

The Relationship Roadmap



**Teachings and Tools for Transforming
Yourself, Your Relationships and the World**



Credits

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Introduction

*We either make ourselves miserable or we make ourselves strong.
Both require the same amount of work.*
— Carlos Castenada

Welcome to the work of transforming relationships. The teachings and exercises presented here are a road map, a basic orientation that can help you show up more fully in *every aspect* of your life.

Conflict is such a natural part of life, but most of us were never taught basic conflict resolution skills. What most of us grew up with—and what we see modeled around us—tend to be less than inspiring examples of honesty, integrity, and peacemaking.

Lacking some of the most basic tools, many of us understandably view conflict with dread and avoid it whenever possible—not really the best strategy for deepening relationships!

We are all wounded by the belief in separateness—the belief that we as human beings are separate from each other, from other species and the Earth, and from our spiritual essence. There is also the perceived mind-body split, the separation of women and men—all the various forms of “us versus them” thinking.

Because the belief in separateness is a wound we all share, you’ll find references in this book to the word “restoration,” the root meaning of which is, *To make firm again*. When you can admit that you too are in need of firming up, of healing, you are ready to begin the work in earnest and walk the path of restoration and active peacemaking.

In walking this path, you challenge and change not only your own habitual patterns, but thousands of years of unconscious thinking and behavior that have been handed down for generations!

The basic approach taken in this book is one of personal responsibility. As an adult you alone are responsible for your thoughts, feelings, emotions, needs, actions, and expectations. You may have some experience of how well it works to look to others to make you happy—doesn’t work so great, right? And the flip side is also true—other adults are solely responsible for themselves also.

Personal responsibility cuts both ways and still leaves plenty of room for all aspects of our humanity—for compassion and the need for understanding, for vulnerability and the need for support.

We hope you'll engage with the practices offered in this book. If you put in the effort, you'll receive the foundations of peacemaking that have the power to transform not only your life, but also the world.

We recommend that you take your time with the book. Think deeply about and feel into these practices, as well as the insights and questions that arise from your own process.

One approach could be working with one topic over the course of several days, or however long it takes to really feel it take root in your being. If you're working this process with a partner, do the initial work alone and then share it with your partner, taking the time to process what comes up before moving on.

We hope this book enriches your life and your relationships and ripples out to help heal a world in dire need of conscious, connected, courageous adults.

Intention Setting

*The more we give our best, the more we are able to receive other people's worst.
Isn't that great?*

— Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Making peace in relationships starts with humility and the admission that you have learning and growing to do. The good news is that relationships are the absolute best place to grow and practice being who you want to be.

Stepping into this territory is a big step because it involves breaking habitual patterns of thinking and behavior. It involves ending the blame game and moving away from feeling like a victim. It means taking responsibility for your part regardless of what the other person did or does. It includes maintaining a firm commitment to increasing your own self-awareness and self-acceptance.

Setting a crisp, clear, clean intention is key because the work of changing habitual patterns and behaviors is challenging. An intention sets your course and helps you stay on track. You can refer back to your intention when the going gets tough.

Exercise # 1: Intention Setting

Step One: *Consider your present situation and longings. Are you in a relationship that isn't working as well as you'd like? Are you alone and wanting to be in a relationship? Whatever your present situation, get clarity on what it is you are longing for?*

Step Two: *Ask yourself what your intention is relative to your situation: What do you want to do differently? Make it an "I will" statement: I will.... Remember the importance of personal responsibility and avoid making it about someone else.*

Build in personal accountability: Instead of "I will stay open and connected," consider adding something like ...and when I do disconnect I will come back to my breath and take a time-out. Make it specific, doable (don't set yourself up for failure), and brief—one sentence is good.

By setting an intention that reflects commitment and personal responsibility, you are already on a potent, transformational path. Remember that it is a path, a journey, not a goal or specific endpoint—and it's not about being perfect.

Mindfulness

Humankind's survival depends on our ability to stop rushing.
— Thich Nhat Hanh

Another fundamental of making peace in relationships is the commitment to truth. The stories you tell yourself about yourself and others are not the truth. They are stories based on beliefs and assumptions. To step into truth you have to let go of the past and come into the present moment. In the present moment there is no story. To see and communicate with others clearly from the heart you have to know what is true *for you*. You need to get in touch with your own deeply felt truth.

Given that much of what drives your thoughts and behaviors stems from unconscious and habitual processes, finding a way to bring consciousness to those patterns is crucial if you are to change them.

Mindfulness is the act of paying attention, in a conscious way, to the fullness of your experience—your *actual* experience as opposed to life on automatic pilot. It is a state of consciousness that comes with making a choice to be present to whatever is happening in the moment and holding that focus in a nonjudgmental way. It is, quite simply, the practice of *conscious* awareness.

By simply “witnessing” the way thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, and memories come and go, you become less attached to them and develop more choice around your behavior.

Mindfulness can be as simple as relaxing into your body, using the breath, and noticing what arises. Whatever happens is okay. One thing arises and goes away, then another thing arises, and on and on. With sustained attention you'll notice that everything that arises in your mind is transitory. Practicing mindfulness is foundational in developing the emotional intelligence necessary to do the work of prioritizing and sustaining relationships.

Basic Mindfulness Instruction

Find a comfortable chair to sit on. Feel your weight in the chair and your feet on the floor. Let yourself relax deeply into the support of the chair. Feel the Earth supporting you. Let yourself relax as completely as you can. Let there be nothing else to do, let relaxation be your priority.

From this place of relaxation allow your awareness to settle from your head down through your neck and shoulders, through your chest and into your belly.

Let your awareness settle like sand thrown into a pond. Take your time.

Then simply notice your experience sitting there—one human being experiencing a moment on Earth. Bring a kind of “witness “ quality to your experience. Don’t judge or try to explain it, just feel it; just notice what you notice and let that be enough. There may be sensations, feelings, thoughts, images—just notice what arises without getting attached to it or going into story mode. What arises will shift and fade away and something else will arise. Stay curious, stay in the Now!

You can practice this kind of basic mindfulness anytime, anywhere. Talking, walking, eating, making love, sitting in silence—anytime is a good time to practice mindfulness.

Exercise #2: Basic Mindfulness Practice

Do the basic mindfulness practice described above and reflect on your experience. What did you notice? Was there resistance? If so, what does it tell you? How will you work with it?

Meditation Practice

*Meditation is not a way to make your mind quiet.
It’s a way of entering the quiet that’s already there – buried under the 50,000
thoughts the average person has a day.
— Deepak Chopra, M.D.*

Meditation is a time-honored technique for cultivating mindfulness. Every major spiritual tradition includes meditation practice, and people all over the world practice meditation as part of a lifestyle aimed simply at increasing their sense of wellbeing.

Basic Meditation Instruction

Take a comfortable sitting posture—sitting cross-legged on a meditation cushion is great but a chair works just fine. Bring awareness to your posture. A straight but not tensed spine brings dignity and a better result to your practice.

A relaxed face and mouth helps keep the rest of the body relaxed. Sit in such a way that you are comfortable and present. Rest your palms on your thighs. If you are in a chair, place both feet flat on the floor. Then begin to follow your breath.

Put your full awareness on following your breath—the in breath and the out breath.

When thoughts arise—which they will—don’t get caught and carried away by them. Don’t evaluate the thoughts or judge yourself. Just say silently and gently to yourself “thinking” and bring your awareness back to your breath. Because having thoughts is what the mind does, the process of noticing thoughts and coming back to the breath is repeated over and over. The moment where you notice that you are distracted is actually very potent.

When you feel complete with this period of meditation, make the transition into the next activity mindfully, staying connected to yourself and your experience.

The benefits of meditation come with the fierce commitment to truth and the self-understanding inherent in the act of coming back to the breath, again and again—a commitment to interrupt the habit of getting lost in every thought and fantasy. In making such a commitment, you gradually develop more control of your mind.

Notice for yourself if the practice increases your sense of wellbeing and if life begins to feel more workable.

Exercise #3: Meditation Practice

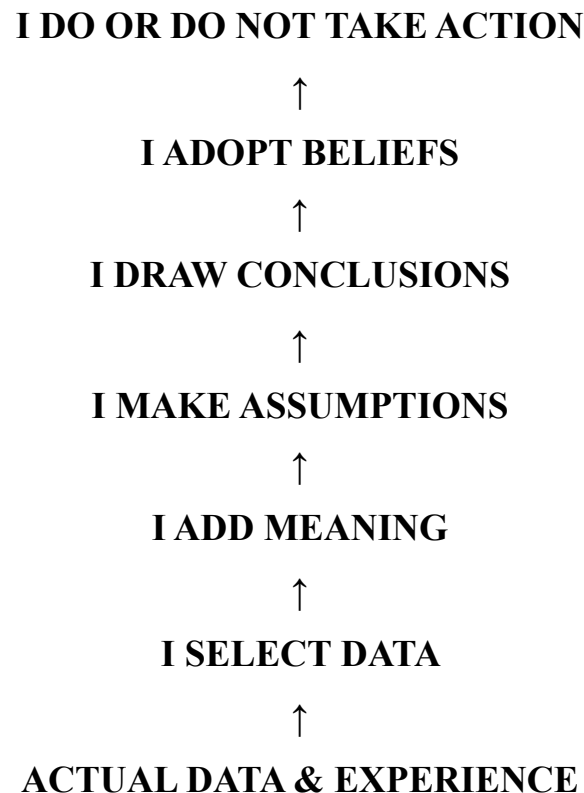
Reflect on your experience of the basic meditation practice outlined above. What did you notice? Try it a couple more times and continue your reflection.

Exercise #4: Ongoing Mindfulness Practice

Be it meditation or some other form of mindfulness practice, ask yourself about your commitment to an ongoing mindfulness practice. Reflect on the intention you set in exercise #1 and ask if a commitment to mindfulness would support that intention. What forms of mindfulness will you practice? How often and when? Be honest with yourself about both benefits and barriers, do some research, get some support (there are many books and audio resources available). Here again, just notice what arises without self-criticism.

If you don’t want to make a commitment to mindfulness practice at this point that’s okay too. Just notice what the source of the resistance is and see if you can bring some curiosity to it.

Ladder of Inference



The Ladder of Inference shows us how selected data and experience—the data and experience we choose to pay attention to—support our existing belief systems and visa-versa.

When we have another person as the source of the data, their mere presence or tone of voice may cause us to jump to false conclusions about their motivations. We stop considering what they actually said or did—what the real data is. Instead, we go directly from our selected data to preconceived beliefs about what is happening. When this happens, we act unconsciously and habitually, using erroneous data, and conflict is the inevitable result.

The Ladder of Inference helps us appreciate why mindfulness is so important. It's hard to see the actual data clearly unless we are in the present moment with a strong commitment to truth and understanding.

Exercise #5: Ladder of Inference

Choose a challenging relationship to work with. Work your way step-by-step up the Ladder and notice if you see it in action—how you automatically make the jumps.

Reflect on your assumptions about the person or people involved. What conclusions have you drawn about them or the situation? Can you see the Ladder of Inference in play?

Give yourself some understanding—some self-empathy—for making assumptions. After all, it's an automatic process that boils down to trying to protect yourself and get your needs met. From this place of greater clarity consider what the raw data is—what was actually said and done. Do you see any disconnect between the raw data and your assumptions?*

What did you learn using this example and The Ladder? Is there a sense of greater understanding of yourself when you operate on autopilot? Can you see any patterns in your behavior and thinking? Is there a sense of the freedom and empowerment that could come with bringing more consciousness to your patterns?

Choose another person and situation and use the same process as above.

* Self-empathy is gentle, non-judgmental understanding and appreciation of your own experience (history, needs, feelings, beliefs, etc.)

Iceberg Metaphor

Virginia Satir



This diagram compliments the Ladder of Inference by representing the unconscious influences on our behavior. Ninety percent of what is influencing our behavior is happening below the surface of our conscious mind. The more we become aware of these unconscious influences, the more mentally healthy and resilient we become. It boils down to self-awareness.

Core Beliefs

In the Iceberg Metaphor, “beliefs and values” are included as unconscious influences on behavior. This is critical to understand and work with. We all formed certain very fundamental beliefs about ourselves and the world at a very young age based on our experience with primary care givers, other people, and the environment. Three popular examples of core beliefs are variations on the themes:

- I’m not good enough
- I don’t deserve love
- I can’t ask for help, I have to do it myself

These core beliefs are pre-rational and form our basic personality structures. We unconsciously carry them into adulthood. Core beliefs filter out those experiences that don’t agree with them and in so doing influence perception. Core beliefs influence virtually every aspect of our experience.

Becoming aware of our core beliefs is a huge step on the road toward self-awareness and self-acceptance. There are reasons why we do what we do and believe what we believe (and it’s the same with other people!). Coming to terms with the experiences that led to our core beliefs and fully accepting who we are in this moment is fundamental to our healing.

But even core beliefs are not carved in stone. Intention and mindfulness are basic tools for working with core beliefs and creating new options for how we respond in different situations.

Exercise #6: Core Beliefs and Personality

Reflect on how your needs were and were not met when you were very young and what basic beliefs you formed about yourself and the world as a result (you can refer to the needs list on page 30).

- *What basic needs of yours were and were not met?*
- *What core beliefs did you form about yourself? Another way to ask this is: What did you “decide” was the best way to survive in the world?*
- *What strengths have you developed based on your core beliefs?*
- *How do these beliefs continue to influence your perception of people, situations, and the world?*

Exercise #7: Building Support and Accountability

An important aspect of restoration is community. The work of restoration is challenging and benefits greatly from involving trusted friends and loved ones who can provide support. This also helps with accountability—helping you stand firm in your commitment when the sledding gets rough. At this stage of the process you have demonstrated your commitment to personal growth and making things better in your relationships. It's time to go public with that commitment.

This exercise consists of selecting a friend or family member who will support you in a non-judgmental way in your work with the restorative process. Give careful consideration to who would be a good choice—it's not about getting advice or approval but support.

One person may be enough. Feel into it. You may want to invite others to support you too. Tell them what your intention is (from exercise #1) as a way to inform them of what you're doing.

Exercise #8: Withholding Honesty and Integrity

There are many ways we tend to be less than fully honest and in integrity with ourselves and others. This can include saying “yes” when we want to say “no,” saying we're fine when we're not, not saying anything when there is something up, self-medicating so as to not be fully present, and so on. Basically, anytime we go against our deeper knowing, we go against ourselves and, in a way, we go against life itself.

Spend some time with these questions:

How do I withhold honesty in my relationships?

How do I withhold my integrity?

Do this as a mindfulness practice and notice the uncensored responses. Reflect on what comes up and the self-talk that arises. Notice any tendencies to fall into self-criticism and “should-ing.” See if you can tune into the deeper longing underneath any “negative” thoughts.

Triggers

*Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our future.*
— Victor Frankl

Triggers are external events (for example, words, tones of voice, and behaviors) that instantaneously create a negative emotional response. One second we're an adult having a conversation and then all of a sudden we are 5 years old again!

Understanding the signs of being triggered, what triggers you, and how you habitually react when triggered is important self-awareness that helps you break free from destructive patterns.

Common signs of being triggered include:

- Physical signs—not breathing or breathing fast, rapid heart rate, muscle tension, and shakiness;
- Thinking signs—blaming, justifying, and resentful thoughts; thoughts of revenge, and obsessively repeating judgments and other thoughts;
- Emotional signs—feelings of anger, hate, or fear; feeling shut down; feeling like a victim; feeling checked out or like you just want to go to sleep; and
- Behavioral signs—saying things you don't mean; using insults, sarcasm, and blame; screaming, door slamming, running away and other forms of isolating; talking faster than normal or refusing to communicate at all.

When triggered our vision narrows and we disconnect from the whole person we are dealing with. We lose track of what was actually said or done and instead make assumptions and judgments and draw conclusions. Our core beliefs about ourselves, other people, and the world as a whole will write the script for what we project onto this person or situation.

Exercise #9: Know Your Triggers and How You Respond

- *What triggers you?*
- *How do you know you are triggered?*
- *What are the physical sensations?*
- *What are the thoughts and feelings arise when you're triggered?*
- *How do you recover?*

Resources

*How you stand here is important. How you listen for the next things to happen.
How you breathe.*

— William Stafford

The flip side of what triggers us are the ways we calm ourselves down and stay grounded. For example, we may have discovered that taking a walk, or talking things out with a friend helps us come back to center. It can be helpful to bring even more consciousness to the ways we “resource” ourselves so that these approaches can become more effective and habitual. It can also be helpful to consider and strengthen resource areas we may be underutilizing.

Categories of such resources include:

Psychological – A healthy sense of self; access to self-awareness and a full range of feelings and emotions; appreciation of challenges and humor; a felt sense of meaning, purpose, and contribution;

Relational – A felt sense of deserving and having friendship and support;

Spiritual – A felt sense of connection to source/God/spirit;

Physical – A felt sense of good health and vitality;

Sensual – A felt sense of pleasure from all of the senses;

Intellectual – A felt sense of the ability to think things through, to see patterns, to be interested and curious;

Artistic/Creative – A felt sense of having outlets for inspiration and expression; and

Nature – A felt sense of interconnectedness with the Earth and other species; a felt sense of support, inspiration, and care.

We emphasize the *felt sense* in these examples because that is what makes them resources and not just concepts.

Examples of practices in each resource area include:

Psychological – Positive self-talk, psychotherapy, mindfulness practices, journaling, conscious relationship building, volunteer/service work, time in nature, rites of passage, and play;

Relational – Sharing from the heart with friends, writing to or calling a friend,

visiting family, relationship/family counseling, using communication skills, and participating in men's/women's groups;

Spiritual – Prayer, meditation, reading or listening to spiritual teachings, yoga and t'ai chi, time in nature, connecting with your sense of purpose, silence, and regular expressions of gratitude and appreciation;

Physical – Conscious breathing, walking, hiking, biking, swimming, jogging, yoga, weight lifting, martial arts, massage, dancing, and rest;

Sensual – Bringing more awareness to the senses, mindful eating and walking, conscious sexuality, massage, skinny dipping, and sun bathing;

Intellectual – Studying, writing, taking classes, learning a foreign language, and professional development;

Artistic/Creative – Journaling, drama/acting, playing music, painting, photography, and writing and reading poetry; and

Nature – Nature-based mindfulness practices, hiking, building relationships with non-human beings, tree hugging, dirt worshipping, and wilderness-based rites of passage.

Exercise #10: Resources

Prioritize and take the time to really allow these resource areas to support you.

What practices do you do in these categories? Do you have at least one regular practice in each category? If not, consider finding a practice in the missing areas that would feel resourcing to you. (Note: many practices contribute to more than one category).

What do you notice as you bring more resourcing into your life?

Which areas feel most resourcing for you? How?

Are you drawn to become more resourced in certain areas? Why?

The Drama Triangle

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.
— Carl Rodgers

The Drama Triangle highlights the habitual roles we often take in relationships when in conflict or involved in some other form of drama. It helps us identify when we are triggered and bring awareness to how we are responding.

Persecutor

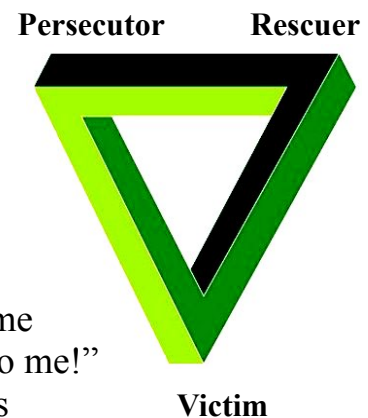
Takes an angry and critical attack-mode position; controls through fear and intimidation, and may say or feel things such as, “You’re so stupid!”
The Persecutor is brought onto the Triangle by fear
That triggers anger and feeling threatened.

Victim

Takes an overtly disempowered position; controls with blame and guilt and may say things such as, “Look what you did to me!”
The Victim is brought onto the Triangle by fear that triggers feelings of helplessness, resignation, and shame.

Rescuer

Takes a “fixer” position, controls through trying to help, whether it’s wanted or not, and may say things such as, “Let me help you.” The Rescuer is brought onto the Triangle by fear that triggers feelings of guilt, insecurity, and shame.



One of the key features of the Drama Triangle is the tendency to jump from role to role. Persecutors can become victims if they feel everyone is ganging up on them. Or they might accept blame, feel guilty and become the rescuers. Victims can build up so much repressed anger they become persecutors, and when that doesn’t work out, rescuers. Rescuers can easily become victims or persecutors if not allowed to help.

All of the positions on the Drama Triangle are ultimately fueled by fear, insecurity, and lack of self-awareness. On the Drama Triangle you sacrifice your power by living in the past and being caught up in thoughts and stories. Noticing and understanding the roles you take helps you get off the Drama Triangle and come into your adult self.

Exercise #12: The Drama Triangle

Make some notes about a couple of specific situations when you found yourself triggered and on the Drama Triangle.

What position did you tend to take?

Are there examples you can think of where you move from one role to another?

Holding the High Ground

Responsibility
Relationship
Respect
Repair

Regardless of how many tools we have and how well we use them it's inevitable that sometimes we'll make a mess. When that happens the adult approach is to simply clean it up. Identifying and repairing the harm as we go is the only way to avoid the resentments that deaden so many relationships.

A helpful extension of the intention-setting process is to come up with some overriding values to aim for in a day-to-day way (how and who you want to be in the world). These come in handy especially when you're under pressure and trying to navigate conflict.

It's easy to assume that we live by certain high ground values more than we actually do. Our core beliefs and negative self-talk all too easily override our best intentions when we don't stay conscious. A commitment to live by specific values helps focus our attention and direct our behavior.

While high ground traits can be represented by a variety of different characteristics, the helpfulness comes from naming just a few that form a comprehensive whole. With just a few words we can capture a wide spectrum of adult behavior.

Because holding the high ground is an on-going process, self-awareness is needed. It's not about being perfect—no one is always on the high ground—but we can practice being there, staying there, and getting back there when we fall short.

Responsibility

Being an adult in relationships begins with total self-responsibility. Without it there can be no real repair. This really is one of life's most important lessons: As adults, we are 100% responsible for ourselves.

Thoughts may come unbidden, but what we do with those thoughts is our responsibility. Our feelings, emotions, needs, and behaviors—we are responsible

for all of it. A commitment to self-responsibility helps us avoid hooking our happiness to the thoughts and behaviors of others (a strategy associated with much disappointment and resentment).

Self-responsibility keeps us in our power.

So much of our dissatisfaction comes from the expectations we place on others. We tend to want other people to think and behave in a certain way. If only they would do XYZ we'd be so happy! When they don't (which is often, right?), we easily fall prey to resentments that build up over time and suck the life out of relationships.

If we make our unhappiness into a problem caused by someone else, we lose our power to change the situation. Instead, we can look more deeply at our own thoughts and behavior. We can gain insight into what we are really longing for and what we need to do. Satisfaction is not something given by someone else but comes from our own felt experience.

Yes, we will be triggered by other people, but how we respond is up to us. Yes, we have needs, but once we are adults, it is our responsibility to take care of ourselves and assure that our needs are met. It is not someone else's responsibility to read our minds and meet our needs.

By the same token, we are not responsible for anyone else's thoughts, feelings, needs, or emotions. We may play a role in triggering them, and we can take accountability for that, but how they respond is ultimately their responsibility.

Healthy relationships are not based on a 50/50 mentality but on each person taking 100% self-responsibility.

Relationship

Prioritizing relationships is really only possible once we realize that our wellbeing is linked to the wellbeing of other people, other beings, and the Earth as a whole. When we prioritize relationships we move beyond habitual patterns of egotism, self-defense, and apathy.

Prioritizing relationships means we do our best to express our needs clearly and listen to the needs of others. It doesn't mean staying in relationships that are unhealthy. Sometimes the best way to honor a relationship is to make clear boundaries and keep a respectful distance. Sometimes, despite our best intentions, we need to leave certain relationships in order to take care of ourselves. But we don't have to blame, resent, or degrade other people in the process.

Prioritizing relationships changes everything because nothing puts us on the spot like relationships!

Respect and Repair

Self-responsibility and prioritizing relationships lay a foundation for respect and the ability to repair damaged relationships. An easily overlooked aspect of respect is self-respect. When we've caused harm it is often very habitual to drop into feelings of shame. This is when we come back to self-responsibility and do what we need to do to resource ourselves and get back into our adult selves. We show respect for ourselves, for the other, and for the relationship. It's our deep interrelatedness that makes relationships so important, wonderful, and tender.

A commitment to responsibility, relationship, and respect makes it possible to repair harm whenever and wherever it occurs. It helps to contemplate and appreciate just how deep our needs for safety and trust are! Without ongoing repair—as a natural and basic aspect of a healthy relationship—it is practically inevitable that relationship will run aground on the shores of resentment and disconnection.

You can talk about qualities such as honesty and integrity all you want without it amounting to much. Talk *is* cheap. Having some kind of actual high ground map and guiding principles that you commit to helps you put your best intentions into practice. Use a map like this as a tool to help you be who you want to be, not as another excuse to beat yourself up when you fall short.

Exercise #13: Repairing the Harm

Come up with a personal experience of not doing your part to repair the harm in a relationship. What happened? Why didn't you step up to repair the harm? What were the consequences?

Is there a time when you did step up to repair the harm? What qualities/values enabled you to do it? What were the consequences?

Exercise 14: Commit to the High Ground

How do you feel about setting an intention to live from the high ground values discussed above (or similar values)? What motivates you to want to do that? What holds you back? There is no correct answer here—what's important is to be as truthful with yourself as possible.

Exercise #15: Hold the High Ground

What follows are some concrete steps for getting back into your power and adult self when triggered. If you can, choose a current situation that knocks you for a loop and very consciously move through the following steps.

- 1. Slow down, breathe, take a time out if necessary—don't make it worse.*
- 2. Bring awareness to your thoughts and emotions.*
- 3. Notice what's happening in your body.*
- 4. Identify what it is you are longing for in this situation (what is the unmet need?). Keep it about you—your need—not some external change you'd like to see.*
- 5. Practice self-empathy.*
- 6. Notice what happens when you keep your awareness focused on your own experience. How do you feel now? What wants to happen now?*

Exercise #16: Find your Own Process

The process outlined in exercise #15 is one approach to increasing your self-awareness and shifting your state of consciousness. In using it you'll get familiar with your habitual reactions and the options you have for more conscious responses.

After working with these steps in a conscious way for some period of time you may want to revise them into a process that works best for you. What's important is that you have a conscious process that you're committed to for getting back to your center. What are the steps that work best for you?

Restorative Communication

*Your task is not to seek love, but merely to seek and find
all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.*
— Rumi

Having a restorative intention and some tools for holding the high ground creates a foundation for communicating in a different way—a way that is more honest, thoughtful, and peaceful. When we take personal responsibility and prioritize relationships, it becomes much easier to show basic concern for the wellbeing of others. It also becomes possible to focus on the issues as they arise and not get all caught up in emotional baggage.

Beyond this basic foundation, restorative communication requires a willingness to be vulnerable, curious, and open. A willingness to be less than perfect is very helpful because, let's be honest, relationships are messy. When you engage knowing that if you make a mess you'll do your best to clean it up it takes the pressure off!

A willingness to engage can even be conveyed in those moments when interacting isn't the best course of action. When emotions are high you must step carefully so as to not make things worse. Sometimes this means taking a time out. You can do this consciously and respectfully. You can tell the other person or people involved what you are needing in the moment or simply that you need some space before interacting further. Then you go do what you need to do to get back on the high ground.

In restorative communication it's important to refrain from generalizing and globalizing the conflict or issue. In both generalizing and globalizing, you move out of the present moment, drop into resentment, and lose the specifics of the issue at hand. You will also put the other person on the defensive and minimize the chances of finding a peaceful resolution.

Examples of generalizing include statements such as, "You're lazy!" "You're messy." Any comment that starts with "you are" will tend to be a generalization. Any statement that begins with "you always" will tend to be a globalization. "You always leave your clothes on the floor!" "You're always late!"

Focusing on the specifics is the best way to transform conflict into mutual wellbeing. Even if the other person *is* always late, yelling this at them probably won't get you what you want. By putting the focus on the specific issue, you focus on the other's behavior and how it makes you feel, not on their character. In this way personal criticism is avoided and your communication is about building relationship, not tearing it apart.

Telling them how *you feel* is key—not your opinion but how you actual feel. You do this by using “I statements” and focusing on your own feelings and needs. Here again, it's important to be specific about the issue. A basic structure looks something like this: “When you didn't help me wash the dishes after dinner tonight, I felt annoyed. I'm needing support with getting things done after a long day.” In this example there is no generalizing, globalizing or blaming, just an honest expression of basic feelings and needs that are signaling that the connection needs some attention.

It is also helpful to add a specific request: “Would you be willing to help me with the dishes during the week?” There is a big difference between a request and a demand. The litmus test for this is that if a person says no (or worse) to my Request, I move into self-empathy and then curiosity and connection, not punishment or counter attack.

The four steps outlined in the example above are the basics of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg.

1. What specific action or words did you observe or hear?
2. What feelings arose?
3. What are your unmet needs?
4. What action would you like the other person to take?

This formula can be great support in practicing a direct way to communicate from the heart. You can also ‘listen’ using this same formula. Most of us don't have much of a vocabulary or even an appreciation for our feelings and needs. This is one of the outstanding contributions of NVC and we include lists of feelings and needs in the following pages to support your practice of restorative communication. We also highly recommend the book by Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*.

Deep Listening

Listening tends to be an under-developed capacity in our culture. And in the heat of conflict, when we're on the offensive or defensive, our ability to listen can become so selective as to do more harm than good. What is needed for restorative communication is deep listening. We can think of this as listening in and from the present moment, without an agenda, without attachment to any particular outcome or the need to be right. It will also help if you don't take what the other person is saying or doing personally, but as an expression of their needs.

Deep listening is listening from the heart and the whole body, not the head alone. One approach for cultivating deep listening is to imagine it's the last time you'll ever see or hear this person (and it might be!). This can create a softening in your defenses and an authentic interest in what this person is saying and wanting.

There are many ways to cultivate and practice forms of communication that are restorative, and it's really a life's work to retrain ourselves out of old communication habits. Some of the helpful hints covered above include:

1. Show basic concern for the other's wellbeing
2. Focus on the specifics of the issue
3. Use I statements
4. A request is not a demand
5. Take time-outs when needed
6. Practice deep listening and let the other person know you've heard them
7. Don't take it personally

And a bonus tip, from the Prayer of St. Francis: Seek to understand, not to be understood.

Feelings Inventory

The following are words that describe feelings (combinations of emotional states and physical sensations). Building your familiarity with the range of feelings can support your self-awareness and communication. There are two parts to this list: feelings you may have when your needs are being met and feelings you may have when your needs are not being met.

Feelings when needs are satisfied:

<p>AFFECTIONATE compassionate friendly loving open hearted sympathetic tender warm</p> <p>CONFIDENT empowered open proud safe secure</p> <p>ENGAGED absorbed alert curious engrossed enchanted entranced fascinated interested intrigued involved spellbound stimulated</p> <p>INSPIRED amazed awed wonder</p>	<p>EXCITED amazed animated ardent aroused astonished dazzled eager energetic enthusiastic giddy invigorated lively passionate surprised vibrant</p> <p>EXHILARATED blissful ecstatic elated enthralled exuberant radiant rapturous thrilled</p> <p>GRATEFUL appreciative moved thankful touched</p> <p>HOPEFUL expectant encouraged optimistic</p>	<p>JOYFUL amused delighted glad happy jubilant pleased tickled</p> <p>PEACEFUL calm clear headed comfortable centered content equanimous fulfilled mellow quiet relaxed relieved satisfied serene still tranquil trusting</p> <p>REFRESHED enlivened rejuvenated renewed rested restored revived</p>
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Feelings when needs are not satisfied:

<p>AFRAID apprehensive dread foreboding frightened mistrustful panicked petrified scared suspicious terrified wary worried</p> <p>ANNOYED aggravated dismayed disgruntled displeased exasperated frustrated impatient irritated irked</p> <p>ANGRY enraged furious incensed indignant irate livid outraged resentful</p> <p>AVERSION animosity appalled contempt disgusted dislike hate horrified hostile repulsed</p> <p>CONFUSED ambivalent baffled bewildered dazed hesitant lost mystified perplexed puzzled torn</p>	<p>DISCONNECTED alienated aloof apathetic bored cold detached distant distracted indifferent numb removed uninterested withdrawn</p> <p>DISQUIET agitated alarmed discombobulated disconcerted disturbed perturbed rattled restless shocked startled surprised troubled turbulent turmoil uncomfortable uneasy unnerved unsettled upset</p> <p>EMBARRASSED ashamed chagrined flustered guilty mortified self-conscious</p> <p>FATIGUE beat burnt out depleted exhausted lethargic listless sleepy tired weary worn out</p>	<p>PAIN agony anguished bereaved devastated grief heartbroken hurt lonely miserable regretful remorseful</p> <p>SAD depressed dejected despair despondent disappointed discouraged disheartened forlorn gloomy heavy hearted hopeless melancholy unhappy wretched</p> <p>TENSE anxious cranky distressed distraught edgy fidgety frazzled irritable jittery nervous overwhelmed restless stressed out</p> <p>VULNERABLE fragile guarded helpless insecure leery reserved sensitive shaky</p> <p>YEARNING envious jealous longing nostalgic</p>
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Needs Inventory

As human beings we have basic needs that are universal—everyone has the same basic needs. What differs are the ways we each try to get our needs met.

<p>CONNECTION</p> <p>acceptance affection appreciation belonging cooperation communication closeness community companionship compassion consideration consistency empathy inclusion intimacy love mutuality nurturing respect/self-respect safety security stability support to know and be known to see and be seen to understand and be understood trust warmth</p>	<p>PHYSICAL WELL-BEING</p> <p>air food movement/exercise rest/sleep sexual expression safety shelter touch water</p> <p>HONESTY</p> <p>authenticity integrity presence</p> <p>PLAY</p> <p>joy humor</p> <p>PEACE</p> <p>beauty communion ease equality harmony inspiration order</p>	<p>MEANING</p> <p>awareness celebration of life challenge clarity competence consciousness contribution creativity discovery efficacy effectiveness growth hope learning mourning participation purpose self-expression stimulation to matter understanding</p> <p>AUTONOMY</p> <p>choice freedom independence space spontaneity</p>
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Exercise #17: Using NVC to Speak

Think of an interaction with another person that caused you stress. Practice the four basic steps of speaking in NVC.

- *What specific behavior or words did you observe or hear?*
- *What were the feelings that arose?*
- *What were your unmet needs?*
- *What is your request to the other person that will support your needs? What action/s would you like taken?*

Exercise #18: Using NVC to Listen

Using the same interaction, practice the four steps of listening in NVC.

- *What specific behaviors or words are they observing or hearing?*
- *What feelings are arising for them?*
- *What were their unmet needs?*
- *Was there a request to you that would support their needs? What action/s would contribute to their wellbeing?*

Exercise #19: Embodied Feelings and Needs*

Here's a partner exercise that builds your experience and vocabulary with feelings and needs. Sit facing a partner who will listen only. Name a need that feels present for you. Describe in as much detail as possible where this need lives in your body, how it makes you feel when you feel (or imagine) it being met.

Use the feelings and needs lists for support. If your partner wants a turn, take the opportunity to practice deep listening.

Notice if this practice increases your sense of self-connection and how it influences the relationship.

*Adapted from the work of Robert Gonzales and used by permission.

Exercise #20: Mirroring/Reflective Listening

You'll need a partner for this one too. Sit facing each other. One person will start speaking while the other listens deeply. The person speaking will use the four basic steps of NVC to describe a recent situation: What they observed/heard, what feelings arose for them, what their unmet needs were, and what action/s they would like taken.

When the speaker is complete the listener will reflect back what they heard. The point isn't to do this word for word as a test, but for the listener to communicate back the essence of what they heard and felt. This lets the original speaker know that they were really heard.

Once the initial mirroring is complete, the original speaker gets a chance to clarify anything they felt was not reflected back accurately. This is done without any sense of right or wrong, but as continued sharing from the heart for the purpose of increasing understanding and building the relationship.

Dialogue and Debate

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.
— Philo of Alexandria

Dialogue is collaborative: multiple sides work toward shared understanding

Debate is oppositional: two opposing sides try to prove each other wrong

In Dialogue one listens to understand, to make meaning, and find common ground

In Debate one listens to find flaws, differences, and counter arguments

Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: openness to being wrong and to change

Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right

Dialogue reveals assumptions for examination and reevaluation

Debate defends assumptions as truth

Dialogue enlarges and changes points of view

Debate affirms points of view

Dialogue searches for strengths in all positions

Debate searches for weaknesses in other positions

Dialogue is grounded in respect

Debate is not grounded in respect and can include blaming and shaming

Dialogue assumes that others have contributions to offer and cooperation can lead to greater understanding

Debate assumes a single right answer and that someone already has it

Dialogue remains open-ended

Debate demands a conclusion

Adapted from *Focus on Study Circles*, Winter, 1993

Exercise #21: Making Dialogue your Default

Study the differences between dialogue and debate and note your own tendencies to use one or the other. How might dialogue might serve you and your relationships better than debate?

Can you commit to a more dialogue-oriented approach? Why, what's your motivation?

The next time an issue comes up with someone, practice using dialogue and, afterwards, evaluate how it went, how it felt.

Restorative Apologies

Our culture instills such a lack of personal responsibility that even when we decide to make an apology it often doesn't come out clean. It can sound like asking to be let off the hook.

We will often think the other person has overreacted in the first place and we were misunderstood. That's beside the point. Their reaction is their reaction, and if we want to move forward peacefully using an apology it's critical to leave behind all justification and resentment. It is in seeking to understand rather than be understood that we open ourselves to the possibility of reconnection.

When done consciously and with integrity, an apology can contribute in profound ways to restoring and deepening relationships.

5 Steps of a Restorative Apology

1. Take 100% self-responsibility. Find the words and the felt sense—the inner knowing—that honestly reflects how your actions caused, promoted, or allowed the situation.
2. Come into the present moment. Get in touch with your feelings and needs now—your longing to make things better and your respect for the other person and their perspective.
3. Open your heart and make the apology. A clean apology requires you to take the first step without attachment to a desired outcome. They may accept your apology, or they may not. Your job is to speak your truth. Regardless of how they respond, take responsibility, stay present, and stay with your heart.

4. Listen deeply and non-defensively to their response. Maybe they won't have a direct response they want to share in the moment or at all—let that be okay.
5. Express your intentions for the future. This can include your feelings towards the importance of the relationship and any commitments you are willing to make in moving forward. This is best done in the positive form rather than the negative. Rather than saying, "I'll never do that again," say "I will do my best to honor our relationship." Or it can be as simple as, "I want us to be friends."

Exercise #22: Make a Restorative Apology

Practice the steps outlined above with a real example from your life. If you have a partner who wants to be involved that's great, just make sure they are clear about the practice aspect and their role. Their role is to listen and give an initial response. Don't feel like you have to be perfect or some kind of saint. If you don't have a willing partner at the moment you can still practice the steps.

Reflect on your experience with each of the 5 steps and your experience in general. What will you do differently next time?

Conclusion

Congratulations on completing the workbook! We hope you found it inspirational.

We encourage you to take some time to reflect on the intentions you set and any commitments you made while working with this book. Remember, there is no quick fix. Transforming old beliefs and patterns is a process. Do your best and get the support you need.

Wishing you joy and ease in your own being and in all your relationships.

Scott Brown and John Ehrhart

Continue your journey of becoming more conscious,
connected, and courageous at 4ActivePeace.com.