

# **Love Theory and Love Therapy Workbook**

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## **Introduction**

Do you ever wonder why it can be so difficult to get along with the people you love the most - your own family members? I have come to realize that all adversity, whether it be political, economic, or relational, has as its root cause, **power and control**. The following information is written in order to conceptualize this idea as a framework for relationship problems, and thereby assist people in improving their most intimate and important connections. This material presents principles and strategies to help you stay in control of your own thoughts and emotions, and not to be influenced or controlled by external circumstances or other people. **The Eight Principles of Love Theory** as described here will allow you to maintain love and respect for yourself and others. The foundation for all of this is: having a strong sense of self, well developed spirituality, and empowering belief systems. You can then make the right choices to stay in control - and to love unconditionally.

As a practicing marriage and family therapist I have noticed that of the many and varied theories and therapies that were developed over the last century, all tend to build one upon another, and many of them seem to borrow one from another; I have also taken that liberty. This workbook is a different approach to theory however, in that it is not research based in the traditional, empirical sense. I am chiefly following upon the shoulders of the tremendous work of the men and women who have crafted psychological and counseling theory, beginning with its origins in the mind of Sigmund Freud more than 100 years ago. My research has all been anecdotal, from my own life and from the observations and reports I have gained through family members and clients. I am qualified to construct this theory; because of my training and my credentials as a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist. But most of all I believe I am qualified because of my life experiences as a wife and as a mother.

I have taken my lead from the "master" Murray Bowen (1978) who developed the first systemic approach to counseling through his personal efforts to apply his theory to himself and his own family. One of Bowen's original underlying assumptions that led to the development of Family Systems Theory was that, "external systems frequently determine internal feeling states"!

I have also learned what works and what doesn't work - through lessons gained from being married for 40 plus years to my husband Tom - and from raising our youngest child, Kristen, who has a severe developmental disorder, and a severe conduct disorder. I have tried most of the accepted theories and related therapies, or parts of them, on Tom, Kristen, other family members, and of course, clients - and found them all to be helpful - in part.

As do most clinicians practicing today, I use an integrated approach, which simply means borrowing parts and pieces of whatever theory or theories seem to match up with the clients needs. No one theoretical method can be definitively determined to be better than others. In fact the only constant as to why clients make fundamental changes in their

lives and their relationships with others is because of the quality of their relationship with the therapist! Clients responding to questionnaires report overwhelmingly that the reason therapy was a success was that they felt accepted, understood, and cared for by their therapists. This has caused me to wonder. . . What is it about a therapeutic relationship that makes the client feel safe, and respected, and willing to make changes?

Could it be the unconditional positive regard that was first practiced by Carl Rogers? (1946) Rogers developed a client-centered, person-centered approach to counseling. He stressed that personal characteristics and attitudes of the therapist such as accurate empathy and authenticity, combined with the quality of the client/therapist relationship, to be the prime determinants for successful outcomes. It is clear to me now that what Rogers was modeling for future generations of therapists and clients, was the necessary components for lasting change in a relationship. He was practicing what I am now naming **Love Theory and Love Therapy**.

I do not presume to place myself in the company of those many giants in the field with what I am about to write. This book is a pragmatic reflection on what I have learned from coursework and experts in the field, as well as clients and family members, in order to help people improve their relationships. I am including annotated references to cite the authors I have studied, and to encourage interested readers to research these materials for themselves. Primarily, I am writing for the benefit of non-professionals. I hope to give spouses, parents, other caregivers, in fact, anyone who is experiencing difficulty in relating to a significant other, some simple tools to use to improve those relationships. That is my mission and that is why I have written this.

The idea for a "new" theory has come about for me gradually, as I have noticed that the therapy I now practice is based strongly on the concept of unconditional positive regard. (Carl Rogers's terminology) The techniques and interventions added to this are a compilation of the work of many writers and theorists, but the basic underlying theme is what The Bible calls unconditional love. An accurate and precise definition was first written down in I Corinthians 13 in the New Testament.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast. it is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13: 4-8)

The foundational truth described in those verses is loving people as they are - and not trying to change them or control them in any way. This is certainly what we all desire to have in our relationships, but unfortunately most of us fall woefully short. Why? Children are taught from infancy about conditional love. They learn early in life that if they behave in certain ways, they will be rewarded. If they behave in certain other ways, they will pay a price that may feel like a withdrawal of love to them.

I must tread carefully here, because I do not want to imply that parents only love their children when they behave in acceptable ways. What I do want to say is that children can receive that message, unintentionally, over time, if they frequently hear disapproval from us. We sometimes give our children the message that we will love them more if they will get good grades, practice good hygiene, cultivate friends we approve of, etc. I was

certainly guilty of that kind of manipulation. To this day I find myself trying to get Kristen to wear certain clothes that I think make her look more attractive than the faded, oversized tee shirts and jeans she prefers.

Conditional love is how power and control begin in relationships. Every culture in recorded history has exemplified power and control as a given, if not a value. Patterns can be set as family members, especially parents, exert power and control over their children and also over each other in subtle, and not so subtle, ways. Power and control always cause resistance, and resistance usually causes resentment. The resentment can turn into other negative feelings, which build up inside and can cause a whole range of emotional and even physical problems, if the hurt is not expressed in appropriate ways.

My intention in this book is to spell out in simplified, layman's terms how to give those we are in relationship with the love and respect that we all long for. My knowledge of human behavior and how systems of any kind work, inform me that when one person in a relationship makes a change, a reciprocal change will occur in the other person or persons. Therefore, profound lasting change can begin with one person. McGoldrick & Carter (2001) This requires having inner peace, good self esteem, and emotional control. These things are supposed to emanate naturally from us when we have a strong sense of self, a well-developed spiritual life, and empowering belief systems. They allow us to maintain love and respect, even while our significant others are not responding in appropriate, caring, ways. However, I am living proof that no matter our training, education, or level of desire, these attributes **do not** come naturally. They all take hard work, discipline, and determination to achieve. Nevertheless, by practicing this and by learning and internalizing the eight principles this material is based on, we can succeed. We can improve our relationships with significant others.

It is necessary to point out here that this theory and this book is in no way an attempt to promote religion or any particular belief system. What I am advocating - wholeheartedly - is the need to embrace unconditional love as the solution to problems in relationships. And this is part of the first principle behind Love Theory: loving others absolutely and accepting them for who they are - simply because they are unique human beings. The problem with having this kind of love is that it is very difficult to do. In fact it can be done - if and only if - we first love ourselves and accept ourselves for the unique human beings that we each are. That is the most important part of principle # 1. The Bible doesn't really explain how we are to do this, however. If we have some past hurt or trauma in our lives, (And who doesn't?) we can become trapped in bitterness and fear of being hurt again, and therefore, not able to love others, much less ourselves, unconditionally. Addressing all of this has been the role of psychology and counseling, as well as an emphasis in the study of spirituality. Unfortunately, until quite recently, spirituality was considered to be an unacceptable topic for discussion in the counseling room. There have some tremendous breakthroughs within; the last ten years - or less - however, that have revealed the deep need for conversations to help clients explore their spiritual selves. Burke & Miranti (1995), Kelly (1995), Ingersoll (1994), and Walsh (1999). Developing one's spiritual self is principle # 2.

Many truths have been discovered, researched, and applied over the past century, since Freud first began to postulate his understanding of the human psyche. I believe we are now at a place where theory and application can be combined to explain these truths, in a way that the average person will find useful. If he/she is willing to put in

the dedication and determination necessary to make important changes in their thoughts, behaviors, and belief systems, this can happen. These changes will make profound differences in the way they relate to those they care about. Changing belief systems is principle # 3.

The major learning I have acquired about the need for therapy based on love is from my struggles raising Kristen, who has a significant developmental disability similar to Autism. Kristen does not have Autism in the classic sense as she very much desires to be socially connected. She enjoys the company of others and wants to be in relationships with them. There is no such person as a stranger - or an enemy - for Kristen. She has poor social skills however, and that can be a major barrier to what she is trying to accomplish in her social attempts. Kristen also has a severe language disorder that makes her speech difficult to understand. She talks in misarticulated, telegraphic, utterances. She has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and has also been diagnosed with a conduct disorder, which is evidenced by obstinant, defiant behavior. Some of the acting out is because of impulsivity and compulsivity that are characteristics of Pervasive Developmental Disorder, (PDD), which is her primary diagnosis. However, one of the original insights of understanding that I had of her behaviors was that Tom's and my reaction to her defiant behavior was causing it to increase. In fact this understanding is the basis for my belief that Love Theory is the answer to most if not all relationship problems, starting with behavior/conduct problems. I will develop this idea in subsequent chapters.

For now it is important to say that my husband and I have undergone much effort over the years to be the parents that she needed us to be. Kristen is the youngest of five children. She was born when I was almost 40 years old and, I thought, wiser and more able to be a better mother than I was to her brother and three sisters. As the years went on and it became more evident that she was seriously limited intellectually, we attempted to find the best programs and opportunities for her to thrive in. I didn't realize for a long time however, that what she needed the most, we were not giving her. She needed tight structure in a daily routine. She needed discipline that was immediate and fair, but always positive and given with calmness and an even temper. My disciplinary methods were hit or miss at best with my older children. I overlooked or ignored lots of misbehavior on some days. On other days, (depending on my internal mood) I would react in screams and shouts and even slapping and hitting.) I had been raised in a very authoritarian home. My father was very strict and not available emotionally. I was the middle child of five and felt that I was picked on and accused unfairly. My father also had what I now call a rage disorder. And, it seemed to me, that I was always the beneficiary of his angry outbursts.

My husband Tom, in contrast, was raised in a home with a disconnected, distant father. No one was in charge. His mother was very passive and allowed whoever wanted to be in control on a given day to take that role. Consequently his home life was chaotic in the sense that almost anything he or his brother or sister wanted to do was tolerated. He was the oldest child, so in some ways he became a father figure. As no one else was in authority he eventually took over that role, which he came to enjoy over the years. Because he has a compliant personality and is a rule follower by nature, Tom did not cause dissension in his childhood home. It wasn't until he became the parent of non-compliant teenagers that his authoritarian nature began to rise up. Because our older kids had normal cognitive functioning, they were able to figure out that when Daddy gets really mad, they had to back off and do what he said.

When Kristen's obstinance first began to surface, his response to her was the same; he became more demanding and controlling. Unfortunately his escalating angry feelings - instead of causing her to stop misbehaving, as her siblings had been clever enough to do - triggered a higher emotional response from Kristen. It would only end when he would scream and shout and slap her, or send her to her room.

A very wise psychiatrist (who was the first to give her the diagnosis of PDD), told us when she was only about eight years old what we could expect from her behaviorally - because of her impulsivity and compulsivity. He said a lot of things, but the one that I remember so well, and yet have not been able to resolve until recently, was that, because of her disability, Kristen was not able to control her own affect - her outward expression of feelings. He warned us that she will reflect back whatever level of emotionality she gets from us. I heard him, obviously, but I was not able to control my own emotional level for a very long time. And that is the basis for why Love Theory has been developed, and why Love Therapy works.

## The Eight Principles of Love Theory

Starting with three foundational concepts we are able to build a theory for developing better relationships with our significant others. The three concepts are: strong sense of self, well developed spirituality, and empowering belief systems. From this foundation the eight principles that form the theory are constructed. The principles are each addressed in the first eight chapters. The ninth chapter combines and summarizes the previous ones. The workbook is designed to compliment a nine week group work course. The final group meeting is held about two months after the eight week series ends.

### 1. Loving self and loving others unconditionally

Who am I? Do I really love myself? Is it selfish to love myself before others? What is my level of self-esteem? Letting go of the past. How do I learn to love others unconditionally? Must I accept them for who they are and not put demands on them to change, or do things my way? What if they put demands on me to change?

### 2. Developing my spiritual self

What gives meaning to my life? How do I compare religion and spirituality? What are my strengths, values, and beliefs? What about setting goals?

### 3. Having empowering beliefs

Now that I am learning to love myself, how do I make changes in my attitude and behavior that I am not satisfied with? Do I have to change beliefs? How can I learn to pay attention to that still small voice inside of me. Growing in self esteem. How can I continue to improve it in an ongoing way?

### 4. Internal control vs. external control

How do I learn to stay in control of my own emotions, thoughts, and behavior? What is this about making the right choices not to let others behavior or outside circumstances affect mine? How can I do that?

### 5. Substance abuse or other forms of abuse

What do I do if my significant other has a substance abuse problem or is abusive in some other way? Does this "problem" have to be resolved before the relationship can flourish? How can one love unconditionally in these situations?

### 6. Self-Discipline - How does it work?

Methods and suggestions on how to develop self discipline in the 3 primary areas of personal wellness: spiritually, emotionally, and physically. More about setting goals.

### 7. Getting in touch with feelings and expressing needs

How can I learn to get in touch with my feelings and then learn to express them to my significant others in ways that they can respond to? How to ask for what you need. Learn more about belief systems and how to change them.

### 8. Confronting with love

What is the difference between aggressiveness and assertiveness? Learn techniques for behavior management and/or positive behavior change that can be used for persons of any age.

9. Putting it all together for lasting results learn to integrate the eight principles for greater freedom and personal autonomy in every aspect of life. Setting goals for the future.

## **The Eight Principles of Love Theory**

### **Chapter 1: Loving Self**

In order to love others unconditionally and without expecting something in return or putting demands on them, I must first love myself. To do that I must come to understand myself. To understand myself, I must learn to accept myself. I must also evaluate my level of self esteem, and I must begin to let go of the hurts from the past. In the first part of this chapter we will discuss these things one by one, and how to go about achieving them, one by one.

In my years of observing others, I have noticed that many people do not really know themselves and accept themselves as unique human beings. That is probably because, like any other relationship, the only way for it to develop is by putting time and effort into it. That means spending time alone, first of all.

How many of us spend quality time alone each day? We are all so busy, we usually do two or three things together when we are alone, in order to save time and accomplish more. That may include turning on the TV or the radio while we get dressed in the morning, or while we fix and eat breakfast. What about driving to work? Do you put the car radio on to catch up on the latest gossip or listen to your favorite music? Here's a new one that I am guilty of - making phone calls while driving - when I can choose to have quiet time and to think. Major exceptions to this are parents of young children. But if you examine your day carefully, and prioritize, you can find time for reflection. I guarantee it will be worth it! Just 4 simple steps can make it work:

#1 is making the decision to do things differently.

#2 is having the determination to follow through on the decision, and

#3 is taking the direction of writing down what changes we want to make. This can be in the form of setting goals. Putting it in writing makes for easy recall.

#4 is having the discipline each day to continue until the new way becomes a habit. It takes about 4 weeks for a new habit to become ingrained in us.

#### **Self Esteem:**

Personal attributes have a lot to do with self-esteem:

Everyone has strengths, talents and abilities that are unique to them. If I feel competent about those strengths I am likely to have good self-esteem. This is the first of three necessary components to develop good self-esteem:

1. Achieving a sense of competency and self worth through recognizing and developing strengths, talents, and abilities.

The second component is praise and appreciation given verbally and in other ways from parents and people who we are close to. Without this affirmation we grow up feeling inadequate and lacking in self-esteem.

2. Receiving appreciation and verbal praise from significant others.

The third component is a genetic one and therefore more resistant to change. It has to do with personality. Some people have more critical, pessimistic, personality styles. This is not necessarily bad for it enables them to look at everything in life with caution and make careful judgments. But an overly critical worldview can limit one's ability to see the

good in things. If you have a negative personality style you can learn to recognize it, however, and take steps to make some positive changes.

3. Having a positive outlook, in order to view the bad things that happen as being controllable and related to external problems that can be changed.

### **Letting Go of the Past:**

Part of the process of discovering self is - revisiting the past:

I realized early in my quest to know myself, the necessity of healing my past. In order to move forward in that journey, in order to make changes and even set reasonable goals for myself, I first had to resolve my past. My history as well as the present time lets me know who I am as a person; both now and yesterday.

As I thought about my history I began to reflect on my strained relationship with my father who, I felt, had not been able to love me the way I needed to be loved when I was growing up. I had done a lot of soul searching at the time of his sudden death many years ago, but I still had much to ponder relevant to my childhood and the role he played as my father. Over time I have been able to forgive him, and also have been able to forgive myself for the many ways I resented him and let him know that I did. I have also asked for forgiveness from my mother whom I also had a very difficult relationship with as a teen. She and I now have a close, loving relationship. I have also put effort into improving other relationships that were not very caring or accepting. Again, this is a process. It will not happen all together and it will certainly not happen instantaneously. As you spend time considering your problem relationships from the past, I believe that you, like me, will begin to attempt to right them by connecting with those persons you need to make amends with. A good way to start is with one that is not in terrible shape. Don't suddenly try to visit or call a parent whom you have not spoken to in 25 years. Start with a smaller project, like maybe approaching the neighbor you had an argument with recently. Small successes will build for you a sense of accomplishment, and you can gradually take on larger endeavors.

It is necessary to point out here that there are many people who suffered horrible abuse and trauma at the hands of those who were supposed to be protecting them and caring for them, in the past. In these instances forgiveness is a very difficult concept to even conceive of. I hope that if you are one of these persons, you will be able to take the necessary steps through individual psychotherapy or counseling to go through the process of healing those terrible wounds.

As I write this I am realizing the difficulty of accepting and loving myself and all that goes with it. Understanding self can be an arduous and challenging adventure. In a very mysterious way learning to love one's self is a spiritual journey. It is not a religious journey, but a profoundly spiritual one.

One way to discover who I am is to determine what my strengths are, what I value, and what gives meaning to my life. These things are important to have a clear understanding of, and will be further addressed in Chapter 2.

### **Loving Others Unconditionally:**

This is a tough one! How can I love others unconditionally? There is only one way to succeed here. And that is first to love myself and accept myself. Then I can be free to love others as they need to be loved. **Freedom** is the operative word here. But how can I

be truly free to make the choice to love and to behave in loving ways, whatever happens externally?

Viktor Frankl wrote a book describing the differences he saw in those who were able to survive the Death Camps in Nazi Germany that he called "Man's Search for Meaning". (1946) (1985) Those individuals who understood that their feelings, attitudes, and state of mind could not be controlled by outward forces were much more likely to overcome the terrible conditions of those concentration camps. This is a very important psychological concept that was first postulated by Frankl. As he noted, those individuals were free in a very real sense, even though they were living in a terrifying and deplorable physical environment. He discovered that the fundamental freedom to choose the response or the attitude they would have to those conditions was the only thing that could not be taken from the prisoners. In other words he realized that no situation or person could change another's mind state and feeling state unless he/she allowed that to happen. Those who were able to control their own emotional/mental state were truly free.

" . . . everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." (P.86)

Other writers have expounded upon this idea. William Glasser, who is the developer of Reality Therapy (1965) states that as humans we are self-determining and are responsible for what we are doing, thinking, and feeling. He calls this internal control vs. external control. In his latest book, Choice Theory (1998) he describes how most people are not aware that they are either controlled by outside forces and events in their lives or else they themselves try to control others through manipulation, force, or a combination of these. Glasser believes this drive for power and control infects our relationships. As a practicing psychiatrist for 40 years, he states that he is convinced that control/power is the basis of all problems that cause people to seek psychotherapy! Think about it. When was the last time you got angry and lashed out at a family member who either didn't do what you wanted them to do, or he/she tried to get you to do something you didn't want to do? That's external control theory, as Glasser has termed it. "I call this universal psychology that destroys relationships because it destroys personal freedom, external control psychology." (p.5) Glasser goes on to describe his philosophy:

"control can be as slight as a disapproving glance or as forceful as a threat to our lives. But whatever it is, it is an attempt to force us to do what we may not want to do. We end up believing that other people can actually make us feel the way we feel or do the things we do.

This belief takes away the personal freedom we all need and want."

If you agree with this thesis then you probably have experienced attempts to control from a significant other. If you are the controlling one, then it is likely that you have experienced arguments and/or fights with family members. Do you want to learn a better way? Do you want to get along in freedom and personal autonomy with those you care about?

Let's assume you are a husband who is being controlled. A typical domestic scene might be this: You and your spouse have a heated argument one night. A lot of hurtful words are exchanged. You go to bed angry. The next day at work some happy circumstance lifts your mood, and you decide that you don't want to be angry any more. When you get home you greet your wife with a cheery hello, intending to forgive and

forget, but not necessarily to discuss what happened yesterday. You get a clipped hi in return and she walks out of the room, slamming the door. What do you do next? You do have some options before you. As Glasser would say, you can make a choice to either remain in control of your feelings or to let your spouse's ugly mood affect yours. How are you going to stay in control, if you choose this option and your spouse does not? And what has happened in your relationship over the time you have been together, to bring you to the place where you are battling with each other more and more frequently? Couples certainly do not start off in a marriage this way. Think back to when you fell in love. You couldn't do enough for each other then. You loved each other so much that you overlooked problem behavior and even harsh words - if they were spoken at all. That was unconditional love! So where did it go?

The good news is - you can get it back. Unconditional love is a **choice** not a feeling. Did you know that? It may seem like a feeling during the first blush of love, but it is still a choice. The reason we feel happiness and joy at the beginning of a romance is because our mood state is euphoric. We are so caught up in wonder and excitement that our beloved is seen as perfect in every way. (Love, 2001) Recalling this time and this feeling state is a way we can begin to let joy come back to the relationship. These ideas will be explored more fully in Chapter 7. You will be given some exercises in the workbook section to teach you how to change your feeling state and the underlying belief system. That is usually the culprit when negative emotions begin to control us.

As mentioned earlier, resentment will turn into anger or some other unhealthy emotion if the one with most of the power exerts control over the weaker partner, and the feelings are not resolved in healthy ways. Trust and acceptance begin to be threatened. A new pattern starts to take place in relationships where these things are happening. Where there was once openness and security, defensiveness and tension take over. Our sense of feeling loved and cared for gets undermined. Our homes become war zones where we each begin to put on the armor of rude or distant behavior as a protection. Defense tactics that may have worked for us in childhood can become counterproductive and destructive in our adult lives.

Many persons simply do not understand that they have a fundamental human right and responsibility to freely choose their emotional response to other's behaviors and/or actions. No matter what my spouse, child, or other significant other says or does, I still have the right and the responsibility to myself, and to others in the family, to choose to remain calm, not to lose control, and/or be controlled by what is going on externally

The other operative word here is: **choice**, this is why Glasser renamed his plan of treatment Choice Therapy. By understanding that the choice is really up to me, I am free to use the wonderful power that this inspires in me. Every time Kristen's acting out behaviors begin now - no matter how dramatic, or annoying - such as locking doors repeatedly, overflowing the toilets by stuffing wads of toilet paper in them, setting off fire alarms, breaking eggs and pouring them or other liquid over my car, or running in the house and slamming the door, cackling, as I follow close behind with my arms full of packages. . . I now pause and take a breath. . . I remember that I have the power to stay in control of my emotions, and I can make the choice not to lose it and shriek at her. . . It works. Her behavior gradually deescalates and I stay in control - of myself, and also of the situation. I also have to make myself aware on a continuing basis of all the principles of Love Theory. I focus on my sense of self, my spirituality, and my beliefs. All these

concepts must be well functioning in me in order to carry out my best intentions to stay calm and to make the right choices for myself. That is the promise and the power of Love Therapy.

## **The Eight Principles of Love Therapy**

### **Chapter 2: Developing my spiritual self**

The second principle is developing my spiritual self. One's spiritual journey can be part of a religious journey, but because it is a very individualistic experience and adventure, it can take many different forms. "Spirituality transcends and includes religion. Religion refers to adherence to beliefs and practices of organized institutions where spirituality describes the experience between the individual and the transcendent." Ingersoll (1998)

"Spirituality, which comes from the Latin, spiritus, meaning "breath of life", is a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate." (Elkins, Hedstrom Hughes, Leaf, and Saunders, 1988), p.10

Based on a review of many different writers, these authors suggest that, "the identifiable values of spirituality include confidence in the meaning and purpose of life, a sense of mission in life and of the sacredness of life, a balanced appreciation of material values, an altruistic attitude toward others, a vision for the betterment of the world, and a serious awareness of the tragic side of life. Spirituality also means living out these values with discernible effects on oneself, others, and nature and on one's relationship with whatever one considers to be the Ultimate". (p.12)

The word religion is derived from the Latin work "religio", which means to "bind together." Religion can be readily defined as a system of beliefs, rituals, and traditions that form the basis of a community of worshipers. The concept of spirituality is difficult to pin down and define because it is so individualistic by its very nature. However, an analogy can be drawn with religion that makes it easier to conceptualize. Religion can be said to be the vehicle, and spirituality is the fuel that drives or energizes the vehicle. Ingersoll (2002)

Developing a strong sense of spirituality is precisely where many people falter. Most of us were raised in homes where we were taught about a particular religion. We learned traditions, rituals, prayers and other forms of worship. However thorough this training was, lots of us never developed a personal relationship with a transcendent God. This is probably because spiritual development is a very personal, labor intensive process, and one that we learn more about through modeling and practicing than through instruction.

It is important to reiterate here that this book is not about religion, or my personal belief system. But it is very much about the spiritual part of every person that is the very core of one's humanity and soul. Without understanding who I am spiritually, what I believe, and how I connect with my "Higher Power", I will never truly understand myself, and my special qualities as a person.

I encourage my clients to begin to take their own personal spiritual journey by spending time each day meditating or praying to get in touch with God, as they understand Him. Obviously this is a long process and it can be tedious, especially in the beginning. I suggest 15 minutes a day as a reasonable amount of time at first, and also invite clients to read whatever books on spirituality and religion they think will be helpful, and to journal about what comes to mind as they spend this time. (I purposely am only

including books on generic guidelines to spirituality in the reference section. This is the only way I can be sure to avoid my own interests and biases.)

So this is how we begin. Some are more willing than others to do this, and therefore, once again, I want to emphasize the importance of the "quiet time". As with all building projects, the base of the foundation is the most important part. Upon the strength of the foundation the rest of the building will stand. Mystics and writers through the centuries have asserted the importance of communicating on a daily basis with God, through meditation or prayer. I believe that without this commitment of time and openness to connecting there can be no meaningful spiritual development, and therefore we will miss God's best. The rewards are many: a closer relationship with God, a clearer understanding of self, an awareness of faults and areas needing change, the recognition of strengths, values, and beliefs, an increased desire to set goals and objectives, and a softening of our hearts toward those we may be estranged from, or have other relationship problems with. You can probably think of other areas that are pertinent to you. This might be a helpful way to start a meditation. Think of the rewards you will get. Write them down. Then explore each one on a given day to determine their particular benefits and how you might want to pursue them. A person's deepest self, his/her truest self is the spiritual self. Not to explore this is to ignore an important part of being human.

As you can see, spending quality time with myself and spending quality time with my God are intertwined and interrelated. As you work on each, the other will improve. I do suggest that you not combine the two in order to save time. Remember each is a relationship, separate unto itself. Don't cheat one or the other. As you spend time on each, however, the other will improve. Why this happens, I can't answer. But I think you will find that this is true.

### **Values and beliefs:**

Values are judgments that we make about what is important to us. They can reflect our ethics or our philosophy about life. They can also reflect our desires and wants. They are determined by our underlying belief systems. Beliefs are convictions that we hold on to with resolve. They can be changed with insight and effort, although they are deeply rooted in us. As we change our beliefs, our values can also change. A personal example: I used to value materialism and having lots of "stuff". My belief that supported those values was that it was necessary to have lots of material goods in order to be happy and successful. When I changed my belief to thinking that relationships were much more important than things, my values changed as well. I no longer lust after "stuff".

### **Setting goals and objectives:**

Is this hard for you to do? If you have difficulty making decisions it may be that you're not sure of your values. When you are sure of your values and beliefs you can begin to understand how they affect your attitudes and feelings, and can take steps to correct them. You will then be ready to set some realistic goals. In the workbook section of this chapter there are worksheets to help you remember important points and to consider your strengths, values and beliefs. Completing these will take reflection and contemplation. Those who take the time to do them, however, will be greatly rewarded by the knowledge and insight they gain.

## The Eight Principles of Love Theory

### **Chapter 3: Having empowering Beliefs:**

Changing parts of me that need changing is a very challenging process. First I have to recognize that there is something in me that I don't like and want to change. As a personal example I can recall that being secretive and not always telling the truth was something I struggled with since youth. It was a defense mechanism that worked well for me as a child, especially as I entered adolescence. That way I could protect myself a little from the consequences of being the middle child in a big family, living in a small house, with not much opportunity for privacy. As an adult with my own family, and a husband who values truth telling above all else, that strategy became quite counterproductive. But I had learned it well and consequently had a really hard time giving it up. In fact until I was well into my spiritual journey I wasn't even aware that it was a problem!

Cognitive Behavior Theory is a theoretical framework that can be used to help change one's attitude and beliefs. Albert Ellis developed a type of therapy that he now calls Rational, Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), as a way to change irrational or distorted beliefs. (1977) (1997) By changing one's belief systems there will be a change in interactions with others over time. Most importantly, unless one makes conscious efforts to change faulty underlying belief systems, there will be no permanent behavior change over time. Ellis believes there are only 3 major categories of irrational beliefs:

1. I must be perfect. If I am not then I am no good at all, and I want to kill myself.
2. Others think that I must be perfect in everything I do. If I fail then I am no good and I want to kill myself.
3. Everything in my life must be easy and good and satisfying. If something is not then I want to die, rather than suffer or face hardships.

Changing belief systems is the most difficult part of behavior change.

First: Be in touch with the thoughts and beliefs that cause the unhealthy behavior.

Second: Be aware of and be willing to modify self-talk that perpetuates the irrational beliefs. One way to use self-talk is to deescalate feelings.

Third: Catastrophize; think of the worst possible result for your problem. This is why I listed Ellis' 3 categories. As you can see he has written the irrational beliefs in a catastrophic way. Check out which of the three categories your belief fits into. Get to the accompanying feeling state. When those emotions are present go through the necessary thought processes to downplay the feelings from anger to sadness, from rage to disappointment. This process will allow you to get in touch with your true feelings. When in touch with actual emotions, efforts can be made to change the underlying belief system to more positive, rational beliefs.

Fourth: Use the exercises on the ABCD's of behavior change. They are found in the workbook section for this chapter and will help you to determine if your beliefs are rational or distorted in some way. They can be the blueprints for profound and lasting change.

Fifth: This is where one's spiritual beliefs come into play. I believe that a deep abiding faith in God is necessary in order to permanently change wrong and/or unhealthy beliefs about oneself and one's world.

"Observable behavioral change that is not accompanied by spiritual development may be especially vulnerable to recidivism. Behavior

change that is manifested outwardly is a cue that personal changes are occurring for the individual. Without accompanying spiritual changes, however, the maintenance of these behavioral changes is difficult at best." Burke, Miranti (1995, P. 48)

Faith in God is developed through spiritual growth. Spiritual growth takes us through a process of surrender. A well-known reference source for this process is the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Using the first three steps of the Twelve Steps one can see how the process works.

1. We must first admit that we are powerless over whatever it is that is controlling us.
2. We must come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.
3. We must make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him. Alcoholics Anonymous (1976)

Turning our lives and our will over to God is the hardest step. That is because we must really surrender ourselves, totally and completely. A healthy spiritual life is the revision necessary to make this surrender fully applicable.

The "still small voice" mentioned in the Third Principle is yet another reference to one's spiritual awareness and journey. The daily quiet time will enable me to hear the voice within myself. All of these things are valid reasons why the spiritual component is a most necessary part of a fully developed life.

### **Growing in Self Esteem:**

Having good self-esteem means I think of myself in a loving and accepting way.

Having good self-esteem means that I accept myself with all my strengths and limitations and without judgment.

Having good self-esteem is a life long striving that all of us undergo.

Having good self-esteem will not protect us from the pain and stress of life. But it will enable us to cope with the pain and the stress.

Developing a healthy self-esteem is a necessary part of turning self-criticism into self appreciation. The goal of self-esteem is developing inner peace and wholeness. If my beliefs and values say that I am not a worthy person then I will have a difficult time loving self. However, if I can make some changes in the beliefs and values that I hold, I can learn to think of myself in more loving, accepting ways. Beliefs and values will be revisited in Chapter 7.

Some people have problems with their thought processes in the area of self-esteem. If this is true for you, know that by changing your belief system through exercises such as the ABCD's, you can raise your self worth and your emotional well being.

**Important to note: people only change and grow from strengths. What does this say to you?**

## The Eight Principles of Love Theory

### **Chapter 4: Internal Control vs. External Control**

As discussed in Chapter 1 William Glasser (1998) postulates in his latest book that the tension that exists in most relationships has to do with power and control. The patients who seek his help all have problems relating to those issues. As Dr. Glasser coaches them on how to take responsibility for their own inner state of mind and attitudes, they can begin to make choices to improve their relationships. Here's an example of how I have allowed Kristen's impulsive/compulsive, acting out behaviors to affect my attitude and my mood state. My original belief system informed me that children must respect their parents, and that parents have the right to discipline their children when they disobey and/or disrespect them.

This is taken from a journal that I have kept for most of Kristen's life. The following entry was made when she was about six and a half years old.

"We have not had much success with your behavior modification chart, Krissie. Every morning we get into a struggle when it is time to get dressed for school. Even though I start off calmly, you resist me every step of the way. You seem to be playing a game with me, because you have learned that if you whine and refuse to do what I am requesting of you, I will eventually get angry and lose my cool. It must excite you - enough to make the battle worthwhile for you. This reminds me of the TV dial switching episodes we used to have with you. Even though Daddy or I would eventually "win" through saying no and slapping your hands to make you conform, you actually were the victor, because you always succeeded in making me angry enough to scream and lose control; and this was somehow very stimulating to you. This also must be the underlying cause of your sometimes irresistible (?) desire to turn the alarm system on by pushing the emergency button. The alarm starts screaming, we start rushing around to turn it off, and then scream at you and sometimes slap you and of course punish you for that. But you get such pleasure from seeing all of the excitement - especially when the policemen come to the door to see if there is an emergency - that it must be worth the punishment for you. The lesson in all of this is for me. I have to persevere, and above all, remain calm. Eventually we will have success in this area, I am sure. If I can break my old habits and patterns of conditioning, by being matter-of-fact and just calmly insist that you do what is expected of you - you will improve. I must be consistent" and I must remain calm. I must not let the "old me" take over."

That was written about 15 years ago. The key concept here is in the statement that I wrote: "you always succeeded in making me angry . . ." What I didn't understand at the time is that I had the power to stay in control of my emotions. Kristen didn't have that power unless I allowed it to happen. Because of conditioning, old habits and, of course, Kristen's determination, we were frequently in a battle for control. When I finally realized that I had the power all the time, I was able to use it more effectively. The acting out behaviors still happen, but I am usually able to stay above them.

My revised belief system is that children must respect their parents and that parents have the right to discipline their children when they disobey and/or disrespect them. However, parents have the responsibility to treat their children with respect and to stay in control of themselves and the situation in a calm way. That is a very different belief

because it talks about parents responsibility to set the example for their children by staying in control and acting in a respectful manner.

Another problem area that has been ongoing for many years is brushing teeth. Kristen has tactile defensiveness, which means anything foreign touching her body parts is disturbing to her. She also has fine motor difficulties, which makes it hard for her to reach all of her tooth surfaces. Almost every night we would end up in a fierce struggle. I tried everything I could think of and took any advice others were willing to give me. Nothing worked until I finally realized that I have the freedom, the right, and the responsibility, to stay in control of my emotions. Now I can stay calm. When I feel my emotional level start to rise, I take a deep breath and talk more slowly and calmly. I praise any attempt to do correct brushing and I stay focused on the task and not the behaviors. This helps me to stay in control, and that knowledge in itself is reinforcing and calming.

How can these examples of my daughter's disability be helpful to readers? Because I failed so miserably for so long, I can understand how others can be so frustrated when the behaviors of those that they care about cause so much dissension in the household. I now know that Kristen's disability was the cause of the constant defiance and disobedience, but for a long, long time I reacted in a negative way as though she were deliberately provoking me. She was deliberately provoking me, but not in the same way that a child with normal mental processes would act. In my ignorance I was actually perpetuating her pathology. My belief system said that there was no way I would tolerate this behavior, and without thinking, I would fall headlong into a rage. Ironically, she was just giving back what she was getting from me. Check it out parents, spouses, and other caregivers. Are you letting external forces change your internal mood and thought processes? Are you giving up control by getting out of control?

If you answered yes to the above questions you can be comforted in knowing that you are not alone in your emotional reactivity. Be assured that you can learn to be more self-directed and emotionally mature.

"Emotional maturity is a measure of the extent to which individuals are able to think, plan, know, and follow their own values and self-directed life course, while being emotionally present with others, rather than living reactively by the cues of those close to them. They do not have to spend their life energy on winning approval, attacking others, intellectualizing, keeping themselves emotionally walled off, or maneuvering in relationships to obtain control or emotional comfort." McGoldrick & Carter, (2001)

As these authors report you can learn to move freely from personal relationships and your own individuality and not be drawn into the old reactive patterns. By practicing making "I" statements, which are factual, calm, verbalizations of your own beliefs and/or feelings, you can learn to relate more openly and honestly while remaining in control - as you focus on that as a goal. Remember you have the right and the responsibility to make the correct feeling and behavioral choices and not let others or outside circumstances take that power away from you.

## The Eight Principles of Love Theory

### Chapter 5: Substance Abuse Issues:

Substance abuse is a problem that plagues many relationships. There are many forms, but the most prevalent is Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) American Psychiatric Association (1994) For the purposes of this part of the chapter we will concentrate on AUD. As you will see, however, the recommended response to any type of abuse follows a similar pattern. For the non-drinking partner it is most important to understand that one can and must take responsibility for one's own reactions and behaviors. You cannot make the abuser quit, but you can make choices and take positive action, even when involved in a threatening or out of control environment.

More than a third of American families are affected by alcohol problems at one time or another. There is tremendous financial cost and emotional suffering to everyone involved. The abuser suffers, but so does the rest of the family as each person deals with the frustration caused by the AUD in a way that is unique to him or herself, and his/her position in the family. Some get angry and want to distance themselves from the drinker and/or the family. Others try to ignore the problem or make it O.K. Some children or teens get into trouble or misbehave, in order to distract the rest of the family from the pain caused by the abuser. Various coping skills emerge as everyone involved attempts to deal with the instability and fear. Denial is probably the most common coping mechanism that families get caught up in. In one degree or another everyone denies that the problem is as bad as it is. It is probably this trait that keeps them from getting help until the problem gets so huge they can no longer deny it.

It is important to figure out what role you play in response to the substance abuse. Once you understand if the role you play allows or even encourages the drinking pattern, you can make changes in your behavior. Remember you cannot fix the problem or make the abuser get into treatment. But you can educate yourself and take steps to do what is healthy and appropriate for yourself and for other family members.

"There are two points that need to be emphasized here . . .

First, research has clearly shown that family members and friends are very important in aiding a problem drinker in getting help. Second the family can be extremely important in helping the treatment to succeed. Part of the reason for this is that, in almost every case, families are important to the person with the drinking problem, just as that person is important to the family. Therefore, the caring, creativity, and wisdom of the family can be put to use in helping to turn the situation around." American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, (2002)

In a given year, only about 10% of people with an active drinking problem get into treatment or self-help. The good news is that treatment works. The bad news is that it is usually very difficult for the drinker to realize that he/she has a problem and needs to get into treatment. This is because it is a disease and is not controlled by will power, or poor judgment. It is caused by brain chemistry disruptions and is progressive over time. Most evidence points to genetic causes. Alcoholics Anonymous, (1996)

There are many different treatment approaches that are effective with substance abusers. Some are individually based, others group oriented, while other methods involve the whole family. Proven treatment involves a three-fold strategy: appropriate medical treatment along with psychosocial therapy, while having spirituality at the core.

It is vitally important to get help for yourself even if the problem drinker is not willing to get into treatment, or - as is frequently the case - admits that he/she has a problem. Al Anon is a support group for family members that has chapters in most communities. There are also groups for teens (Ala teen) and for young children (Ala tot)

It is also necessary to emphasize here that substance abuse is very different from physical or emotional abuse. As mentioned earlier, substance abuse is a chemical imbalance - a brain dysfunction - which has distinct genetic causes. Domestic violence is always about power and control. It may be learned behavior, for violence in families is frequently found to be intergenerational, but the causative factor is always one person trying to exert power and control over others. The reason I have placed these two very different problem issues in the same chapter is that they tear families apart in similar ways, and successful handling of these very destructive problems follow similar paths. Abuse in any form must be dealt with before other difficulties can be successfully addressed.

### **Other Forms of Abuse:**

If you are being physically abused or emotionally abused, it will probably be necessary to get out of the abusive situation, at least temporarily. The cycle of violence that is played out in abusive situations is invariably about power and control being terribly misused. In order to stop the violence, positive action steps must be taken. It is important to get help and support. Generally the person being abused is female, but that is certainly not always the case. However, it is usually easier for a man to be controlling because of patriarchal society norms which include accepted beliefs and customs such as using "male privilege", and financial and economic pressures to keep a woman in a subservient position.

Know that there are refuges where you and family members can be housed when the abuser becomes violent or threatens violence. It is also important to create a safety plan in advance as a way to take control of the situation. This will enable you to become more responsible, and feel better about yourself - even when living in a seemingly out of control environment. Remember it is about loving yourself and taking care of yourself - as well as giving your partner space to behave in a responsible manner. There is a worksheet in chapter 5 of the workbook that will help you to write a plan for safety.

There are programs for battered and abused women in every area of the country. There is help out there for those who need it. I have listed the web sites for the YWCA and for the Battered Women's Program in the greater New Orleans area. If you are reading this and live in another state, there are national web sites listed that can give you information. These will direct you to an appropriate support system.

Again, it is vitally important to understand that until the abuse problem is dealt with, the relationship problem will not be resolved. In all of these instances "tough love" has to be implemented. Tough love is unconditional love but with these perimeters:

A. Tough love is about setting boundaries and restrictions that are fair and reasonable - and then keeping them.

B. Tough love is about stating your feelings about what happened to your significant other - after he/she has sobered up and/or calmed down. Talk about your emotions using I statements and expressing your feelings. Try not to accuse or blame.

C. Tough love means continuing to show respect and fairness toward a significant other who is being abusive or incorrigible. It does not mean "getting even" by acting unpleasant or rude. It does not mean "retaliating" by refusing to carry out responsibilities and duties that are yours.

D. Tough love means continuing to take care of your usual responsibilities such as washing clothes, cooking, and keeping the house clean. It does not mean doing more than you should, such as cleaning up a mess that he/she deliberately makes.

E. Tough love is about staying in control of your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It means not letting outside circumstances or another's behavior get you out of control.

### **Unconditional Love:**

Loving an abuser may seem an impossible task. But remember unconditional love is always a choice. The goal with love is always to treat others the way we would want them to treat us. That means with respect and fairness. It is equally important not to engage at all with a person who is out of control from substance abuse or rage. Trying to argue or debate is a waste of time. This will only cause the emotional reactivity of that person to increase. The best and only response is to leave the room or the house if necessary. Can you see that this response is respectful and fair - both to yourself and the abuser? It takes two people to have a fight. It is very hard not to react though, especially if you are being called names, or cursed, or worse. However, If you are well grounded in the 8 principles of Love Theory, you can focus on whichever points are meaningful to you when the threatening behavior begins. This will help to keep you from reacting emotionally.

As I have mentioned in earlier chapters, the most helpful thoughts for me to have when Kristen starts her acting out and even violent behavior such as pushing over antique furniture are about staying calm and focusing on positive outcomes. (She really has done this. Several of my most precious antiques have been destroyed this way.) I think about staying in control and not letting the situation or the behavior change my inner mood. Not being in control of self and letting external systems determine internal feeling states, was what Murray Bowen saw as a destructive pattern in his own family of origin, and in the many families in crises that he worked with as he developed his Family Systems Theory. The ability to "rise above" the problem behavior or circumstances is what so impacted Viktor Frankl at the Death Camps during WWII, and this is what William Glasser calls "Choice Theory".

All of this data informs us that we **always** have the right to choose our response no matter what is happening around us and to us. This is the most basic freedom that we can have as human beings - the right to choose our behavior. No one can take that away from us unless we allow it to happen.

## **The Eight Principles of Love Theory**

### **Chapter 6: Self Discipline; How Does it Work Spiritually, Emotionally, and Physically?**

Let's start with the definition of discipline. Webster's dictionary defines it so: "Training that develops self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency. The result of such training; self-control and orderly conduct." (Webster's 1966) So self-discipline is the development of self-control and orderly conduct through training.

Alfred Adler (1958) was probably the first modern psychotherapist to note the importance of wellness from a holistic viewpoint. Others have elaborated on this. Myers, Sweeney & Myers (2000) have proposed a holistic model of wellness and prevention over the life span.

"We define wellness as a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community." (p. 252)

These researchers have constructed a circular shaped model called the "Wheel of Wellness". In it they conceptualize spirituality as the core characteristic of healthy people. The spokes of the wheel, which are life tasks, spring from the core and are interconnected this way. Metaphorically, just as the wheel on a vehicle must be full and round to provide a firm foundation, the core of a person, his/her spiritual self, must be full and round in order to support the spokes. These authors write "If one's sense of spirituality is somehow flat, the rest of the sphere cannot be firm and round".

### **Spiritual Wellness:**

The "how to's" of developing one's spiritual self have been discussed in earlier chapters. We will not go further into this here except to list the suggested ways of developing a sense of spirituality.

1. Spending time each day praying and/or meditating.
2. Reading books and articles on related topics.
3. Keeping a journal.

### **Emotional Wellness:**

Emotional wellness has to do with self-esteem, self-direction, and self-control. It is also important to have realistic beliefs, a sense of humor, creativity, and problem solving abilities. In a very real way emotional health is interconnected with one's physical well-being and, of course, one's spirituality.

Self-esteem has been discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Working on the exercises in the workbook section of those chapters will give you further assistance.

Self-direction is about setting goals and objectives for yourself and making plans for the future. Self-direction is about having a vision and then working it out. Self-control goes along with self-esteem and self-direction. It means being able to put limits on yourself and not give in to selfish desires or whims for instant gratification.

### **Physical Wellness:**

Physical well being starts with good nutrition and a healthy life style. This also means getting an adequate amount of rest and sleep on a daily basis. It certainly includes physical exercise, and having regular medical checkups - especially before beginning an exercise program, if you are over fifty years old, or have any health problems. The

benefits of exercise for physical and psychological well being have been well established. (Green & Shellenberger, (1991) The time tested and also recently approved levels of exercise consists of 3 to 4 times a week of a sustained, 25 to 30 minute cardiovascular workout. Some of the attributes of regular exercise are:

- 1) It helps to control blood pressure.
- 2) It helps to control your weight.
- 3) It gives you more energy.
- 4) It helps tone your muscles.
- 5) It helps you to handle stress.
- 6) It helps you to sleep better.
- 7) It helps you to look better
- 8) It helps to improve your self-image.

The simplest form of exercising, and one that is considered to be excellent, is walking. It does demand discipline however. (There's that word again!) The results are well worth the effort, for those determined enough to get off the sofa. You are guaranteed to feel better after you're done. If nothing else, it raises your energy level and your disposition by releasing mood-elevating chemicals in your brain. It has an added benefit for me of allowing that quality alone time that I have learned to crave. When I'm tired and dragging, I go take a brisk walk. It always makes me feel good when I'm finished. It definitely works for me. Try it. Check out the definition of discipline at the beginning of this chapter first. It may help to motivate you!

## The Eight Principles of Love Theory

### **Chapter 7: Getting In Touch with Feelings:**

Verbalizing feelings in an open and honest way can be very hard to do. Some families are able to discuss sensitive feelings more easily than others. In general females are socialized to be able to talk about a wider range of emotions than males. Many of the problems in relationships come from an inability to discuss and resolve hurts in ways that can be satisfying to both parties. What happens in many cases is the partners attack and blame each other so that only angry emotions are brought out. The sadness and the hurt may be brought out in a tentative way by one partner. But anxiety usually enters in quickly because few individuals know how to let themselves be vulnerable and open to sensitive topics. Emotional reactivity takes over and so does the anger. Many men, and some women, are a lot more comfortable with anger than they are with tender feelings. This is learned behavior, however, and therefore it can be unlearned. That is where the ABCD's of behavior change can assist, as feelings are often a reflection of the internal belief systems that we have.

### **Expressing Needs:**

Most of us do not have much practice in asking for what we need from our partners. Clients often tell me that their significant other is supposed to "know what I need". Actually that is rarely true. Even though we may like to think that our spouses are mind readers, and assume that he/she "knows" what we need, few humans are able to do this. There is untold misery caused by unsuspecting partners not giving or getting what they each need, simply because they do not know how to ask.

Let's now construct a story about how to resolve the issue of emotions that were bruised and hurt during an argument, and also how to go about getting needs met. We will use the scenario mentioned in Chapter two. Let's make the wife the victim this time:

Here is a familiar case of a wife, we'll call her Sue, who was criticized and insulted by her husband who has a demanding, controlling personality. Her father was also overly critical of her, as he too was a perfectionist. Sue grew up feeling insecure and having low self-esteem, although she is intelligent, well educated, and physically attractive. She decides the next day after the argument that she doesn't want to be angry any more. But her spouse, Sam, is still in an angry mood and rebuffs her attempts to make amends. Using Love Theory what can she do about this?

First of all, she can try to become aware of the feeling state that she is in right now. If it is not a peaceful, calm one, she might want to reflect on what external forces may be affecting her attitude at the present moment. If she is feeling angry or resentful she can admit that to herself and then determine to verbalize her feelings and needs in an appropriate way at an appropriate time. Just reminding herself that she has the right and the freedom to maintain a calm, tranquil mood can often be the necessary trigger to get her back in that state. Sue can then ask Sam when he will be willing to talk with her about the incident, making sure to set a time when there will be no distractions. The most important part of the discussion will be Sue's ability to say what she was feeling when the argument took place. Using "I" statements she can talk about her own emotions and

needs. If she can do this Sam is not as likely to get defensive or feel accused. Even if he is uncooperative and unwilling to ask Sue for forgiveness for his hurtful words, she may be able to let go of the hurt by saying these things to him in a factual way, using "I" statements. The difference in this and the "old way" is she must make the choice to let go of the hurt - and expressing once she has expressed how she feels about what happened. Sue is showing self love by taking care of herself her feelings and needs. She is also showing unconditional love for Sam by treating him with fairness and respect. Is this hard to do? Yes it is. The only way it can be done, I believe, is through spiritual surrender and making the right choices to stay in control of your inner self.

Sue will also be getting her needs met by working through this problem by talking it through, and not pushing it down and/or letting it fester until her resentment builds to the point of an explosion. She can also take the opportunity during the discussion she and Sam have to express what she needs from him at this juncture. Again, she must use "I" statements and tell him how she feels and what she needs. He is more likely to respond in love when she approaches him from a vulnerable and seeking position.

If a man has a hard time telling his partner what his needs are, she can take the lead by first telling him about hers and then asking him how she can help him to get his needs met. These conversations are usually easier for women to initiate simply because they are generally more comfortable talking about sensitive issues. It is important to remember that getting needs met is a crucial part of relationship satisfaction. So learn to ask for what you need.

In chapter three we talked about changing irrational or distorted beliefs into ones that are more reasonable. In the workbook section of this chapter there are reprints of the exercises to develop more empowering beliefs.

## **The Eight Principles of Love Therapy**

### **Chapter 8: Confronting With Love:**

Sometimes in our relationships it is necessary to confront. If this is done with assertiveness but also with love, it can be helpful in many ways. Only a person with good self-esteem can confront with love, because it takes a lot of courage and vitality to do this. The easier response is to do nothing, but this does not love self, and it certainly doesn't love the person who has gotten off track. Most of us tend to put off the confrontation, until something triggers our anger. Then we've got the nerve and the strength. However, angry feelings can get in the way, causing us to lose control of our emotions. That is aggressiveness not assertiveness. Aggressiveness is tempered with anger, assertiveness is tempered with respect and love. Assertiveness uses "I" statements and talks about "my" feelings. Aggressiveness uses "you" statements and accuses and blames.

Here's a true story a client shared with me. I'll change the names to protect their identity. Maryanne married Joseph after a whirlwind courtship of only six months. She was 25 years old, having been married briefly, for less than a year, when she was just 19. She had no children. Joseph was 30, recently divorced, and was in a custody struggle for his only child, a son who had just turned 11. The newlyweds came home from their honeymoon and Joe Jr. moved in with them three weeks later. Joseph felt very guilty about not having a closer relationship with his son when he was younger, and so he prevailed on his bride to let Joe Jr. come live with them.

From the beginning Joe Jr. was difficult. He obviously resented Maryanne for taking his mother's place, and treated her with disdain. He made it clear to her that he was waiting for his parents to realize they had made a terrible mistake by divorcing, and get back together. He was also used to being waited on and not having to follow rules. Maryanne tried to be understanding and caring. The harder she tried to overlook his sloppiness and his unwillingness to be cooperative and pleasant, the more he seemed to take advantage of her good nature. Joseph had made it plain to her that because Jr. was not her child she could not discipline him. And whenever she tried to remind him of the rules, Jr. would snap at her and say, "You're not my mother."

A year passed this way and Maryanne's frustration grew. She loved her husband and did not want to have a second failed marriage, but the stress and the tension continued to grow to the point that she and Joseph were having regular arguments about this. She tried to hold off until Jr. was spending the weekend with his mother. But lately they had even argued when Jr. was in the house.

One afternoon Jr. returned home from school just as Maryanne had finished mopping the kitchen floor. It had rained earlier and he came tracking through the still damp kitchen in muddy shoes. "please take off your shoes, they are muddy. she pleaded. "I don't have to", he replied, streaking mud across the floor. Maryanne choked down her angry feelings, got the mop out, and cleaned the floor again. Just as she finished Jr. walked back in the kitchen, this time looking for a snack, still wearing the muddy shoes. "I said, take off your shoes. Can't you see I just finished moping the floor?" He ignored her demand, messing up the floor again as he rummaged around the cupboards.

Maryanne suddenly realized that she had to do something - she had to confront him. She grabbed him by his shoulders and turned him around up against the cabinet, where she held him firmly, but not hurting him physically in any way. She looked in his

eyes and told him how she felt: how hurt she was, how disappointed she was, and how sad she was that their relationship had deteriorated so badly. She also told him that she was not going to leave, if that was what he was hoping would happen. She told him that she and his dad loved each other and they were committed to each other. Furthermore if Jr. was not willing to have her be the number one person in his dad's life, then he would just have to leave and go back to his mother's house. She also told him that from now on he would have to follow her rules - rules that were always fair and reasonable - rules that he had input in. She expected him to start right now by cleaning the kitchen floor. She had mopped it twice and wasn't going to do it again. If he didn't like what she was telling him, he could leave that very day. She said all of that without screaming shouting, or accusing, but she reported that she did speak forcefully. When she finished talking to him she let him go and went into her room and shut the door quietly. When she opened the door an hour later she discovered a note that Jr. had pushed under it. The letter was a handwritten apology, telling her that he was sorry, and that it was true - she had always been fair to him. He also wrote that he would follow her rules, starting with cleaning the floor that he had messed up.

The point of this story is that Maryanne used Love Theory to reach this pre-pubescent boy, who was trying every way he could to break up her marriage with his father. Because this woman had a good self-image, a strong belief system, and a deep spiritual self, she was able to confront in love and therefore begin to resolve the problems in her relationship with her stepson.

### **The Three C's of Behavior Management**

Children and teen's behavior can get out of control as he/she tries to become independent and self sufficient, and learns how to get his/her own way. The 3 C's of Behavior Management is a simple plan to help improve your children's behavior using clear, concise communication, consistent, congruent consequences, and staying in control. It uses the principles of Love Theory and is applicable for any age child. It is included in Chapter 8 of the workbook section. Another helpful tool for children is to write a weekly behavioral contract in order to track and shape behavior goals. This must always be done from a positive viewpoint. Consequences or rewards are always written from a positive perspective as well, and must be something the child wants to earn.

## **Eight Principles of Love Theory**

### **Chapter 9: Putting it all Together for Lasting Results**

Hopefully you are rereading this about six to eight weeks after you finished the group course work, and have already begun to make some positive changes in your life and in your relationships.

#### **1 Loving Self and Others Unconditionally:**

Do you feel differently about yourself in a positive way? What about resolving problem relationships from the past? Are you noticing changes in your tolerance and empathy for others? How's your unconditional love quotient? Are you more accepting and less demanding of your significant others?

#### **2 Developing Spirituality:**

Are you taking time out of your day for prayer and meditation and quiet time alone? If you can answer yes to the above questions then you are on your way to achieving meaningful self growth. Are you incorporating the other principles into your daily life? Are you more aware of your strengths, values, and beliefs?

#### **3 Changing Disempowering Beliefs; Growing in Self Esteem:**

Have you been able to notice any irrational or distorted beliefs? Have you decided to make any changes in your belief systems? What about attitudes and behaviors? Have you noticed differences there? Can you hear the still quiet voice inside of you now?

#### **4 Internal Control vs. External Control:**

Are you learning to stay calm and in touch with your own emotions and attitudes so that the behavior of others, or outside circumstances are not getting you down? Remember it's about inner control rather than outer control. It is your responsibility and your right to make the correct behavioral and feeling choices for yourself and not let others take that away from you.

#### **5 Substance Abuse or Other Forms of Abuse**

What have you done to resolve this problem? Have you written a safety plan? Most importantly, have you been able to practice unconditional love with your significant other since reading this manual? You will need the principles of "tough love" if you are a victim of abuse of any kind. To refresh your memory, tough love means putting some restrictions and boundaries where there were none before. That means not doing things for your significant other that he/she should be doing for himself/herself. No enabling.

#### **6 Self Discipline - How does it Work?**

Have you grown and developed in spiritual, emotional, and physical wellness since you completed the first eight chapters of this workbook? What changes have you noticed? Have you been able to set some goals for yourself that are reasonable and obtainable? Are you working toward any objectives to meet those goals?

## **7 Getting in Touch with Feelings and expressing needs:**

Are you consistently able to talk about your more sensitive feelings in ways that your partner can respond to? Do you notice yourself using "I" statements when disclosing how you are feeling and avoiding telling him/her how he/she feels? Are you able to verbalize what you need in ways that are open, clear, and reasonable? What about disempowering beliefs and empowering beliefs? Have you been able to work on changing some disempowering ones? How are you doing on surrendering? A lot of letting go of disempowering beliefs has to do with surrender.

## **8 Confronting with Love:**

Are you learning to be assertive rather than aggressive? What's the difference? Remember aggressiveness is tempered with anger, assertiveness is tempered with respect and love. Assertiveness uses "I" statements and talks about "my" feelings. Aggressiveness uses "you" statements and accuses and blames.

Review the goals and objectives you set for yourself. If you have achieved any, give yourself a cheer. If not, you may need to reassess them. You want them to stretch you, but not be so difficult that they are virtually unobtainable.

Take the personal wellness exercise at the end of the workbook. This test will give you a good indication of how you have grown in emotional wellness and maturity since you took a similar one two or three months ago.

You should now have a comfort level with the necessary tools to be able to stay in control of your emotions, thoughts, and behavior - no matter what is happening around you. No one and no set of circumstances can force you to get upset or out of control. Only you can make that choice! You have the right and the responsibility to love unconditionally and to stay in control.

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#### World Wide Web Resources on Domestic Violence

Greater New Orleans Battered Women's Program (2002) [www.metrobat@bellsouth.net](mailto:www.metrobat@bellsouth.net)

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2002) [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

Support Network for Battered Women (2002) [www.snbw.org](http://www.snbw.org)

YWCA of Greater New Orleans (2002) [www.ywca-neworleans.org](http://www.ywca-neworleans.org)

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