. I'm sure there are times when you feel lustful yourself and this gives you the opportunity to come together in a way that allows incredible amounts of intimacy

and sensual pleasure. Celebrate your mutual sexual desire, but focus also on the love that you have for each other. When you do this, and bring the emotional together with the sexual aspects of your relationship, you will start having the sex life of your dreams.

When it comes to our bodies, both men and women can have insecurities that can easily damage their sex lives. The fashion and beauty industry puts us under great pressure to conform to certain stereotypes, but this will only affect us negatively if we already have an insecurity about our image. The problem is that many of us focus too much on our bodies and place all the emphasis on our physical attributes, rather than on our mind or our emotional qualities. We can trace this back to problems with self-esteem where we rely on external appearances rather than our inner sense of love and worth. If we believe that somebody only loves us only for our *looks*, then we become will become terrified of growing old and losing our youthful appearance. A burgeoning cosmetic surgery industry is built on this insecurity.

I am amazed when I speak to my female friends to discover how *insecure* they are about their bodies. I am told that a large proportion of women will not get undressed or have sex with the lights on. This is a real tragedy because most men like their partners *just the way they are*. Of course men will admire a perfectly formed body but this doesn't mean that they expect that in their partners. Unless a man is very insecure himself, he will be attracted to a woman who has *accepted* and *respects* her body, even if it is not perfect. We want you to love yourself and embrace your femininity – whatever shape and size that comes in. As you know yourself, it is not just your partner's body that attracts you to him. A loving relationship goes much deeper than this and is about the *real* person. As you become more *secure* about your own body image, you can begin to talk about any remaining insecurities you have with your partner. The chances are that he will have quite a few of his own, and once you share them, they will lose their importance in your relationship.

**Most men like their
partner's bodies just
the way they are**

I know from experience that in a committed, healing relationship that the physical attraction grows between partners. Sex opens us up emotionally and allows deeper, buried feelings to well up. If you can handle these feelings successfully, the experience of love will grow in your relationship and the sex will get *better*. You will find yourself adoring your

partner's body and charmingly, come to love their imperfections the most. In a good relationship sex will develop from the initial lust and desire when you first meet to a more comforting but equally erotic experience as it matures. Those feelings of love and connection that you had when you fell in love can return, but with the added bonus that you know each other much more deeply - both emotionally and sexually.

I know that some of you may be in relationships where there are significant sexual problems or where there is no sex at all. There can be good reasons why a couple may choose to abstain from sex and have a perfectly happy relationship, however, for the majority of couples, sex is a very important. If the sex has been the key factor in holding your relationship together, when it deteriorates, you may be left wondering if there is anything left. Perhaps your relationship become less physical over a period of time, so that one day you woke up and realised that you hadn't touched your partner affectionately for weeks or even months? When was the last time you held hands or had an affectionate hug in the kitchen or somewhere else private? Although these seem like small gestures, they are a good barometer of the sexual health of a relationship.

If a physical distance has developed between you and your partner, it is important to identify what it is causing this, because it will also be affecting other areas of your relationship. When we have sex, it brings us very close to another person physically as well as emotionally, and it is this that will tend to bring any hidden insecurities or negative self-beliefs to the surface. It is our fear that our partner will see these negative aspects of our personality that can cause

**Sex can make us feel
naked both physically
and emotionally**

all manner of sexual problems. Sex can make us feel

naked both physically and emotionally and any fear will tend to create a separation in both these areas.

The fear that surrounds sexual and emotional intimacy will certainly damage other aspects of a relationship and can even prevent us from entering

into a relationship in the first place. Although we may not be consciously aware of our *fear of intimacy*, it can be the underlying issue that is holding us back from a new relationship or making it difficult to connect with our partner in an ongoing relationship.

Some problems begin early in a relationship due to this fear of intimacy. Many couples start sleeping together immediately, or very soon after meeting, and this can dramatically increase the level of fear in a relationship. Sometimes this can bring up so much subconscious pain that the relationship fails, or if it survives, is damaged in a way that can lead to problems years down the road. This is why it is sensible to *refrain* from sex until you have got to know your new partner better. This doesn't have to be for months, just long enough to begin to form a friendship with your new partner, before it becomes a full-on sexual relationship. This can sound quite outdated; as if I am suggesting that we go back to the old days of abstinence and courting! Of course, you must decide for yourself when it is appropriate to start a sexual relationship, but bear in mind the powerful emotions that can be unleashed when you allow yourself to become very intimate with another person. If you can learn about your partner - their fears, insecurities and needs, early in the relationship, then not only will you have a much better 'honeymoon', but you will also have a better relationship in the months and years that follow. The trick is to form a *sustainable* relationship by setting a pattern of emotional and sexual openness and honesty from the very beginning.

**Sex can unleash
powerful emotions
because it brings us very
close to our partners**

In a longer-term relationship, a fear of sexual and emotional intimacy may still be present, but more deeply buried. Such fears will obviously damage our sex lives but they will also keep us at a distance from our partners in other areas of the relationship. Think about your own relationship. How close do you feel to your partner, both physically and emotionally? Do you know everything about him? Does he know everything about you? As well as the guilt and sense of failure that comes out of our childhood heartbreaks, there might also be a layer of sexual guilt that is keeping you apart.

Sexual tension can also occur when men become independent in a relationship. You will recall that this is the psychological stage where they pretend that they don't have needs and feelings and cut themselves off from emotionally meaningful relationships. In order to keep down their sense of failure and suppress subconscious feelings of guilt and inadequacy, they

have to *control* the people and situations around them. During sex this will mean that a man will want to be *in charge* and will tend to control the whole experience.

Very independent, alpha-type men can be the source of considerable heartbreak for women. At first they come across as confident and strong and they will give you the impression that they have no emotional baggage. They will be absolutely charming, thoughtful and attentive, and will usually be virile and confident in bed. All in all they will treat you like a lady, probably making you feel much

Alpha-males can appear strong and virile but this is usually an act

better about yourself. It is this that makes them so attractive, especially if you are subconsciously looking for a 'knight in armour' to take away any feelings of insecurity or low self-worth.

The problem is that women often fall *madly in love* with such a man, only to find that he changes over time. The romance is something of an act and as this falls away, the independent alpha-male begins to show his true colours. Such men can then treat a woman very callously - breaking her heart and leaving her traumatised. If you have ever fallen in love with such a man and been let down by him, perhaps I can give you a shred of consolation. Somebody who breaks other people's hearts to this extent is defending a *severely broken heart* himself. They might not know it at the time, but eventually it will catch up with them and they then suffer terribly. I am not suggesting that you feel good that one day he will have to face his insecurities, but I want you to understand that all bad behaviour will eventually bounce back on the perpetrator.

If your partner is independent and has an A-type personality then it is critically important that you appreciate that his apparent confidence is a *smokescreen* for his insecurity. What isn't apparent, is that the controlling and unauthentic behaviours of an independent man hide a great gift for *tenderness* and *compassion*, especially in the bedroom. You can help him discover this by showing him how to get back in touch with his emotions in the various ways that I have been describing in this book. You can start by becoming aware of how his independence affects his approach to sex. If a man is looking for physical pleasure during sex, rather than a more complete package that includes feelings of love and connection, he is likely to *rush* sex. The

problem is that when a man becomes aroused his brain and body is flooded with hormones which makes him seek pleasure as soon as possible. Unfortunately this means that he will be uninterested in setting the scene romantically or in delaying his pleasure through some form of foreplay.

The desire for rapid gratification accounts for the most common complaint I hear from

**You will have to teach
you partner about the
pleasures of foreplay**

women about sex - that their partner doesn't take enough *time*. Men can become aroused very quickly, but most women take longer, and enjoy the process of arousal. If you want a period of sensual foreplay before you have sex and your partner is impatient to

have his pleasure, your needs are very different and it is inevitable that one of you is going to be disappointed. On some occasions you might both want a 'quickie', and this is OK, but at other times, a fuller enjoyment of sex can only happen if you give yourselves more time. This means that you will have to *teach* your partner about the pleasures of foreplay.

As a woman, you once again need to lead the relationship, because a slower and more patient approach to sex is your natural style. You also know that the joy of sex can be built up slowly and that taking time serves to enhance the sensations. Many men have never had a chance to experience this, so if your partner rushes sex, it is up to you to show him how he can have more fun, by slowing down. The most effective way to do this is by teaching him how to use all his *senses* during foreplay. I have already mentioned the power of *touch*, but don't forget all the other senses. When a man becomes independent, he subdues all his senses as a way of protecting himself emotionally, so you will need to gently encourage him to turn them back on again. By becoming more aware of your senses you will both be much more present during sex and this will allow you to connect at a much deeper and satisfying level.

One of the biggest problems an independent man has with sex is being able to *receive* love from his woman. All too often his experience of sex is about what he can get from the experience and the hormonal surge that he gets at climax. He finds it hard to just lie back and receive your love because at some level of his mind he feels guilty and unworthy of what you are trying to give him. You will therefore need to help him receive by showing him how much pleasure there is to just open himself to your love through the experience of sex. As you give to

him, remember to receive yourself. In a good sexual relationship the giving and receiving is *balanced*. As you teach him to receive, you will see his true sexuality awaken, and he will then naturally want the foreplay to continue because it is so much fun. Before long he will probably be slowing you down!

Some people worry about the way their sex drive might change in later life. For most people, their sexual appetite and the type of sex that they enjoy will *mature* with age. The virility and energetic sex of our youth may be replaced by a more sensual and relaxed experience later in life. These changes will be reflected in natural physiological changes in our bodies. In our later years we may choose to cease penetrative sex, but continue with the tenderness of touch and other sensual experiences. The key is to maintain the feelings of love and to give and receive with our partner on both the emotional and physical levels, in a way that is mutually enjoyable. Nothing touches me more than seeing couples in their eighties or nineties walking down the street holding hands. I have no doubt that these couples have kept talking to each other and sharing their concerns, passions and hopes throughout their relationship.

**Sex is a way of
communicating our
love to our partners**

Ultimately sex is a way of *communicating our love* to our partners. It is as natural as eating and breathing, and if we are repressing it or denying our sexual needs, we will soon suffer. Think about the best sex you have ever had – wasn't it full of love as well as passion? I hope that I have given you some ideas of how you can improve your sex life and repair it if it has been damaged. Remember to communicate as much as you can about your needs and desires and tell your partner how great he makes you feel. Help him to *appreciate* you and take some of the *lead* in making your sex life more creative. In all relationships there will be times when the feelings of connection fade but if you have sufficient emotional awareness, you will be able to rebuild the intimacy quickly.

I have described the emotional as well as the physical aspects of sex and shown how these can be brought together. As you do this you will notice something else happening that takes the experience of sex to a whole new level. If you have been working to remove the emotional barriers to intimacy with your partner, you will have felt ever closer to him when you

make love. Eventually you will feel as if you are *melting together* and it will feel as if your psychological and physical boundaries are disappearing - that you are becoming *one* with them. When this happens your relationship is naturally tapping into the ultimate, higher levels of consciousness where you are joining physically, emotionally and *spiritually* with your partner. In the next chapter I will explain how a spiritual understanding of a relationship can take it to a whole new level of joy and fulfilment.

Learning points from Chapter 10 - Improving the quality of your sex life

- *Sex is a vitally important part of a relationship*
- *Men often confuse the gratification of sex with love*
- *Sex without love will quickly become dull and boring*
- *Sexual problems are usually related to emotional problems, particularly guilt*
- *Understanding each others sexual needs and desires is the key to a good sex life*
- *A man wants to know he has performed well in bed and that he has pleased you*
- *Foreplay allows you to increase the sensual aspects of love making and allows for a more complete emotional experience*
- *Sex is a way of communicating our love to our partner*

How to have better sex with your partner

- *Let go of any emotional and sexual guilt that might be holding you back from becoming intimate with your partner.*
- *Give yourself time to enjoy the experience - make love-making a priority in your relationship*
- *Teach your partner about the joys of foreplay*
- *Talk about what you each need and like sexually and then give these things to each other*
- *Bring all your sense into play when you make love, especially touch*
- *Celebrate and embrace your sexuality - it is a wonderful part of your life force*

Chapter 11

Love On A Higher Plane

Bringing spirituality to your relationship

In this chapter I want to show you that love is far *bigger* than a bodily emotion or feeling. Through the centuries many philosophers, academics, poets and playwrights have tried to describe love, but we still don't know exactly what it is. Despite this mystery, we all know *instinctively* when love is present or absent from our lives, and this shows us how fundamental it is to our existence.

In previous chapters I have described the psychology of love and have given you some practical ways of bringing more love into your relationship. Now I want to explore the link between

**Love is far bigger than
a bodily emotion**

love and spirituality. I will show you that our search for love is nothing less than our search for *spiritual meaning*, and that our romantic relationships give us the best opportunity to discover this. In fact, to love a man fully, you will need to connect, not just with his heart and mind, but also with his spirit.

If you already have an interest in spirituality you may be familiar with many of the things that I will describe in this chapter, but I realise that others of you may be new to these ideas. Some of you may have some concerns about the subject. You might feel that you have no need for spirituality in your life or are worried that this chapter is going to take you down a religious path. I can assure you that this is not the case. This chapter is about discovering a part of yourself that will take your experience of love to a whole *new* level. I want to show you that *spiritual love* is an entirely natural expression of your higher states of *consciousness*, which will allow you to let go of fear and experience yourself and the world around you in a much more positive and loving way. It will also help you to come much closer to your partner and discover more happiness with him.

For much of my life I denied my spirituality, alternating between being an atheist and an agnostic - I suppose I was hedging my bets because I sensed that there was a deeper meaning to life. I was a very independent young man and had no time for anything to do with spirituality

or religion. I can remember how resistant I was when I first heard about the ideas that I will describe in this chapter. They seemed to challenge everything about me and the way I understood life. I found the psychology of relationships fascinating and full of practical applications, but the spiritual aspects seemed fanciful and far-fetched. I also had many judgments about organised religion. However, through the shock of my failed marriage and a growing self-awareness, my attitudes softened and I became curious about the possibility that there was something going on under the surface of our practical lives. I began to experiment with some of the radical ideas that I was learning about, and to my astonishment, they worked. It turned out that the very ideas that I was most opposed to in those early days, became the sources of my *greatest learning*. I became much happier, discovered a powerful way to work on my personal problems and noticed that all my relationships improved.

My aim in this chapter is to share with you what I have learnt about spirituality and relationships and to show you how this can make it much easier not just to understand a man's behaviour, but to love him as well. We all operate on several levels – physical, emotional and spiritual and to find lasting happiness it is important to address all these areas. This is a *holistic* approach which looks at the whole person and understands that although we are made of up of many parts, that they all are *inter-related*. I will collect together many of the ideas that I have introduced in the earlier parts of the book and show you how to incorporate these into a bigger 'spiritual picture'. I have already shown you how to read the psychological process that is continually unfolding in your relationships and I will show you how this is driven by an unseen, yet beautiful spiritual process.

It is the *invisible* nature of our spirituality that makes it so hard to believe that it exists. My guess is that for much of the time you are not consciously aware of the way you are *connected* to other people. There is a good reason for this – virtually everything we see and do suggests that we are *separate* individuals, living *independent* lives. Think of your own sense of self. Your consciousness is probably rooted in your physical body and you go about your daily business with a belief that you are separate from your partner, family, colleagues and friends. You believe this because that

**Virtually everything we
see and do makes us
feel separate**

is what your *eyes* tell you. The well known physicist Albert Einstein had some interesting things to say about this:

“A human being is part of a whole called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness”

What Einstein was telling us is that our sense of being separate from other people and other objects is an incredibly convincing *illusion*. To understand how this can be, we need to look to physics and the nature of matter. When we do this we find that our bodies are not solid, but are actually made up of a mass of vibrating energy bundles. We would be better visualising ourselves as cloud of energy rather than as a solid mass. Energy by its nature comes in fields that extend way beyond their original source and this allows us to understand how our energy fields must continually interact with other energy fields. This view of matter allows us to free ourselves from our separate identities and realise that we are a small but integral part of the whole Universe. Of course, this idea isn't new because philosophers and mystics have been telling us for thousands of years that we are all *connected*. Modern physics is just catching up with this ancient wisdom and confirming that we are part of an energy field that extends right across the Universe.

The importance of this physics is that we are connected to *everybody* and *everything* through an immense network. I remember my own excitement when I realised the implications of these amazing ideas. Being able to visualise myself as energy rather than flesh and blood allowed me to question all the assumptions that I had about *who I was*. It can be a little scary to think of yourself in this way, but as you get used to the idea that you are invisibly connected to other people and part of something much bigger than you, it paves the way to a profoundly *different* understanding of love.

**Love is the fabric of
the Universe**

It's time to let go of the idea that love is a bodily emotion or sentiment. Instead think of it as part of the energy field that I have just described. Think of love as the *fabric* of the Universe. This is a huge idea and

it will probably challenge all your assumptions about your life and relationships. For me, this came as one of those eureka moments that changed my life forever. Suddenly I could see that love wasn't something I'd *created* within me, it was something that I was *part* of. I realised that love was my *spiritual essence*, and the feelings of love that I had experienced in my life, came about when I allowed myself to embrace my spirituality.

As all these ideas buzzed around my head I could feel the excitement growing inside me. This new way of thinking about love was transforming how I *knew* myself and the people in my life. The most exciting thing of all was that I now understood my spirituality – it was simply my *connection with love*. In the past I had struggled to understand religion and spirituality because I thought there was something I was supposed to *get*. Understanding that love is another word for spirit came as a huge relief to me because I realised that there was *nothing* to get, because I already had it! I knew what love felt like and knew that I could choose to embrace it at any moment. Of course, the immediate question that came up was “*Why wasn't I inviting it in all the time?*” As I pondered this question, it didn't take me long to become aware of all the barriers that I had placed in its way.

The problem in the earlier part of my life was that I had no desire to become spiritual or religious because its ideas held no *meaning* for me. I had been trained as a scientist and had always struggled with the idea of there being a God. Even if there was, I certainly didn't believe God would look like an old bearded man hanging out of the clouds, as he is so often depicted in the Christian art that I was brought up with. The personification of God just didn't work for me. I also had judgments about the hypocrisy and violence that I saw carried out in God's name. However I did notice that once we strip away all the doctrine, ritual and man-made embellishment, that all the religious and spiritual faiths were saying the same thing - that God is another name for love.

Understanding love and spirituality in this *pure* way allowed me to drop my judgements and resistance. Even though I still had some doubts, I was increasingly experiencing the power of love to bring healing to me and the people around me. During these experiences I had a strong sense that the love I was feeling was much *bigger* than me. I didn't suddenly become converted to a particular religion or spiritual path, but I was able to discover a version of spirituality that worked for me. Of course, many people find great comfort and inspiration in

exploring their spirituality in religious or spiritual groups, but this was not my way. I can happily attend a religious service and find the love and meaning I am looking for, but I can equally see it in the natural world and the people around me. If you have any of the judgments that I had, I would urge you to put these aside and focus on what love means to *you*, personally and in your relationships. Try to find a way of embracing your loving spirit in a way that suits your style and works for you.

Sooner or later, most people who are introduced to spiritual ideas, start asking for *proof*. Many atheists site the lack of scientifically verifiable evidence as proof that God or spirit doesn't exist. It is important to realise that this is not an exercise in logic. The chances are that we will never be able to prove that love is part of a collective Universal consciousness or that it has a divine source, but this need not stop us *believing* in it or receiving its benefits. Although spiritual love may be an unfathomable mystery, the amazing thing is that we can still *experience* its power in our everyday lives.

**You can't prove that there
is a spiritual love but you
can experience it**

One way to gain confidence in spiritual love is to *experiment* with it. As you surrender personal control and *trust* that you can call on an *infinite* source of love, your life *will* get better. You will notice that your fears, insecurities and problems fall away and that you have more energy, feel more inspired and are more contented. Your relationships will also become much better. As you experience the benefits of your spiritual connection, you will know that you can call on it at times of need or when you have problems - it will become a natural part of your life.

Once we have a spiritual understanding of love, it becomes much easier to explain why we often struggle with our emotions and relationships. It also shows us how we can solve our relationship problems and create partnerships that are full of love and healing. Much of what I will describe in the next few paragraphs builds on the psychological ideas I have already introduced, but I hope you will find, as I did, that having a spiritual foundation the these ideas makes them far more powerful.

Let's start with the process of falling in and out of love. I'm sure you are aware that many 'happy' hormones flow when you fall in love, but something else more magical happens.

You feel euphoric because you and your partner are *allowing* yourselves to join with each other and to tap into the *unlimited* source of spiritual love. The wonderful thing is that you don't have to work at this – it happens automatically whenever you allow yourselves to fully connect with your partner. If you cast your mind back to those heady days when you first fell in love, you will remember that not only did you fall in love with your partner, it felt like you had fallen in love with the whole world. You would have become a different person; happier, more hopeful, more sexy and more creative. Perhaps you became starry-eyed and struggled to concentrate on your work. Notice how these effects are a very similar to people who have experienced a spiritual *awakening*. You probably didn't realise it at the time, but when you fell in love, you were transported to a higher state of *spiritual consciousness* - you became enlightened!

You can now see why falling in love is such a powerful experience – it is a realisation of

**Falling in love is a
realisation of your true
spiritual self**

your true *spiritual self*. You can also see why, when we cannot feel our natural spiritual connections, that we develop such a strong need for love. We are born with those connections and suffer terribly if we think they are lacking or have been lost. This is why the failure of a relationship can hit us so hard. If we

have become dependent on our partners and they leave us, it is like having our spiritual connections severed and our vital supply of love taken away.

The heartbreak of lost love in a relationship can be so intense, that it can be hard to continue with our lives. The feelings of loss and abandonment are coming from the *belief* that we have lost our spiritual connection to love forever. This has been likened to our *fall from grace*; the moment when, as children, we lost our spiritual connection for the first time, in a moment of broken parental bonding or trauma. We can understand our adult heartbreaks as replays of this original experience of loss. We can also understand why the quality of the loving bond and expression of love is so important in our original families - it *protects* and *preserves* our spiritual connection, long enough for our self-esteem to develop and strengthen. Of course, any fear that we experience in those early years has the opposite effect, making us doubt our spiritual connection and damaging our self-esteem.

Recognising love as our spiritual essence also explains why *guilt* plays such a huge part in our psychology. We can understand this by using the idea of a *spiritual promise*. When we come into the world as babies we are full of love - our spiritual connection is present and at its full potential. We know *instinctively* that we have this connection to love and that we have gifts that we can bring to our families and the people around us. As we enter this life, we make an unconscious promise to *help* people, particularly our families, with our love and gifts. But then, in the first few years of life something might happen to shatter our confidence and make us doubt our spiritual connection. We experience fear and see the problems in our families, and this makes us feel frail and vulnerable. We then forget that we have gift of love to help the people around us and we forget our promise. In turning away from our spiritual essence, we deny who we are, and in failing in our promise to help, we feel very *guilty*, because we know we could have helped.

Of course we don't make a promise in the formal sense of the word, but deep down all of us know that we are connected to a Universal source of love, and that we can use that love to help ourselves and the people around us. This is a huge *responsibility* and one that causes many of us to turn away from helping. The trouble is that every time we deny our gifts and refuse to help, we increase our level of guilt. For those of you who have a belief in God as a divine source or provider of love, you can think of guilt originating from your refusal to use your God-given healing gifts. If, on the other hand, you have a humanistic belief system, you can think of guilt being created when you fail to treat the people around you with love, compassion and kindness - something that you innately have as a human being.

A man's behaviour is directly related to the quality of his spiritual connection

These are profound ideas and can seem far removed from the theme of this book, but I want to show you that they are highly relevant to your relationship. For both men and women, our behaviour is directly related to the quality of our spiritual connection. The more spiritually connected we are, the more we love ourselves, and the more positive our behaviour becomes. Applying this fundamental principle to your partner, his *self-esteem* is a measure of how much he is spiritually connected. As we have seen, self-esteem is the key factor in how much love he gives to you and receives for himself - it determines the quality of your relationship.

You are probably wondering about your own spiritual connection and the impact that this has on your self-esteem. Perhaps you already follow a religion or nurture your spirituality in some way, so you will already have your own way of connecting spiritually. Others of you may be wondering about the best way to form and maintain a connection. In my experience, the simpler and more pure this is, the better. All of us *know* how to connect to love already, it's just that we turned away from it during a moment of fear and confusion in our earlier lives, and then forgot that we had done this. The extent of your spiritual connection is the amount of love you naturally *allow* into your life, so you will need to remove any barriers that are preventing you from *receiving* love. Many of the psychological ideas that I have been describing in this book do just that, and now you can enhance them by embracing your spirituality.

If you struggle with the concept of God, or a divine source of love, you may prefer instead to think of love coming from your higher states of consciousness, sometimes called the *higher mind*. In fact it doesn't really matter where you think the love comes from as long as you don't start thinking of it as a transient and fickle emotion. Simply imagine yourself connecting to the higher part of your mind that is full of *intuition*, *inspiration* and *creativity* - the part that has all the answers and is full of love. When you have a problem or issue you can tap into your source of knowledge and love and use it to help your relationship. Knowing that you have this connection to love and that it defines who you are, will help to build your self-esteem and will be highly beneficial to your relationship.

Whatever your belief system and no matter where you think the love is coming from, it is useful to become aware of how much love you *allowing* yourself to receive. As you sit reading these words, how much love are you experiencing? How much love does your partner allow himself to feel? Keep these questions in mind as I describe some of the problems that hit our relationships when the connection to love is broken. Being able to spot when this has happened and then understanding why, will allow you to reconnect faster and bring love back to your relationship. Although I will describe this section from the point of view of a man, bear in mind that you can apply the same principles to yourself.

In the earlier chapters we saw how feelings of *dependence* and unmet needs create attention-seeking and manipulative behaviours as a way of obtaining love. These can be understood as a reaction to the loss of spiritual connection and the incredible need for love that

this creates. The greater the loss of the connection, the more demanding and antisocial will be the behaviours. If a man is reacting to feelings of failure, these will have come directly from a belief that he has failed to help *significant* people in his life, often his parents. As we have already seen, the guilt that comes out of these failures is at the heart of all relationship problems. The anger and aggression of somebody who is dependent comes from the belief that somebody *took away* their spiritual connection - and this is why they feel like *victims*. The reality is of course the opposite - that they took the connection away by turning away from it at some earlier point in their life. They would rather become angry at somebody else, than feel the sadness and guilt for having turned away from their spiritual gifts.

The way to help a dependent man is to recognise that although he might have lost his connection to spirit, he *cannot* lose the spirit itself - in other words, the love can never be taken away. You will therefore need to see through his behaviour to his loving spirit that lies underneath and help him to see it in himself. As always, the most effective way to do this is to find it in yourself first and then become the inspiration for your partner to follow suit. Later in this chapter I will help you more with this process.

While some men will continue to act out their dependence, most will move on and become *independent*. The behaviours that come out independence are designed to hide the dependent feelings of failure, inadequacy and guilt. Expectations, perfectionism and control may seem to be a way of ensuring success, but deeper down they are once again a reaction to the loss of spiritual connection. An independent man knows subconsciously that he has lost his connection and therefore has to defend himself against his pain by pretending that everything is fine. This is what creates all the hard work, busyness, stress and burnout. If your partner is independent, at one level he is saying:

**All bad behaviour can
be traced back to a
denial of
spirituality**

“I am happy and know how to be successful – I can do everything myself and do not need to rely on other people”

And at a deeper level he is saying:

“ I can do this life thing on my own, I’m in charge – I don’t need a spiritual connection or God”

In the end, both of these strategies will let him down because both place him at the centre of his Universe and allow his ego to be in control. But, as we have seen, this strategy closes down his heart and damages his relationships.

Understanding your partners problems as a lack of spiritual connection is a very powerful way of helping him. All the behaviours that you find so difficult are the result of the *denial* of his spirituality. Anything you can do to help him recognise this denial and encourage him to invite back his spiritual connection will make things better. But it is important to realise that he is having to behave independently because he is *terrified* of facing the pain of his lost spirituality. All he can do *close down* his emotions to protect himself. Therefore, if your partner has become independent, it means that his mind is full of *unconscious fear*, even if he gives the outward impression of being successful and happy. It's this fear around the loss of his spiritual connection that makes a man so hard to love.

Without the spiritual nourishment of true love, and if your relationship survives, you will drift into the dead zone, where you will be effectively living two *separate* lives. Your partner's independent behaviour will have further eaten away at his self-esteem and increased his level of guilt, to the extent that he has little or no connection to his loving spirit. As the connection withers, the amount of love that is available to him becomes less and less. He is then open to all the fear that he has hidden away for so long in his subconscious mind. Not surprisingly, this can create enormous anxiety. In his emotional and spiritual desert he will have to work harder and harder to bring him small amounts of pleasure. He falls into deadness because his spirit is his *life-force* and this is now ebbing away. Before long his mind turns towards separation, loneliness and death , which is why the dead zone is such a depressing place.

**Deep down all of us
know that spiritual
love and connection is
our true state**

Some men will remain in the dead zone throughout their lives, but many others will either be ejected from it by some form of crisis or choose to leave it of their own accord. This is quite literally, the saving grace of independence! Deep down all of us know that spiritual love and connection is our true state and this

acts like a clarion call if we find ourselves in the dead zone. Slipping into the dead zone is a

mistake, but we know subconsciously that we have done this, so our minds will always try to bring us out again. Unfortunately a man might do this by starting *affairs* or falling into a *mid-life crisis* to re-awaken himself. Although his behaviour may not be positive, and can be deeply upsetting, it is important to recognise that he is responding to a call from within to re-discover his spiritual connection. His underlying desire to return to his spiritual truth should be a source of hope to you. If you can touch this part of him through your compassion and forgiveness, you will be able to re-open his heart again and lead him out of the dead zone.

A theme throughout this book has been the importance of accountability in our relationships. This is also true when it comes to our spirituality. The best way to help your partner get in touch with his spirituality is to embrace it yourself. Perhaps you once had some spiritual belief but it has faded as you have struggled with your relationship, or perhaps you have never had much in the first place? This isn't a problem, because it is never too late to discover it. The minute you make the connection, it is as if it has always been there. Even the things that you regret about the past will fall away and you will instantly make up for lost time.

I have stressed the role that guilt plays in damaging your self-esteem and your relationships and if you are to fully embrace your spiritual connection you will need to let it go.

Guilt keeps us at a distance from our partners and it kicks off all sorts of bad behaviours - it also acts as a *block* to our spirituality. If you or your partner are holding on to any guilt from broken relationships in

**Guilt acts as a block to
our spirituality**

the past, this will prevent you from reconnecting spiritually. It does this by making you feel *unworthy* of all the love that is on offer. The guilt was created when you turned away from your spiritual essence and now it stops you returning to it because you feel unworthy of such a gift - it is self-perpetuating vicious circle. Although in principle it is possible to instantly re-discover your spiritual connection, most people find they need to let go of their guilt in stages, slowly healing the layers that have built up over their lifetime. This always involves a process of forgiveness that I have described in earlier chapters. Once you start letting go of the guilt, you will immediately make yourself *open* to your spiritual connection and the love that comes with it.

As your spiritual connection improves you will find it much easier to help your partner discover his own connection and work on any issues that are present in your relationship. Here is a way of working on a relationship problem using a more spiritual approach. Although you may still want to apply some of the psychological understanding of relationships that I have given you in this book, the advantage of using a more spiritual approach is that it is a much *simpler and quicker* way to achieve healing. It is also a much more intuitive approach because there is very little to think about or analyse.

Start by identifying a problem that you are facing with your partner. Think about the issues and notice how he is behaving. If he is coming across as anything less than positive and constructive, you will know that he is experiencing a personal *lack of love*. In the past you might have become irritated or frustrated by this type of behaviour, or sunk into feelings of low self-worth yourself. This time I want you to *consciously refuse* to do this. If you do become negative and judgmental you will have joined him in his problems and then you will no longer be able to help him. This time I want you to take the lead both emotionally and spiritually.

Start by becoming as spiritually connected as you can. If you find this difficult, think about somebody who you find it *easy* to love. This might be a child, a parent, a friend or perhaps even a pet. Feel the love that you have for this person or animal and feel their love returning to you. If you believe in God or have other spiritual beliefs, request help with your problem and ask if you can be given inspiration. If you do not believe in God or a divine source of love, ask your higher mind to help you get in touch with feelings of love. Some people like to meditate quietly by themselves to strengthen their spiritual connection, others might prefer to go for a walk to connect with nature. There are no hard and fast rules - do whatever works for you. Once you feel more connected and in a loving space, you are ready to focus on the problem at hand and on your partner.

Imagine yourself pouring love into him and forgiving him for any bad behaviour. If he is

**Make your love for
your partner more
important than the
problem**

with you in person, look at him and feel as much love as you can for him. Remember that with a spiritual source of love you have an *never-ending* supply and can think of yourself *directing* this into your partner. *Make your love for him more important than the*

problem. Then imagine him re-discovering his own spiritual connections and letting go of some of his fear and guilt. If you are face to face, make eye contact with him and feel your love passing to and fro. Remember that it is just as important to *receive* his love, as it is to give it to him. If you can hold the feelings of love for your partner and receive his love in return, you will find that something shifts in your partner and in the relationship. You will find that you have more inspiration to solve the problem or it will just fall away as you rejoin your partner in love.

At first you may have considerable *doubt* that this spiritual approach can work. I remember being very sceptical when I first tried to use it. In the past I had always favoured a more analytical style of problem-solving. Eventually though, I became convinced that love is *all* that is needed to solve problems and it only needs one person to start the ball rolling. When love shows up in a relationship, the guilt and other negative emotions automatically and effortlessly fall away. If you try this with your partner, remember that you are not healing him directly - you are loving him unconditionally so he can begin to *remember* his own spiritual connections and heal *himself*. This is an important point because if you are tempted to believe that you are healing him, this will soon turn to control, your ego will take over, and the whole process will grind to a halt. In fact, if your ego takes over, your problems will always get worse.

This approach does require a *faith* in the power of love to solve any problem and heal what lies between you and your partner. I realise that it is hard to find this much faith, particularly if you feel you have been injured by your partner's behaviour. However, if you can find sufficient compassion to forgive him and then be open to *grace*, you will be rewarded with what seems like miracle. Even if your partner is in dreadful pain or behaving unreasonably, with sufficient love he will come back to you, open his heart and begin to heal. There is *no problem* that can withstand the love that comes from your open heart.

**There is no problem
that can withstand
love**

As soon as you realise that you have access to an *abundance of love* and that it is always available, you will increasingly call on your spiritual connections to help you solve problems or to be a constant companion in your life. In your own relationship you will probably have to work hard at forgiving your partner and yourself, because guilt can have a powerful

hold on your mind. However, once you have experienced the healing power of love you will be spurred on to remove any further layers of pain that will almost certainly come up. Sometimes these deeper layers contain very painful feelings, but if you remember that your spiritual connection to love is always there, you will be able to handle anything.

As you and your partner learn to trust each other and become more intimate, I hope that you will be able to communicate about your fears and insecurities and relate these back to your loss of spiritual connection. Some men may be more reluctant to enter into such discussions or to embrace their spirituality, but remember that in the early stages you can do much of the healing in the relationship without too much active involvement from your partner. He will probably notice that you have changed for the better and be intrigued to know how this has come about! If you become happier, he will also become happier and the chances are that before long he wants to join you in the healing process. As an added bonus, your sex life will get better, and this will bring further opportunities for healing.

As I described in the Chapter 10, sex is a representation of our *life energy* and it will normally suffer in the power struggles and dead zone of independence. Although you don't need to have sex to be spiritually connected, within a relationship, the quality of your sex life can be useful measure of the state of your connection. I have already described the how sex can be much more than a physical experience, and how it can be an opportunity for becoming much more emotionally intimate with your partner. Now you can take this to an even higher level by allowing sex to be a spiritual experience as well. If your partner is resistant to exploring his spirituality in the more conventional ways, involving sex is a sure-fire way to gain his interest. By showing him that embracing his spirituality leads to better and more fulfilling sex, then you will have a very willing learner!

Sex that embraces our spirituality is often called *tantric* sex. Tantric spiritual practices originated about five thousand years ago as part of the Hindu religion. They have much in common with yoga and bring together the mind, body and spirit. Tantra itself is a very involved spiritual practice, and it is not within the scope of this book to go into any detail, but you can get an essence of it by learning to embrace your spirituality when you have sex.

Start by making love in the way you normally do, but focus on gaining as much emotional intimacy as you can. Once you feel close to your partner, pour more and more love into them

and feel their love returning to you. Then allow yourself to drift into a state of higher or spiritual

You will feel as if you are melting together

consciousness where it feels as if you are *melting* together. When this happens, the natural *energies* that are circulating in your body, including the sexual ones, begin to flow in unison. The sensation of melting

together is often accompanied by a sense of *timelessness* and even *out-of-body* experiences. As your self-judgments fall away and your judgments about your partner disappear, you will naturally drift to a place of pure love.

All this sounds very easy, but of course in reality there may be aspects of your relationship that are preventing this level of connection. You can remove any psychological barriers by using some of the methods that I have described in this book. Making sex a more spiritual experience is really about giving yourself more *time* to connect with your partner and allowing yourself to connect as fully as possible. One of the most powerful ways of doing this is through each other's eyes.

Our eyes have been called the 'portal of our souls', because when we make strong eye

Our eyes are the 'portal of our souls'

contact it seems that we can see into the very soul of another person, and they do the same with us. This is exactly what we aim to do in *Joining*, a method that has been developed by psychotherapist, Lency

Spezzano to help people discover more spiritual connection. Although you can do this with anybody, I want to explain how you might do it with your partner in bed. You may already spend time talking with each other and cuddling your partner in bed, and this is an extension of that. Find a comfortable position where you can focus on each other's eyes, at a distance where you don't have to strain. Relax and look into *one* of your partner's eyes. Hold the eye contact as long as you can (allowing yourself to blink as normal), and notice what you are feeling.

At first, you might both find it hard to look into each other's eyes so intently. In our society making too much eye contact can appear threatening, but here you are deliberately allowing yourself to maintain the contact as long as you wish, with someone you love. Even so, you may feel *uncomfortable* or awkward, might want to giggle, or have a strong urge to talk. It is possible that you feel disturbed by this level of intimacy and will want to stop the process.

These reactions are quite normal and show that there are emotional *barriers* between you and your partner that are preventing you from getting really *close* to each other. If your relationship has been strained, it is these barriers that have created the problems. The technique of eye joining can be used to remove these barriers and create greater emotional and spiritual connection.

Making eye contact can be difficult if you or your partner are holding on to guilt. Eye-contact increases the level of emotional intimacy and it can then feel as if your partner is *seeing* all your *secrets* and the things you don't like about yourself. Of course, he will probably be defending his own secrets and negative self-beliefs as he looks into your eyes! Even though most people find eye-joining a little strange at first, most of us have already experienced it in our lives. When we fall in love, we can't get enough of it! We are all familiar with the honeymoon lovers who gaze endlessly into each other's eyes. In the early phases of a relationship, when each partner gives and receives love unconditionally, it is easy to make eye contact because the rush of endorphins hides our needs and judgments.

Joining with your partner with sustained eye contact will burn through layers of fear, guilt and emotional pain by bringing them to the surface where they can be healed. We become frightened when love is absent, so your fears will dissolve as soon as you *shine love* on them. Here's how to do it with your partner. As you maintain eye contact for more than a few seconds you should

**Love is always present
beneath our pain**

start to feel some emotion – it could be positive or negative. Try not to judge or control the emotion, just let it flow naturally. The emotion is welling up from your subconscious mind. You may feel anger, sadness, loss or other negative emotions. You may want to cry – don't worry about this, just let it happen. As you maintain eye contact, keep feeling into your emotions and eventually any negative feelings will begin to dissolve and be replaced by more positive, loving feelings. At first this can feel a bit scary, but please persevere with this technique because it is a really powerful way of burning through emotional pain to find the love that is *always* waiting underneath.

Once you have become more aware of your own emotions and perhaps healed some layers of pain, you can focus on your partner. If he has been able to maintain his eye contact with you, he will also be feeling some emotion. Look into his eyes and imagine that you are

seeing right into him. What is he feeling? If he seems to be in any discomfort or pain, pour love and appreciation into him. Can you see underneath his pain to the love that lies within him? If so, this is the *real* him. By seeing the love in him, you will be helping him to see it in *himself* and this will boost his self-esteem. Gaining this much *empathy* for your partner is incredibly uplifting, and is one of the many rewards you will receive by helping him. With practice your partner will be able to do the same for you, and together your relationship will have stepped up into a wonderful healing partnership.

As you join with your partner, either during sex or at other times, you may notice yourself drifting into a state of *no-mindedness*. By letting go of the various layers of fear and guilt, you are letting go of your *thinking mind* and opening you *heart* to an ever growing experience of love. The positive feelings that come with joining can grow quite dramatically and you may feel overwhelmed by just how much love you are experiencing. Your partner's face might change before your eyes - he might suddenly look younger and more relaxed, and even seem to be limed in light. Some people like to see God in their partners and this helps them to make the joining a more divine experience. With access to so much love, you may come over in a hot flush and you might start smiling or laughing uncontrollably, or become very peaceful. These are experiences of spiritual enlightenment! Gurus and monks can meditate for years to reach such high levels of consciousness, but they are available to all of us through our relationships, once we surrender control and allow ourselves to *receive* all the love that is available to us.

This is often the closest many of us come to an experience of *oneness*, a state of spiritual consciousness that is described in many spiritual and religious practices. Depending on your faith or belief system, you might call this *Heaven, Paradise, Nirvana or Ecstasy*. Oneness is our natural spiritual state; the one we reach when we have let go of *all our fear*. It

**Embracing our
spirituality gives our
lives meaning**

is a place where we feel totally *connected* to everybody and everything in the Universe, and time and space lose their conventional meaning. Although experiences of oneness can be fleeting, especially early on during our healing, they act as a beacon on

our spiritual journey. Every one of us has an intuitive memory of our true spiritual home, which is full of love, peace and joy, and we are continually trying to return there during our lives.

One of the most comforting aspects of embracing your spirituality is that it will give your life *meaning*. To believe that you are nothing more than a body, having an entirely physical existence, is very frightening. If you believe that you are *separate*, you will assume that everything that happens is random, unconnected and beyond your control. All you will see in the world are threats and danger and your whole life will be preoccupied with (consciously or unconsciously) keeping yourself safe. If, on the other hand, you have a spiritual understanding, your approach to life and how you see the world will be totally different, and full of meaning. You will know that you are much *more* than a body and that your essence is love. You will notice how everything is connected and that nothing happens in isolation. In the past you might have dismissed interesting patterns and line-ups as coincidences but now with an understanding of spirituality and the connectivity of the Universe, you will know that these are just examples of *synchronicity*. As you become more aware of the unfolding psychological process, you will increasingly see examples of these interesting patterns. For instance you may drive past an advertising hoarding and see a man giving a bunch of red roses to his girlfriend, and then get home to find your partner, on the spur of the moment, has brought you flowers. Or you may have been thinking about an old friend who you haven't seen in ages, only to find they ring the next day. Keep an eye out for these synchronous connections - they will make your life much more interesting and help you to become even more aware of what is happening around you.

**Listen and trust the
intuitive messages
from your heart**

You will also learn to trust your *intuition*, another of your feminine gifts. It is really important to use these powers as you become more emotionally and spiritually connected. Intuition can save you a great deal of time and heartache in a relationship. Listen to the *messages* that your heart is sending to you. Sometimes you will only realise the significance of your intuition after an event, but use this to gain confidence in this natural gift. Your experience and intuitive wisdom as a woman is held within the higher, spiritual parts of your consciousness and by bringing these together with your emotional awareness, you will be able to lead your relationship through any healing that is necessary. Men are often reluctant to use their intuition because they do not trust it. They assume that *logic* is a much better way of making decisions, and therefore fail to pick up on the subtle messages that are coming from the intuitive part of

their mind. You can show your partner how to use his intuition to reduce his stress and bring him ease and success.

Perhaps by now you are beginning to realise that a spiritual approach to love and relationships isn't just about healing your problems - it is also about creating the relationship and life that you *desire*. In the past you might have felt like a victim to circumstance, rather like a cork bobbing around on a rough sea. You may have felt at the mercy of your partner's behaviour or moods. This is a typical way that we will look at the world if we feel dependent on other people. We may think that becoming independent is the answer, but we then kid ourselves that we are in control, to hide the fact that we feel so vulnerable and out of control. As we become more emotionally and spiritually aware, it dawns on us that there is another type of relationship that embraces our natural state of being. When our relationships become *interdependent* we recognise and celebrate our loving connections and understand that true happiness can only come when we embrace our spirituality and move into *partnership* in all our relationships.

In this book I have introduced many ideas about relationships and love and you might be struggling to remember them all! However, I hope you can also see that as we have progressed from the psychological into the spiritual aspects of love, that the story has become more simple. This is summed up in this beautiful quotation:

“All life is a spiritual evolution towards the realisation that we are love”

Dr. C. Spezzano

In the final chapter, I would like to review what we have learnt so far and bring the various ideas together to explain the principles of *interdependence* - a way of living and relating that is full of love and connection. It will also give me a chance to show you how to use the power of your heart and mind to create the relationship of your dreams.

Learning points from Chapter 11 - Love on a Higher Plane

- *Love is much bigger than us*
- *Our search for love is really a search for our spirituality*
- *Spiritual love connects us to everybody and everything in the Universe*
- *Our emotional and relationship problems have their roots in the denial of our spirituality*
- *You can't prove spiritual love exists, but you can experience it*
- *No problem can withstand the power of spiritual love*
- *Embracing our spirituality gives our lives meaning and brings us happiness*

How to discover and strengthen your spiritual connection

- *Stop thinking of yourself as a body and start thinking of yourself as loving spirit having a physical experience.*
- *Work to let go of any guilt you are carrying from failed or disappointing relationships and your disconnection from spirit*
- *Connect physically, emotionally and spiritually as much as possible with your partner*
- *Maintain lots of eye contact and feel your connections with everybody around you*
- *See love and connection in everything*

Chapter 12 Everlasting Love

How to create the relationship of your dreams

There is no doubt that finding a partner and forming a long-lasting relationship is one of the hardest things we will ever do. The early hopes and dreams of our relationships don't always materialise and we can find ourselves compromised or even traumatised by them. The high proportion of relationships that end in separation or divorce confirms how difficult it is to find and keep love in our lives. For every failed relationship there is a trail of misery and sadness for those directly involved as well as children, family and friends. We owe it to the people that we love and to ourselves to improve our relationships and pass on what we have learnt to others.

I wrote this book to help you do just that. I hope it has given you some insight into the male mind and why men can, at times, be difficult to love. The very fact that you are reading these words suggests that you have persevered and stuck with some of the challenging ideas that I have introduced to you. Although I have tried to be sensitive in my explanations, I have wanted to be honest about the causes of relationship failure. My aim has been to explain that difficult behaviour in men comes from their unhealed emotional and spiritual issues, and that as a woman you have all the gifts you need to help them and your relationship.

You might have been reading this book following the painful ending of a relationship or you may be suffering in one that has become dead and loveless. I know from my own experiences that although our relationships can bring the utmost joy, they can also take us to our knees. All of us hate the feelings of sadness and loss that come with our failed relationships, and that is why we bury them as quickly as we can.

Although this does allow us to carry on with our lives, it can mean that we miss the opportunity for healing. Emotional pain comes to the surface when we need to heal something. It also forces

our hearts open and makes us ready for healing. My own separation and divorce was the hardest and most painful experience that I have ever had to endure, but in retrospect I can now

**Burying pain can mean
we miss the opportunity
for healing**

see that I needed this *wake-up call* to get me in touch with the emotional and spiritual issues that I had suppressed for so long. I would therefore encourage you to take a brave new approach to emotional pain. See it as an *opportunity* rather than a problem. The more willing you are to acknowledge your issues, the quicker the negative emotions will come to the surface, where you can heal them and let them go. Our problems in life come from suppressing our emotions, and that is why one of the most effective healing methods is to feel into the fear and pain until it is dissolved by love. This can seem like a daunting task and maybe you don't feel you have the energy to face these issues. However, if you persevere, you will find that you become more confident in *feeling your feelings*, and will grow in strength until you can experience painful feelings without crumpling or acting them out on the people around you.

In this book I have tried to help you understand men better. I have explained how many men think and behave, and the way that they are often frightened of their emotions, but I have also stressed the importance of you becoming *accountable* for your own self-beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. This is the bit that most of us don't want to hear! We would rather make our partners responsible for our problems because it saves us having to admit that we might have our own issues. Even though we may be reluctant to accept that we play a part in our relationship problems, most of us know that it 'takes two to tango'. As soon as we can take responsibility for our own emotions and for the impact of our behaviour or attitude on our partner, any deadlock in the relationship will be broken, and the healing will begin.

The only way to reach this level of accountability is to *understand* rather than *judge* your partner. Finding fault with him might make you feel better in the short-term, but the problems will return. You can force him to behave differently, but his resentment will build up and create yet more problems later. The way to build a successful relationship is therefore to

**Take responsibility for
you own happiness**

move into a position of *leadership* and start taking responsibility for your own happiness and in doing so encourage your partner to do the same. To make this possible you will need to build your self-esteem, step into your true power and embrace your feminine gifts of emotional awareness, compassion and empathy. By honouring these gifts, you will act as a role model for your partner and demonstrate to him the value of a wholehearted approach to life.

Although this accountable approach to relationships can be challenging, particularly if you have got into the habit of being dependent on each other, it will bring an enormous number of benefits to your relationship and your enjoyment of life. By taking charge of your emotions, you can positively influence your experiences and choose the relationship that you want. To do this you will need to *know* and understand yourself deeply, and I hope that in reading this book you have been able to start this familiarisation process. As you gain self-confidence and self-esteem you will no longer be hurt by your partner's behaviour or distracted by other challenges that you meet in life. You will find the confidence to speak from your heart and have the faith that love will *always* win the day. All these things take time to develop, but once you begin the process and experience some success, you will have sufficient encouragement to tackle any issue or problem that comes up in your relationship.

Gaining self-awareness comes from a desire to *learn* and *grow* as a person. It is also important to look at the 'bigger picture' of your relationship and life and to be willing to ask the more searching questions. For much of my life I was happy to take each day as it came, without much deep thought or reflection. Unfortunately this rather blinkered attitude left me emotionally vulnerable and eventually led to the rude-awakening of my failed marriage. Now I enjoy looking for the deeper meaning and connections in all my relationships and I would encourage you to do the same. For instance, have you ever wondered why you want to be in a relationship? Why is it so important to share your life with somebody who at the outset is a complete stranger? Try to be really honest about your answers. Like many of us you may be looking to be part of a loving relationship, but what does that really mean? How much of your desire to be in a romantic partnership is about the fulfilment of your needs? This was certainly the case for me. After the agony of my divorce I began to ask myself these types of question. Eventually I had to admit that I was looking for somebody to love me because I didn't feel much love for myself. My wife was filling a terrible *emptiness* inside.

Ask yourself why do you want to be in a relationship

Earlier in the book I reminded you of the old adage - *you can't love somebody else until you love yourself*. If you have been hoping for a knight on a white charger to sweep you off

your feet and make you happy, then I'm afraid you could be waiting a long time. Even if Prince Charming does appear, he may well be hiding all sorts of needs and insecurities himself, and it will only be a matter of time before they appear in your relationship. The same is true if you are in a relationship and waiting for your partner to change. Your partner cannot give you love and happiness if you don't feel it for yourself. Although a kind and considerate man can help build your confidence and feel good about yourself, ultimately you must find the love *yourself*. This is without doubt the toughest lesson we have to learn in life. Many of us fight hard to avoid accepting this, but as long as we look to somebody else or something material to make us happy, we will suffer.

Dependence is the opposite of accountability and lies at the core of all our relationship problems, and letting go of it is the key to a happy life and relationship. Earlier in the book I described how two needy people can fall in love and find *instant* happiness, but also how the 'honeymoon' is usually a short-lived experience that soon turns into a power struggle. We often fall in love with people who have a similar level of emotional need to us, even though we may

**Unmet needs are like
time-bombs**

not see this at first. When we talk about meeting our 'soul mate' we probably mean that we have met somebody who seems to understand us and knows how we feel. This isn't surprising because they probably had childhood heartbreaks that left them with similar unmet needs and self-beliefs to ourselves. The problem is that those unmet needs are like *time-bombs* in a relationship and unless we actively heal them, they will eventually explode.

If you are just starting a new relationship or when you find yourself in one in the future, stay as aware as you can of your needs and those of your partner. Enjoy the honeymoon but notice the very first time that a problem appears in your relationship. Identify which need is not being met for you both. Your temptation may be to push the bad feelings that you are having down again and pretend that they are not important. This is a mistake. Instead, recognise your pain, feel into it and then find the courage to tell your partner how you are feeling. *Own* the painful feelings without judging him or making him feel at fault and tell him that you want to work through the issue that has come up in a way that strengthens your relationship. I accept that this can be a terribly hard thing to do, especially in a new and fragile relationship, but if you

can do it, you will set a pattern for a much more honest and communicative relationship in the long run. As you rediscover the feelings of love with your partner, it is very useful to discuss with each other why the healing process was successful and how *honesty* formed such an important part of it. It is worth *committing* to do the same thing every time a problem comes up in your relationship. You will soon gain confidence that being honest with each other does not destroy a relationship, but brings it closer together.

Some of you will be in long-term relationships, so your challenge may be to communicate with your partner in more honest and meaningful ways. This might be the first time this has been possible in many years or in some cases the first time ever. This can seem very difficult, but it is not impossible, because both of you will have an unconscious urge to rediscover love and connection. It is best to think of relationship problems as a form of *homesickness* – subconsciously you both know that in the past you moved away from your loving essence; your spiritual and emotional ‘home’. The good news is that its memory lingers on and beckons you to return. The trick is to see that your problems are signposts on a healing path back to the *real* you. Once you have gone beyond the idea that your partner has been put on this planet to make you happy, you will have opened up the opportunity for healing. You will also see that there is a much more profound reason that the two of you came together.

The *purpose* of your relationship is to bring more love to you, your partner and anyone else who comes into contact with you. To make that a reality you will need to *continually work* to let go of fear, insecurity and guilt. Forget about fairy-tale romances. It is very rare for two people to form a long-lasting, loving relationship that has no problems or challenges. A relationship is *designed* to dredge up the hidden and painful parts of your mind because they are standing in the way of love. Although you may want your partner to take away your pain, the reason you were attracted to him was that, at the deeper level of your minds you are holding onto the *same* pain. This is why it is so easily triggered when you are under pressure or stressed. The purpose of your relationship is therefore to unearth and heal the pain that you *share* and to let it go. If you can do this, not only will your relationship take a big step forward, but in doing so you will send out a positive, healing message to all the people around you.

Taking this broader view will stop you getting tripped up by the daily drama that unfolds in all relationships. If you simply focus on bringing more love to yourself, your partner and the

people in your life, you will become much more aware when love is *lacking*. So programmed are we to *return to love*, that anything that isn't love in a relationship, will naturally come up for healing. As we have seen, this is always in the form of a difficult behaviour, a problem or a crisis. To move your relationship forward you must stop ignoring or running away from your problems and begin to see them as *gifts*. When you can see them in this way, you can then set about healing the underlying issues. This will always involve you identifying the needs that are not being met in the relationship and then setting about fulfilling them. The most effective way to do this is to make your partner's needs *more important* than your own. This immediately changes the state of the relationship from one of fear to one of love. It brings compassion, removes judgement and leads to forgiveness. If you do this consistently and truly put your own needs aside, I guarantee that the love will return and that almost magically, your partner will start to consider and meet your needs.

**Make your partner's
needs more important
than your own**

To place your partners needs ahead of your own requires considerable emotional maturity. At first it can seem unfair. We are often reluctant to give to our partners in this way because we think that they should give to us first. This is the crux of any relationship problem and is what leads to power struggles. The opposite stance is a willingness to lead in our relationships and be the one who breaks the deadlock by being the *first* to recognise the needs and then *give* the love. If you need some incentive to give to your partner, then remember that when you give from the heart you will automatically *get back* what you have given. Even if your partner takes some time to reciprocate, you will immediately feel better because of your own giving - it's a classic *win/win* situation. *Unconditional giving* really is the key to a happy relationship and a happy life.

If you feel dependent on your partner for your happiness then it is inevitable that you will begin to feel disempowered. You will believe that what happens to you is beyond your control and feel vulnerable to your partner's mood changes and behaviour. This need not be the case. By letting go of your dependence you can take charge of your life and create the relationship that you have always wanted. In fact you can use the technique I am about to describe to create any experience you want in life.

Creating or *manifesting* as it is often called, is a way of bringing change to your relationship without control or manipulation. To do this you will be removing any barriers that you may have erected to the natural *flow* of love that is all around you. Although it is not always obvious, *good things*, including love are coming to you all the time, and therefore the trick is to *receive* them. In fact an *openness* to receiving love is the key to a happy relationship and life. When you manifest something, you are using the power of your mind to choose the outcome you desire out of literally millions of other options that are being presented to you in any moment. For instance, if you want your partner to become closer and more communicative, then you can bring this about without even speaking to him. I know this might sound impossible, but try to suspend your disbelief on this one. Much of the time we are unaware of the enormous power of our mind and our subconscious can end up choosing negative outcomes - especially if we are holding a lot of negative self-beliefs. It makes a great deal of sense to start choosing and projecting the positive aspects of our mind.

To understand how manifesting works you need to cast your mind back to the last chapter about spirituality. I asked you to let go of the idea that your partner is separate from you and accept that you are connected to him *through your higher states of consciousness*.

Although you may normally communicate with him verbally, it is also possible to communicate through your higher consciousness - through the medium of love. This connection is always present, and though you may not be very aware of it at the moment, it

**You can communicate
with your partner at a
distance**

means that you can communicate with him even when he is not physically present. There is much evidence to suggest that we all have such psychic abilities. Most of us have experienced situations where we think about somebody we love and decide to call them on the phone, only to find that they call us within a few seconds. These telepathic gifts show how our thoughts and feelings extend way beyond our physical bodies and allow us to communicate at a distance.

Once you get your head around the ideas of spiritual connection, you will see that they provide you with a simple yet powerful way to influence your partner. When you are in a close relationship with somebody you will be interacting with them emotionally and spiritually all the time. This leads to a *mirroring* of thoughts and feelings - anything that you think, feel or do will appear in your partner's mind, and vice versa. You are effectively becoming *one* person.

184

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

Therefore all you have to do to *change* your partner's mind, is to change your own! This explains why it is so important to become accountable in your relationship, because your partners thoughts, feelings and behaviours are so influenced by your own. This is the ultimate form of *empowerment* because it means you can *choose* the experience you want.

You can change your partner's mind by changing your own mind

If we believe in an independent, separated world then it seems that everybody is thinking, feeling and acting in isolation. However, when we look deeper into our human experience and think about the natural connections between us and other people we realise that this is an *illusion*. Everything, including human beings affects everything else in the Universe - this is what we mean by interdependence. Of course this means that we need to be careful about what we think and feel, because, at some level, *everything* is communicated. We often *project* out our negative thoughts and feelings, directly, in the form of judgments, or indirectly, in the form of a bad mood or negative behaviour. When are then surprised when the projections bounce back! Now however, with an appreciation of our shared consciousness, we can see why this happens. It was the psychologist Carl Jung who showed that we tend to *project* out the aspects of ourselves that we *don't like* and 'paint' them onto the people around us. The most common way to do this is to judge somebody to be bad or at fault. While offloading our anger or displeasure might make us briefly feel better, those unpleasant behaviours will then return to us. The person we have just judged, acts out those aspects that we most hate in ourselves!

You can see how mirroring in a relationship creates a vicious circle. If this is happening in your relationship, you will need to break the cycle of projection and counter-projection. The best way to do this is to become aware of your own judgments and stop projecting your pain and insecurity onto your partner. You will also need to look at why certain aspects of your partner's behaviour upset you so much. As you become more aware of your judgments, you can use these reactions to see what is going on in your subconscious mind. Notice the behaviours that *annoy* you or *frustrate* you the most in your partner - these will be a reflection of your own negative self-beliefs. For instance, if your partner tries to control you and this gets on your

nerves, look at your own need to stay in control. By working on this control issue and healing it, you will no longer project it onto your partner, and he will become easier to live with. Once you have removed some of the barriers that you may have been putting up in your relationship, you will be ready to have a go at manifesting.

First of all decide what you want to happen. Make sure that this has a positive, loving outcome because our minds are capable of manifesting negative things as well. Take the example of encouraging your partner to be more open, so he finds it easier to talk about his feelings. Get yourself into a relaxed and comfortable position where you won't be disturbed.

You can change your partner's mind by changing your own mind

Close your eyes if you wish. Think about the issue and visualise you and your partner sitting down and openly discussing your feelings with each other.

Make the image as vivid and as real as you can in your mind's eye. Bring as many of your senses to the visualisation. Are there any evocative smells in the

room, what does it feel like to be in the conversation, what sounds are there? If you are having a drink or eating, can you smell and taste it? See your partner smiling and feeling comfortable and feel as much love as you can for him. Really *believe* that this conversation is possible and that your partner has a hidden gift in this area. If you have a spiritual belief, pray or ask for help that this might come about easily.

Don't forget to feel your partner's love and the pleasure of starting to talk about the things that really matter for your relationship. Once you have made the visualisation as strong as you can, bring it to a close. As you do this it is critically important that you *let go of the need* for the manifest to be successful. Many of us fail to achieve this final part because we are too invested in the outcome - we hang on to the *need* in an obsessive way, which then sabotages the manifest because it now contains the fear of failure. The only way for the manifest to succeed is if you *trust* that it will happen, without your control and that you let it go with a sense of love and gratitude. If you have a spiritual belief, you can make the letting-go easier by handing the manifest over to God or a higher power of your choice. If you prefer a non-spiritual approach, hand it over to your higher, intuitive mind.

Having completed the manifest, put it completely out of your mind and get on with your life. If you have truly let go of your need for change, and if there is a truth in what you are manifesting, it will appear in your relationship very soon. I am still shocked when I successfully manifest something because it seems too easy! I suppose I have got used to working hard for my successes. If we are tapping into the natural flow of our lives and the Universe, things will come to us easily - it's just a matter of getting out of our own way. If you are finding things *easy* in your relationship or in your life, you will know that you are on track and in the flow. *Ease* is a really good indicator of partnership and interdependence in a relationship. Of course the opposite is also true - if things always seem difficult or painful, then you will know that you are out of the flow, and need to do some healing.

Ease and flow are a good indicators of a successful partnership

You have probably noticed that there is a *paradox* with manifesting. To set one up, we start with a need that we want to fulfil, but for it to work we must get rid of that need. The trick is to want something one hundred percent but to not need it! By the same token, manifests fail if we retain a need for the outcome that we desire. Manifesting a huge lottery win might fail because you want the money to take away feelings of low self-esteem. If your own manifest fails ask yourself "*Have I truly let go of my need around this manifest*". Although I don't always succeed at manifesting, over the years that I have used this technique to manifest such things as a space in a car park during the Christmas rush, to bringing a loving partner into my life. I would encourage you to give manifesting a go, because it makes life so much easier and is incredibly satisfying and empowering when it works.

One of the most important characteristics of a successful and sustainable relationship is a mutual commitment from both couples. I know that many woman despair at the *lack of commitment* shown by men in relationships. This isn't just about a man's reluctance to marry or live with his partner; it is about the level of commitment in the relationship as a whole. Commitment is one of those issues that both men and women will avoid talking about, because it brings up many uncomfortable feelings around *trust* and *rejection*. If your partner isn't committed, or you are feeling uncommitted yourself, you will need to find out what is creating this *doubt*. At the core of a commitment problem is a belief that we won't be able to maintain

sufficiently strong feelings of love into the future and that we will then be forced into a life without love. Fears around being able to commit will only appear if the feelings of love in a relationship have already begun to fade, so it is more likely to be a problem in the power struggle and dead zone stages.

A man who is feeling uncommitted will be afraid that he will become *trapped* or even enslaved by his relationship. If your partner has this issue, he has a fear that committing to you will rob him of his freedom. This comes from a belief that love does not last *forever* and that it can be lost or taken away. Such beliefs would probably have originated from his childhood experiences of heartbreak and unmet needs. His lack of commitment and beliefs around love show that he is *dependent* on you to bring him love. Although he may be thinking and acting very independently in your relationship, this will be hiding considerable heartbreak and a sense of unmet needs. In the honeymoon stage, these deep feelings would have been kept at bay by all the mutual giving and receiving of love, but as it ended, his needs would have started coming up. Instead of healing them, he would tend to shut down his heart and become independent to protect himself from emotional pain. With his heart defended, his sense of being in love with you will have faded and he would have begun to doubt the long-term viability of the relationship.

Committing is therefore about healing your needs and finding self-love. If you can do this it will make it much easier to commit to each other because you will not be placing the impossible demand on your partner to provide love to you forever. Commitment isn't about a legal agreement, it's not even about an undying promise to your partner, it is about your willingness and courage to keep healing your fears and needs and making your partner and the relationship *more important* than the problems that stand between you. Commitment is your willingness to heal anything that might threaten the relationship by continually moving towards your partners with love and an open heart.

Commitment is about making your partner more important than your problems

Sadly there are times when the quality of a relationship falls so low that its survival is in question. During a relationship coaching session I am often asked how to tell when a relationship has come to end. This can be a difficult question to answer because it is always tricky to know if a partner is intrinsically unsuited to somebody or if they are good for each

other but have not yet been able to heal their issues. In my experience most relationships end *too soon*. I say this because when I talk to people about the problems they are facing I discover they either have dependency issues, are in a power struggle or are in the dead zone. All of these are evolutionary stages in a relationship where we can easily get stuck. If you find yourself in these stages it means that there is further potential for healing and returning love to your relationship. The only exception to this is if you have reached the *natural end* of your relationship and it is appropriate for you to go your separate ways so that you can continue your healing in a new and more appropriate direction. When this happens, although there may be some sadness at parting, the relationship ends without *resentment, disappointment or regret*. In this situation you would remain friends and feel great love and affection for each other for the rest of your lives. If there are any children involved in the relationship, then they will understand and respect their parents choice to separate and know that this is best for the whole family.

If you are wondering about your own relationship, ask yourself, from your heart, has it reached the end of the road? Have you done everything you can to heal any issues that you have with your partner? Having now read this book, you will appreciate that this question should read - have I healed all my own needs and fears that could be contributing to the relationship problems I am experiencing? You owe it to yourself, your partner and your family to ask this question very seriously, otherwise you could throw away the best opportunity of finding true happiness that you will ever have. If you can honestly say that you have worked on all your own issues, and you cannot find a flow of love in your relationship, then it is probably time to go your separate ways.

When a relationship is going through difficult times it can be useful to ask, “*What is the truth of my relationship, for me and my partner?*” Commitment to your partner and to the healing process will always reveal the truth, but ultimately it is your choice whether or not to stay in a relationship. Sometimes it can be true to uproot yourself in order to kick-start your personal healing process. However, if this is the path you choose, it is still important to leave your relationship in the most loving way you can. If you leave with pain and hurt, it will bounce back

**What is the truth of
your relationship?**

at you in your next relationship, whereas if you leave with love then you have the best chance to let go of the past and discover more happiness in the future.

If you do decide to remain in your relationship, I hope that I have given you a better understanding of your partner and some tools to work on the issues that cause you concern, or keep you apart. Armed with this knowledge and with practice, you should be able to close the physical, emotional and spiritual distance that is present in your relationship. Throughout this book I have described how men are frightened of feeling into the pain of their heartbreaks and unmet needs as well as facing their sense of personal failure. Understanding these aspects of a man's psychology are vital if you are going to have a loving relationship with him. However, as we get deeper into his mind and strip away all the guilt, inadequacy and sadness we find that there is yet more fear sitting underneath, and this time it is shared equally by men and women.

Marianne Williamson describes this fear in her book - *A Return to Love*, with these profound words:

*“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our Light not our Darkness that frightens us most”*

By light, Marianne means love. At the end of our quest to understand our relationships better we find that our greatest fear of all is *love* itself. This is an astonishing idea and one that needs explanation. After all, how could we be afraid of something that is so beautiful and brings us so much pleasure? The answer to this question takes us to the very core of our humanity and what love

**Our greatest fear is
love itself**

really means to us. For a moment, think about what it would be like to know yourself only as love, and to embrace *all* the love that is available to you in the Universe. At first this sounds wonderful and you might imagine all the joy that this would bring, but then you might start feeling uncomfortable and wonder how you would cope with so much love. You might fear that so much love would overwhelm you or turn you insane. Furthermore, if you expressed all that love, you might be worried that people would think that you are weird and reject you. They could be envious or jealous and attack you. All the needy people in the world would flock to you

190

Understanding Men

The Things You Need To Know About Men , Love & Relationships

to you for some of your love and for salvation. This will probably trigger a very major fear in you - one that we all have when we are asked to step up into a position of leadership around love and relationships. Could you answer all the calls for help, and find inspiration for any human problem that was delivered to you?

These are some of the more obvious fears around love, but there are deeper ones still. We would become so full of love that the reality is that we would change beyond recognition - we would become a completely *different* person, and this is something that really frightens us. We have got used to our separated state of consciousness, even if we have limited ourselves and invited fear and pain into our lives. Living a restricted emotional life, with a closed heart seems to protect us from these fears. Our egos then convince us that if we were to wake up fully to love, we would have to *lose something*.

With so much fear about embracing our loving essence, we create a whole series of false beliefs about love and protective mechanisms in our relationships. We think that it is *bad* for us and that it can *hurt* us. We make sure we don't fall too deeply in love because we can't stand the pain of losing it again. We walk away from our gift of love because its power frightens us. We are terrified of connecting fully with the people and things around us in case we lose our sense of individual identity. With such a negative and fearful attitude to love it is not surprising that we lose connection with our hearts and sabotage our relationships.

A fear of love is really a fear of our *spiritual identity* - of accepting that we are so much more than physical bodies. If we were to continue healing and letting go of all our fear, we would see that the sense of separation is an *illusion* - that our true state is one of intimate connection to the people and things around us. This is what is known as a state of *oneness*, and has been described by the great spiritual traditions for thousands of years. These traditions tell us that in this state of total connection the concept of "I", the ego, falls away to be replaced by a sense of being at one with the Universe. In such a state there would only be love, joy and peace.

You might be thinking that this is all far too profound for a book about romantic love! Perhaps it is a little philosophical, but I want to show you how these ideas can help you understand the practical, day-to-day challenges that you might be facing in your relationship. The first thing to realise is that a fear of love is present in both men and women. Therefore if

there is a problem in your relationship, it will always have at its core a separation from love and a belief that you are separate from your partner (the exact opposite of believing that you are at one and connected). This belief would have probably first formed when you were both young, long before you met each other romantically. To have a gift as big as Love (the capital is deliberate here!) is a huge responsibility and brings up many of the fears that I described earlier. Perhaps you were frightened of your gift or believed that you had misused it in some way. Or maybe you experienced a difficult and heartbreaking situation when you were an infant and lost faith in your ability to help yourself and the people around you. Whatever caused you to hide away your gift of love, you have been searching to win it back ever since. Unfortunately the ways you have gone about this search have probably made things worse because you would have been working from a belief that love is scarce to you personally, when in fact it is infinitely abundant.

Any difficulties you have had in loving a man or with your emotions are simply reminders that you have turned away from your *loving essence*. Of course your partner must also have turned away from his essence, because otherwise he would have been able to help you re-

**Your partner is
probably
afraid to love you**

discover your's. Any problems that you are still facing are a call for you to discover your true self and to take up your leadership role in your relationship. It's time for you to return to the love that is your birthright and embrace it fully. As you invite it back

into your life, your partner will automatically start to do the same because your self-love will remind him of his own. If his behaviour is currently negative, it's not because he doesn't love you - it's because he is *afraid to love you*. Any sense of failure and guilt that he is carrying subconsciously will make him feel undeserving of love, so he will make sure that he doesn't allow much in from you. He may want to love you, but has lost much of his ability to feel love and to express it to you because he has closed down his heart. However, all is not lost. The good news is that he may be struggling to experience love, but it has never gone away. What's more, there is no defence that can withstand the full force of love. Even if your partner is initially resistant to the process of healing, your faith in the power of love and your connections to spirit or your higher mind, will ensure your eventual success. By building your own self-

esteem and refusing to judge him when he behaves negatively, you will lead the way in returning love to your relationship.

I wrote this book because I have noticed in my coaching work that many women want to understand men better so that they can solve their relationship problems. I hope that I have given you an insight into how men think, feel and behave. The key to bridging the gap between men and women is not to focus on the differences in behaviour, but to realise that deep down we share the same needs and fears, as well as the same potential for love. You are lucky to be a woman because your gift for love and compassion is normally much closer to the surface than for a man. Use this gift to forgive yourself and dismantle any barriers that stand in the way of self-love and then help your partner to do the same. This will need to be a daily practice because the ego and its belief in separation will continually try to re-assert itself. But I promise you, that if you persevere, you will become much closer to your partner and start having much more fun!

A healing relationship is an ever-unfolding experience of love, intimacy and spiritual connection. You might already have a man in your life or you might be waiting for one to appear, but remember that underneath his sometimes difficult behaviour is a *beautiful, courageous* and *open-hearted* guy, just waiting to be discovered. Having the relationship you want does not have to be a distant dream - it can be yours today if you can let down your defences and let in the abundance of love that awaits you.

END

Relationship Workshops and Coaching

If you are interested in the approach that I have described in this book, I can thoroughly recommend the workshops and one-to-one coaching offered by the *Psychology of Vision* organisation. The workshops are built around the psychological model designed by Dr. Chuck Spezzano and his wife Lency over the last thirty years and have benefited thousands of people worldwide. The workshops are offered across the globe and are profound, inspiring and life-changing. Look on www.psychologyofvision.com for more details of events and coaches in your part of the world.