



Digging Deeper with

LISTEN LEARN LOVE

*Companion
Guide*

BY SUSIE MILLER



Hi Friend,

Cheers to you for being brave; working on your relationships takes courage! Thank you for trusting me to walk with you into the most significant part of your life — the people you share it with. I applaud your willingness to risk, grow, change, and invest in your relationships. This companion guide will help you dig deeper into the skills *Listen, Learn, Love* and how to apply them specifically to your life and relationships.

Honestly, I've never met anyone who didn't have at least one relationship they want to get better. *Listen, Learn Love* will help you improve any relationship... not just the difficult ones. You may have a lot of good relationships, but you want them to get even better. Or, you may be struggling and barely holding on to hope. I have been where you are... wondering if a relationship will make it, staring at the slammed door, dreading the tension-filled work environment. Wondering “what is wrong with me,” “why is this so hard,” or being mad at “them” for being such “jerks.”

Some days I am still there — in the midst of messy, complicated relationships — wanting more, making mistakes, and sometimes tempted to give up. Every relationship has tough spots, tension, silence or loud moments. People who enjoy healthy, thriving, and satisfying relationships have learned to navigate through difficult times with authenticity, perspective, and skills. You can too! Relationships can get better. You can grow and change; life can be different.

While *Listen, Learn, Love* doesn't specifically focus on personal growth or developing a deeper faith, I do have programs and resources that do, so don't walk alone if you are struggling. Grab a cup of coffee, friend me on Facebook for some encouragement and inspiration, or go to my blog (susiemiller.com) and have a virtual chat with me. Explore the resources on my website; download some free ones or sign up for a course or coaching program. Remember, you are just one choice away from making a change in your life and relationships.

Together We Grow,

Susie



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A Note from the Author



Relationships are the stuff of life; in the end they are all that really matter

Susie Miller

Are you:

- ◇ sitting in tense silence at the dinner table
- ◇ tired of going to bed angry
- ◇ worn out from arguing with your kids
- ◇ feeling lonely in your friendships
- ◇ distant from your parents and siblings
- ◇ frustrated with your work relationships

Or, do you simply want *better relationships*? **Circle any of the above that apply.**



What other things, situations, and struggles are you experiencing in your relationships?



How are your relationships different from the way you “dreamed” or “envisioned” them when you were younger?





How are they “just how you imagined they would be?”



What is the “more” you want from your relationships?



Chapter 1

You Don't Have to Settle for Less Than



▲ We are hardwired for connection.
We are created for relationship.

Susie Miller



What feelings did you resonate with in the opening paragraph when it described different relationships?

.....





Are you feeling: Tense, bored, tired, frustrated, disappointed in your relationships, and if so, which ones?

.....



List 3 important relationships & your feelings about them. Try to list at least one positive for each relationship as well.

.....

Example:

Husband

enjoying empty nest

frustrated about work schedule

Relationships:

Good Feelings:

Undesirable feelings:

1

2

3



Review the list of What if's:

- What if you could dramatically change the way your conversations go?
- What if you could engage in difficult discussions and they actually went well?
- What if your conversations with your spouse led to deeper intimacy rather than distance?
- What if talks with your kids brought you closer together; if they felt like you understood them and began to share more openly?
- What if your work relationships felt more like partnerships than transactions because the conversations and collaborations surrounding your work together were seamless?

Which of these resonated with you? (Circle the bullet point to each one that tugged at your heart.)

Pause and imagine what it would be like, feel like, look like in any of these that apply?



Listen, Learn, Love: What were your first thoughts about these as skills to help you grow better relationships?

.....

Listen:

Learn:

Love:





How effective are you at using these skills in your relationships?

.....

Listen:

Learn:

Love:



How might the 3 *people* in your “important relationship list” answer that same question?

.....

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Did you think in 30 Days?!! Really? Can things get better that fast!? Have you seen relationships improve in the past?



△ Relationships can improve even if you're the only one making an effort.

Susie Miller

Good news is yes! I have seen it countless times. And relationships can get better even if you are the only one making the effort! People respond when they feel cared about.



What is one thing that would make each of your 3 *people* relationships be better?

.....

Example:

John, if we could have a conversation about my feelings and expectations about the time he gets home in the evening.

1

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Are you willing to learn these 3 simple, elegant, effective skills to begin to make changes in your relationships?



A large empty rectangular box for writing or drawing.



Symbols:

I am a visual learner and love the artsy things around my home. When we lived in Seattle, the beaches were filled with beautiful stones and I brought lots home with me to remind me of a walk on the beach during a great conversation with a friend.

One of my favorites is a heart shaped stone. I found it one afternoon, when I was struggling with sadness about losing my dad at a young age. Whenever I see it on my table, it reminds me of that time and the thoughts, feelings, and comfort I found alone on that beach.



Do you have things in your home that bring to mind special memories or moments?



What are they and what drew you to them?



Symbols for Listen, Learn, Love:



How might a conch shell remind you or teach you about listen?



What do glasses or “perspectacles” remind you or teach you about learn?



What does the heart symbol remind you or teach you about love?



Personal Chat:

I am thrilled you are taking this virtual journey with me and I do hope you connect with me online at SusieMiller.com

I am also on: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. All of the links are on my website, so PLEASE connect with me on those sites too!



What other things, situations, and struggles are you experiencing in your relationships?

.....

I treasure my online community and have made some dear friends through various social media outlets. But we need real people in our lives too.



Who are you walking with, sharing your life within the day-lines of life?

.....





Who shares your joys, knows your sorrows and struggles and can take this *Listen, Learn, Love* journey with you?



What can you share with them to invite them into your journey?





△ We want someone to bear witness to our life. We want to know we matter.

Susie Miller

How to get the most from this book:

These 3 Skills: *Listen, Learn, Love* can be applied to any relationship! Just the fact that you are making the effort will improve them because people respond when we make efforts and sacrifices to improve relationships.

But let's be honest: Relationships can be hard. They aren't always easy, and don't even always feel worth it. I have been there. Yet, no matter how hard relationships get, we continue to long for them to be rewarding, joyful, satisfying, and better. By using the skills: *Listen, Learn, Love* you can help make that happen.

There are various scenes throughout the book to put yourself into and imagine your relationships. The more you interact with the book, the stories and actually do the "Practicing *Listen, Learn, Love*" steps, at the end of each chapter, the more you will grow and see improvement in your relationships.



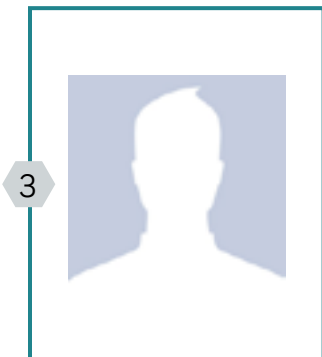
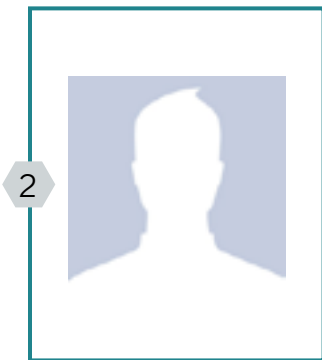
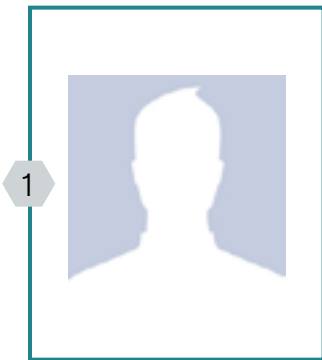
Your Relationship Avatar:



This is my avatar!

Remember your *3 important people* at the beginning of this chapter? Those will be your Relationship Avatars. The relationships you want to take through the scenes in the book AND the exercises at the end of each chapter.

Feel free to cut out a picture and put it in your workbook or pop a digital one in here so you have them with you on this journey.





Head over to my

FREE Facebook Group:

Better Relationships NOW:

- ◇ Connect with me
- ◇ Share your stories
- ◇ Post your questions
- ◇ Answer questions and help others
- ◇ Connect and make friends

We are all in this together!



Chapter 2

Relationships are the Currency of Today



What thoughts or images came to mind when you read the chapter title, Relationships are the Currency of Today?

.....



How do average, mediocre, tension filled relationships impact your life?

.....

At Home:

At Work:

At Play:





Relationships are the currency of today

Susie Miller

One day I was struggling to write, facing a deadline and feeling discouraged and overwhelmed. Tired of staring at my blank screen and aware that all the “research” I was doing, (and some time spent surfing FB) was not moving me forward. It was a lovely spring day, so my puppy Bella and I took a walk, since that can usually shake me out of my funk. But it didn’t this time. Time to use a lifeline!

So I face-timed my dear friend —a phone call wasn’t going to cut it- and shared with her my angst, overwhelmed and even a few good things that were happening. She listened, reassure, encouraged and even celebrated with me. Hanging up, I thought, “That was just what I needed!” My day actually got better, and I got some writing done!



When did a positive interaction from one or more of your relationships impact your mood and make your day better?

.....



Another day, I was tooling along on a very productive day, when my son interrupted me to discuss some frustrations about his college search and applications. Forgetting to apply *Listen, Learn, Love* as I should have, instead I said something bossy, (told him how I thought he should handle it) and the conversation stalled. Free fall is more like it! It ended something like this: “Okay fine, Mom, I’ll think about what you said.” Not a catastrophe, not a relationship ender, but tension and yuck. And the rest of the day was colored by this tension.

I went over and over it my mind: beat myself up a bit for being bossy, hit a few shots his way for not being “teachable,” I mean, I am older and wiser than he is...right?!

But needless to say, the day was overshadowed and tension colored our interactions. It’s not only the big messes or huge fights that get to us and impact our relationships. Tension or misunderstandings might be like paper cuts, but they hurt and hinder us none the less.



Can you relate? When did a relationship struggle darken your mood and impact your day negatively?

.....





What examples can you think of where your professional life was negatively impacted by your personal life? (Stay at home moms—you have a professional life too—full time mom is simply too costly a career for anyone to afford your salary!)



▲ You can't be truly considered a success in your business life if your home life is in shambles.

Zig Ziglar





Relationships drive our choices.
Relationships are our why.

Susie Miller

Relationships...Good ones, easy ones, complex one and yes even hard and challenging ones...fill our lives. Wouldn't you agree that relationships motivate most of our life and work choices.

They are our "why." We work in order to provide a certain lifestyle for our families, and relationships influence, where we live, what we do in our spare time and where we invest our energies.



Do you agree or disagree and why?





How do your relationships impact and shape your life, work, where you live, how you spend your time and who you spend it with?



Most relationships make a shift:

- The sweet baby and tenderhearted toddler disappear into a truculent teen.
- The great boss, who was excited about our new ideas, starts shooting them down and, instead, promotes sticking to the status quo.
- Our supportive spouse wavers in their excitement and commitment to the time and financial cost of pursuing our entrepreneurial dreams.
- Tension floods our friendships with other moms as school politics or sports team selections impact your kids and their friendships.
- Clients become competitors.
- Sibling rivalry, disagreements, and jealousy replace childhood games and tree house dreams.



When you read about relationships shifts (Chapter 2), which ones did you resonate with, OR what shifts have you experienced in your own relationships?

.....



What was the impact of those shifts?

.....



What would you like to be different in those relationships?

.....



“Relationships are the stuff of life, why are we rarely, if ever, taught how to create quality ones?”



Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?



Have you taken classes, seminar, or workshops on building better relationships? If so, which ones? And what major lessons did you learn?





Where are the holes you see or areas you need to work on to create better relationships with your *3 Important people* (Relationship Avatars)?

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When you read the story about my daughter and me, did it make you feel better? (I hope so!) Here is an expert in the field, making a total mess of one of the most important relationships in her life!



What thoughts and feelings were stirred as you read this story?

.....





What relationships in your life came to mind?



Remember: We are all in process, on a journey of becoming and we can create better relationships once choice at a time.

Practicing Listen, Learn, Love



Reflect on your 3 Important people (Relationship Avatars), and write down one thing you learned in this chapter to apply to each of these relationships

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What would you like me to address about relationships? Write them here and then post them online in [Facebook Group: Better Relationships NOW!](#)

.....

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Join us!

Better Relationships NOW!
Facebook Group

is here for you!!

It's important to know you don't have to do this *relationship stuff* alone. That is the whole point—building meaningful connections and engaging in relationships. In today's digital world, virtual relationships can be encouraging and genuine.

The *Better Relationships NOW!* Community is committed to creating a meaningful community offering support, resources, and connections. We can share success stories, post questions, and grow together.!



Chapter 3

Hearing without Listening



▲ The most basic of all human needs is to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.

Ralph Nichols

Skill #1: Listen:

Did you think, Listen, well duh! Like my mentor did?



Are you a good listener? Why? or Why Not?

.....





Would the people in your life agree?



For me: I struggle to *Listen Well*, when I want people to talk faster or get to the point. My mind is 7 steps ahead and I have to remind myself to slow down. I listen for a living as a coach and I share a lot of my listening failures and struggles in this chapter. So, let me invite you to be brutally honest with yourself about where you may need to grow in *Skill #1: Listen*.



Where do you need to grow in your listening skills?





What makes it hard for you to *Listen Well*?

.....



How well do you pay attention to non-verbal communication?

.....



Think about a recent conversation or interaction when you were acutely aware of the non-verbal messages. Did they reinforce the message or contradict it? How?

.....



Listening is Not:

- ⬡ A defense, dismissal or explanation: “Well, this is why I did/said/acted that way.”
- ⬡ Rebuttal or unloading: “Well you, did/said/acted in a way that hurt me.”
- ⬡ Me too stories: “Really? Me too, in fact when I... blah, blah, blah... me, me, me!”



Which of these “Listening is nots” are you most guilty of doing? Are there any other ways you don’t listen well?

.....

Listening is:

- ⬡ Pausing and taking time to let what the other person is saying sink in.
- ⬡ Asking questions for more information and clarity.
- ⬡ Paying attention to their nonverbal communication.



Which of these “Listening is” are you most skilled at using?

.....





What is an example or time when you used them recently in any of your relationships?

.....



Describe in detail, a time when you used the “Listening is” skill with any of your three Relationship Avatars.

.....





Did you resonate with any of the stories discussed in this chapter? If so, which ones and why?

.....



Did any of stories from your own life or relationships come to mind?

.....



Pause & Pay Attention:



▲ Pause and pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal messages.

Susie Miller



Do you pause and pay attention or are you often more busy thinking about what you want to say in response? (Be honest-it's only you who will see your answers!)

.....



How can you remember to pay attention to both the verbal communication—the words and tone—and the non-verbal communication—body language, facial expressions, etc to develop *Skill #1: Listen?*

.....



Clarify and Validate:



What comes to mind as you consider what it means to “Fire your Defense Attorney”? What is your knee-jerk reaction when you are feeling defensive?



Think of a time you jumped the gun and didn't Clarify or Validate the other person. What happened?





Imagine how that conversation would have gone differently and write that scene below:

.....



Think about a time when you did Clarify & Validate. How did that interaction unfold and turn out? (If this is a new skill–skip this question and come back after you have tried it out).

.....



Clarify and Validate:



△ Feeling are. Period, end of sentence. We cannot control our feelings. We can only control what we do with them.

Susie Miller



How have you been taught to handle feelings?

.....

As a child:

As a teen:

As an adult:





What is positive and helpful about the way you been taught to handle feelings?

.....



What is not helpful or relationship enhancing about what you have been taught?

.....



What were your thoughts or response to the statement “feelings are”?



Have you ever had a “beach ball” moment? If so, describe it:





How could you have handled it differently with what you have learned so far about feelings and listening?

.....



Has anyone ever dismissed, diminished or tried to talk you out of your feelings? Describe the situation. How did that feel to you?

.....



What was your response?

.....





Have you ever dismissed, diminished or tried to talk someone out of their feelings?

.....



How did they respond?

.....



How could you have handled it differently with what you have learned so far about feelings and listening?

.....



The Most Important Question to Ask



▲ Is being right more important than this relationship?

Susie Miller



Think about the last time someone said, “I’m sorry” to you. How did you feel? How did it impact the relationship?

.....

No one likes to be wrong. However, if we take it out of the right/wrong or win/lose category and move it to the relationship category, everything changes.





What were your thoughts and feelings when you read this section about learning to and being willing to say “I’m sorry”?

.....



How could asking yourself the most important question, “Is being right more important than this relationship?” shift your posture in a tough conversation, disagreement or full-blown argument?

.....



Has anyone ever done this in an argument or difficult discussion with you? How did you feel? What was your response?

.....





Have you ever done this in the midst of an argument or disagreement? How did you feel? What was their response?

.....



What are some things that contribute to your (potential) resistance to saying “I’m sorry”? Circle the ones that apply and add any others that come to mind.

.....

- ☐ Admission of guilt
- ☐ Taking the blame
- ☐ Fear of being misunderstood



▲ The words “I’m sorry” go a long way in creating strong and safe relationships.

Susie Miller



What is your response to this sentence, "I'm sorry is not an admission of guilt. It is not declaring you purposely did or said something wrong." Do you agree?



How does knowing the crucial question: "Is being right more important than this relationship?", influence your willingness to say "I'm sorry".



Listening with your Eyes and Ears:



Listening requires action, concentration and focus. What comes to mind when you read the words, "listen with your eyes and ears"?



What things prevent or hinder you from listening with your eyes, ears and heart in the midst of daily life? What can you do to remedy this?



When was a time when you really listened with your eyes, ears & heart to each of your Relationship Avatars? How did they respond? How did it impact your relationship?



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Listening with your eyes, ears, and heart is a foolproof way to develop deep and meaningful relationships. Why? Because most people don't feel listened to and everyone wants to be seen, heard, and understood — not necessarily agreed with, but acknowledged and listened to!

Imagine if:

◇ Picture a conversation with your aging parents: they don't want to face the fact they are aging, let alone have a conversation about it. However, they realize you're worried about future plans or what their preferences would be should they become disabled. They not only validate your worry, but willingly have a conversation they prefer to avoid.

◇ Envision a discussion with your spouse about a necessary debt increase for your entrepreneurial dream. Instead of fearfully shaking their head or just blurting out, "no!" your spouse said, "Okay, even though it scares me, help me understand the need for this investment because I want to be supportive."

◇ What if, during a work meeting, a colleague noticed your body language communicated frustration, but you hadn't spoken up, and he paused to ask for your thoughts and input?



Jot down some thoughts and feelings that came to mind as you read each of these scenarios.

.....





When was the last time you felt really listened to? How did you feel and how did it impact your relationship?



To create better relationships, we must be the ones who practice *Skill #1: Listen*. Like the conch shell we pick up to hear the ocean and return to the shore; in our mind’s eye, listening opens us to a deeper understanding of others. We will discover a multitude of insights, points of connection, and stories about our loved ones, friends, and colleagues that will help you create better relationships.



🏠 I felt it. Shelter to speak with you.

Emily Dickinson

Practicing Listen, Learn, Love:

1. Pick one of your Relationship Avatars and recall a recent conversation when you did a less than stellar job of listening. If you had a do-over, what would the conversation look and sound like using *Skill #1: Listen*? Write a few notes about how you hope the conversation would go this time!



2. Call to mind one conversation where saying “I’m sorry” could have changed the outcome. Write down this person’s name – quick before you talk yourself out of it! Revisit that conversation, call them, show up at their home, office, school or take them to coffee, and be brave enough to say, “I’m sorry my actions/words hurt you.” Remember to ask yourself: “*Is being right more important than this relationship?*”



3. This week be aware of how you do or don't listen. Pick one tip you can work on to develop your Skill of Listening and practice it in one or more of your relationships.

.....

4. Write the tip on three Post-it™ notes: put one on your bathroom mirror, steering wheel, TV remote (or other places you see multiple times each day). They will remind you to take action.

.....



Please share how practicing and implementing these skills impacted your relationships in our [BetterRelationshipsNOW! Facebook community](#)



Chapter 4

Treasure Hunts



🔺 Discovery consists not in seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes.

Marcel Proust

3: Learn Them

Learn Them perfectly captures the process of discovery essential to any thriving relationship. Learning people creates deeper connections.

We are created for authentic relationships, deep and meaningful connections; where we let down our guard, remove our masks, turn off the filter, relax, and show our real selves. Have you ever done that?

Have you ever spent time with someone and been totally you? Uncensored: you didn't have to be "on," or carefully weigh each word or monitor your mood... where instead of a chess game, your time together resembled a ramble down the lazy river: comfortable, easy, and safe? Authentic relationships are restful.





Who do you have this kind of authentic relationship with?

.....



What is it like? How does it make you feel?

.....



Authentic Relationships are Restful

Susie Miller



How did it get to such a deep level of connection and authenticity?

.....



Who do you wish you had more of this kind of authentic and restful relationship with?

.....



Learning Them involves intentionally seeking out below-the-surface revelations. What are their dreams, struggles, experiences — in essence: what is their story, what makes them tick, and how are they unique?



What comes to mind, when you think about *Learning* the 3 Relationship Avatars you are taking though this book? Have you *Learned Them*?

.....

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Write down some fun facts: favorite candy, movie, color, coffee preference, favorite meal, book, vacation spots for each of your Relationship Avatars:

.....

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2

3



Write down some below the surface stuff: hopes, fears, tendencies, strengths, weaknesses, joys, and struggles?

.....

1

2

3

Learn Them is not:

- ◇ Figuring out the things you would like to change about your spouse, friends, loved ones or coworkers and developing a plan or campaign to do so.
- ◇ Tweaking, correcting or making negative comments regarding what you learned.
- ◇ Invading their privacy, demanding answers and revelations rather than paying attention to clues.



Which, if any of these “Learn Them is nots” are you most guilty of doing?

.....





△ We are created for deep connection on a soul or spiritual level, and this happens when we “Learn Them” by observing and playing detective.

Susie Miller

Learn Them is:

- ◇ Studying them, observing nonverbal clues, going on a treasure hunt.
- ◇ Asking questions, listening to their answers, and seeking out stories.
- ◇ Watching and investigating... go all CSI on them and see what you can dig up.

Very few of us feel deeply known. Marriages in the United States are filled with lonely people living like roommates, co-existing on a surface level with the “love of their life.”

We are created for deep connection on a soul or spiritual level, and this happens when we *Learn Them*... when we take time to put aside our agenda, our multitasking, and fully pay attention. We check our eyes, adjust our vision, get out our “perspectacles” and look for hidden treasures.



Which of these *Learn Them* are you most skilled at using?





Did you resonate with any of the stories in this chapter? If so, which ones?

.....



What personal stories from your own life came to mind?

.....



When has someone taken time and made the effort to “Learn You”? What did they do?

.....





How did you feel? How did it impact your relationship?



How would this new deeper type of conversation impact your networking, ladies lunch, or cocktail party interactions? Think of and write about your most recent surfacey interaction and imagine using the *Learn them* questions.



Before:

After:





How would your life and your relationships improve if we took the time to genuinely get to know the people in your life to Learn Them and then engage based on what we learn?



In general:



With your 3 Relationship Avatars?



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Tips to Practice Skill #2: Learn Them



Tip #1: Learn their love languages

This incredibly helpful concept is from Gary Chapman's book, *The 5 Love Languages*. Here are the ways I teach these love languages to my clients:

- ◇ Gifts: small tokens of affection, cards, flowers, notes, anything that says, "I was thinking about you — and made this, picked this, or bought this for you."
- ◇ Words of affirmation: words spoken or written — often — that affirm, praise, offer encouragement.
- ◇ Acts of service: caring, helpful or kind acts done on behalf of another.
- ◇ Quality time: chunks of uninterrupted time, while being fully present and engaged — no smart phones or multitasking.
- ◇ Physical touch: (this is not the same as liking sex) loves to hold hands, sit close, is touchy-feely.



Do you see yourself in any of these? (List them in order from most Likely to least favorite love language.)

.....





How do you tend to express your love and care for the important people in your life?

.....



Reviewing the 5 love languages, which are your top two?

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2





What are the top 1 or 2 love languages for each of your Relationship Avatars?



1

2

3



List one specific thing you can do to communicate your love or care for each of them according to their love languages and then set a date to take action. Come back and check it off.



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3





What you actually did & how they responded

.....

1

2

3



More ideas for communicating in their love language:

.....

1

2

3



Tip #2: Investigate, Discover, Discern

Learn Them: observe and study them. Listen to the clues they drop. Pay attention to their nonverbal messages. (Skill #1: Listen will come in handy here.)

What did you discover about each of your 3 Relationship Avatars when you pulled out your detective gear?

Preferences/Habits/Idiosyncrasies



▲ Learn Them: Become a detective, study, observe, and look for clues to understand their story.

Susie Miller



How I can interact with them based on what I learned:

.....

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Enneagram:

One of my favorite tools for learning others is the Enneagram. It uniquely and accurately describes the “why” behind how we think, feel and behave based upon our core desires and fears. I have used it personally and with clients to help discover areas of strength and areas of needed growth. It provides a language to talk about our unique wiring and how we engage with others based on our type.

Some people are resistant to personality tests and inventories because they don't want to be put into a box. I get it. I believe we are all uniquely designed by God and have our individual stories and experiences that shape us. That being said, I find personality assessments very helpful because while we are all unique, we share traits, behaviors, and ways we think, act, respond to things. The Enneagram in particular provides a way to understand our differences and offers a language to increase understanding. And anytime we can better understand ourselves and the people that matter most, we have the opportunity and tools to improve relationships

There are books, podcasts, and training courses that can help you discover and understand your type. I've included a number of my favorite resources below as doing a deep dive into the Enneagram is beyond the scope of this guide.

That being said, I would highly recommend taking time to explore the Enneagram to help you grow personally and in your relationships with others. Below are some resources I have used.

Enneagram Resources:

YourEnneagramCoach.com by Beth and Jeff McCord, who wrote the foreword to *Listen, Learn, Love*. This site is full of resources, including their podcast. Also check out their informative Instagram account [@yourenneagramcoach](https://www.instagram.com/yourenneagramcoach)

They have a terrific book for marriages: *Becoming Us: Using the Enneagram to Create a Thriving Gospel-Centered Marriage*.

The Road Back to You, by Ian Crohn, along with his [Typology Podcast](#), and his [website](#)

The Complete Enneagram, 27 Paths to Greater Self Knowledge, by Beatrice Chestnut, PhD

A few Enneagram Instagram accounts that I follow and learn from: [@enneagramandcoffee](#) [@enneagramexplained](#) [@theblackenneagram](#) [@justmyenneatype](#)



Tip #3: Give them room to grow and change



▲ Thriving, growing relationships allow for and encourage growth in one another.

Susie Miller



What boxes have you been put in? And by whom?

.....





What specific parts of your story have shaped these boxes?

.....



Where have you grown, changed or transformed?

.....



Who sees, knows, and honors these shifts?

.....



Who do you want to see, recognize, and learn these changes in you?



What boxes might you put your Relationships Avatars in and what transformations have you missed?



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How can you engage in their story and Learn Them as they have grown?

.....

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What other treasure hunts do you want to go on now that you understand Skill #2: Learn Them?

.....

Practicing *Learn Them* entails using *Listen* to help us pick up cues and hints about the likes, dislikes, and preferences of our loved ones, friends, and coworkers. You don't need three different pairs of glasses; intentionality and curiosity are better tools. We can observe, ask questions to provoke conversations, and go on treasure hunts to discover things below the surface. This information helps us personalize our expressions of care.



Practicing Listen, Learn, Love

1. Think about your Relationship Avatars and apply *Learn Them*. Using your CSI super sleuth skills, consider what you know about them on a below-the-surface level... their moods, their hopes, dreams, hurts or disappointments. Think of **two specific things** you can do to *Learn Them* more deeply. Write them down. Plan how and when you will put *Learn Them* into action this week.



2. Pick another relationship (spouse, kids, friends, family, or co-worker) and surprise them in a way that communicates you *learned them*. Be creative and clever! Did any person or ideas come to mind while you read? Look at your notes. If you have a number of people, make a list and choose one to focus on each day this week, or chose one individual each a week this month.



3. Make a list of your five most important and intimate relationships. Try to figure out their love languages, write it down and use this information to improve your relationship. If you aren't sure about their love language, observe them or ask them.

.....

4. Grab your Post-it notes and write a *Learn Them* tip you want to put into action. Make 2-3 more of the same tip and put them in strategic places to see throughout your day.

.....



Please share how practicing and implementing these skills impacted your relationships on our [Facebook Group Better Relationships Now!](#) I am active in the community and we have all kinds of resources, conversations, videos and engagement to help you create better relationships!



Chapter 5

The Deeper Yes



▲ There is a time for risky love. There is a time for extravagant gestures. There is a time to pour out your affections on the one you love. And when it comes - seize it. Don't miss it.

Max Lucado

Skill #3: Love Well

Skill #3: Love Well is about sacrificial engagement. It is simply putting the needs of the other person in the relationship above your own. *Love Well* requires short-term sacrifice for long-term gain.

Wouldn't you agree the word love is overused? At times we throw it around casually and with little thought. We say "I love you" to the most important people in our lives and then cheapen the word by saying, "I love your new hairdo, outfit or car."

Love Well is not casual. It requires commitment and choice.





What came to mind when you read the words Love Well?



How have you practiced this sacrificial Loving Well in your relationships in general?





▲ Loving Well is a full-contact emotion, requiring us to go all in, risking vulnerability and commitment.

Susie Miller

Love is a universal language, desire, and emotion. We long to be loved for who we are, and we desire to love others. If only it were that simple. But love is messy and painful as much as it is rich and glorious. Broken hearts, dashed hopes, disappointments, and pain are as much a part of love as feeling cherished, enjoyed, and chosen.

Loving Well is a full contact emotion, requiring us to go all in, risking vulnerability and commitment in order to have a lasting and positive impact on our relationships.

Loving Well is born of commitment and choice; kicking selfishness to the curb. It is any action, engagement or behavior intended to bless and/or benefit another person.

Loving Well is focused on the long game. We are guided by our desire to bless a loved one, friend or even coworker. *Love well* means we choose short-term sacrifice for long-term gain. I call it choosing the “deeper yes.”



Where have you experienced someone choosing the deeper yes and choosing to Love You Well?

.....





Think of a situation where you have not been Loved Well.
What was it and how did you feel?

.....



What stories and experiences of being Loved Well came to mind
as you read the *Imagine If* vignettes in chapter 5?

.....

Love Well is Not:

- ◇ Keeping score of who sacrifices more.
- ◇ Using candy, flowers or any other means to smooth things over and avoid addressing issues after a conflict.
- ◇ Giving in to another person's whims, especially when it is unbeneficial to them.
- ◇ Looking the other way when a coworker is dishonest or acts in a manner detrimental to the business.
- ◇ Compromising your standards or acting against your morality or ethics.





Which if any of these “Love Well is not” are you most guilty of doing? Describe the situation:

.....



What is the internal motivation for you actions when you make these choices?

.....



Love Well is:

- ◇ Putting your knowledge about the important people in your life into action with the intention of blessing or benefiting them.
- ◇ Acting on behalf of and in the best interest of the other, especially when you least feel like it.
- ◇ Valuing the relationship more than your comfort, convenience or emotions.

We all like the concept of loving and being loved. But *Loving Well* requires sacrifice; consciously choosing to put the other person's needs and wants first. It is saying “no” to me and “yes” to you, born of our desire to be a blessing or support... to be a giver in our relationships — especially when it means being uncomfortable, disappointed or doing without something we want.

When you Love Well, you choose to say the “deeper yes.”

Loving Well utilizes both the skills: *Listen and Learn Them*, but it is first and foremost about our motivation and choices.



Which of these “Love Well” are you most skilled at using?
Describe a situation where you used them:

.....





Did you resonate with any of the stories about Loving Well? OR What stories or experiences came to your mind as you read through these?



Tips to Practice Skill #3: Love Well

Loving Well is the most nuanced of the three skills. It draws on both *Listen* and *Learn* Them. Through the process of discovery, using the first two skills, you will gain information and insight about the important people in your life, which you can apply in creative ways to *Love Well*.

Tip #1: Awareness of what will get in your way.

“*Love Well*” are action words implying effort and intentionality. To *Love Well*, we must be acutely aware of the pitfalls and potholes that can trip us up or steer us off course.

It is crucial to know how our moods, frustrations, stress, and fatigue impact our decisions. And we must be honest about the thoughts, beliefs, and fears that may get in our way and stop us from choosing to *Love Well*.





What pitfall and potholes can trip you up or steer you off course? (Beliefs, attitudes, stories, fears etc.)



When and how do your moods, fatigue, or stress impact your ability to choose to Love Well?





Choose to say the deeper yes

Susie Miller

It takes courage to acknowledge what could stop us from making the hard decision to say “the deeper yes,” from choosing to Love Well.

Sometimes, I don’t want to admit it is a choice. I want to ignore or deny responsibility. Blaming someone or something else is easier, but doing so isn’t healthy, honest or beneficial for any relationship.

Love Well involves examining our motivations and making intentional choices; sometimes it’s harder than we ever imagined.



As you identified the pitfall & potholes as well as the moods & stressors that impact you, what actions can you take to create margin in your life to engage you to have the energy, focus, and awareness to Love Well?



Tip #2: Be willing to sacrifice

Sacrifice, by definition, means putting someone else's needs, wants, desires above our own. It means we are willing to take the hit, blame, be misunderstood, judged, inconvenienced, disappointed and/or bear another's burden.



▲ Loving Well is born of sacrifice and choice, kicking selfishness to the curb

Susie Miller



What thoughts and feelings come to mind when you hear the word "sacrifice"?

.....

Loving Well is challenging, especially when it is costly. Making the choice to *Love Well* is also more fulfilling and meaningful in these moments.





Think of two times when you have been Loved Well as someone made sacrifices for you—your wants, desires, dreams, & preferences. Write down the situation and your actions and how it made you feel.

.....

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When & how have you Loved Well the 3 Relationship Avatars you are taking through this workbook?

.....

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3





What was their response?

.....

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Tip #3: Loving Well is based on commitment not emotions.

We can choose to *Love Well* by acting from our commitments, not from our emotions. This is hard to do. We are emotionally driven beings, and it takes practice and discipline to manage our emotional response, choosing to act from our decision made in a rational moment.

Sometimes we won't feel like being sacrificial. It is hard, uncomfortable, and simply not what we want to do sometimes. *Loving Well* does not require us to “feel like it” — but rather make a conscious choice to act according to our commitments and not be governed by our emotions. *Loving Well* means choosing to do it anyway.



When have you benefited from someone choosing to Love Well and act from their commitments and not their emotions? Describe both the situation and how it felt to be Loved Well in this way.

.....





When have you acted based on your commitments and not your emotions with each of your Relationship Avatars? How did they respond? How did it make you feel?



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△ How can I serve you?

Susie Miller



Love Well in Business

I mentioned earlier that *Loving Well* might seem like an unusual term to use in business. However, I believe it's totally applicable. I am convinced more businesses, salespeople, and executives would enjoy greater success if they intentionally employed *Listen, Learn, Love* to their professional relationships.



What comes to mind when you think about using
Skill #3: *Love Well* in Business?

.....

If you want to practice *Love Well* in your professional relationships, keep the following questions at the forefront of all your interactions:

- How can I give to the other person in this relationship?
- How can I add value to my client, my customer, my colleague rather than have a quid pro quo attitude?
- How can I show appreciation and gratitude for my client, colleague, or customer?





Think about your business or work life. When have you used this skill and these questions in a situation or relationship there?

.....



In what other areas of business or work can you practice *Loving Well*, with clients, customers or co-workers?

.....



When have you experienced someone in your work or business life exhibit this “how can I serve” you mentality?

.....



The Big Picture Skill

Any time we choose to put the needs and interests of someone else above our own, we are *Loving Well*. This is a big picture skill; an “I’m in this for the long haul” relationship posture. *Loving Well* isn’t easy, it doesn’t come naturally, but it is a valuable skill, an intentional choice that will significantly impact the quality of our relationships.



When have you been the recipient of someone choosing to Love You Well as a big picture skill? How did this impact your relationship?

.....



What *Big Pictures* come to mind as you contemplate Loving Well for the long haul?

.....





Write one down for each of your 3 Relationship Avatars.



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What is your hope for each of these relationships as you view their picture/avatar and think about what it would look like to Love Well?



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How do you handle the feelings of discomfort or tension which come with the “tough love”-sometimes required when Loving Well?



▲ Relationships grow and thrive when we choose to listen, learn them & love them

Susie Miller

Relationships grow and thrive when we make the choice to *Love Well*, because trust grows, defenses come down, and we become more authentic and transparent, causing our relationships to reach deeper levels.



Practicing Listen, Learn, Love:

1. Pick a Relationship Avatar; think back on an interaction where you just wanted to have your own way and you breezed or bulldozed over their needs. Re-imagine the scene with you making the choice to *Love Well* and write down what how it would unfold or look in this new scenario. Decide if you want to address it with them in person.

.....

2. Recall a recent business exchange or client interaction that was more quid pro quo than go-give. How would you handle it differently using *Skill #3: Love Well*?

.....



3. Think about the days and weeks ahead; ponder the potential interactions in your relationships. Try to envision and plan some conversations in which you can practice *Love Well*. Jot down a few notes for each one that comes to mind.



4. Choose a *Love Well* tip to focus on in the coming month. Write it on a Post-it and put it beside the others. (If you haven't done any Post-it notes yet – write one tip for each skill on a single Post-it, at least it's a start)!



5. As you read through the examples of Love Well, did anyone come to mind who had loved you well? List them below. Take a moment and send them a note, email, text or pick up the phone and say thank you.

• • • • •

Please share how practicing and implementing these skills impacted your relationships on our [Facebook Group Better Relationships Now!](#) I am active in the community and we have all kinds of resources, conversations, videos and engagement to help you create better relationships!

Possibilities and Potential



▲ To be fully seen by somebody then and be loved anyhow ~ This is a human offering that can border on miraculous.

Elizabeth Gilbert

Pause for a moment and think about the people in your life who you can really be yourself with... authentic, uncensored, messy, grubby clothes, without makeup, struggling, transparent, doubtful... moments of discouragement, despair, anxiety, mania... your fears hanging out and even your flaws and idiosyncrasies showing.



Who has seen you at your worst and still knows you at your best? And loves, enjoys, and accepts you either way. Whom do you trust with the real you?





Write a few of your favorite uncensored moments with them:



1	
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Where on the spectrum is your relationship with each of your Relationship Avatars?



1 is surfacey ----- **10** is real as can be- messy, falling apart, best & worst of you

1	
2	
3	





Are you happy with the level of connection you have with them? If not, what needs to happen to move closer to a level 10 relationship with each of them?

.....

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Warning #1: Long-term and regular use of *Listen, Learn, Love* will result in authentic and rewarding relationships!

Relationship changes are a bit like a sand timer; sometimes the grains get stuck in the middle. Clogged, static, with no movement, it ceases to be effective as a sand timer. But give it a little shake, the pieces begin to “get unstuck” and shift. Suddenly, whoosh, a whole bunch of grains flow through to the other side. Our relationships are similar — a few shifts yield a rapid and significant change.



Have you ever experienced this type of shift in any of your relationships?

.....





With whom?

.....



What happened to cause the sands to shift?

.....



What happened after you got unstuck?

.....

Love Well practiced repeatedly, even with missteps and moments of utter selfishness will yield lasting results if you don't give up.



How does this truth give you specific hope in each of the relationships you want to improve (with your 3 Avatars and any others that you are willing to work on).



Example:

If I don't give up on my teenager, even though we are in conflict often, we can eventually get along because: she will grow out of her teenage years, I will demonstrate unconditional love and acceptance, even in the midst of boundaries, by pausing and not interrupting when she is sharing her thoughts or opinions (especially the ones I disagree with).

1

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▲ Long term and regular use of *Listen, Learn, Love* will result in authentic and rewarding relationships.

Susie Miller

Listen, Learn, Love @ Work

If your personal relationships were easier, more comfortable and fulfilling, would you be less stressed, more patient, and enjoyable? Yes!



How do your personal relationships negatively impact or hinder your effectiveness at work or in business? And how do you handle this issue?



How would *better* personal relationships specifically impact you and your home life?





How would that shift positively impact on your effectiveness at work?

.....



What is preventing these shifts from happening?

.....



Which of these obstacles can you address by using *Listen, Learn, Love*? Be specific in how you would apply one or more of these 3 skills to each obstacle.

.....

Relationship Realities

Thriving and satisfying relationships simply make life better. However, in reality, for many of us most of our relationships are mediocre, tense, or just plain boring. We muddle through... While all this sounds great, we still live in the mess of life



Have you felt the sting of a relationship in jeopardy? And what was your response? How did you handle it with the person?

.....



How did you handle it internally?

.....



What other *relationship realities* have you experienced?



How did you respond?





Thinking about those same situations, how would using the skills *Listen, Learn Love* impact your response today?



As you think about your relationships, are there others you want to work on, invest in, or make an effort to improve?





▲ Relationships are the stuff of life. We can't avoid them or live without them. So doesn't it make sense to learn how to create great ones?

Susie Miller

Warning #2: You will make mistakes; it will be messy. (Don't panic!)

“Messy” isn't a bad word. “Messy” means you are engaged, invested, and committed. You have the courage to actually be in the arena trying... not standing on the sideline wishing and hoping things change or get better.

The good news: Practicing these three skills will bring far more rewards than the effort you make. Why? Because we desperately desire to connect; thus, we are delighted when someone makes an effort on our behalf, whether or not they get it right! So “messy” is worth it! “Messy” at least means you are invested, wanting more, and willing to try!



What are your thoughts as you read this quote? Does it embolden you? Intimidate you? Why?



Where have you “dared greatly” by being in the arena in the midst of the messy relationships?





Where has “daring greatly” brought rewards in your relationships?



Where have you felt thwarted? Frustrated? Tempted to leave the arena and not return?



▲ You will make mistakes. Relationships are messy, but don't panic! Messy means you are in the arena, investing in creating better ones.

Susie Miller



Jumping Scared:

In the movie, 6 Days, 7 Nights, with Harrison Ford and Anne Heche, there is a scene where they are stranded on an island.

While seeking a way off the island, they discover a boat moored off the opposite coast and try to capture the captain's attention.

Instead, they witness the captain being shot by pirates who have overtaken his boat.

Suddenly they must now flee from the pirates who want to kill them for witnessing the murder.

Scrambling up the side of a mountain, they run for refuge only to find themselves trapped between the approaching pirates and a cliff overlooking the blue sea.

In an effort to save their lives, Harrison Ford's character pushes Anne Heche's character off the cliff and jumps immediately after her.

I remember watching and thinking how awesome it would be to jump off a cliff like that!



Does that ever happen to you? Do you watch a movie scene and just wish you could try the stunts or have the experiences shown in it? If so, which ones any come to mind?





Have you ever done any of them? If so, which ones? Where? And when?



▲ Jumping scared yields more results than letting fear win.

Susie Miller

The cliff from the movie is Makawehi Point, at Shipwreck Beach in Kauai, Hawaii.

We celebrated our 27th wedding anniversary in Kauai. And I was thrilled to find out that the cliff was a short walk from our resort.

I was determined to jump off it and have my once in a lifetime movie moment! After researching the safety hazards and calculating my swimming abilities against the rip tide warnings, I convinced my husband that I wasn't crazy for wanting to jump off that 55 ft. cliff.

Standing at the top, I was scared. My courage and determination waned. I wasn't sure I could actually go through with it –even after all my brave boasting. I peered over the cliff edge and watched a huge sea turtle effortlessly glide through the crystal clear water.

John was waiting on the shore, where I would swim in, triumphant from my adventure. I hesitated – what was I thinking?!! Nervous about the riptides, apprehensive about the 55ft drop -I was really scared.

The fear of jumping played tug of war with the fear of regret. I said to myself, “Susie, just do it... just jump scared!”

I flung myself off the cliff and plummeted toward the sea! It was amazing, exhilarating and fun! After hitting the water, I scrambled toward the surface and caught my breath, my first thought was, “I want to do that again!” Suddenly, the 55 ft jump didn’t seem so scary!

I didn’t repeat the jump, as the swim into shore was brutal and frightening when I got caught in a riptide and had to struggle to make it safely to the beach.

It was scary and jumping scared was worth every moment of fear to feel the exhilaration and satisfaction of having done it! Cross another one off my bucket list! I can now say I have cliff jumped!

Jumping scared in relationships is a lot like that cliff jump! Frightening, unsure, wanting so badly for things to go well! When things go well— when our relationship risks pay off, we are thrilled, however, when struggle comes instead, we wonder if we were crazy to even try!



Have you jumped scared in life? Not just a movie moment, but in life - a risk in business, an adventure, a major life change? What was it? How did you overcome the fear? What did you feel after doing so?





Have you ever let fear keep you from jumping scared in life? If so, when and why?

.....



Have you ever jumped scared in relationships? How and what happened?

.....



Have you ever let fear keep you from jumping scared in relationships? If so, when and why?

.....

Stiff Jeans:



Can you relate to trying new things and having them feel awkward or uncomfortable? What kept you moving forward?



What were the results of continuing on in your efforts to improve your relationships?





When have you enjoyed the “broken in” side of relationships, where there is ease and comfort? What helped you get to this stage?

.....



How will using *Listen, Learn Love* in each of your 3 Relationship Avatars relationships improve them and move them more towards the “comfy jeans” type of relationship?

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Which of these skills do you feel the most adept at? What other tips have you used to make this skill one of your most effective ones?

.....



Which skill do you feel needs the most work? Which of the tips under that skill do you want to focus on first?

.....



Look at your 3 Relationship Avatars and think about which skill and specific tip in that skill you want to focus on in the coming weeks?

.....

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Practicing Listen, Learn, Love:



Perfection is not the goal, Practice is

Susie Miller

1. How is your relationship with your avatars? As you have taken them and your relationship through each of these actions steps, are you more hopeful?

.....

2. Can you see improvement? Look at some of your notes and make a list of a few personal action steps specific to your relationships.

.....

3. Review the practice exercises at the end of each chapter and do the questions you skipped in this Companion Guide

.....

4 .Update your sticky notes for each skill and favorite tips. Go back through your dog-eared pages, highlights, and notes. This is “stuff” for your sticky notes. Make three or four copies of each one. Then put them up on your mirror, fridge, TV and/ or dashboard to remind you to practice. A reminder to *Listen, Learn, Love* the people in your life could make the difference between actually doing it instead of just wanting to.

.....



Please share how practicing and implementing these skills impacted your relationships on our [Facebook Group Better Relationships Now!](#) I am active in the community and we have all kinds of resources, conversations, videos and engagement to help you create better relationships!

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

—Theodore Roosevelt

Join us!

The Better Relationships NOW! Community

is here for you!!

Would you do me a favor?

Post one question, on the Community page, about using these skills in your relationships. It will help me know what additional things to write about in *Listen, Learn, Love* blog posts, a workbook, or even the next edition. Thanks!

It's important to know you don't have to do this relationship stuff alone. That is the whole point—building meaningful connections and engaging in relationships. In today's digital world, virtual relationships can be encouraging and genuine.

This free Facebook group is a place to find support, encouragement, and resources. We are creating a meaningful, engaged community where we can share success stories, post questions, and grow together.

I would love to hear about moments of connection, understanding, increased ease, or how practicing and implementing these skills impacted your relationships. And, if you feel you need more time, tools, help, or encouragement, join me over in the [Better Relationships NOW! Facebook group](#).

Remember, we're all in this together. I can't wait to connect and hear your stories!



Susie Albert Miller

Susie Albert Miller, MA, MDiv is an author, speaker, and catalyst for growth, dedicated to helping high performers thrive in the relationships that matter most.

Susie helps people not settle for mediocre relationships with those they love and, through the process, help them learn to love God, and even themselves, better. For over 25 years, Susie has equipped countless men, women, and couples reduce stress, communicate effectively, and create better relationships through tried and true methods for long lasting results.

Susie is the author of *Listen, Learn, Love: How to Dramatically Improve Your Relationships in 30 Days or Less* which offers practical advice and actionable steps create better relationships Fast! Susie has appeared on Capitol Hill, NPR, and numerous media outlets. She is an engaging speaker and emcee featured at national events and conferences.

Susie is a cancer survivor; her story includes numerous life challenges which have shaped her work, but she's known for her outlook on life as a "possibilitarian". She loves dark chocolate, good books, and lingering conversations. She and her husband John have been married 37 years, have 3 adult children, and an adorable grandson.

To learn more about Susie's offerings, schedule her for your conference, retreat, or a speaking engagement, access more resources, or connect with her on social media, go to SusieMiller.com.





SusieMiller
Author|Speaker|Catalyst

Digging Deeper with
LISTEN, LEARN, LOVE