

What Color
is
Your
Relationship?

By Anthony Okrongly

Dedicated to the women in my life who taught me about relationships.

Margaret Okrongly, my mother

Donna Okrongly, my wife

Margaret Okrongly, my daughter

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**TABLE OF
CONTENTS**

<i>What Color is Your Relationship?</i>	1
<i>Emotions, Feelings and Maintaining Full Color Love</i>	8
<i>Spiraling Narratives</i>	14
<i>Your Self-Narrative Becomes a Love Narrative</i>	23
<i>Let's Add some Color to Your Relationship</i>	38
<i>The Early Marriage</i>	46
<i>The Big Disappointment</i>	53
<i>Polishing His Sphere (not dirty)</i>	62
<i>What is Important to You? What is Important to Him?</i>	71
<i>Moving Toward, Moving Away From Values</i>	79
<i>Men are Fence Fixers</i>	90
<i>Creating the Common Problem or Challenge</i>	97

**TABLE OF
CONTENTS**

<i>What is a "Proportunity"</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>When Nothing is Wrong but Nothing Feels Right</i>	<i>108</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>114</i>

What Color is Your Relationship?

In order to understand a relationship, we must first understand ourselves as individuals. “Who am I? What defines me? What is it that makes me... well... me?” You may think that what makes you “you” is something unique and special... it is... and it isn’t. The essence of each of person is his or her NARRATIVE.

We are completely and essentially nothing more or less than our narrative – or story. As you move forward through “What Color is Your Relationship?” you will explore this reality in much more detail, and how your narrative defines not only you but also “you two:” you and your love.

Think of yourself. Who are you? If I were to meet you at a party, in an alcove, where the conversation was muted and the music unobtrusive, and I were to ask, “Who are you?” what would you say in return?

Let’s explore what might transpire. First, you would say your name. What is your name? A name is a sound that you go by – no more and no less – it could be a grunt just as easily as it could be “Elizabeth.” What does “Elizabeth” say about you? Nothing *per se*, but it says much about how your identity is a NARRATIVE. Elizabeth will be our avatar

for you, the female reader. Later we will meet our male avatar, but for now he is undiscovered, and thus unknown to Elizabeth.

“Elizabeth” is simply a sound that was spoken about you shortly after your birth. “What will we name her?” “What name should I write on the birth certificate?” This is a question that must be answered! All human offspring must begin life with a sound that begins their NARRATIVE.

Your parents chose the sound “Elizabeth,” yet it is not who you are. It is not uniquely you. It is not even unique to you. Many human babies have had that same name. Perhaps your mother’s mother, or your mother’s sister, or your father’s cousin who died at a young age carried that sound as her moniker, so your parents assigned it to you. Perhaps they just liked the sound of the consonants and diphthongs of the syllables.

However, when asked, “Who are you,” we all start with that series of sounds. “I am John.” “I am Stephen Tobias.” “I am Elizabeth.” Are you Elizabeth? NO! You are much more. However, Elizabeth is the first point of your narrative. So that is where you start. It is the opening line of the opening scene of the opening act of the narrative of your life.

This brings us back to the primary point that who you “are” is simply a narrative – nothing more and nothing less. We will not discuss the nature of one’s “soul,” for it is truly beyond the scope of this book. For

the purpose of this book, we will be dealing only with those events that occur between your birth and the present moment. We need not speculate on what might have occurred before your physical emergence or what might transpire after your inevitable decay. Let us return to your birth. Shortly after birth your narrative was very short. Let us speculate some data points... 7 pounds 8 ounces... 22 and a half inches... born on a date in a year... at a time in a place... to parents such-and-so and thus-and-such. People at that time may have asked about the nature of your emergence. "Was she a difficult birth? Was she breech? Did she cry vigorously?"

These data points were all relevant at the time because when you were born, there was no other data to discuss. Your narrative was exceedingly short, so any small tidbit seemed to deserve intense scrutiny. Today, do you define yourself by your birth weight? Of course not! Does anyone care to ask with what level of enthusiasm you latched onto the nipple for your first suckle? How absurd! Yet, that was the essence of YOU for some brief period of time.

As your STREAM OF EXISTENCE – we will return to this concept in greater detail soon – spiraled forward through time, your narrative grew. Data points that were important BEFORE became less meaningful as new points on the narrative accumulated. Various homes, other people with whom you lived, educational landmarks, employment occurrences, and relationship interactions all reshaped and re-punctuated the narrative that is YOU.

Why do I use such odd word choices to describe normal life experiences? Because I want you to see them in a new and different light. Just as I say your name has no real bearing on “who you are,” the people who live in same house or town as you are also not “who you are.” Yet... and this is the entire point... they DO define who you are if YOU USE THEM to define who you are.

Let us return to the alcove at the party and to you introducing of yourself to a new acquaintance. What do you say about yourself? You are Elizabeth in every interaction. After that, your narrative is selected based on the circumstance. At a party you might say, “I work with Peter.” If Peter is the host of the party, you choose to define yourself in relation to someone whom your new acquaintance also knows. In doing so, you can create a relationship through mutual association.

People generally find comfort in similarities. The friend of my friend is probably okay and will not stab me in the neck (physically) or in the back (metaphorically). In a new interaction we all tend to declare “I belong here; I’m no danger to you,” and wish others to do the same. Our first instinctive goal is to determine how dangerous the other person might be. If you say “I’m a friend of Peter” and the other person says, “I am Peter’s parole officer,” then little alarm bells will go off in your head because only a dangerous person has a parole officers.

See how a little variation from the norm – a little left turn – changes everything about a narrative?

Imagine that Peter, instead of a co-worker, was your husband. Now imagine that the same exchange happened but you didn't know Peter was on parole for anything. Can you speculate what your internal reaction might be?

These are the types of things we will be exploring in *What Color is Your Relationship*.

Now that you have been briefly exposed to the concept of your "self" being a narrative, you can begin to see that who you are isn't quite the same as who you THOUGHT YOU WERE a few pages ago.

You look in a mirror and see an image of yourself. Although you can describe your features, you don't see ONLY your features as THE ENTIRETY of who you are. Brown hair, hazel eyes, almond-shaped, straight nose, small mouth, prominent lower lip, thinner upper lip, freckle on left temple. Is that who you are?

You are more than just that! However, that is who you are physically. If someone with a perfect memory described your details to an expert police sketch artist, the result would be YOU. If that picture of you was then shown to you, you would say, "That's me!"

The point is, YOU - that is, everything you see about yourself in all aspects and circumstances - is nothing more than a narrative of the data that you use to describe yourself at a particular time.

If I say, “Tell me who you are,” you would start with your name, followed by a litany of “things” that describe you. This could include relationship status, education, job, hobbies, shared connections with others in your family or community, what part of the world/country/neighborhood you have lived in or currently reside in, etc. If your goal is to form an intimate relationship, then you might describe relationship data points. If your goal is to gain employment, then you would describe data points that you feel would compare favorably to the job you want.

However, and this is very important to *What Color is Your Relationship*, this description contains only *selected* aspects of the narrative of your life. You might then translate those story points into how they made you “feel” and how that might have affected subsequent story points. “I broke up with John and that made me feel lonely, so I moved back to Philadelphia to live closer to my family.”

We define our self by what data points we use to describe our self. This is true for how we describe our self internally and externally.

As a quick experiment, **think of the five greatest things about yourself.** Think about these very quickly. What are they? Think about them again. List them in your mind one more time. THAT is who you are right now.

How do you feel about yourself?

What partner does that person deserve?

What life should that person have?

What if, instead of listing your five greatest attributes, you listed your five greatest failures? How would that change your perception of who you are and what you deserve?

If you stop reading right now, and don't read one more word from this book take this one lesson and hold onto it for life.

YOU CONTROL THE NARRATIVE POINTS THAT YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF TO BOTH YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

Choose deliberately!

Choose wisely!

Choose the best for yourself!

Don't let others choose any narrative points for you that undermine the life and love that you deserve.

The narrative points that you use to describe yourself will define how you feel at any given moment. How you feel about yourself determines what you feel you deserve out of life and love. People who habitually associate negative narrative points have generally negative views about themselves, life and others. People who habitually CHOOSE to think about positive things about themselves and those around them feel more deserving of even more positive experiences, including relationships.

Emotions, Feelings, and Maintaining Full Color Love

If this were a perfect book in a perfect world, this section would occur much later in our discussion of *What Color is Your Relationship*. Prior to discussing emotions and feelings and how they relate to maintaining true love, I would hope to discuss in greater detail how our spiraling narrative and the spiraling narrative of our partner influence every aspect of our relationship. However, this is neither a perfect world, nor a perfect book. The words “Love” and “Feelings” and “Emotions” are so completely intertwined that the subject needs to be addressed early on.

Humans feel emotions that strongly direct our decisions, actions, plans and psychological well-being. It would be foolish to say that feeling sad doesn’t create a completely different set of reactions than feeling excited. Emotions not only affect us, they DRIVE every aspect of our lives. Much of what we consider “logic” is simply the manipulation of facts that create a “choice” that make us “feel good about our self.”

For example, do you buy a Ford SUV or a Mercedes sedan? This appears to be a very logical question and one might weigh the pros

and cons of both choices. Leather or cloth? What color? Do we “need” a sunroof? All these questions are considered with great weight and gravitas. In the end, decisions are made and a car is purchased.

But were those decisions really based on logic? Emotion never lets us ask the most basic question of all – do we absolutely need a car right now? In most instances, the answer is NO. Yet, every day thousands of cars are purchased by people who drive one perfectly usable car into the lot and later drive off with a DIFFERENT perfectly usable car, along with a hefty new car payment.

Again, let’s examine the base “logic” of this transaction. If we asked 100 adults who have purchased cars at dealerships in the past the following questions, we would almost universally get the attached answers.

1. Will you get the full value of your trade-in at a car dealership? NO.
2. Will you get the lowest payment possible by financing through a car dealership? NO.
3. Which is more logical, drive an okay car with high mileage for *no car payment* or buy a new car before it is absolutely necessary? DRIVE A CAR WITH HIGH MILEAGE AND NO PAYMENTS.

4. How much equity does a new car lose upon pulling out of a car lot? 10-20%

Certainly no one would choose to buy a car *“before it’s necessary”* by trading in an *okay car* at a dealership for *less than full value* while *paying more than is necessary* through a car dealership. **That would be illogical on all counts.** Yet every day thousands of normal, reasonable, logical people do exactly that. Many also roll “negative equity” from the previous car onto the financed amount of the new car! While they are doing all this, they have seemingly “logical” discussions about the “practicality” of leather over cloth or a light interior over a dark interior a-la the heat collection differential in the noonday sun.

Why do people buy new cars? It makes them FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES. It creates a positive reflection on their personal life narrative. When something happens that creates a negative reflection on your personal narrative, you feel bad. Here comes the concept that can change the nature of your relationships forever...

THE THING THAT HAPPENED IS NOT WHAT CREATED THE EMOTION; what created the emotion is how it was REFLECTED on your PERSONAL NARRATIVE.

Let us return to the quiet alcove at Peter’s party where we are introducing ourselves to each other. What if you are a young, adventurous woman and you just learned that Peter – a person who

you might be interested in – has a parole officer? You might feel excited upon hearing such news. Peter has a “past,” he has been a “bad boy,” he might be “dangerous” and he might do “scary things.” You might be more drawn to him after hearing such news. You aren’t looking for a life mate; you’re looking for some fun and adventure. The news created a *positive* reflection on your own personal narrative!

Now imagine that you are Peter’s wife. You have been married for two years and you have a nine-month-old daughter together. Peter never told you he was on parole. What would be your emotional reaction to such news? The reflection is so alien to your personal narrative that the resulting emotions would be sheer, stark terror, betrayal, shock, and a strong desire to flee.

In both instances is Peter a different person than he was 10 minutes before? NO! Nothing happened to Peter at all. He is smiling and conversing happily with another party guest. He looks over and smiles at you, raising his glass in your direction. Do you get an excited tingle or vomit and run out of the room? The answer has nothing to do with Peter. It has everything to do with how the news *reflected upon your own personal life narrative*.

When looking at other people and their life circumstances you may think, “How can she put up with such a thing?” The simple answer is that her circumstance doesn’t reflect onto her own personal narrative

the same way that you would imagine that the same circumstance would reflect on yours.

Each of us is a combination of the narrative points from our life that we use to define our self to our self.

Also, different choices and life circumstances reflect onto each of us differently, and that defines how we emotionally see those choices as acceptable or unacceptable. Let's say Elizabeth grew up with a father who yelled a lot. He wasn't abusive, but he was very loud. Would she feel unsafe if her husband yelled sometimes too? Of course not. Her previous life circumstances taught her that yelling happens, but it's OK. If, however, when she was young yelling often led to hitting then how would her reactions change? Let's say her husband would never, ever under any circumstance strike a woman or a child. Would that change her reaction if her personal history was one where hitting had occurred in the past? NO.

In one instance yelling would be perfectly acceptable to Elizabeth. In the other it would make her run away in fear. It has less to do with yelling and everything to do with previous experience – also known as her LIFE NARRATIVE.

Some narrative points, like abuse, are not something we can choose to “unremember”. However, many, if not most of the narrative points we use to describe our self to our self are completely under our own control. You can choose to remember how much work and dedication you put into learning a new song; and how proud everyone was when you got the solo in the school musical. Or you can remember how you

got a little pitchy in the middle and lost the key for a moment when you sang it on stage. What you *choose to remember* about an event can be more powerful than the event itself.

Even the worst points of a person's narrative can be modified by how you choose to define them. Was your mother a cancer “victim” or a cancer “survivor?” Were you a “victim” of abuse or a “survivor?” If someone defined himself or herself as a “victim” what kind of partner do they deserve? If the same person defined himself or herself as a “survivor” how does that change whom he or she would choose to live his or her life with? We can't change the past. Sometimes we can't ignore bad events in our past. But we can – if we choose to – redefine what they mean and how they reflect on our own personal narrative!

The instant we change our own personal narrative it changes how our life reflects on our self and it changes our reactions. This is the power of narratives and how we reflect actions and circumstances of our own narrative to help us define what is good, bad, fun, healthy, responsible, dangerous, unacceptable, loving, positive, disgusting, friendly, etc. Change the narrative and you change the response.

Spiraling Narratives

When we say “true love,” we mean a relationship. “True Love” represents a very specific relationship between two people who have chosen to be romantic partners. Yet, there are other types of relationships. In this section, we are going to discuss relationships OTHER THAN true love, including relationships with family and friends. We will discover what made them relationships in the first place and how they affected our lives then and probably continue to reflect in our lives today.

You are born! Welcome To The World!

Your very first relationship was with your mother. Your life completely and utterly depended upon and revolved around your mother. Each of you was a sphere in space (like little planets). It was just you and she. She was all that you knew. You revolved around her like the Moon revolves around the Earth. The two of you had a constant and unbroken flow of attention, interactions and shared interests.

You, as a baby, wanted food and she, as your mother, wanted desperately to feed you. You wanted warmth and she wanted to warm

you. You wanted attention and she wanted to focus only on you. You and she were symbiotic. You were in perfect synchronicity, perfect orbit around each other.

Can you imagine that? Two spheres orbiting around each other, their gravities fully intertwined? I want you to envision it, create a picture of it in your mind, a little movie. Now I want you to imagine that the sphere that is your mother starts moving through space. What will you do? You will move with her! You will keep orbiting around her as she moves forward, because you are entirely dependent on her. She is your entire universe.

Now imagine that each of your little spheres leaves a trail of shining space dust (or love dust) in your wake. As your mother moves forward, she leaves a trail. As you move with her, orbiting around her, you leave a trail as well. What color is your trail? What her trail's color? What color are your spheres? Do they sparkle and glow? Are they bright and shining or dark and brooding?

Now that you have this picture in your mind, you are ready to learn about *What Color is Your Relationship*.

The Spiraling Narrative

This image of you and your mother moving through space while you revolve around each other leaving a shining trail of dust is a *spiraling narrative*. This is the image we will use to define, explore, and analyze

your relationships with other people. This is how we will know *What Color is Your Relationship*. Let's begin!

In the beginning, your Elizabeth avatar had only one relationship, that with your mother. Your entire universe was comprised of only two spheres. You revolved around her entirely, completely, and unerringly. She was the morning and the evening. She suckled you and supported your existence. When you opened your eyes you saw only her. When you cried for help, you cried for her.

As you became more aware you began to notice that your mother's sphere (assuming a normal family relationship) had another sphere close to it: your father. So, you became aware that your life actually revolved around a "binary sun," a PAIR of spheres that was your mother and father. The three of you hurled through space together, leaving three sparkling trails in your wake.

Before long you saw something out of the corner of your eye, perhaps another sphere or two who were ALSO revolving around your mother and father. Who are these? It turns out that there are others who have the same orbit as you around your mother and father. They are your siblings! As you grew and became more aware, their presence started affecting your orbit, sometimes attracting, sometimes repelling you. The smooth, symbiotic relationship began to feel turbulence.

Generally younger siblings revolve around their mother in a tighter orbit than older siblings. Often the closer your age (or orbit) is with a

sibling the more turbulence you cause to each other, because you are both competing over the same type of attention.

This is the nature of human relationships. When two bodies are entirely focused on each other, when they completely revolve around each other in utter co-dependence, then nothing else affects them. This is the relationship between a baby and a mother. It is pure love because they are in perfect harmony, perfect synchronicity. The baby is completely dependent.

The baby has no narrative of her own. She is a perfect reflection of what the mother WANTS her to be. The mother can project whatever she wants onto the baby's mirror-like sphere and the baby will reflect it back. This is why everyone loves a baby. They are perfect mirrors. They have no faults, no ideas of their own. They never disagree with what we project upon them. They just reflect it back to us. In our mind we can make them whatever we want them to be. Why? They have no NARRATIVE of their own.

This concept is called "Attraction through Reflection." When another person perfectly reflects our own feelings, ideas, and emotions back onto us, we find that very comforting and attractive. Later in the book we will discuss the different types of attraction.

- Attraction through reflection.
- Attraction through absorption.

- Attraction through projection.
- And, attraction through acceptance – which is the deepest form of attraction.

What are you? You are a NARRATIVE collection of stories, events, experiences that are then interpreted through the lens of emotion. That is the first important concept to learn in order to discover *What Color is Your Relationship*.

***YOU ARE A NARRATIVE COLLECTION OF STORIES, EVENTS,
EXPERIENCES THT ARE THEN INTERPRETED THROUGH THE LENSE OF
EMOTION.***

I would like to request that you write down your thoughts on what you have just read. The purpose of this book is to reintroduce you to your relationship with yourself and your relationships with others. In this book a machine will not print the most important words. You will write these words.

What narrative points in your life have defined you in a way that *negatively* affects your relationships with others?

Since you get to choose your own narrative points that you use to describe yourself, can you think of more positive, powerful, life-affirming, love-affirming things about yourself as you are now and as you have been in the past? Can you think of more positive, powerful, life-affirming, and the love-affirming ways to describe even the negative occurrences in your past?

Take a few minutes to release yourself from any points on your narrative that hurt you, and replace them with new narrative points. Go look in the mirror and see yourself in a new light. You are not just a collection of physical attributes that someone could describe to a sketch artist. You are not just the collection of syllables and diphthongs that make up your name. You are a point of light. You are a shining sphere glowing in complex, vibrant, and changing colors.

The color of your relationship always starts with your own perception.

It's okay to have negative life experiences. Life is complicated and messy. The question is how you let those narrative points define how you experience yourself in the present. The question is how you let past negative narrative points affect how you describe yourself to yourself. Do they make you stronger, wiser, better, more flexible, and more loving? If not, take as much time as you need to explore the most positive and powerful aspects of who you have been and who you want are. Pull those traits to the front of your mind. Use them to redefine your self-narrative. Write them down to remind yourself.

**You are simply a narrative that you tell yourself about yourself. YOU
GET TO CHOOSE what points on your narrative you use.**

**IN ORDER TO CREATE THE BEST RELATIONSHIP YOU CAN POSSIBLE
HAVE WITH OTHERS YOU MUST FIRST CREATE THE BEST NARRATIVE
YOU CAN FOR YOURSELF.**

Your Self-Narrative Becomes a Love Narrative

In our imaginary journey, Elizabeth is one person: a single shining sphere starting on a journey of love. How does she transfer her sphere from her parents and family to her lifelong love? The life force that connects us with other spheres in our influence is called *"touches"*. Touches are what connect us to others in our emotional solar system.

Let's watch Elizabeth's childhood transpire. With whom does she have the most contact at first? Her primary points of contact are her mother, and to a lesser extent her father. Throughout the day their lives "touch." They feed her, bathe her, and read her stories. She amuses them, hugs them, and cries for their attention. Each interaction is a touch. The more intimate the touch, the deeper the connection made.

At some point, Elizabeth starts school. On the first day, she's scared and alone. Why? She's a sphere alone. Who is the first

person she feels attracted to? Her teacher. Think of kindergarten teachers on the first day of school. They are immediately open and interested in each child individually. They are demonstrating “attraction through reflection.” What they do is get down on the child's level and quickly find something that the child already thinks, feels or likes.

“Oh my, what a beautiful outfit you're wearing! I really like it, Elizabeth!” What is that? It's how we create attraction through reflection. We find things that the other person already thinks, feels, or likes and we reflect it back. In this case, our sphere becomes a mirror. When the other person looks at us, she sees her own colors being reflected back at herself.

Elizabeth becomes attracted to her teacher. Her teacher pulls Elizabeth into her influence. From there they start sharing experiences, or touches, which create a stronger bond over time. This is how we create relationships. Attraction turns to interaction. This then turns into influence, affection, even love.

Attraction through reflection is when someone is simply reflecting another person's ideas, likes, feelings, preconceptions back onto them. The person's sphere becomes a mirror, reflecting the first person's ideas back onto them. Both spheres are the same colors, because one is simply a mirror of the other.

In the case of the teacher, the young Elizabeth isn't adding much to the relationship. The teacher is the one who is creating the relationship using attraction by reflection. Elizabeth is practicing "attraction through absorption." She is absorbing the teacher's interest and praise. When someone tells you how great you are, you tend to like that person.

If you think about teachers you had who strongly influenced you it is because they showed attention and interest in YOU. Contrast this with other teachers who just stood at the front of the class and projected sound at the mass of students in front of them. Both gave instruction, but only one created "touches" by "attraction through reflection." That is the teacher you felt a "relationship" with. She or He reflected your own interests and ideas back at you and you absorbed it. Attraction through "reflection" and attraction through "absorption."

Attraction through absorption is mostly a one-way street. Think of the spheres that represent you and someone else. You may lavish someone with attention, interest and praise where he simply absorbs it. From your perspective, his sphere is dark. It's not reflecting anything back at you. It is simply absorbing the emotion you are putting out. It's nice for him, but for you it's more of an investment. Hopefully later he will reciprocate. Will he? Only time will tell.

Attraction through reflection is exactly the opposite. In this case, one person is expressing his attention, interest or praise, and the other person is reflecting it back. Often the person doing the reflecting is trying to create a stronger bond. It's instinctive for women to show interest in whatever her man enjoys. "Oh, that's fascinating! I never knew the quarterback position was so technical." In this case, one person is acting as a mirror. New relationships are generally formed when each person takes turns mirroring for the other. This creates MUTUAL attraction.

If one person in the relationship is only practicing attraction through ABSORPTION and never reflecting the first person's ideas and interests back onto them, then the relationship becomes unfulfilling for the person who is doing all of the reflecting and not receiving anything in return. In this instance the other person's sphere is only absorbing... it's dark... it is not reflecting anything of value back.

Later we will discuss "attraction through projection" and "attraction through acceptance." But let's get back to Elizabeth. She goes about making friends (and enemies), creating new relationships at school. Think about how an enemy would reflect your ideas back to you. You say, "I like butterflies." Your enemy says, "I think butterflies are stupid. I like to squish

butterflies.” Your enemy is purposefully reflecting the opposite in order to be the opposite of attractive... repulsive.

These relationships then influence her in different ways over the years. Attraction turns to interaction, which then turns into influence, affection, even love. Do we interact with people with whom we share no interests, no attraction? Not on purpose. Without attraction there is no interaction (or touches); without interaction there is no influence, affection, or love.

What is a “touch?” A “touch” is a meaningful event shared with someone to whom you are attracted. This doesn't have to be love. We share touches with teachers, friends, siblings, and parents. The deeper the touch, the more influential it might be. What makes a meaningful event? The event must be shared in a way that creates an impact on both of your psyches.

Think about going to the movies with someone. It's a shared event. How much impact does it have on your psyche? Probably it has very little. On the other end of the spectrum, imagine two soldiers fighting a battle for their lives, side by side, helping each other survive near death experiences. How much impact does that shared experience have on their combined psyches? It's immeasurable, permanent, and indelible.

The deepest touches tend to involve life: creating it, nearly losing it, and sharing someone else's loss. A deep touch is often created when siblings share the bedside at the death of a parent. The birth of a child has a very deep impact on the parents. Fighting for survival, whether literally in battle or figuratively by building a household together, creating income to support your new family, and so on... these are the events (or touches) that create strong bonds.

Weak touches are created through sharing activities that create no impact. Riding go-carts at the fair is fun, but it doesn't create much impact. To increase the impact for a relationship, you might bring another couple and have a competition to see which couple "wins." In the first instance it was just an activity you and your partner did at the same time. In the second example it was an event you did TOGETHER. Whether you won or lost is irrelevant. It was "you two" working, fighting, playing together against a shared enemy, issue or opportunity. We will return to this topic later. For now, let's return to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth is now old enough to be interested in boys. She's at her first dance. She's nervous and excited. Who surrounds her? Her girlfriends! Why? She is more closely bonded to, or attracted to, their spheres than any boy's sphere. At an early adolescent dance the boys will cluster in one area, the girls will cluster in

another. Then they send out a sacrifice, a test, a soldier to infiltrate the enemy camp. It's like two different universes. All the boys' spheres are reflecting and absorbing each others' interest and affection. They revolve around each other. The same goes for the girls.

At the end of the night, whether or not Elizabeth found a boy to whom she might be attracted, she definitely created new bonds with her girlfriends through "touches." They embarked on a great and frightening journey. They shared harrowing emotional experiences. Elizabeth's parents will always form the core of her relationships with others, but at this point her friends exert more gravitational pull than her parents do, and more than any boy could.

Obviously, as Elizabeth matures into womanhood, these relationships change. Think about your own relationships during this time. Attraction is created through reflection and absorption. At times you absorbed others' interest. At times you reflected others' interests back onto them so they would be more attracted to you. Sometimes someone else simply absorbed your interest and never returned it in kind.

As the years pass, the gravitational pull or influence of Elizabeth's parents and siblings grows weaker. It's always there. It is the center of her emotional solar system because the shared

touches she had with her family are the deepest. But Elizabeth drifts farther away while interacting with others until one day she's caught in a new gravitational field. It's the day Elizabeth meets Graham.

Elizabeth sees Graham at her friend's party. He's new, he's interesting, and he's attractive. Now the question is: how can Elizabeth be attracted to a man to whom she hasn't even spoken yet?

"Attraction through projection" is when we use someone else like a movie screen onto which we project our interests, ideas and feelings.

Let's take the person out of the experience and replace him with a pair of shoes. What attracts you to a pair of shoes? It's not the shoes! It's how the shoes reflect on your own PERSONAL NARRATIVE. Where might you wear the shoes, who might see you in the shoes, what might they think about you in the shoes, how will you think about yourself in the shoes? You are PROJECTING lots of ideas and emotions onto the shoes. They can't project anything onto you. They are just inanimate shoes. In attraction through projection the target doesn't need to participate or mustn't even be aware!

If we return back to our self-narrative, we can discuss how we create attraction through projection. Remember that what we think about ourselves is simply a set of narrative points that we tell ourselves about ourselves. This creates our self-image. The image we project onto others is created by our beliefs about ourselves, based on our self-narrative. It has very little to do with the other person.

If I believe I'm a rugged individualist, then I might buy a Range Rover that can go off-road. If I'm rugged, then my vehicle must be rugged as well. We surround ourselves with people, objects and ideas that reflect our ideas about ourselves back to us and project our ideas about ourselves out to others. This is why one person wants a red sports car and another is happy with a minivan.

Elizabeth sees Graham as “attractive.” What does that mean? If there were only one definition of attractive then only one type of man would ever get married and have babies. Only one type of man would marry and procreate with only one type of woman... the “attractive” type. In reality, pretty much all men get married to pretty much all women. How does that happen?

Even though we might all agree that some actors or models are beautiful or handsome, that's not what makes them attractive. A man might see a stunning Norwegian swimsuit model and find

her beautiful, alluring and sexy, but to be truly attractive, she needs to be *attainable* and must *reflect his self-narrative*. That's the difference when I use the word "attractive" in *What Color is Your Relationship*. Attractive isn't just handsome, it's someone who you could "see yourself with for life."

What makes Graham attractive to Elizabeth, even though she hasn't talked to him, is that she can project an idea onto him that coincides with and reinforces her own ideas about herself. In order to be attracted to a certain type of man, Elizabeth has to see herself as the type of woman that would be with that type of man.

This is where your self-narrative exerts its strongest influence.

The way you see yourself creates the way you see others, and that vision defines what you believe might transpire. A girl who was highly sought after by males in adolescence would naturally assume that as a woman she will have her pick of men. A girl who strongly desired but never attained her father's affection as a child might seek to resolve that through picking a man who is like her idea of her father. There is no absolute reality to how we think of others or ourselves. It's a spectrum of our own perceptions and misperceptions.

Remember, our self-narrative is nothing more than a collection of data points that we CHOOSE to use to define ourselves. We

all have positive and negative data points. All of our perceptions about ourselves are tainted by error and downright lies. If we practice defining our self-narrative in a new way, we can see our current or future relationships in new ways.

Before we stray too far afield, let's return to Elizabeth. She projects her ideas of herself and of the future that she should/might/will have onto Graham. Graham, standing on the other side of the room, has no choice with his handsome self but to reflect those ideas back to Elizabeth. He does this with the back of his head because he has no idea that he was just pulled into an imaginary relationship with someone he has never met.

A person's imaginary relationships are often just as powerful as real relationships. Elizabeth has created the idea that Graham is both confident and attracted to her. That means he will talk to her first. She positions herself appropriately, laughs playfully, and flips her hair alluringly, until it finally happens. He notices her and comes over. If, on the other hand, in her mind she had wanted Graham to like bold, playful women, then she might have walked up to him and said, "Hey sailor, new in town?"

The way that we interact with others is as much a projection of our own ideas upon them as anything else. Where do we get those ideas? Looks, dress, comportment, body language, etc. have an impact, but more importantly, it's how we *translate*

those things that really matters. One woman might see a tall, chiseled man standing in an expensive suit and think, "What a guy!" while another woman might think, "What an egotist." It's all perception.

As Elizabeth talks to Graham, her attraction will grow stronger or weaker based on how he meets, exceeds or dashes her expectations. Perhaps her tall, dashing Prince Charming is an atheist who talks like Elmer Fudd and hates puppies. But that's not the case here. Because she is already projecting her ideas onto Graham, if he says, "I'm from Boston," and she's from Concorde, she'll think, "We're from the same place, that's interesting." If, on the other hand, he says he's from Denver, she'll think, "How rugged and natural!"

What real relationship information can possibly be gleaned from something as meaningless as someone's birthplace? As we already know, narrative points are relative. It's really more about what we THINK about the information, regardless of whether the information actually has meaning. When Elizabeth is projecting her thoughts and ideas onto Graham, then what he says will be filtered through her beliefs about him, which are simply an extension of what she believes about herself.

Did I just ruin love? No, I simply explained it in a boring, unromantic way. But Graham is Elizabeth's Prince Charming.

She was right. They are perfect for each other. He reflects her ideas and interests back to her, and she reflects his back to him. He can project onto her a future where they are together and happy, and the same goes for her. She adores him and he absorbs it, he worships her and she takes it all in. A match made in heaven.

At this point in a relationship, the one type of attraction that doesn't happen much is *"Attraction through acceptance."* This is the highest level of attraction possible. It's when you are attracted to someone because he or she truly accepts you for who you are. Early in a relationship, we all minimize our faults. So relationships rarely start with attraction through acceptance.

How can someone accept your faults when they are hidden? How can you accept their faults if they never show them? Unless two people meet in an Alcoholic's Anonymous meeting or a therapy group it is very rare that a relationship starts with people exposing their faults, issues and fears to each other.

We will delve deeply into attraction through acceptance later when the faults and issues start to really show in the relationship. The fissure that is often embedded deep at the beginning of a relationship is when projected attraction gets set in stone. Remember at this point of the relationship, a lot of what you believe about each other is based on ideas you have

about *yourself*, not reality. That's the joy and fun of relationships that unfold over decades. If Elizabeth knew now what she's going to know then, would any relationship ever get off the ground? Probably not. That's why we keep the yucky, crazy, secret stuff private until much later.

Let's activate some of the information that was just revealed.

What ideas, thoughts and expectations have you projected onto your current relationship that you need to adjust to reality?

Is it okay with you if the person is different from your initial projection? Everyone thinks "of course," but what if the person is *really* different? What differences can you accept and what are unacceptable?

We will discuss this more throughout the book. For now just give it some thought and write a few feelings about it.

Think about the “touches” that join you and your current partner together. What impactful, shared experiences bind your individual narratives? The true depth of a relationship is often found in the depth of these experiences.

Place the most impactful events on a timeline and see if they are getting farther apart as time passes, or were few and far between at times when your relationship was weak.

Let's Add Some Color to Your Relationship

What Color is Your Relationship is an intriguing title. At the end of the book, I will reveal the inspiration for it. Many women who hear this title are immediately engaged in the concept. So, what color is your relationship? Many women who read this book wonder, "What color should my relationship be?"

I want you to think about color and write a color next to each of the words below. It's important to write the color down, don't just think about it.

Love:

Honesty:

Regret:

Insecurity:

Hope:

Desire:

Needy:

Faithful:

Excited:

Ignored:

Satisfied:

Intimate:

Passionate:

Insecure:

Overwhelmed:

Angry:

Receptive:

Happy:

Your Relationship:

Is your final answer the true color of your relationship? No, not even close. It's just a color that you arbitrarily assigned to your relationship. What do the colors mean? Let's find out.

Go back to the list of words and interpret each color for yourself. Next to each color, write what that color means to you. Let your mind free associate. There are no wrong answers. It's important to write what the COLOR means to you, not the original word.

Example.

Happy: Yellow...(what does yellow mean to me?) sunshine, summer days, bright spirits, cupcake, and skis.

The purpose of this exercise is to tie some new associations to old words. Look at the list and you might find some surprises. The more you let your mind go afield with the words that describe the colors, the more interesting and informative you will find this exercise.

By doing this exercise, I can understand why when my wife makes cupcakes I'm happy and drawn to her. If she makes brownies, I'm neutral about the experience. I associate cupcakes to the color yellow, which my brain sees as pure happiness. So when my wife gives me a cupcake she is giving me pure happiness.

More important than the color you choose is how you associate the color. The color of your relationship will obviously flash and change based on the state of your relationship. Now look at

the “type” of color you chose. What other colors on the list are related to the color of your relationship? This might inform you about what emotions, feelings, and thoughts are influencing your relationship.

While one person might perceive their relationship in bright colors, because they see it as fun and bubbly, someone else might perceive their relationship in darker colors, because they want a relationship based on seriousness, commitment and stability. It's not the color that's important. It's your perceptions.

If you look at the list and you have a similar color for your relationship as you had for the negative words on the list, then that's an important thing to know. Perhaps your relationship is in a negative place in your perceptions right now. Does that mean it's a bad relationship? Not at all. But it is your current perception of the relationship.

Take all the words that have any meaning to you and do this exercise with those words. Some words will be more meaningful than others. Write the word, assign the color, and then use other words to describe the color. This exercise will associate other thoughts and feelings with the original word. It will begin to show you how to view your relationship with the parietal lobe of your brain instead of your frontal lobe.

The frontal lobe of your brain is where you process emotion, problem-solving, speech, and self-awareness. The parietal lobe is where pure sensory information is translated. It's also where we interpret language and words. Taking your associations out of your frontal lobe and running them through your parietal lobe, through color, can reprogram your reactions to these feelings.

Very often what we think and what we feel are two different, even contradictory, things. Why is this? Because, we often force ourselves to think what we “should” think, not allowing ourselves to experience what we “really” think. Why would we do that? To avoid things we don't want to think about.

By using two different parts of your brain. We can get a second opinion on our thoughts. Which part is “right?” What does it matter? We can take information and feelings from both parts and put them together in a way that builds lifelong love in a marriage.

The ultimate goal is to have TWO ways to process your relationship so you can make it as strong and supportive as possible. Don't worry too much about brain structure; just practice translating words – especially emotionally charged words – into color, and then translating that color into different words.

This exercise becomes very interesting when you have your husbands do it. Most husbands don't read books about relationships. One way to get your husband to do this exercise is to turn it into a game. A great game to buy that will simulate this is "Compatibility". You can find it online.

You should remember this exercise and use it in periods of your relationship that are particularly difficult. During difficult times it is very easy to get tunnel vision or narrow mindedness about our relationship. This exercise can help you open your mind to new thoughts and ideas that will help you through an impasse.

What have we learned so far?

1. Our life – particularly how we see ourselves – is simply a selection of narrative points that we choose to use to describe ourselves to ourselves. By slightly modifying what points we choose to use, we can make a big difference in how we see ourselves and how we choose our relationships.
2. Our relationship is really a set of life narrative points that we SHARE with our significant other. These shared points are what describe and drive our relationship. By choosing what shared points we remember, we can

change how we think about our relationship. More importantly, by controlling what shared points we CHOOSE to create in the future, we can shape our future relationships. **(We will talk more about this in the coming chapters.)**

3. Relationships can be described as orbiting or spiraling narratives. The closer we orbit, the stronger the relationship. The farther out our orbit, the weaker our relationship is and the more likely we (or our partner) will fall into someone else's orbit
4. Our feelings drive us, but feelings are strongly shaped by how events reflect on our personal narrative. Just because something “happens” doesn't mean we have to feel a certain way about it. By looking at how we “translate” the events through our personal narrative, we can affect how the event makes us feel about our significant other and ourselves.
5. We discussed different types of attraction: Reflection, Absorption, Projection, and Acceptance. We learned that early in relationships, attraction is mostly created through Reflection, Absorption, and Projection.

6. Finally, we started adding some Color to these concepts and we used those colors to tap new feelings and concepts about our relationship and its components.. This is just the beginning of creating a vibrant, dynamic kaleidoscope of color bouncing between you and the love of your life.

We are just getting started on this journey and we have already blown up the idea of what makes a relationship form, what makes it strong, how it affects us emotionally, and what that means to you. One of the most important concepts in the book hasn't even been introduced yet. It is the concept of how men are "fence fixers" and how that may have affected every part of your relationship to date.

Very soon you will learn how to use that new knowledge to change your relationship forever.

The Early Marriage

What Color is Your Relationship revolves around married couples. The information is certainly applicable to other types of relationships, but its focus is on the evolution of a typical married couple. While every marriage is different, themes often recur. Feel free to ignore whatever in this book doesn't apply directly to you or your marriage at this exact time. But also take note of areas that might apply over the coming decades.

Life is a complicated thing. We often live many different "lives" in a lifetime. Life experiences and conditions change as we navigate our lives. This is true for both the love of your life and you. Will you navigate the entire river of life together? Or will your lives diverge where the river splits? This is the central question of *What Color is Your Relationship*. Let's find out together.

Elizabeth and Graham get married!

When we imagine Elizabeth and Graham as colorful spheres orbiting each other and flying through space, it's easy to see how tightly they encircle each other at the beginning of their marriage. Remember how the baby and the mother were symbiotic. A newly married couple

is really close to that level of bond. They are super-focused on each other and highly “reflective” of each other’s needs and wants.

Almost everything Elizabeth and Graham do, they do together. Their goals are highly aligned. This is especially true in a first marriage when the couple is young. It's often “us against the world.” Neither of them has anything of their own. Everything they need, they collect and build together. This is an excellent example of two people who have a tightly bound shared narrative. They need each other and they project themselves as necessary for their future shared narrative as well.

Remember “touches?” - interactions with deep meaning. Doing things together. Fighting for life together. This is all very true of a young couple. Certainly there are misunderstandings, miscommunications, fights, arguments, hurt feelings, and disruptions. However, when it comes to *What Color is Your Relationship* those things don't matter! If a couple is properly “bound” together through a tightly spiraling shared narrative, then the little stuff is insignificant in the long run.

Often the more isolated the couple is, the tighter the bond. Geographic isolation is the most common. If a married couple lives close to home, to parents and lifelong friends, then all those forces pull the couple in different directions. Does that mean the marriage is doomed? Certainly, not. But remember Elizabeth's first dance. Her friends had more influence on her than any boy could. The situation has changed, for sure, but early in a marriage it's important to see how outside

influences – particularly family and lifelong friends – can affect the relationship Elizabeth has with Graham.

So we reach our first lesson.

Even though a new marriage is a very strong bond, once the initial, frantic fixation on each other has passed (wedding, honeymoon, and setting up a home), outside influences can disturb the gravitational field between Elizabeth and Graham. This is most often seen when Graham still wants to go out with his friends to play pool or watch sports three days a week. The logical response is for Elizabeth to spend more time with her old peer group. Already, the spheres are starting to loosen their gravitational grip on each other.

Compare this to an alternate geographic situation. After their wedding, Elizabeth and Graham move to a new city more than 100 miles away from where they grew up. In this case neither of them has anyone else to lean on, or to pull them away from the marriage. Thus, they spend more time together, do more activities together, and create more “touches.” This builds the gravitational bond between them.

Does this mean you should move away from your friends and family to create a stronger marriage? It could help if you have the option. As a compromise I would say, “You should really understand that your old friends and family can sometimes reduce the level of reliance you have on each other and thus reduce the bonds of your marriage.” However, saying that doesn't change the reality. Guys hang out with

their friends. Women gather – either physically or electronically – and talk about their relationships.

Which brings up the question of electronic communication in a modern marriage. In the past if a new couple moved away from friends and family then their communication with old friends decreased. Now, we are all in a constant stream of communication with other people. This seriously affects our relationships. In the 70's parents had almost universal control over their child's interactions with others (outside of school). Now any child with a mobile phone receives way more interaction with their friends than with their parents. And these interactions are out of the parents' control.

What does this mean? It changes the nature of control in relationships forever. In this book we cannot spend too much time discussing these concepts, but I would recommend that everyone find some instruction on how to deal with this type of communication with spouses and children. For the moment, I just want to say that just living away from your friends does not mean they cannot still seriously affect your relationship.

Be aware of how you are letting others disrupt your orbit around each other. Seek out and encourage communication with friends and family who choose to reinforce your relationship, not undermine it. The most common negative communication spiral is when you are in a negative emotional state and you share that state with your friends. Your friends, wanting to support you, REFLECT AND AMPLIFY your feelings back onto you. This creates an echo chamber that amplifies

your negative narrative about yourself, your husband, and/or the relationship. When others agree with you it feels great, but do not let them undermine your relationship. We will discuss how to do that later. Let's get back to Elizabeth.

So Elizabeth and Graham buy a house! That will certainly keep Graham home more. After all, there's a lot to do when you buy a house. Furnishings must be bought, curtains selected, perhaps some painting needs to be done, etc. That's all good for a relationship. More importantly, if Elizabeth can create a place where Graham's buddies can come, then he can stay home and have fun watching the game with his buddies. He doesn't need to leave Elizabeth home alone anymore. She has done something positive for the relationship.

Does this totally solve the problem? Of course not. But it does present more opportunities for shared experiences, creating a stronger shared narrative and keeping the couple closely bound. Create spaces for shared experiences to occur.

Why do guys want to hang out with their buddies so much?

For most women the “relationship” is the fun part. It's interesting. It's fun to “play with.” Even though relationship issues can certainly cause a woman stress, the relationship itself is fun – like a toy.

For many men a “relationship” is work. They are constantly trying to guess what the woman wants, means, *really* means, and *really* wants. Men don't understand women. For many men the “FUN” part is the

pursuit, dating, winning the contest, and *capturing* a woman. Once the hunting and conquering aspects are over they aren't sure what to do next.

Girls spend lots of time thinking about “when I will be married and have a family.” The marriage is a key that unlocks a future that they have already envisioned IN ITS ENTIRETY. So, for many women, the marriage activates a SCRIPT that must be followed.

Boys NEVER think about those things. Boys think about flying in space, fighting a battle worth fighting, winning the game, building super-fast sports cars. Then one-day puberty kicks in and all of a sudden they must mate! That's the entire transformation from boy to man in a nutshell. Cowboys and Indians... click... “Must mate now!”

So, why do men like hanging out with their guy friends? It's easy. They can relax. They understand 100% of everything that is going on and being said. They don't have to guess at a meaning or a purpose. If there is a problem the solution is obvious – punch each other until they get tired, then go back to playing pool.

Guys don't “play house” decorating, picking out furniture, and arranging the dishes. These activities are not as interesting to guys as it is to women (generally). Those things are often interesting to guys simply because they love their wife. However, often for most guys it's like walking on a strange planet with weird air. As soon as possible they need to return to an environment that isn't so foreign. Go hang out with some “dudes.”

Men have to acclimatize to the “air” of marriage. This transformation takes years for many guys. They have to “take a break” and go someplace that is “native” to them. It's nothing personal, but women take it very personally sometimes because they have a script that was created as a girl. This script is deeply ingrained and they want it to play out as expected.

One thing to understand, especially early in a marriage, is that men weren't given you “script” after the wedding. They don't know that you're going to say “this” and then they are supposed to say “that” and then touch your arm in “this way.” They are totally unaware.

Once I realized this reality in my own marriage I would sometimes tell my wife, “All scripts must be submitted 48 hours in advance.” Because I could tell I said the wrong thing. What's more important than the script? Deep, meaningful, life building “touches.”

**DEEP, MEANINGFUL, LIFE BUILDING ACTIVITIES TOGETHER ARE
WHAT MAKE “TOUCHES”.**

The Big Disappointment

Here is a common issue in early marriage. Unfulfilled Expectations! Not with Graham, but with Elizabeth. There is no universal secret to happiness. But unfulfilled expectations are a common secret to *unhappiness*. When your expectations are low and they are exceeded, it's a surprise! For instance, you thought it was going to be a normal date and he surprised you with something special. You're happy.

What surprised you? Perhaps it was a nicer restaurant than expected, or the flash of new jewelry in a velvet box. What made the difference? Did something “real” change, like the basic nature of your relationship? Probably not. It just exceeded your short-term expectations.

Now imagine the opposite. You dress up and he ends up taking you to the local BBQ joint. How do you feel? A little disappointed, perhaps even unhappy. There's no real reason for it. You're out with your guy. You're spending time together. What really changed? What changed is how that event reflected on your own personal narrative for the evening. The “script” got ruined.

Imagine a date where you are positive he is going to propose. You both dress to the nines, go to the finest restaurant, and have violins at the table. But instead of proposing he pays the check and takes you home. How would you feel? You just dressed to the nines, went to the finest restaurant with someone you love, and listened to violins at the table. Why do you feel bad? Expectations.

When what occurs reflects POSITIVELY on our own PERSONAL NARRATIVE, we feel good. When what occurs reflects NEGATIVELY on our own PERSONAL NARRATIVE, we feel bad.

Your own personal narrative is the story you tell yourself about yourself. When that story gets interrupted in a negative way, we feel disappointment. **When we direct disappointment OUTWARD, it often comes out as anger. When we direct disappointment INWARD, it often becomes unhappiness. Unhappiness over an extended period of time turns into loss of hope, also known as depression.**

People with the highest expectations can feel hurt the most often. After a while, that recurring disappointment turns into lowered expectations to the point where you expect very little from your partner.

Also, as a relationship becomes “more serious” then the script for the woman becomes more critically important. In a flirtatious relationship variations from the script are no big deal. In a marriage variations from what is expected can cause a major disruption. That's why often

relationships get very heated early in relationships. The occurrences didn't change much, but their IMPLICATIONS changed mightily because expectations gained much more gravitas.

Wouldn't it be great if you could maintain high expectations and high spirits by dealing with disappointment in a different way?

Here's a relationship secret that women sometimes don't know. Men are rarely disappointed in their relationships because they have few expectations. They don't realize that to most women, the relationship is like a Christmas tree where they hang dozens, even hundreds, of ideas, hopes, projections, and beliefs about themselves and "the relationship." You shake one little branch and all the ornaments tremble perilously.

You hear the jokes. All men want are Food, Beer, Sex and Sleep, generally in that order. You laugh. "How absurd," you think. He laughs. "That's about right," he thinks.

Elizabeth tells Graham she's unhappy and he is shocked! How can you be unhappy? Look at the ring. You're married! Look at the house. You're comfortable! Look at our jobs. We're doing great!

What's Elizabeth really saying? "You used to pay more attention to me. We used to do things together. When we were dating we were more focused on each other. Now you go out with your friends twice a week and when you're home, you think watching TV is doing something together. When we go out, all we do is eat and maybe watch a movie, then we come straight home."

Thus the slow degeneration begins because Elizabeth said one thing when she should have said another.

Why did the two partners in the relationship go in entirely different directions after the “new” wore off the marriage? To her the marriage was the START of a script, and to him the marriage was the END of a conquest. He's taking a victory lap and resting while she's just getting revved up!

Remember, disappointment directed OUTWARDLY often comes out as anger. Is Elizabeth angry? No, she's disappointed. What happens when someone throws anger at you? You immediately get defensive. Often the best defense is what? A strong offense! Now Elizabeth and Graham are having a fight and neither one of them really knows why. Graham thinks it's because he doesn't take Elizabeth dancing, and Elizabeth thinks winning the argument will somehow make Graham want to spend more time with her!

Would YOU want to spend more time or less time with someone who exposes your flaws, disrupts your personal self-narrative, and proves that you are wrong by “winning” the argument? You would want to spend LESS time, not more, with them. This process is how one makes an enemy, “I hate butterflies and like to squish them,” not friends!

Attraction through projection... neither of them is projecting positive ideas onto the other.

Attraction through reflection... neither of them is trying to reflect back to the other person what they agree with or believe, because they are both fighting to make “their” point.

Attraction through absorption... neither of them is emanating love, appreciation, care or affection. So the other cannot absorb love, appreciation, care or affection.

Attraction through acceptance... how can someone be accepted when she isn't being honest? Graham is not being accepted for what he wants or feels, and can't be accepting of Elizabeth because she is hiding her true feeling – her need for and dependence on Graham for happiness.

We are going to change what Elizabeth says from *disappointment outwardly directed as anger* to an attempt at *attraction through acceptance by being honest*.

When Elizabeth felt disappointed because Graham wanted to go out with his buddies, she remained flexible. After a few disappointments, however, she started to feel sad, lonely and depressed. Why? She missed Graham. Human nature wants to find blame. “It's Graham's fault. It's his buddy's fault. How can he not know how I'm feeling? He knows; he just doesn't care! How can he not care? I care about his feelings all day, every day.” Now Elizabeth feels angry and hurt.

This process is how we build a shell around our true feelings, externalize and create conflict instead of love. Let's go back to how

Elizabeth really feels... sad, lonely, and depressed. What is depression? It is a loss of hope. As long as Elizabeth had hope she was not depressed. As her hope for the PROJECTION of ideas that she has for her relationship declines, she becomes more despondent. She wants the PROJECTION to be a reality. She wants to get back on the “script” and will do whatever it takes to get that picture back into alignment.

The fact is, Graham will do anything for Elizabeth. He loves her. He still remembers how she looked when they met at her friend's party. In our scenario, Graham came home to an argument he never saw coming. He might have had a few beers and it was late. What was going to happen?

What if Elizabeth had been honest with Graham at the beginning when he said he wanted to go out with his buddies after work? Imagine her saying, “Graham, I'm lonely and I miss you. I want to spend every minute of every day with you. I want you to sit and talk to me while I cook us dinner and I want you to stand next to me and dry the dishes with a towel as I wash them. If that happened, you would make me the happiest woman on Earth.”

What do you think Graham would say? Would he say, “Screw you, I'm going to play darts with my friends?” Of course not! He would say, “I love you and I want to make you happy.”

Why?

Attraction through projection... Elizabeth is projecting love, hope and togetherness onto Graham, which makes her more attracted to him, and he can feel it.

Attraction through reflection... Graham can make Elizabeth happy by reflecting her ideas and wishes back onto her. When he does that she reflects love back onto him.

Attraction through absorption... Elizabeth is emitting how much she cares for Graham and how important he is to her life. He absorbs that and it reflects well on his self-narrative.

Attraction through acceptance... (This one is important.) Because Elizabeth is honest about what she really feels and is exposing her own perceived flaws – such as neediness and dependence – it gives Graham the opportunity to accept Elizabeth as she is, not as she pretends to be. Graham gets to accept Elizabeth and that creates a very deep attraction for both of them, along with a growing trust.

Graham and Elizabeth spend the entire evening do exactly what she wants... spending time together. It doesn't really matter what they do. But Elizabeth can make the evening exactly what she wants by using loving words and support to move Graham through each activity.

“Graham, I know it's silly. But one of the things I really loved watching about my father and mother is how they did the dishes together. It really made me feel like they loved each other. Will you do that with me?”

What's the result? Elizabeth gets exactly what she wants and while they are doing it, she could talk about her parents' relationship and where she would like their relationship to reflect it or avoid it. She gets Graham to talk about the relationship and she teaches him how to do it "right."

Project this entire concept forward. Honesty, communication that creates attraction and acceptance, results that reinforce the relationship.

Compare that to the alternative. Disappointment coalescing into sadness and depression, projected outwardly as anger that decreases attraction to each other, builds barriers and hurt feelings, and results in silence and distance.

Can you hear the words, *"Why am I the one always doing the dishes? Why can't you lift a finger to help around here?"*

The Four Steps to Overcoming Disappointment in Marriage

1. Absolutely know without question that externalizing disappointment as anger will erode, decay, and possibly destroy your relationship over time. "Winning" fights doesn't make a relationship stronger.
2. Internally translate your disappointment (anger) into other emotions that are real and honestly reflect what you want.

3. Find the *opposite* words from what you originally wanted to say, and state them in a way that will create attraction through Projection, Reflection, Absorption and Acceptance.
4. Do not “ambush” your husband late at night with what you want to talk about. Do it as early as you can, so you can enjoy the rest of the day basking in each other's love. Don't worry; you'll still have “makeup sex.”

This doesn't mean you can't have a fight. Fights are fun. Sometimes it's exactly what a relationship needs. Perhaps you didn't start it. Maybe you've “just had enough.” Great! Go for it! For some people, fighting is how you “know the other person loves me.” There's nothing wrong with that. We will talk about that when we discuss “always, sometimes, never” statements.

Polishing His Sphere

(not as dirty as it sounds)

If I gave you a silver platter that was dull and asked you to polish it would you try to polish it by throwing a hand full of sharp rocks at it over and over again? Yet, this is what some women do to their husbands. They try to “improve” their relationship by throwing rocks at him. It works exactly as well as trying to polish a silver platter by throwing sharp rocks on it.

If you want to polish his sphere, so it is more reflective of your needs, then you have to use MILD abrasion, not coarse. You need to use LOTS of lubrication. You need to polish WITH the grain, not against it.

Using a mild abrasive is understanding that you can't change everything in one pass. You can't confront an issue with a fight and expect the issue to be resolved. You need to come at it again and again with soft strokes. Each pass will make a small, almost imperceivable difference. Over time these changes add up until you start to see your reflection in the metal. Your relationship is going to last a lifetime, if it takes a few weeks or months, or even a year to polish out a problem, it's a small investment.

Lubrication is WORDS that surround each small abrasive grain. Nice words, complimenting words, softening words, moderating words. If you feel like what you're going to say might be upsetting then start with those words. "What I want to talk about *might* be upsetting. I'm not trying to be upsetting. I want for us to never have an issue. *I love you* and I know *you love me*. If it takes a while to work this out then *that's OK*. I just want to start talking about it *a little, if that's OK with you.*"

That's a lot of softening language. You give your husband a lot of "outs" by using words like "a little" and "if it's OK" and "start talking." You aren't "putting your foot down," and "demanding change right now," etc.

Imagine what it was like to prepare for an argument in your head in the past. "I'm going to say this, and then he might say this. If says that then I'm going to point out the thing. If he says something about the other thing then I'm going to tell him that isn't right..." Some women will dot every "i" and cross every "t" of an argument before they ever broach the subject with their husband.

Unfortunately they started out with exactly the wrong thinking in the first place. They started out by thinking about having an argument, not by creating a better relationship.

What does this accomplish? You have a 100% chance of losing every **argument** you ever have with your husband. Even if you "win" what will happen? He will storm out of the house or shut down and resent you. You cannot get what you want by arguing. Because what you

REALLY WANT is a good relationship. Arguing never creates a good relationship.

That's not to say you can't argue. This is not a Polly-Anna book that says you can't have screaming fits if you want. You certainly can, and some couples absolutely need them to blow off steam. Every relationship is individual. What works for some women would scare other women into the hills. To each her own. And sometimes arguments just "feel good."

Do you know why women feel the need to argue sometimes? They are hurt, disappointed, and unhappy. And HE'S JUST HAVING THE TIME OF HIS LIFE! So they aren't trying to win an argument. Their real goal is to SHARE THE MISERY! If I'm going to be unhappy then I'm going to make darn sure he's MISERABLE. Is that the self-narrative you want? Think about the good things in your life. Is this what they all added up to? Spreading misery? Of course not.

If you want to create a closer, more loving relationship with your husband you need to use softening language to LUBRICATE any difficult discussion.

Finally, you need to polish WITH THE GRAIN. That means you need to understand your husband and work with his particular personality. Some men are disagreeable. They disagree with everything. If you start by saying the opposite of what you want then the man will instantly disagree and give you what you wanted in the first place. "Between the blue and the red I like the red. What do you want?"... "The BLUE!"... "OK, we will get the blue." And you get the blue that you wanted to

begin with. He didn't really care about the color. He just likes to disagree.

Other men have different peculiarities. Work WITH the grain. If he's easier to talk to after he's had his coffee then don't start a conversation before. If you need to agree with him first, then agree first then wait 2 minutes before saying, "However..." That is the best tactic.

One-Hundred percent of the time you will have a problem if you try to compete with sports on TV. Trying to have a conversation about your relationship in the middle of a football game is like trying to hold a tea party in the middle of a bullfight. Sports ramp up a man's testosterone and adrenaline. It's a substitute for battle! Stay out of the way... seriously. Unless you're actually into sports it's best to just steer clear. I promise he won't try to put himself into helping you plan your sister's wedding shower.

The biggest mistake women make is that they take on the tactics of men – arguing and being loud and aggressive – instead of going with feminine subtlety. Use your natural skills. Work with what works for your particular man. Try different angles. Remember you are going to come back at it over and over again to POLISH him. You'll have plenty more opportunities.

Finally, and this will be the most difficult piece of advice, is that you can't expect the silver platter to polish itself. You can't put the silver platter aside and think, "It knows I want it polished. If it really loves me then it will understand that and polish itself. I've talk about how I want a polished platter before. If it really listened and cared about me

then it would polish itself and put a tea set on itself and come have tea with me.”

If you want it polished then you have to polish it. The relationship is the woman's responsibility. You're the one with the script. You know what's “supposed” to happen, not him. You can make the relationship you want. I promise. It just takes time to polish it up.

You have a lot of little levers you can pull to influence your own happiness in the relationship. Let's review a few.

Firstly, your self-narrative is based on the experiences you choose to use to define yourself. You can't instantly change your self-narrative, but you can substantially change it with a little repetition and taking some input from others. The relationship you will have in the future is strongly influenced by how you see yourself.

The least scary way to change your self-narrative is to repeatedly do the exercise earlier in the book. Get a journal and do the exercise every day for at least a month. You will quickly run out of narrative points that you want to change. If this happens, then each day, quickly summarize the points that you have already changed and reinforce them.

The next way to change your self-narrative is to talk to people who you feel have a positive opinion of you. Tell them you are doing a self-evaluation exercise and ask them what they think your positive qualities are now and have been in the past (especially for people who

knew you as a child and adolescent). Incorporate their views of you into your own self-narrative.

The final way is the hardest and most people won't do it, but here it is. If you think someone has a negative opinion about you, or you have a negative narrative point that involves someone else, go talk to that person about it. You will be amazed at how their memories and thoughts are different from your own. I once met up with a guy who hated me and once tried to get into a fistfight with me. This wasn't a childhood incident. I was 34 at the time. A year later, when I asked him about it, he had no memory of it at all. In his mind, I was a great guy and we had always gotten along famously. I had a negative narrative point in my life both about him and about myself from that almost fight. Talking to him completely changed my self-narrative about the incident.

This last suggestion is particularly powerful with family members. Family is a funny thing. We love our family... why?... shared narrative points! Yet those same family members can also cause us to have really strong negative self-narrative points. Often our negative translation of their thoughts or actions is the last thing they would want us to think about ourselves. It's really hard to ask, but just tell them you're doing an exercise for a book. If you're uncomfortable doing it in person, try an email or a text.

By exploring and rewriting your own self-narrative, you can actually become a more contented person with a deeply grounded foundation.

Your relationship is your SHARED NARRATIVE, and it's difficult to have the best-shared narrative you can have without having a healthy, positive SELF NARRATIVE.

Secondly, keep in mind that what makes people feel a certain way about an occurrence is how that occurrence reflects on their own self-narrative. Two people get onto a boat. One says, "I think this boat is going to sink." The other says nothing. He's thinking about getting home for dinner. Halfway across the river, the boat sinks. They're both in the cold water in the fading evening light. The first guy has a great big grin across his face. "I told you so!"

What could possibly make anyone happy about being on a sinking boat? Some people value being right over being dry, or warm, or living. Silly, right? The fact is we all value some things over logic and reason. Many women get depressed at some point in the first couple years of marriage – or even the first few months. Why? It's not what they "expected."

Women spend years thinking, dreaming, watching TV and movies, romanticizing about first the wedding, then marriage, and then having a child. They have a very specific idea about EXACTLY how it should transpire. Because the picture is so closely connected with the emotional centers of the brain, when things go sideways it can deeply affect their well-being. Often nothing is actually "wrong," but it's just "not right."

This unhappiness is based entirely on expectations. The question to ask in this case is this. "Are my marital expectations more important than my actual marriage?" Of course, the answer is "no." Are you adventurous? Embrace the adventure of the relationship being different. Do you like challenges? Activate the part of your brain that loves a challenge or a puzzle to start creating new paths forward. Do you love talking about your relationship? Tell your husband in the ways that we already discussed: non-confrontational, non-accusatory, exploring and opening up your ideas of relationship.

You don't have to lower your expectations or change them. Instead of using exclusive "or" statements: such as, "My husband is either going to support me OR he's going to come home late for dinner;" use more inclusive "and" statements: "It's possible for my husband to love me AND sometimes come home late for dinner." Do you want to be right and rigid or flexible and happy?

Finally, embrace the idea that the *ONE* truly fun, interesting and ever-engaging activity you will have for the rest of your life is YOUR RELATIONSHIP! Don't rush to fix every issue, fight every battle and experience every facet right now, today, this instant. Understand that your relationship is going to unfold over decades.

Tony Robbins said, *"Most people overestimate what they can accomplish in a year and underestimate what they can accomplish in a decade."* In other words, let time be on your side. If your relationship

is more important than the problem, then you'll always have time to fix the problem. If the problem is more important than your relationship, then it will destroy your relationship and time won't matter.

**THE STORY YOU TELL YOURSELF ABOUT YOURSELF DEFINES
YOUR SELF-NARRATIVE. CHOOSE WISELY!**

What is important to you?

What is important to him?

If you think it's the same, think again. What follows could be the most eye-opening thing you'll learn in *What Color is Your Relationship*.

The following was heavily influenced by Tony Robbins. If you want to explore Robbins's particular views on these topics, read his book, *Awaken the Giant Within*.

You and your husband are together because you have much in common. However, the next two topics can transform your understanding of each other. You may be a lot more different than you ever imagined, but those differences might just be what make you perfect for each other.

Always, Should, Shouldn't, Never Statements

Please complete the following sentences. Write as many endings to each sentence as you want.

A good/loving husband ALWAYS:

A good/loving husband SHOULD:

A good/loving husband SHOULDN'T:

A good/loving husband NEVER:

Do your answers make sense? Of course they do...to you. If you gave these same questions to your husband, I can assure you that his answers will probably be different, maybe very different.

The power of these questions cannot be underestimated. These answers can create great marriages or destroy weak marriages.

What did Elizabeth say? "A good/loving husband always. *loves his wife unconditionally.*"

What did Graham say? “A good/loving husband always: *keeps his family safe and gives them the best possible life.*”

Hmm. What does that mean? We will talk about that later. First, it's time to turn the tables.

Please complete the following sentences. Write as many endings to each sentence as you want.

A good/loving **wife** ALWAYS:

A good/loving **wife** SHOULD:

A good/loving **wife** SHOULDN'T:

A good/loving **wife** NEVER:

Did you write down your answers? If not, then please take the time to do so. Reading this book academically won't teach you “the secret to lifelong love in marriage.” Doing the exercises will.

Let's talk about the answers. First of all, there are no wrong answers. Second, many of your answers are probably wrong, because I didn't explain the full weight of the answers before you did the exercise.

A good/loving wife never. What happens if I'm married to a woman who does something on this list? Do I divorce her? The question is simple. "A good loving wife never... cheats on me." Does that mean if you cheat on me then I immediately divorce you? What constitutes "cheating"?

I want to give these questions more weight. "Always" means that if the other person doesn't do it you cannot be happy in the marriage. "Never" means if the other person does it, you cannot be happy in the marriage. "Should" and "Shouldn't" are more flexible. Be careful what you put where. Are your "always" and "never" statements more important than your relationship?

Your answers to these questions are not a contract. Life changes people. Years from now, you may do something on your husband's "Never" list or stop doing something on his "Always" list and you might get through it just fine. But it is important to put real thought into your answers. Share these with your husband, and he needs to share his answers with you.

I have been married for 25 years to the only love of my life. My response to what a good/loving wife never does is very short. **A**

good/loving wife never divorces her husband. Everything else can be worked through. Your answers may certainly be different.

It is very important that your answers be honest, but also that you own them and that they aren't flippant or minor. Your marriage is the most important relationship you have. It's the one you chose and the one you can choose to end. Women never stop being mothers to their children, but they often stop being wives to their husbands. Why? You just found YOUR answers in the ALWAYS and NEVER questions.

On that same note, husbands sometimes choose to stop being husbands to their wives. It's very important that you know what *his* ALWAYS and NEVER answers are.

Your answers (*as the wife*) about what a *good/loving wife* ALWAYS and NEVER is are very informative *for him*. They will help him understand what you think are the most important virtues and most terrible vices for a wife. ***But they are not critical to your relationship.*** Why? Because if you violate your own ideas about what a WIFE always/never is, it won't break your relationship.

If, however, you violate what YOUR HUSBAND THINKS a wife always/never is, it might very well break your relationship. That works the other way around as well.

This is an important concept, so I'll state it again. The most important answers for you to take very seriously are your husband's answers

about what a wife should be. Likewise, the most important answers for your husband to take very seriously are your answers on what a husband should be.

IMPORTANT WARNING:

When you start this, or any, exercise with your husband it is CRITICAL for you to understand that YOUR HUSBAND HAS NOT READ THIS BOOK. Your husband just came home from work or got up in the morning. To him this is JUST ANOTHER DAY, not “the most important day of the rest of his relationship. “So, it is CRITICAL that you ease him into this concept over the course of a few hours, or even days. Don't just blast him with a questionnaire upon which you are going to base your relationship.

Start off by talking about the book over breakfast. Tell him why it's important to you. Tell him the things you love about him that would make him open to the ideas you want to discuss. Remember to make the ideas non-threatening and to use the laws of attraction: reflection, projection, absorption, and acceptance. Use the skills of POLISHING. If you want honest, open answers, you need to bring him to an open, honest, SAFE, comfortable state of mind.

Share your answers with him FIRST. Start with the easy answers – the “should” and “shouldn't” answers. Ask his opinion. What does he think a wife should or shouldn't do? What does he think a husband should

or shouldn't do? NOTE: Make sure he understands that you are not ACCUSING OR IMPLYING anything by your answers, or his.

If you get your husband to open up and be honest, but then you emotionally attack him or go into some kind of emotional shut down yourself, it will be a long time before he will trust you enough to try this again. Tread with care. When talking about sensitive, emotional, and relationship questions a husband can be like a baby deer. Make a sudden move and he'll dart back into the woods. But don't worry. This is the fun stuff! You're playing with your relationship!

Let's go back to Elizabeth and Graham's answers about what a good/loving husband always does.

She said a good/loving husband always loves his wife unconditionally. He said a good/loving husband always keeps his family safe and gives them the best possible life.

It's very important that they discuss what "unconditional love" means, where the idea came from, and how it might play out in the future. For instance, if Elizabeth believes that her father divorced her mother because she gained weight and became unattractive to him and that's what she means by "unconditionally," then Graham needs to understand that.

Assuming that's the case then it would soothe Elizabeth's state of mind if Graham would honestly compliment her appearance as they grow older. What Elizabeth is saying is that she feels vulnerable about being

abandoned by her husband over her appearance. Graham can easily make Elizabeth feel accepted and “unconditionally” loved as they go through life together.

On the other hand, if Elizabeth wants to make Graham feel good as a husband, she should talk about how safe she feels and how well he takes care of his family. Because this is what Graham said a good husband is: a provider and protector. Elizabeth can tell Graham that he's handsome 100 times, and it won't have the same impact of telling him *once* that she feels safe and well cared for.

The answers to these “always,” “should,” “shouldn't,” “never” questions provide the “morals” or guiding boundaries to the unique marriage between you and your love. The couple sets the rules of any marriage. Others outside your marriage will want to give you advice, which can be helpful. Remember, however, that they don't have to live with the *consequences* of their advice. You do! Always make your own decisions about your own marriage.

The most important answers to these questions aren't yours, but your partner's. Let your partner's answers guide how you support and interact with him. He should let your answers guide how he supports and interacts with you. By doing so you each receive the support that makes the most impact to YOU and give the support that makes the most impact to THEM.

Moving Toward, Moving Away From Values

The purpose of this section of the book is to move beyond mere narrative points as a way to understand your mate. They don't mean as much as you think; because, as previously noted they are arbitrary and open to interpretation. The purpose of this section is to create the deepest possible understanding about what drives each of you; so you can really, honestly understand each other.

What do I mean by “moving beyond mere narrative points?” A person thinks they know their mate because they know his “family,” “where he came from,” “what happened in his childhood,” “what he likes or dislikes.” Most of this information is not as useful as you think for your relationship. They aren't really “who he is.” They are just narrative points. If you want to find out what really matters to him and how that will affect your relationship then you need to dig deeper.

Moving Toward and Moving Away From Values is a useful way to know why your husband acts the way he does in all aspects of life.

What are “moving toward” and “moving away” from values? When presented with a list of values, or descriptive words, you will associate more closely with certain concepts, and feel less drawn to others. Neither word is “right” or “wrong.” They are just words. Through repeatedly comparing words to each other, you will end up with 3-5 words or “values” that you are strongly drawn to, and 3-5 values that you try to avoid.

Here's a quick example. Which of these two words are you most attracted to: Supportive or Independent?

If you chose “independent,” it doesn't mean you aren't supportive, and vice versa. You are simply choosing a word – IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE.

Let's try it. Underline any word on the next page that you feel strongly drawn to. You can underline as many as you want.

(see list on next page)

Moving Toward Values

Accomplishment	Friendship
Accountability	Fun
Accuracy	Generosity
Adventure	Gratitude
All for one & one for all	Hard work
Beauty	Happiness
Calm, quietude, peace	Harmony
Challenge	Health
Change	Honor
Charity	Improvement
Cleanliness, orderliness	Independence
Collaboration	Individuality
Commitment	Inner peace
Communication	Innovation
Community	Integrity
Competence	Intelligence
Competition	Intensity
Concern	Justice
Connection	Kindness
Cooperation	Knowledge
Creativity	Leadership
Decisiveness	Love, Romance
Determination	Loyalty
Delight of being, joy	Meaning
Discipline	Merit
Discovery	Money
Diversity	Oneness
Enjoyment	Openness
Equality	Perfection
	Personal Growth
	Perseverance
	Pleasure
	Power
	Practicality
	Preservation

Now go back and write the number 1, 2 or 3 next to each word. #1 means it's a top priority, #2 is a second priority and #3 means it's a third priority. They are all "important;" we are just dividing them into three levels of importance. You can have as many #1's as you want, as many #2's, etc.

Write your #1 priority words below. There should be fewer than 10. If an alien beamed you up to his ship and asked you, "What is the #1 value on your list? **You only get one.**" what word out of the list of #1 priority words would you choose?

Look at the remaining words and ask yourself the same question again. What **one word** would you choose **from the remaining words?** Now do it one more time.

The three words you chose are what drive your life in a positive way. Every time you have to make a decision, these are the subconscious levers that move you toward a decision, whether you want them to or not. When you are doing things that support and reinforce your “moving toward values,” you feel empowered, fulfilled, excited and meaningful. It's unavoidable. Those are the three words that make life worth living for you.

On the next page is another list. This is a list of negative values. Please perform the same exercise for this list. First, underline any negative value that you think is REALLY big. We want the negative values that really turn you off. Next, write 1, 2 or 3 priority next to each word you underlined. Finally, write the words with #1 next to them below.

Choose your top 3 negative values from the list of to priority words.

(see list on next page)

Moving Away From Values

Aggressive	Aloof
Belligerent	Big-headed
Boastful	Bone-idle
Bossy	Callous
Careless	Changeable
Compulsive	Cowardly
Cunning	Cynical
Detached	Dishonest
Domineering	Finicky
Foolish	Foolhardy
Greedy	Grumpy
Harsh	Impatient
Impulsive	Inconsiderate
Indecisive	Indiscreet
Interfering	Intolerant
Jealous	Lazy
Materialistic	Mean
Moody	Narrow-minded
Naughty	Nervous
Obstinate	Overcritical
Patronizing	Perverse
Pompous	Possessive
Quick-tempered	Resentful
Ruthless	Sarcastic
Selfish	Self-centered
Silly	Sneaky
Stubborn	Stupid
Tactless	Timid
Thoughtless	Truculent
Unpredictable	Unreliable
Untrustworthy	Vague
Vengeful	Vulgar

The purpose of this exercise is the same as the first: to learn what really motivates your partner. The “moving toward values” are what compel you forward. The “moving away from values” are what repulse you. Given a choice – and we always have a choice – these values will direct the flow of your life. They are what make you feel good or bad, empowered or despondent.

Let's look at Elizabeth and Graham's values.

Elizabeth's Moving Toward: Charity, Sensitivity and Fairness

Elizabeth's Moving Away From: Cynical, Narrow-Minded and Superficial

Graham's Moving Toward: Independence, Self-Reliance, Security

Graham's Moving Away From: Lazy, Inconsiderate, Weak-Willed

From this list, we can see a little of why Elizabeth and Graham are attracted to each other. Elizabeth believes in charity and fairness while Graham would never be inconsiderate of others. Elizabeth doesn't like things or people who are superficial, and Graham appears to be real and reliable.

Based on these answers, we can see how Graham believes that a good husband always keeps his family safe and makes sure they are well cared for. He believes in Security and Independence while he hates Laziness and Weak-Will.

What do you think are the chances of Elizabeth wanting to work at a business law firm? Probably not too high. We could see how she might find it cynical and unfair. She would definitely be much more open to volunteering, or working for an organization that is charitable and sensitive to others. On the other hand, Graham would be perfect for any high-demand field, including self-employment. Graham is internally motivated. You'll never see him unemployed, sitting on the sofa playing video games.

What if Graham bought a motorcycle without asking Elizabeth? Do you think he would? Perhaps his desire for independence might drive him to such a purchase with the idea of the open road. But it seems unlikely that he would do so without talking to her about it, because that would be inconsiderate.

Let's say he did; how would Elizabeth take it? She might not see it as much of a negative as some other wives might. If Graham explained the purchase in a way that activated Elizabeth's sensitivity to his feelings, she might feel good about herself for accepting it. Elizabeth isn't particularly money motivated, so the price of the purchase wouldn't really bother her. As long as she believed that Graham bought the motorcycle for genuine reasons instead of superficial ones, she would probably be happy for him.

Like the previous exercise, there is no right or wrong answer. The point is to learn what really motivates or deters you and your love. This information is way more valuable than where you grew up or whether or not you "like dogs." This information will tell you why one

person chooses to rescue a dog in need that is scared and skittish, while someone else buys a \$2,000 pure-bred German Shepherd. The dog is just the end result of their “moving toward” and “moving away from” values.

If you want to know why your husband does what he does, know his “moving toward” and “moving away from” values.

What conflict might come up often with Graham and Elizabeth? Elizabeth is unable to make strong decisions for herself. She is careful and sensitive to what other people want and need. That means, when pushed to make a decision, she will probably defer. This will, at times, grate on Graham's distaste for “weak wills.” Perhaps his disdain for weak wills is directed more at himself. Maybe he doesn't like to feel weak-willed. But, what if his wife is weak-willed? How would that reflect on his personal narrative?

Perhaps it does bother him that his wife seems weak-willed but his distaste for being inconsiderate of her feelings keeps him from saying anything about it. However, what if he did say something about it, would Elizabeth be able to make herself more assertive? No! Assertiveness, or strong decisiveness is against her basic nature. We will discuss these types of conflicts later when we discuss how to deal with unresolvable problems in your relationship.

As you can see, our attractions to each other, our ability to support each other and our fights stem from deep within our emotional drivers. Graham may not even know why he gets an itchy, irritated feeling when he goes shopping with Elizabeth. But we know that

Elizabeth's indecisiveness is making Graham's brain hurt. It's even harder for Elizabeth to shop because so many clothes are “superficial.”

Perhaps Elizabeth believes that one of the strongest things that attracts Graham to her is her sensitivity when actually what really attracts Graham to Elizabeth is that she doesn't get in the way of his independence. These are the perceptions and misperceptions that flow throughout a relationship.

By understanding each of your “moving toward” and “moving away from” values, you can start to decode what's causing conflict in your relationship. If you can understand it... REALLY understand it... then you can help each other.

I've said this before and I'll say it again. Conflict isn't bad! This book is not how to create the “perfect marriage.” There is no perfect marriage. All marriages have hurt feelings, broken trusts, miscommunication, irritation, avoidance, fights, and even worse. That's normal. This book cannot make an “abnormal” marriage that is free of all stress, disappointment or conflict. It simply shows you how to navigate the rapids, avoid the rocks that will absolutely sink you, and enjoy the beauty as it comes into view. You don't know what beautiful experience is around the next bend.

Where did we leave Elizabeth and Graham? They have been married for a while. They have experienced some of the ups and downs of marriage. Graham is fully engaged in building a career. Elizabeth is working as a coordinator for a family advocacy center. They are about to be blessed with a baby, but they don't know that yet.

The good news is, over the past week Elizabeth has slowly introduced Graham to the ideas of “moving toward” and “moving away from” values. She already knew how focused he was on his career, but now she knows more than ever that, in Graham's mind, he's doing it FOR her safety and future well-being. Graham learned that Elizabeth's tender-heartedness isn't just a character trait; it's one of her “most defining” character traits. That knowledge makes it easier for him to be more tolerant of her apparent indecisiveness.

What have you learned about yourself and the love of your life? What has he learned about you? It doesn't hurt to write it down. Our memories are a lot weaker than we think. Write below how these lessons matter to you and your relationship.

**KNOW YOUR HUSBAND'S MOVING TOWARD AND MOVING AWAY
FROM VALUES AND YOU WILL KNOW WHY HE DOES THE THINGS
HE DOES.**

Men Are “Fence Fixers”

Many books have been written about the differences between men and women in relationships. The one reality that I want you to understand about your husband is that men are “fence fixers.” What does that mean? It simply means this – if there's a hole in the fence and that hole gets your husband's attention then he will probably go get his tools and fix it. Before he noticed the hole he didn't have a single thought about the fence. After he fixed the hole he went back to not thinking about the fence again.

This seems like a stupid concept but it is the fundamental difference between women and men in relationships.

Men are fundamentally “problem solving machines.” When there is a “problem” the man wants to: Identify, Isolate, Strategize, Formulate, Execute, Resolve. It's animal instinct. “grunt, Hole in Fence, Must Find Wood, grunt, Must Get Tools, Bang on Fence, grunt, Now Hole is Fixed, Drink Beer to Celebrate.”

I want to use an exchange from a movie to illustrate how women are different.

The husband and wife are lying in bed. The wife says, “I'm thirsty.” The husband says, “I'll get you a glass of water.” The wife says, “See, if I'm

thirsty. I don't want a glass of water. I want you to sympathize. I want you to say, 'Gloria, I too know what it feels like to be thirsty. I too have had a dry mouth.' I want you to connect with me through sharing and understanding the concept of dry-mouthedness."

And THAT, in a nutshell is the fundamental difference between men and women in relationships. The quote, by the way, is from the movie *White Men Can't Jump*.

It may seem like a small thing – perhaps even a joke. However, I propose that this difference is the fundamental cause of chronic deterioration of married relationships over time.

Elizabeth feels upset about something. She says something about it to Graham. The “problem” needs a “solution.” The “fence needs fixing” so Elizabeth get's 100% of Graham's attention while he strategizes and formulates a solution. It's very difficult for Graham to understand that Elizabeth just wants to TALK. Instead of just talking about it, sympathizing, engaging in the “idea” of the problem without feeling the need to resolve it, Graham and Elizabeth are experiencing the problem entirely differently.

However, and this is a big however, Elizabeth has Graham's attention! He's engaged. When Elizabeth talks about things that ***are not problems***, she gets grunts and half-hearted responses from Graham. When she talks about things that ***are problems***, she gets more engagement. What Elizabeth wants is engagement!

What this does in Elizabeth's marriage, and in many marriages, is create a dynamic where the wife “complains” in order to get the husband to engage in conversation. The husband foolishly tries to “solve the problem” whatever it may be. Whether the problem gets solved or not is irrelevant. It's the DYNAMIC of communication that sticks.

Complaining or bringing up “problems” activates the husband's “fence fixer” gene.

The second issue this starts to create is the fact that many of the “problems” that Elizabeth wants to bring up are *problems with Graham!* She wants to tell Graham how he needs to fix himself. This combines her two most interesting subjects - Graham and the relationship - into one conversation. Graham's brain is engaged because it's a “broken fence” that he has to fix, but he is conflicted because he doesn't want to see himself as the problem.

This all seems fine and well to Elizabeth; because, although the problem is important, she's not nearly as invested in having it “fixed” as Graham thinks. She just wanted to talk about something, and this is what gets Graham's full attention - even though she doesn't consciously know why.

When you engage your husband in one of these “We need to talk” conversations about how he needs to change himself in order to fix a perceived problem and you see that “stupid look” come across his face, it's because you just crossed two wires in his head that aren't meant to be crossed. In other words, you short-circuited your husband.

While this may seem like fun sport, and very interesting, it's important to understand that this will take its toll after a few hundred (or thousand) repetitions. Early in the marriage it's fairly benign because most of the issues Elizabeth brings up are within Graham's power to address. Even if he can't fully address it, Elizabeth sees him "trying" to address it and that's enough for her.

In these instances Graham's fence fixer gene gets to be exercised and they make some progress toward more of what Elizabeth wants. However, after a number of years Graham cannot fix the problems that are left. They are un-fixable based on his basic nature, or the nature of the relationship.

Remember Graham's strongest personal drivers are taking care of his family, security, and a strong sense of work ethic. Then, Graham hits an important career milestone where he is either going to break through to the "next level" at work or not. One hundred percent of his focus will be on fixing the fence of his career. If Elizabeth continues to insist that Graham's "problem" is that he isn't home enough or he works too hard, then how can Graham fix both fences? He can't. So his basic programming kicks in "security and work ethic" over "relationship." He focuses on work.

Because Elizabeth has never developed any other real skills at getting Graham's attention other than activating his fence fixing gene, she creates more and more of a problem to get Graham's attention. Neither of them knows why their relationship is spiraling out of control. Graham has less and less interest in being home where he is

incapable of solving the problem – because HE IS the problem – and becomes more and more interested in spending time at work where everyone tells him how great he is – including the young, blonde project manager working with him.

Attraction by Reflection, Projection, Absorption, and Acceptance. What just happened?

Graham and Elizabeth are about to get a divorce!

Their spheres are drifting farther and farther apart as they orbit. Both of their spheres have become dark. Neither can reflect what the other is thinking because the problems are mutually exclusive. The gravitation fields are weakening. The principles of attraction are breaking down.

Elizabeth emotionally retreats to other spheres around her – her friends. They want to support their friend, so they continually reflect her own ideas back at her: her hurt and disappointment, feelings of abandonment, betrayal, and lack of value to Graham. Because her friends' spheres are more reflective of Elizabeth's ideas Elizabeth is more attracted to them.

At the same time, Graham isn't talking about his problems at home at all. These are a distraction from his #1 focus, his #1 broken fence, his career. At the same time the blonde project manager is agreeing with his choices, his decisions, and his ideas. She is reflecting what is important to Graham at the moment back at him. She's not even trying to "steal" him. But she is certainly easier to be around than Elizabeth

and the unfixable problems at home. Graham and the woman at work are solving shared problems together. They are creating “touches” through their shared work narrative.

Here's the sad part. Elizabeth and Graham both started with the same goal, to have a relationship with each other. But due the fundamental misunderstanding between men and women their relationship is in serious trouble.

Then Elizabeth gets Pregnant!

Everything instantly changes. One hundred percent of her focus goes to the baby. One hundred percent of Graham's focus goes to the baby because he's the dad, but also because it activates his primary life drive of taking care of his family.

The fundamental communication problems never get solved. All that happens is that a more important hole got made in the fence (for him) and a more focal relationship occurred for her. Baby trumps hubby! In the end they both now have a “shared challenge” which creates a deep sense of working together instead of at each other. This is the same feeling they had early in the relationship when it was “us against the world.” “Touches” start happening more frequently. The gravitational bonds between them reassert.

What changed? The “problem” changed, the “challenge” changed. Something arose that they had to work together to accomplish. That shared effort crates TOUCHES that increase the GRAVITATIONAL PULL of the two spheres toward each other. The conversation changed

from how they weren't getting along (very non-reflective) to how to move forward with the baby (lots of common "reflective" ground).

YOUR HUSBAND'S FENCE FIXER GENE WILL BE DRAWN TO ANY PROBLEM. BE CAREFUL USING RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS JUST TO GET HIS ATTENTION.

Creating The “Common Problem or Challenge”

This will probably be the most controversial concept in this book, so we will approach it slowly. Let's review a few concepts.

1. TOUCHES – emotionally connective activities performed together – are what create, reinforce and strengthen bonds. The more visceral the activity (life, survival, working together) the deeper the touch and the stronger the bond.
2. Relationship ORBITS are tightened or loosened by the frequency and depth of the TOUCHES. Early in a relationship a couple spends most of their time “pulling in the same direction” trying to survive, to build a base of life. This creates a tight orbit.
3. A Relationship's COLOR is dictated by Reflecting, Absorbing and Projecting ideas and emotions that are AGREEABLE to the other person. This is how bonds are maintained. The more a couple is working toward the same goals the more those colors will be in synchronicity.

4. The best way to create synchronicity in a relationship is for both people to be working against a common problem or enemy. This activates the husband's fence fixer gene. The way to destroy synchronicity is to work against each other individually.

The fundamental, yet unstated, concept in this book is that the RELATIONSHIP is more important than anything else. It's a simple concept, because if something else comes up that is more important than the relationship, the relationship will die. If that happens then this book is pointless.

How do we create, foster and grow the most powerful relationship possible, the strongest relationship between husband and wife? That's the question this book asks. It does not ask how to create the most "healthy" relationship or the most "appropriate" relationship, or the most "socially acceptable" relationship. That may seem shocking.

"But I want a 'healthy' relationship" one might say. Do you? What is the definition of "healthy?" Chances are it is someone else's definition. What is the definition of an "appropriate" or "socially acceptable" relationship? Who defines that? Almost by definition someone OUTSIDE the relationship has to tell you what is "healthy," "appropriate," or "socially acceptable." Who do you want to do that? Your mother? Someone on daytime TV? A magazine with a glossy cover?

I'm not saying you should purposefully have an unhealthy relationship. What I'm saying is that sometimes it's better to have a

temporarily unhealthy relationship than it is to have a healthy no-relationship.

Are you worried about what comes next? Don't!

I'll return to the premise that we both agree on, your relationship is incredibly important. At any point if you want to end it, you can, for whatever reason. I want to show you how to make your relationship last a lifetime in spite of problems, issues and catastrophes.

I'll give you the secret right now. Ready?

**ALWAYS MAKE THE PROBLEM EXTERNAL TO THE RELATIONSHIP
AND MAKE IT A PROBLEM THAT YOU CAN SOLVE TOGETHER.**

If you do that one thing, then your relationship will always be STRONG whether it's healthy, appropriate or socially acceptable.

Most currently in Elizabeth and Graham's life there occurred a problem External to their relationship – that they could both solve together – A BABY! It seems strange to call a baby a “problem,” but in this case it's like the most benign definition of the word “problem,” like a math problem. That's not a “problem, problem,” it's just something that needs thought and work to complete.

Another word for problem is “opportunity.” Create a new opportunity that is so compelling that it cannot be avoided – like a baby.

“Are you saying if I have a problem in my relationship I should get pregnant?” NO!

Plus I need to clear one thing up this book is about Marriages. This book is not about dating. This book is about life-long commitment in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, 'til death do you part. That is a relationship that rises to the highest responsibility and commitment.

What I am saying, and will expand upon, is this:

If your relationship is disintegrating before your eyes, deteriorating and devolving, if you desperately want to maintain your relationship, and if you don't know how to get back on the same page with your husband before all is lost then DO SOMETHING REAL. CREATE A "PROBORTUNITY!"

**ALWAYS MAKE THE PROBLEM EXTERNAL TO THE
RELATIONSHIP AND MAKE IT A PROBLEM THAT YOU CAN
SOLVE TOGETHER.**

WHAT IS A PROBORTUNITY?

A probortunity is a combination of a problem and an opportunity. If you find yourself at a point in your relationship where “the writing is on the wall.” If you can tell “this thing is going seriously sideways.” If you need to refocus your relationship in a real way or lose it forever, then find a probortunity and take it.

Often probortunities happen accidentally, such as Elizabeth getting pregnant. But you may find once or even twice in a lifelong relationship the need to reset or it will disappear. When that happens do something big TOGETHER. If, years before, your husband talked about moving to Alaska then go online and buy a couple of plane tickets! Drag him onto the plane if you have to and go look at property in Alaska. Pack up and Move!

Blow life up! Quit your job, move to a houseboat, start a restaurant together, whatever it takes to go from pulling against each other (or simply not pulling anymore at all) to pulling together, fighting for survival, you two “against the world” again.

Don't ask for permission. If you have gotten to where talking doesn't get you anywhere anymore, then find a probortunity and take it!

Do you want to know what makes a relationship stale? Not doing stuff TOGETHER that has any meaning anymore. You don't have to entirely blow up your life. Enter yourselves in a public dance competition where you have to be ready by a certain date. You need a common goal that's more important than your petty problems. If your problems are big then you need a BIG common goal.

If your house burned down tomorrow and no one was hurt but all your stuff was destroyed; do you think you would be arguing about how you don't talk anymore? (I'm not saying to burn down your house.) There are some things that are REAL that require REAL ACTION TOGETHER. These are the probortunities that I'm talking about.

Think about ideas or opportunities that could really change your life. Make a list for future reference.

Now think about less drastic action that you could take that would refocus your relationship on a compelling, shared, external goal that you can do together. Make a list.

Now think about ways you might activate one of these actions without allowing it to get bogged down in the normal talk, talk, argue, talk, don't talk cycle that married couples get into.

The interesting thing about probortunities is that it doesn't matter if you succeed or fail at the actual task. The point is to create a new relationship within your existing marriage. If you open a restaurant and lose your life savings, then that's bad. But it's not nearly as bad as leaving things as they are and getting divorced. Which is more important, money or your relationship? The relationship is more important if you want to stay married to the same person who you love for your whole life. Would you rather be poor together or rich apart? You could also be rich and together, I suppose!

I don't use many personal examples in this book, but this example is the best way to illustrate the concept of creating a Probortunity.

It is very common for a marriage to begin to disintegrate when the youngest child is in high school. This occurs because in a long-term marriage often the children become the only "shared problem" that the couple has anymore. The husband and wife each have their own career, their own life. They have slowly grown more independent of each other over the previous decades. It's natural.

What keeps a couple together? Shared Projects, Shared Problems, and Shared Issues that they must work together to solve. That is almost the definition of having children. Children are a constant source of "outside the relationship" issues that need to be addressed. This can carry a marriage forward for years without the husband or wife even thinking about it.

Many marriages deteriorate when the youngest child is in high school (or heads off to college) because the last shared project, shared

problem, leaves. This exposes the underlying lack of synchronicity in the color of the relationship. So, this is a big danger period for married couples.

When my youngest daughter started high school I knew this was a risky time for my twenty-year marriage. Just because I wrote this book doesn't mean that I don't have all the same relationship problems that everyone else has. What created this book was my ironclad commitment to not only maintaining my marriage for a lifetime, but also my desire to try to understand exactly what causes my relationship to be stronger or weaker throughout our lives together.

To get back to the story, I knew that my daughter going to high school was going to be a very dangerous time for my marriage. I had created my life, and my wife had created her life. At times it felt like we were just passing strangers in the kitchen. I knew something had to happen.

Very early in our marriage my wife and I had taken a drive to the pine forest of East Texas. We talked about buying a farm in the woods, down a yellow dirt road. We talked about gardening, raising chickens and goats, and canning our own food.

When my daughter was about to start high school I felt it was a big enough danger to my marriage that I decided to create a Proportunity. I called an East Texas realtor and put my wife in the car. One thing we have always enjoyed doing is going for drives together. My wife and I spent that summer before my daughter's freshman high school year tromping through fields, hacking through woodlands, standing next to ponds and looking at old farmhouses.

We spent the summer discussing fences, tractors, soil types, and layouts for the orchard. We put thousands of miles on the car driving to look at land as far north as the Oklahoma border, as far to the east as the Louisiana border, and as far south as Austin.

We aren't rich. We didn't have a dime saved. This was in 2011, and the recession of 2008 had devastated us. We were struggling just to make the mortgage payment on our city home. There was no logical way we were going to buy a farm. But I was committed to doing it anyway! I knew that a farm was the perfect Probortunity for my marriage.

In September, just as my daughter was starting high school, we sold everything that wasn't nailed down. I mean everything that we could possibly sell: the extra car, the motorcycle, my bicycle, weights, furniture, books... everything we wouldn't need on the farm. We rented out our house and in October we moved to 10 acres with a small mobile home, a goat barn and some fencing. It was down a long yellow dirt road!

We basically started a new life that neither one of us had any idea how to live. We had to learn everything again. We built rabbit hutches and chicken houses. We learned how to take care of goats and grown green beans. I still had to drive to Dallas to earn money every weekend, but we had reset our marriage by changing everything. For the first time in decades we really needed to depend on each other every day.

It has been many years since we made that move and we still are nowhere near settled on the farm. It will be many more years before we finish planting the orchard, building our new house together, and doing all the other things we wanted to do on our farm. By then our grandchildren will be our shared project. After that, just feeding each other medicine and taking each other to doctor visits will be our shared project.

I knew that there was a moment in my marriage where I had to change everything in order to save it. Every marriage may not need to be blown up to this extent, but it is true that times do arise in every marriage where big things need to happen to keep the marriage together and strong.

If your marriage is the most important thing in your life to you, then make sure nothing else in life makes it fall apart. Remember, shared experiences create “touches,” those “touches” are what create strong gravitational bonds. When the shared experiences go away the gravitation starts to weaken. Don't let that happen.

When Nothing is Wrong But Nothing Feels Right

Wives improve their husbands over time. They start with a rugged chunk of “stuff” and they chisel it and polish it. This is very helpful for the man and for the relationship. Early in the relationship there's a lot to improve, the issues that are being improved are easy to fix, and the man is very motivated to please his wife. At some point in the relationship, however, that changes.

People are born with certain individual traits. In psychology there is a personality profile called the Five Factor Model, which measures the “Big Five” personality traits. These traits include: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.

This profile measures a person's personality on a scale for each of these five factors. Each person falls somewhere on a scale for each of these traits.

Agreeableness, for instance, is simply how “agreeable” someone naturally is. There is no special value to being highly agreeable, highly disagreeable or somewhere in the middle. It's just a measurement. It would seem that a person would “want” to be agreeable; however, that's not necessarily the case.

For instance, someone who is extremely agreeable might have many friends, but she might not be capable of making independent decisions. Therefore she is forever at the whim of others, a victim of cons and scams, she can never become an independent thinker.

Someone on the other extreme – who is highly disagreeable – may have few friends but his independent thinking could make him a great creator, inventor or innovator.

Being more or less of any of these traits is neither good nor bad. It simply IS.

Why do I bring this up?

We are all born with HARD WIRED personality traits that cannot be changed. An agreeable person cannot CHOOSE to become a disagreeable person. An extrovert cannot CHOOSE to become shy, no matter how much someone else might want them to change.

These personality traits are hard-wired into a person's DNA exactly the same as eye color or height. People are born with these traits and cannot change them.

This book teaches women better ways to polish their man in order to allow him to reflect their feelings and create a more satisfying relationship. However, there is a limit to this model.

Early in a relationship there are lots of things going on, the man is a “hot mess,” and there is lots of room for improvement. That's good.

Men went from “I want to be an astronaut” to “must mate now.” They need women to help them know how to exist in a relationship.

After fifteen-to-twenty years, though, you will find that your husband can't fix the remaining things that are broken in your relationship. The normal tactics and levers don't work. It's not his fault. You have polished him down to his basic personality profile.

This is when nothing is wrong, but nothing feels right. This is when you have to make a decision about who you are going to spend the rest of your life with.

By the way, the same process has happened with you as well. There are personality traits that you have which he would really like to change, but he can't change because you can't change.

At the same time people also have personality disorders, chemical imbalances, and brain abnormalities. These are real and they come in many names: Attention Deficit, Borderline Personality, Narcissism, Premenstrual Dismorphic Disorder, Fear of Abandonment, etc.

Personality disorders affect a person's ability to think clearly, respond appropriately emotionally, control their impulses and interrelate with others in normal ways.

These disorders are not something that a person can change with willpower. You have your own personality profile and potential personality issues as well. We all do!

Attraction Through Acceptance

There comes a time in every relationship where the partners in the relationship have to decide which is more important, the “problem” or their relationship.

Sometimes this comes early, out of the blue. You have to decide is the relationship more important than the breach in trust and we work through it, or is the breach of trust more important than the relationship and we end it.

We marry each other “for better or for worse, in sickness and in health” but today people get divorced. It happens every day over very important issues and very superficial issues.

The purpose of this book is to create a life-long loving marriage.

The point where nothing is wrong but nothing feels right is the point where your relationship is “stuck in the mud.” It's going “nowhere” but everything is still “normal.” It's not like you're fighting. You just get to the point where there is nothing left to say. He can't really satisfy your needs and you don't know what to do to satisfy his.

Nothing is “wrong” but nothing “feels right.”

I believe that these issues are caused more by personality type and mild personality disorder issues than by “relationship” problems – especially when they occur after year 15 in a relationship.

What should you do?

By this point in your relationship you both know each others' "issues" pretty well. You know each others' "hot buttons" and "peculiarities." You avoid saying certain things or doing certain things because you don't want to "start up."

This is the point where you each need to start helping each other by using **Attraction Through Acceptance**. You can really help your husband by ACCEPTING that there are some things he can't fix. It doesn't mean he doesn't love you. It is simply beyond his control.

At the same time he needs to understand the little things in your life that are simply "part of you."

This is the point, in my experience, when a marriage becomes a life-long reality. Before you each get to the point where you can accept the most trying parts of each other you haven't really finalized your marriage vows.

After you can say, "I know... you can't change... and I'm OK with that" then you will become what you see in older couples who have been together "forever" and you can tell they will continue to be together "until death do they part."

This is the highest form of attraction. Truly accepting someone for who they are. It won't make their "issue" less frustrating for you to deal with. It's still unnerving, or irritating, or even a problem. But you accept him 100% for who he actually is... not the projection you put on him years ago. And he accepts you 100% for who you are... not some idea from a magazine.

This is the highest form of love.

I propose that “true love” isn't found in the honeymoon. It's easy to love someone you just married while holding hands on a beach in Hawaii. I propose that “true love” is found when you can't stand the person you are with. When you have reached a point of disagreement and disillusion that makes you want to run away. When you face that moment and you choose to continue your life with the other person then you have found your TRUE LOVE.

THE LOVE THAT COMES AFTER ACCEPTANCE IS THE LOVE OF A LIFETIME. IT IS YOUR LIFETIME SERVICE TO YOUR MATE WHEN YOU ACCEPT THEM FOR WHO THEY ARE. AND IT IS THEIR LIFETIME SERVICE TO YOU WHEN THEY DO THE SAME.

Conclusion

Even though no two relationships are exactly the same, there are some common relationship patterns and issues. Most relationship issues will resolve themselves using common sense and common communication.

This book aspires to teach some uncommon approaches to dealing with relationship issues. The book mainly addresses conflicts and issues, because no one needs a book on how to deal with a relationship when everything is going perfectly.

Take what you can use now. Store away what you might find useful in the future. Ignore the parts of the book with which you disagree.

If you have found this book helpful in your relationship then please share it with others. I wrote it in an attempt to get these new, useful, exciting concepts to as many women as possible. Anything you can do to help that happen will be appreciated.

Thank you,

Anthony

P.S.

I promised I would tell you how this book got its title: *What Color is Your Relationship?*

When I first started thinking about writing this book I knew that men and women think about their relationship entirely differently.

Generally speaking men NEVER think about the relationship. It's a fence. Unless it's broken (or it's Valentine's Day, Anniversary, etc) they don't think about it one whit.

I wanted to test how deeply women think about their relationships. In order to do that, I needed to perform a test. I was laying in bed with my wife before we went to sleep and I thought, "What is the most off the wall question I could ask with the word 'relationship' in it?"

That's when I thought of the question: "What color is our relationship?" The question has no foundation, no reality. It's completely made up.

So I asked her, "Honey, what color is our relationship?"

Without pausing or skipping a beat she said, "It's white!"

I said, "Why is it white?"

She said, "Because it's pure."

Then she asked me, "What color do you think our relationship is?"

I said, "It's red."

She looked at me and said, "Why is it red?"

I said, "Because it's passionate!"

Then she said, "I change my mind. I think it's red too."

And she went to sleep with a big smile on her face.

What color is your relationship? It's whatever color you want it to be!

Just asking the question is the important part.

B.T.W.

Elizabeth and Graham lived happily ever after.