

By the author of the *New York Times* bestseller with more than
1½ million copies sold, *Getting the Love You Want*

RECEIVING LOVE

TRANSFORM YOUR
RELATIONSHIP BY
LETTING YOURSELF
BE LOVED

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EXERCISES

All of us have received love throughout our lives, but many of us have blocked the love we've been given. Maybe we've forgotten about some of the love that people have tried to give to us. Maybe we haven't allowed ourselves to experience love emotionally because we are afraid of the obligation, or we don't feel worthy to receive it.

These exercises will help you regain your capacity to receive the love that is already in your life.

If you want, you can consider these exercises a workshop to be completed after you've finished listening to the rest of the program. Sit down and do them with your partner.

EXERCISE 1

The Gift Diary

The purpose of the Gift Diary is to develop a daily consciousness toward receiving love in your life.

Purchase a spiral notebook or some kind of a diary, preferably one that is divided into three sections, and label it “My Gift Diary.” Ask your partner to do the same.

A. RECEIVING INVENTORY

Label the first part of your diary RECEIVING INVENTORY. Take time to think about what gifts you received in the past that were the most valuable to you. Who gave you these special gifts? How old were you? What did it feel like to receive them?

When you finish making your list, use your separate knowing to think rationally about the fact of each of these gifts. Then shift to your connected knowing of each gift. Move from your head to your heart, and allow yourself to re-experience the moment you received each one. Be aware of the emotions you felt about each gift and the different levels on which you felt love expressed by receiving the gift. Let yourself spend some time feeling connected to both the gift and the giver of the gift. Savor all the good feelings of the moment.

B. DAILY RECORD

A multitude of gifts we exchange each day can get lost in our busyness and self-absorption. To complete this exercise, you and your partner need to label the second part of your Gift Diary DAILY RECORD. In this part of the diary, you will record three gifts you receive from each other every day, beginning with today. You can note little or big things. Here are some examples: “I appreciate the way you always set the alarm clock correctly.” “I appreciate the fresh towels in the bathroom.” “I loved the look you gave me when I brought you hot tea this evening.” Talk about the three gifts you each received from the other before you go to bed at night.

After you acknowledge the gift of your partner’s love that you received that day, practice moving to another place deep within yourself. Feel your heart opening to your partner’s presence in your life and say: “I receive this as a gift, thank you.” Let yourself feel the gift. Breathe it in. Hold an image of it in your mind. Move from an abstract separate knowing of your partner’s gifts to a connected knowing of your partner’s love as you allow yourself to feel the gifts your partner gave and the gift of your partner in your life.

Share with your partner what it was like for you to receive his or her gift, including all the sensations you experienced. This will help you grow in your capacity to receive. Also, when you notice the three behaviors each day that you value, you are mirroring your partner’s efforts. This will encourage your partner to give in ways that have the most meaning for you, and to continue to give gifts to you daily. Remember, receiving love opens your heart *and* empowers your partner to give you even more.

C. DREAM GIFT INVENTORY

Label the last page of your diary MY PARTNER'S DREAM GIFT INVENTORY. In this space you will keep a running list of things you think your partner values receiving. Take some time now to create an initial list.

Now ask your partner to review your list for accuracy, and ask him or her to add what you missed. Review your partner's list and add things he or she missed. Clarify for each "dream gift" the following questions: What time of day, in what setting, and how often would your partner like to receive your gift? The DREAM GIFT INVENTORY will help shift giving in your relationship from unconscious relating, based on what you *think* your partner wants, to conscious relating, based on what you now know your partner wants.

If you give gifts to your partner that he does not mention, ask your partner gently whether he experiences the behavior as a gift. For example, you may enjoy buying a box of candy for your partner from time to time. And while you may be excited to give it, your partner doesn't seem excited about receiving it. Ask your partner if he values getting a box of candy from you. If yes, you will know he is receiving it. So keep doing it, even if he doesn't comment. If he says no, ask him what would seem like a gift to him. Show interest in your partner's feelings and thoughts about what he most values and appreciates. Simply being asked, in and of itself, is likely to be received as a very meaningful gift.

You can keep the lists updated by adding hints, things you hear each other say in passing about things you each like—a day with nothing to do, a bright leather jacket, skydiving lessons, breakfast in bed, a trip to the beach, a full hour massage. Be sure to add these hints to your ongoing inventories. These inventories are the key to both your hearts, and if used, will help both of you learn to receive the love you want to give each other.

EXERCISE 2

The Imago Dialogue

The Imago Dialogue helps to create safety in your relationship, and safety is a precondition for receiving love. The Imago Dialogue process is the central therapeutic process in Imago Relationship Therapy. Regular practice of this skill will lead to clear communication and deeper emotional connection. It will help you learn how to listen accurately to what your partner is saying, to understand and validate your partner's point of view, and to express empathy for your partner's feelings. By using this tool, you and your partner can learn to create a space between you in which true love can be born.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Choose who will be the sender and the receiver. The one who decides to be the sender should start the dialogue by saying: "I would like to have an Imago Dialogue. Is now okay?" When using this process in your relationship, after this practice session, it is important that the receiver respond as soon as possible. If now is not possible, then set a time when you will be available so your partner will know when he or she will be heard. You should signal your readiness by saying: "I am available now."
2. The sender now talks for a few minutes, sending the message she or he wants the receiver to hear. The message should start with "I" and describe what the sender is thinking or feeling. Remember, in order for the dialogue not to be associated only with concerns and frustrations, start the first dialogue with something positive: an appreciation, something positive your partner did that made you feel loved or a positive trait you appreciate. For this exercise, therefore, the message should be something positive or at least neutral and simple. Example: "I have been thinking about the positive things in our relationship, and I would like to tell you about some of

them.” If you chose something neutral, you could start with: “I awakened this morning with a sore throat and don’t feel like going to work. I think I will stay home.” The receiver then mirrors using these suggested sentence stems: “**If I got it**, you awakened with a sore throat, and since you don’t feel well, you are thinking you will stay home from work. **Did I get it?**” If the sender indicates he or she felt heard accurately, then the receiver says: “**Is there more about that?**” If the sender has more to say, she or he adds to the message. The receiver continues to mirror and ask “Is there more about that?” until the sender has completed the message. (The question, “Is there more about that,” is very important. It helps the sender complete all of his or her thoughts and feelings and prevents the receiver from responding to an incomplete message. And, since it is limited to “more about *that*,” it helps the sender limit the message to *one* subject at a time.)

3. When the sender has completed the message, the receiver then summarizes all of the sender’s message with this lead-in: “**Let me see if I got all of that. . .**” When the receiver finishes the summary, he or she should check for accuracy with this question: “**Did I get it all?**” (The summary is important because it helps the receiver understand the sender more deeply and to see the logic in what was said. This helps with validation, which is the next step.) When the sender indicates that the entire message has been heard accurately, you then move to validation, or Step 4.
4. Now the receiver *validates* the sender’s message with something like these lead-ins: “**You make sense, because . . .**” or “**It makes sense to me, given that you . . .**” or “**I can see what you are saying . . .**” (This response indicates that the receiver understands the logic of what the sender is saying. It is the sender’s “truth.” The receiver does not have to agree with the sender, but it is essential that they “see” the logic or “truth” of the sender’s experience.) The receiver should check to see if the sender feels validated. If so, then the receiver moves to empathy, the final step.

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5. Empathy can be expressed with the following sentence stems: **“I can imagine that you might be feeling . . .”** or **“I can imagine that you might have felt. . .”** or **“I can see that you are feeling. . .”** (Feelings are best stated using one word, such as angry, sad, upset, happy, and so on. If you use more than one word, such as: “you feel you don’t want to go to work,” you are probably expressing a thought.) It is important to check for accuracy by saying: **“Is that what you are feeling?”** Or, **“Did I get your feeling right?”** If the receiver did not imagine the right feelings or misperceived the expressed feelings, then the sender should again state what he or she is feeling. Also, if the sender shares other feelings that were not picked up by the receiver the first time, the receiver should mirror those feelings and ask: **“Is there more about that feeling?”**
6. When the receiver has gone through all three parts (mirroring, validation, and empathy) then she or he says: **“I would like to respond now.”** Then the receiver becomes the sender and the sender the receiver. The sender (former receiver) may respond to the message he or she heard or the sender may express feelings or thoughts about something from his or her experience.
7. This exercise will feel like an unnatural, cumbersome way of relating, but it is a good way to assure accurate communication. Like learning any new skill, it will be awkward at first, but with practice you will become more artistic and less mechanical. When you have the exercise down pat, you will discover that you do not need to use the structured process all the time. Your communication will become dialogical in spirit. The three steps will be necessary only when you are discussing highly charged subjects, or when communication breaks down. Eventually, you will experience a decrease in reactivity, more emotional safety, and deeper connection.

8. Now use the dialogue process to share what you learned about yourself and your partner by doing Exercise 1. Take turns. The exchange in the Imago Dialogue offers you an opportunity to practice both receiving and giving. Each time you fully listen to your partner, you expand yourself by receiving and you empower your partner to impact you. When you speak, you are giving yourself to your partner and helping them enlarge themselves by taking in your reality. When it's your turn to listen, give your partner your full attention. Mirror what your partner is saying until you get it. Then validate her or his point of view and communicate empathy. You may ask clarifying questions, but do not try to analyze your partner, make interpretations, or express frustrations or criticisms. As you listen, try to visualize your partner's issues with giving and receiving.

The Imago Dialogue helps you develop a new way of knowing, called relational knowing. When you listen accurately to the content of what your partner is saying, you engage in separate knowing. Your partner feels safe with you when you mirror correctly what he or she has said. Then, when you validate your partner's view, you move from your head into your heart, and imagine some of your partner's experience, connecting with your partner's reality. Expressing empathy opens you to an even deeper connectional knowing by allowing you to feel some of your partner's feelings about his or her views, and, at a deeper level, to participate in those feelings. Both separate and connected knowing are necessary for you to really understand your partner, and the dialogue process, done accurately, helps you develop both. You will learn more about separate and connected knowing in Exercise 3.

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EXERCISE 3

Learning How You Know

This exercise is designed to help you learn two ways of knowing, called separate and connected knowing. It will assist you in deciding which best describes how you tend to process information. One way to talk about separate knowing is that it has to do with thinking, learning the facts about things, and knowing them in your head. Connected knowing has been called “heart knowing.” It is a way of relating to the world through intuition and feelings. Connected knowers experience things, events, and persons with their emotions, feeling them in their “hearts.” All of us use both kinds of knowing. We were born with the capacity to do both. But most of us have trouble easily accessing both modes of knowing in a balanced way. As a result of our childhood experiences, we come to rely on one kind of knowing at the expense of the other. One becomes dominant and the other becomes recessive.

Bringing separate and connected knowing into balance will enhance and deepen your ability to experience life, and will enhance your functioning in all aspects of your life. The achievement of this integration is called, “relational knowing.”

For example, you have exaggerated reliance on connected knowing when:

1. You cannot say what you mean succinctly.
2. Your partner/others become impatient with your elaborations.
3. Your partner/others say that you get overly emotional.

You have relied on separate knowing when:

1. You speak clearly, succinctly, and logically, but with little if any affect.
2. You are impatient when your partner/others elaborate their point excessively.
3. Your partner/others say they experience little warmth or empathy from you.

Below is a self-rating scale to assess whether or not you see yourself as a separate knower, a connected knower, or a relational knower. Study the examples above carefully and think about how they might apply to you. On the scale below, SK stands for “separate knowing” and CK represents “connected knowing.” If you think you are a separate knower, give yourself a rating of 1–4. If you consider yourself a connected knower, also give yourself a rating of 1–4. The closer your rating is to either the left or right side indicates the degree to which you are a separate or connected knower. The closer your rating is to the center, number 5, the closer you are to being a relational knower. If you rate yourself with a 5, you consider yourself a balance of separate and connected knowing, and thus a relational knower.

SK 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 CK

If you have a partner, ask him/her to rate you and compare your ratings. If you do not have a partner, you might also like to ask a close friend to rate you and compare your ratings.

The exercises that follow will help separate knowers develop their connected knowing skills and connected knowers develop their separate knowing skills. After you have determined which kind of knowing is dominant for you, select the growth process that is appropriate. It will help you develop the balance you need to become a relational knower.

Growth Process for Separate Knowers

PURPOSE: To become a relational knower.

GOAL: To keep your separate knowing skill, but at the same time, increase your connected knowing skill.

STRATEGY: To become more familiar and intimate with your inner world of feelings, images, intuitions, hunches, and body sensations, and to become more curious about and empathic with your inner world and the inner world of others.

PROCESSES:

1. Practice becoming **silent** inside. Use a meditation method to help you focus on your breathing. Allow yourself to experience whatever is going through your mind, then let it go, and return your attention to your breathing. Be aware of your body, note any tension, and then let it go. Note any thoughts and/or images, suspend any judgment, and then, let them go.
2. Practice becoming **present to others**. Use the dialogue process to listen to your partner and others. Create an empty space inside yourself to receive their reality. Simply listen. Place your hand over their heart and experience their body sensations. Release any thoughts, analyses, suggestions, solutions, and judgments, and allow the speaker to be who they are. Become curious about their experiencing; make a space in your consciousness for their reality. Respond with empathy.
3. Practice being **present to your emotional self**. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, and just sit, allowing yourself to be aware of your feelings, images, intuitions, hunches, and body sensations. When thoughts, analyses, suggestions, solutions, or judgments arise, let them go, and go back to experiencing your inner world.
4. Practice **translating action into words and feelings**. The next time you become aware of wanting to take a particular action, such as getting up from your chair, taking a drink, eating, or going to find your partner, pause first. Rather than proceeding with the action, notice what you are feeling and thinking in connection with your proposed action. Put your feelings and thoughts into words to yourself. Then decide if you want to take the action or not.
5. Practice **expressing your emotions**. Ask your partner for a dialogue. For fifteen minutes, talk about your feelings. Go as deeply into them as you can, suspending any thoughts, analyses, or judgments that you might have. Ask your partner to mirror your feelings. You can also practice expressing your emotions by flooding your partner or a friend with positive feelings you have about them, and/or telling them intensely the positive feeling you have about your relationship. Again, ask your partner or friend to mirror your feelings.

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6. Practice **transferring the energy of your mind to your heart**. Find a quiet place, and then imagine your mind in an energy field, radiating energy into your environment. Then shift your focus to your heart, and imagine that your heart generates the same kind of energy radiating out into your environment. If you want, you can visualize your heart encircled with a warm glow that overflows your body and spills out of you.

Growth Process for Connected Knowers

PURPOSE: To become a relational knower.

GOAL: To keep your connected knowing skill, but at the same time increase your separate knowing skill.

STRATEGY: To become more familiar with your thoughts, analytic skills, logical-sequential thinking, ability to solve problems, and to develop your ability to think clearly, to speak succinctly, and to enjoy the external world.

PROCESSES:

1. Practice becoming **silent** inside. Use a meditation method to help you focus on your breathing. Allow yourself to experience whatever is going through your mind, then let it go, and return your attention to your breathing. Be aware of your body, note any tension, and then let it go. Note any thoughts and/or images, suspend any judgment, and then, let them go.
2. Practice becoming **present to others**. Use the dialogue process to listen to your partner and others. Create an empty space inside yourself to receive their reality. Simply listen. Place your hand over their heart and experience their body sensations. Release any thoughts, analyses, suggestions, solutions, and judgments, and allow the speaker to be who they are. Become curious about their experiencing; make a space in your consciousness for their reality. Respond with empathy.

3. Practice being **present to your rational self**. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, and just sit, allowing yourself to be aware of your thoughts. Let one thought crystallize. Hold the thought in your mind. When a feeling arises, let it go, and go back to experiencing your mind and its thoughts.
4. Practice **finding the thoughts behind your feelings**. Create one succinct thought on any one subject in your mind. Practice becoming less diffuse and more focused with this thought. When feelings, images, intuitions, hunches, and bodily sensations arise, let them go, and return your attention to your thought.
5. Practice **translating feelings into words and action**. Notice the next time you have a strong feeling about your partner or one of your partner's behaviors. Rather than staying in your feeling, initiate a dialogue with your partner. Ask him or her to listen and mirror. Then speak clearly and succinctly—putting a period at the end of each sentence. Next, in the same clear, succinct manner, ask for a behavior you want. Be specific about what you want by making the behavior you want measurable and time limited. Notice how you feel once you have stated what you want.
6. Practice containing **your emotions**. The next time you have a problem that arouses your feelings, instead of staying in your feelings, shift into your thoughts and make a plan for solving the problem.
7. Practice **transferring the energy of your heart to your mind**. Find a quiet place, and then let yourself experience your feelings about your partner, imagining energy circling your heart. Then imagine that energy shifting to your mind, encircling it with a warm glow, and then radiating out toward a problem to be solved. Construct a plan for addressing the problem. Allow yourself to envision yourself carrying out your plan. How does that feel?

Now, as you continue with the exercises, keep in mind how you tend to know and practice both separate and connected knowing with all the new learning that is ahead.

EXERCISE 4

Practice Receiving and Giving

The following tasks are designed to assist you in developing your capacity to receive. Receiving is a prerequisite to giving.

PART I: RECEIVING SENSORY IMPRESSIONS

When we are wounded in childhood we tend to become self-absorbed and shut down our five senses.

To reactivate our sensory organs, we need to practice paying attention to the stimuli that come in from our environment. The following is a simple exercise to help facilitate this. The best way to do this exercise is to go outside with your partner and walk around. When you are outside:

1. Just breathe. Be aware only of the air coming in and out through your nostrils. Take a deep breath in and let the air out. Receive the air. Say to yourself: **“I am breathing in the air. It’s just there and it’s there for me.”** Use dialogue to share your experience with your partner. Listen carefully to your partner’s words. Let them in and receive them in the same way you took in the air around you. Experience the sensation of receiving your partner’s words and emotions.
2. Just see. Look at your environment. Be aware of the images coming in through your eyes. Let them in. Let yourself see the colors of the trees, grass, and flowers; the movement of the birds; and the clouds floating in the sky. Look at your partner. Take in your partner’s appearance, the color of his/her eyes, her/his height, and size. Use dialogue to share this experience with each other, letting your partner’s words and emotions in.
3. Just touch. Focus only on what you touch. Touch a tree, a blade of grass, a rock, and your partner’s skin. Experience the sensations on your fingertips. Let the sensations in. Experience the texture. Use dialogue to share the sensations of touch with each other. Experience the sensation of receiving your partner’s words and emotions.

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4. Just listen. Using your ears, let in the sounds of your environment. Take in the sound of the wind blowing in the trees, the cars, your partner's voice, and your own breathing. Use dialogue to share your experiences with each other. Be sure to let in the sound of your partner's voice, as well as his or her words and emotions.
5. Just taste. Focus only on the sensations on your tongue. Experience where the taste sensations go in your body. Taste a piece of fruit, taste your own skin, kiss your partner, and taste his or her lips with your tongue. Let only the sensations in, letting any distracting thoughts and feelings go. Use dialogue to share your experience with each other, letting your partner's words and emotions in.
6. Now take the experience one step further. Say aloud: **"I appreciate the air, the images given to my eyes, the sensations of touch, the sounds, and the tastes."** Think of everything in your environment, including your partner, as a gift and experience the joy of receiving.

PART 2: RECEIVING YOUR PARTNER'S REALITY

This part of the exercise will help you become more closely in touch with who your partner really is and help you to pay close attention to what he or she is saying.

1. Find a place where you and your partner can have an uninterrupted dialogue. Ask your partner to talk about his or her experience of letting in sensory sensations. Listen carefully, focusing only on your partner's words, tone of voice, and emotions. Let the words in until you can experience her or his inner world. Let only your partner's words into your consciousness. Let all your own thoughts and feelings go. Focus until you are silent inside.
2. Now change places and talk to your partner about your experience and ask your partner to listen.
3. Now, to deepen your capacity to take in your partner's reality, ask your partner to talk about something that is uncomfortable to him/her in your relationship. Focus. Concentrate. Let your partner's reality be all that is in your mind. Listen until you are silent inside, and aware only of your partner's experience.

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4. Say to your partner, **“I appreciate your sharing your reality with me.”**
5. Now switch roles and ask your partner to listen to you and appreciate you in the same way.

PART 3: RECEIVING A GIFT

Remember that receiving expands the self and empowers your partner.

1. Find a place where you and your partner can have an uninterrupted dialogue. Ask your partner to give you something you have never before asked for. It could be a certain kind of kiss, a massage, a physical item, certain words, or an experience—anything you want that you have never asked for. Take your time and think about your deepest desire, the fulfillment of a fantasy, or an unfulfilled yearning. Then, pick one that you’d like to receive today.
2. Be aware of any thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as you ask, but let them go. Focus only on your asking.
3. Now accept whatever you have asked for. Let any uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations go. Experience yourself receiving.
4. Say to your partner: **“I accept this gift. I appreciate the gift you have given me. It helps me expand myself into a larger person.”**

PART 4: GIVING A GIFT

Remember that giving stretches you into new parts of yourself.

1. Ask your partner to set aside some uninterrupted time, and using the dialogue process, ask him or her to ask for something from you that he or she has never asked for.
2. When your partner has asked for the gift, let yourself be aware of any thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations you may have, and then let them go.
3. Stretch into giving your partner what he or she has asked for, no matter how you feel. Focus only on the experience of stretching toward your partner.
4. Say to your partner: **“I appreciate your asking me for what you want. It gives me a chance to grow into a larger, more empowered person.”**

EXERCISE 5

Positive Flooding

Practicing mutual positive flooding is another way to develop your ability to receive. It creates more safety and joy in your relationship, opening you and your partner even further to the possibility of receiving.

1. Have your partner sit in a chair and, while walking in a circle around your partner, keep eye contact and say all the positive things you can think of about your partner's physical characteristics, character traits, behaviors you value, and so on. Flood your partner by starting with your voice at its regular volume and then raising it with each of your positive comments. At the end of the flooding, you should be *shouting* positive global expressions of caring to your partner, such as, "You are the most thoughtful husband in the world!" Or, "You are the most wonderful wife in the universe!" Shout these exclamations with a level of intensity equal to your expressions of rage or anger.
2. While you are doing this, be aware of reactions on your partner's face and body.
3. Now, have a dialogue with your partner and ask him or her to talk about how it felt to be positively flooded. Note especially the words you said that were mentally deflected by your partner, those that were let in, and the feelings your partner had with each one.
4. Ask your partner to do the same for you, and repeat the process.
5. Now, list all aspects of yourself that you want your partner to flood. Include what you wanted to hear in your childhood and what you want to hear in the relationship of your dreams.

Physical Characteristics	Character Traits	Behaviors	Global Affirmations

6. Ask your partner to repeat the flooding exercise, using the words you want to hear. Then, share the experience with your partner, using the dialogue process.
7. Now, take your partner's list and repeat the flooding exercise, using the items your partner wants appreciated. Remember to raise your voice as you amplify the list.
8. Ask your partner to share the experience with you, using the dialogue process.

Do this exercise weekly, including the traits you value in each other and the traits you both want valued. Then make it a part of your daily interaction, flooding each other regularly with positive words. This changes chronic negativity into chronic positive flooding. Each time you practice this exercise, you strengthen your ability to give and to receive. Raising your voice while flooding increases the emotional intensity with which you express your positive feelings to your partner. Positive words expressed with intense emotions can overcome any defense your partner may have against giving or receiving love. Your relationship will become safe, and you will continue to grow into your wholeness.

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EXERCISE 6

Your Imago

Our ability to receive and to give is greatly influenced by our childhood relationship with our caretakers. The way they treated themselves was a model of giving and receiving. Most of us unconsciously adopted this model for ourselves and continue to live it out in our significant relationships.

This exercise is designed to help you construct an image of your primary caretakers as you remember them from childhood with regard to receiving and giving. As such, it will provide you with many clues to your current attitudes toward giving and receiving in your relationships today.

On the following chart or on a separate sheet of paper, make a list of positive and negative words that describe your parents as you recall them.

Mother		Father	
Positive Traits	Negative Traits	Positive Traits	Negative Traits

Now, underline the items below that would apply to your mother (female caretaker) and circle those that would apply to your father (male caretaker). If a term applies to both of them underline *and* circle it.

It's okay to want: love, sex, play, fun, intelligence, movement, feelings, nurturing, rest, sleep, education, work, success, happiness, health, food, vacations, spirituality, religious beliefs, touch, laughter, support, warmth, praise, knowledge, your own thoughts, sympathy for others, money, property, recreation, freedom, independence, compliments, negative feelings, hope, orgasms, massages, fear, sadness, anger, grief, happiness, joy, peace, equality, pleasure, musical talent, creativity, artistic talent, faith, doubt, desires, athletic talent, competition, trust, fatigue, education, respect, tolerance, appreciation, gratitude, empathy (add any other words that you wish).

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It's okay to receive: love, sex, play, fun, intelligence, movement, feelings, nurturing, rest, sleep, education, work, success, happiness, health, food, vacations, spirituality, religious beliefs, touch, laughter, support, warmth, praise, knowledge, your own thoughts, sympathy for others, money, property, recreation, freedom, independence, compliments, negative feelings, hope, orgasms, massages, fear, sadness, anger, grief, happiness, joy, peace, equality, pleasure, musical talent, creativity, artistic talent, faith, doubt, desires, athletic talent, competition, trust, fatigue, education, respect, tolerance, appreciation, gratitude, empathy (add any other words that you wish).

It's not okay to want: love, sex, play, fun, intelligence, movement, feelings, nurturing, rest, sleep, education, work, success, happiness, health, food, vacations, spirituality, religious beliefs, touch, laughter, support, warmth, praise, knowledge, your own thoughts, sympathy for others, money, property, recreation, freedom, independence, compliments, negative feelings, hope, orgasms, massages, fear, sadness, anger, grief, happiness, joy, peace, equality, pleasure, musical talent, creativity, artistic talent, faith, doubt, desires, athletic talent, competition, trust, fatigue, education, respect, tolerance, appreciation, gratitude, empathy (add any other words that you wish).

It's not okay to receive: love, sex, play, fun, intelligence, movement, feelings, nurturing, rest, sleep, education, work, success, happiness, health, food, vacations, spirituality, religious beliefs, touch, laughter, support, warmth, praise, knowledge, your own thoughts, sympathy for others, money, property, recreation, freedom, independence, compliments, negative feelings, hope, orgasms, massages, fear, sadness, anger, grief, happiness, joy, peace, equality, pleasure, musical talent, creativity, artistic talent, faith, doubt, desires, athletic talent, competition, trust, fatigue, education, respect, tolerance, appreciation, gratitude, empathy (add any other words that you wish).

It's okay to give: love, sex, play, fun, intelligence, movement, feelings, nurturing, rest, sleep, education, work, success, happiness, health, food, vacations, spirituality, religious beliefs, touch, laughter, support, warmth, praise, knowledge, your own thoughts, sympathy for others, money, property, recreation, freedom, independence, compliments, negative feelings, hope, orgasms, massages, fear, sadness, anger, grief, happiness, joy, peace, equality, pleasure, musical talent, creativity, artistic talent, faith, doubt, desires, athletic talent, competition, trust, fatigue, education, respect, tolerance, appreciation, gratitude, empathy (add any other words that you wish).

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It's not okay to give: love, sex, play, fun, intelligence, movement, feelings, nurturing, rest, sleep, education, work, success, happiness, health, food, vacations, spirituality, religious beliefs, touch, laughter, support, warmth, praise, knowledge, your own thoughts, sympathy for others, money, property, recreation, freedom, independence, compliments, negative feelings, hope, orgasms, massages, fear, sadness, anger, grief, happiness, joy, peace, equality, pleasure, musical talent, creativity, artistic talent, faith, doubt, desires, athletic talent, competition, trust, fatigue, education, respect, tolerance, appreciation, gratitude, empathy (add any other words that you wish).

Now, using the words you underlined and circled, complete the sentences below as they apply to each caretaker:

Mom (or female caretaker):

It's okay to want:

It's okay to receive:

It's not okay to want:

It's not okay to receive:

It's okay to give:

It's not okay to give:

Dad (or male caretaker):

It's okay to want:

It's okay to receive:

It's not okay to want:

It's not okay to receive:

It's okay to give:

It's not okay to give:

Now think of these as “messages” you received from your parents about what you could want, receive, and give. Using these messages to you about how to live, study each one and write down what consequences were attached to obedience/disobedience of the negative and positive messages.

If I obeyed the negative messages, then:

If I disobeyed the negative messages, then:

If I obeyed the positive messages, then:

If I disobeyed the positive messages, then:

Next, indicate which messages you obeyed and disobeyed, and indicate the consequences.

The negative messages I obeyed were . . . , and the consequences were . . .

The negative messages I disobeyed were . . . , and the consequences were . . .

The positive messages I obeyed were . . . , and the consequences were . . .

The positive messages I disobeyed were . . . , and the consequences were . . .

Now, given the messages you obeyed, what decisions did you make about:

Who I am:

What I deserve:

What I don't deserve:

Given who I am, what I deserve, and what I don't deserve, I can expect from life that I:

And, given all that, the kind of intimate relationship I will have is:

RECEIVING LOVE

Now, given the messages you disobeyed, what decisions did you make about:

Who I am:

What I deserve:

What I don't deserve:

Given who I am, what I deserve, and what I don't deserve, I can expect from life that I:

And given all that, the kind of intimate relationship I will have is:

Next,

Which messages are you still obeying?

Which decisions are still active?

What consequences are you still experiencing?

Finally,

Which of the active decisions do you want to change?

What thoughts, behaviors, and feelings would you have to change in order to negate the decisions?

Now, decide what new decisions you will make.

REPEAT THE PROCESS FOR YOU AND YOUR PARTNER

Now you will want to use the process you have completed for your primary caretakers to work out the same kind of results for you and your partner. Start with the beginning of Exercise 6. Based on your experience with your partner, ✓ the words that apply to him or her; X the words that apply to you.

Now, complete the sentences below with messages you think your partner received from his or her caretakers.

My partner feels:

It's okay to want:

It's okay to receive:

It's not okay to want:

It's not okay to receive:

It's okay to give:

It's not okay to give:

Then, review the list again, and this time, complete the sentences with messages **your partner sends to you**.

In my relationship with my partner, it's okay for me to want:

In my relationship with my partner, it's okay for me to receive:

In my relationship with my partner, it's not okay for me to want:

In my relationship with my partner, it's not okay for me to receive:

In my relationship with my partner, it's okay for me to give:

In my relationship with my partner, it's not okay for me to give:

Review the list once again, and this time complete the sentences with messages **you send to your partner**.

In my relationship with my partner, it's okay to want from me:

In my relationship with my partner, it's okay to receive from me:

In my relationship with my partner, it's not okay to want from me:

In my relationship with my partner, it's not okay to receive from me:

In my relationship with my partner, it's okay to give to me:

In my relationship with my partner, it's not okay to give to me:

These messages indicate what prohibitions and permissions around receiving and giving exist in your relationship.

Now using the dialogue process, talk with your partner about the messages you both received from your parents. It's important to recognize that you and your partner will no doubt have different perspectives on some of these issues. Engaging in the Imago Dialogue will help you both clarify where your perspectives are different and where they are similar.

Next, dialogue about the messages you give to each other about giving and receiving. Then, write down the messages you wish you had heard from your parents, the messages you want to hear from your partner, and the new permissions you will give to yourself. Using dialogue, share them with your partner.

The results of this exercise will give both you and your partner insights into the origins of messages you have received from your respective primary caretakers as children, as well as ways in which those messages continue to have life within your relationship. You can use these insights to identify and discuss through dialogue your barriers to giving and receiving love.

RECEIVING LOVE

EXERCISE 7

Becoming Whole Again

As we discussed in the program, all children are born whole and have natural talents and impulses that express who they are. As a result of praise from caretakers, children develop some aspects of themselves, such as creativity, musical talent, or curiosity. However, other self-aspects, such as athletic skills or intuition, are ignored by caretakers and thus not developed. When caretakers criticize talents and impulses, such as sexual curiosity, abstract thinking, or assertiveness, children take the same attitude toward those self-aspects as their caretakers. They see those aspects as bad and dissociate from them in order to survive. But ignored or criticized talents and impulses do not disappear; they are simply rejected and pushed out of awareness. They do not fit into one's self-concept. This creates a "split" in the self, which can be recognized as a sense of emptiness accompanied by unspecific longings, and is the source of self-hatred and low self-esteem.

Since they are split off and repressed, they do not receive input and they do not express themselves, because they are unavailable for communication with the conscious part of ourselves. In other words, these aspects of the self can neither give nor receive. They are blocked.

In order to become whole again, to be able to receive, give, and engage in relational knowing, we must become aware of talents and traits we possess that do not fit our concept of ourselves, and integrate them. Only then can we truly receive, give, and know with our minds and hearts.

The fate of rejected self-traits is self-hatred, which underlies low self-esteem. Another fate of these criticized talents and impulses may be their conversion into compensatory traits. For instance, a person who has denied his or her sexual curiosity may become a crusader against pornography or become a “prude.”

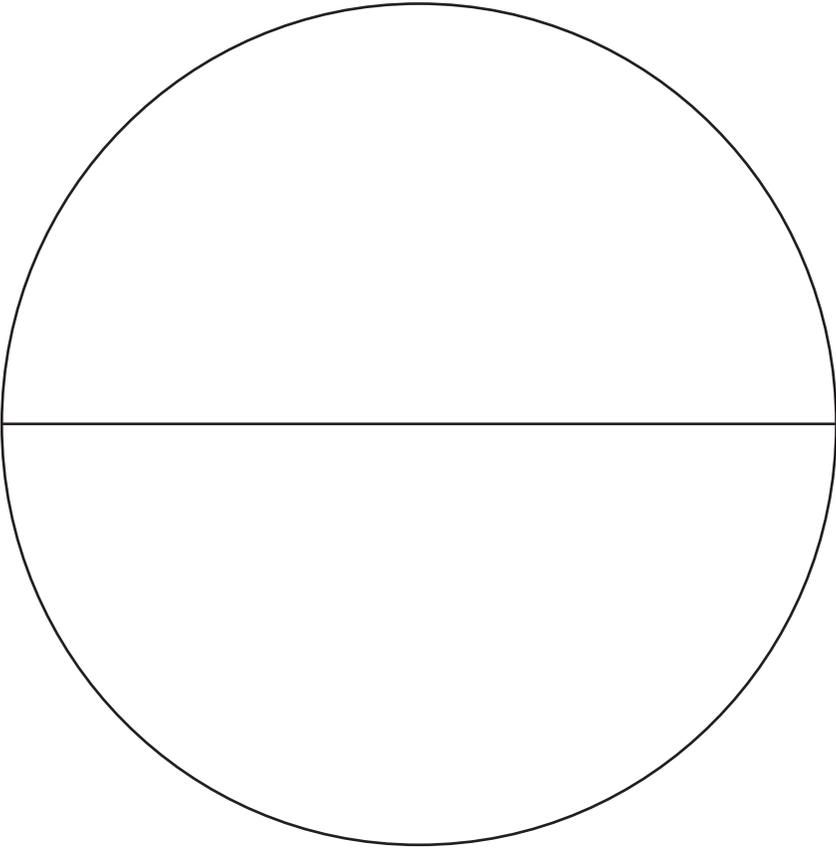
On the other hand, rejected self-traits may be projected onto others via adoration or criticism. For instance, we may adore musical talent in others or criticize their intelligence as “eggheadedness.” The rejected trait or undeveloped talent is projected most often onto persons who are emotionally close to us. Commonly, we project onto our partners and our children.

DISCOVERING REJECTED ASPECTS OF YOURSELF

To free your partner from your own history and avoid involving him or her in unresolved issues from your own childhood, it is important that you know, admit you have, and become willing to change traits that are inconsistent with your concept of yourself. Then you will be able to relate to your partner as a subject-person, rather than a mirror of rejected aspects of yourself.

To discover rejected aspects of yourself, take a blank sheet of paper and draw a large circle that covers most of the page. Now divide the circle horizontally. Place a plus sign on top of the circle and a minus sign below it.

POSITIVE TRAITS +



NEGATIVE TRAITS –

In the circle, above the horizontal line, list the positive adjectives that describe your caretakers, partner, any ex-partners, the traits you admire or adore in any opposite-sex person(s), and the traits you admire or adore in any person.

In the circle below the horizontal line, list negative adjectives that you assign to your caretakers, partner, any ex-partners, the traits you dislike or despise in any opposite sex person(s), and the traits you dislike or despise in any person.

RECEIVING LOVE

Now study the circle carefully. The top circle suggests positive traits that you may possess, but disown. In some context in childhood, you decided not to develop certain traits that most people would value as positive, but that represented a danger to you. The traits listed below the horizontal line suggest negative self-traits that you may possess, but deny. In childhood you used behaviors that had survival value to you, but that were rejected as “bad” by your caretakers. The combination of these disowned positive traits and denied negative traits suggests a description of your rejected self.

To deepen and add validation to this process, select three to five persons who know you well and ask them to make a list of adjectives that they think describes you and/or their experience of you. Ask them to hold nothing back and to put a plus sign (+) or a minus sign (–) beside each trait.

Next, take all the positive and negative traits from your circle and from all the lists your loved ones compiled for you, and enter them in the chart below, or make a similar one on a separate piece of paper. Put positive and negative traits in the appropriate columns. The final chart will be a refined and accurate description of your disowned and denied self-traits.

CHARACTER TRAITS LIST

Column A—Positive Traits	Column B—Negative Traits

Now rank each item on both lists from one to five, with one being the trait that you think is most unlike you and five being the trait that is most like you.

Then, pick five traits from both columns that have the ranking closest to one and put them on the chart below according to the categories. The trait *least* descriptive of you is #1, #2 is less descriptive, #3 is somewhat descriptive, #4 is somewhat more descriptive, and #5 is most descriptive.

When you finish this question, you will have identified a total of ten traits, five positive and five negative.

Ranking	Positive Traits (Column A)	Negative Traits (Column B)
1. Least Descriptive	_____	_____
2. Less Descriptive	_____	_____
3. Somewhat Descriptive	_____	_____
4. Somewhat More Descriptive	_____	_____
5. Most Descriptive	_____	_____

You must own these traits to become whole and to make any significant changes that will influence your relationship with your partner. As you own, integrate, and change these traits, your imago will change and your relationship with your partner will improve.

PERSONAL GROWTH PLAN

This exercise will help you integrate the disowned and denied traits you have uncovered, helping you to overcome your split. Please follow the instructions below. Move the five traits under column A, Positive Traits, in the preceding chart to the appropriate column in the chart below.

A

Positive Traits	Potential Traits	Behavioral Expression	D

Then move the traits under column B, Negative Traits, in the chart on page 32 to the appropriate column in the chart below.

B

Negative Traits	Potential Traits	Behavioral Expression	D

RECEIVING LOVE

The traits in column A represent positive potential you possess that other people already see, but which you may have denied. You need to claim and integrate these traits into your self-concept. You can do this by changing the name of a positive trait that may feel like too much of a stretch into a potential trait that you want to develop. You can list potential traits in the space provided for all five positive traits, if necessary. Then, design a behavior that expresses the positive or potential trait in interpersonal transactions. The behavior should be positive, concrete, specific, and quantified. Use the space provided and record behavioral expressions for each of the five positive or potential traits. Next, rank the behaviors one to five with one as most difficult, in Column D.

For instance, if one of the traits is “creative,” you can keep that word or choose a similar word, such as “insightful.” If you keep “creative,” you can express it behaviorally as follows: “I will write poetry at least once each week for the next six months.”

Now change the five traits in Column B into traits that for you would be positive and desirable. Changing to an opposite trait is okay, if that is the new trait you want to develop. Use the space provided to record behavioral expressions for each of the five positive or opposite traits. Next, rank the behaviors one to five, with one as most difficult, in Column D.

For instance, if you listed “stingy” as a trait, then you can change it into “prudent” and express it behaviorally as follows: “I will establish a savings plan that will enable me to save steadily over the next twelve months.”

You can use the example below as your guide.

Ranking	Positive Traits (Column A)	Negative Traits (Column B)
1. Least Descriptive	<u>creative</u>	<u>stingy</u>
2. Less Descriptive	<u>intuitive</u>	<u>distant</u>
3. Somewhat Descriptive	<u>adventurous</u>	<u>arrogant</u>
4. Somewhat More Descriptive	<u>warm</u>	<u>suspicious</u>
5. Most Descriptive	<u>intelligent</u>	<u>rigid</u>

RECEIVING LOVE

SAMPLE PERSONAL GROWTH PLAN

A

Positive Traits	Potential Traits	Behavioral Expression	D
Creative	Insightful	I will share my new ideas daily.	1
Intuitive	Perceptive	I will express a perception I've had to my partner once a week.	2
Adventurous	Bold	I will take a risk each day.	3
Warm	Intimate	I will express my deepest feelings with my partner once a week.	4
Intelligent	Intelligent	I will take one course a quarter in an effort to finish my college degree.	5

B

Negative Traits	Potential Traits	Behavioral Expression	D
Stingy	Frugal	I will make careful decisions daily about spending my money.	1
Distant	Boundaried	I will protect the time we plan for relaxation each weekend.	2
Arrogant	Proud	I will positively flood our relationship once a week.	3
Suspicious	Watchful	I will help double-check that we have positive energy in our relationship daily.	4
Rigid	Reliable	When you call, I will come.	5

RECEIVING LOVE

Thinking about and writing this exercise is a practice in separate knowing. Putting this exercise into practice requires becoming more of a connected knower, and thus moving toward relational knowing. Sharing and receiving feedback and support from each other will increase your ability to receive and to give.

When you complete the written exercise, ask your partner for a dialogue and share your growth plan. Ask your partner to share his or her growth plan with you. Then develop the new traits by practicing the behavior expressions regularly. Each week, pick a trait and practice it. The more whole you are, the more you are able to receive the love in your life, too.

RECEIVING LOVE

EXERCISE 8

Discovering Your Hidden Potential

This exercise is designed to help you identify and recover your “lost self” in your relationship. Your partner can help you in this process. In the columns on page 39, record the positive and negative messages you received from your caretakers about each aspect of yourself listed in each column. Study the examples below before you start. They will guide you in doing the exercise.

EXAMPLES:

THINKING: Statements from caretakers:

You don't need to go to school.

You think you are so smart.

Message: Don't think.

I am so impressed at your clear thinking about that.

I really like your idea. Could I hear more?

Message: It's okay to think, to use your mind.

FEELING: Statements from caretakers:
You are so emotional.
Don't show your anger around here.
Message: Don't feel (or feel certain feelings).
So you are feeling sad right now.
Tell me about your anger.
Message: It's okay to feel your feelings.

SENSING: Statements from caretakers:
Don't waste your time listening to music.
Wanting hugs is silly.
Message: Don't experience your senses.
I'm glad you like hugs.
Look at the beautiful sunrise.
You seem to hear the melody in the music.
Message: It's okay to use all of your senses

MOVING: Statements from caretakers:
Don't climb or run so much.
Don't sing at the dinner table.
You are always wiggling.
Message: Don't move your muscles.
I like the way you are dancing.
You can really run fast.
Your body is so agile.
Message: It's okay to move your body.

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CORE SELF (Your real self): Statements from caretakers:

Don't be.

Don't.

Don't be you.

Don't want things.

Message: Don't exist.

It's okay to be.

It's okay to be you.

It's okay to be all of who you are.

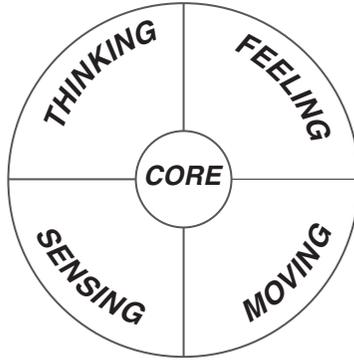
Message: It's okay to exist.

Thinking	Feeling	Sensing	Moving	Core Self

Use the chart above to record the messages you received from your caretakers. Identify the positive messages with a + sign and the negative messages with a – sign. Count the total number of positive messages you received about each function and the total number of negative messages you received about each one.

RECEIVING LOVE

Now, on a separate sheet of paper, draw a circle and divide it horizontally and vertically. Write the word **thinking** in one section, the word **feeling** in the next, the word **sensing** in the next, and the word **moving** in the last, and then in the center write **core self**, which refers to you, your existence.



On the diagram, record the number of negative and positive messages you received for each function. Study your negative messages for each function and black out your estimate of the percentage of that function you feel was repressed in your childhood.

The sections of the circle which you black out as repressed functions constitute your “lost self.” These functions were rejected by your caretakers and thus by you. The remaining white space reflects the percent of that function that was not repressed.

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You will discover which parts of yourself you rejected under pressure from your caretakers. In most intimate relationships, the functions you rejected in yourself are the opposite of those rejected by your partner in him- or herself as a result of his or her caretakers' messages. This means that what is missing in you is developed in your partner. Because the functions that are "on-line" in your partner are "off-line" in you, you will tend to reject those functions in your partner because your caretakers forbade them in you. In other words, you will take the same negative attitude toward those functions in your partner that your caretakers took toward them in you. You will ask your partner, through criticism and devaluation, to sacrifice those same parts that you surrendered in order to survive in your family. (If you have children, you may find yourself asking your children to inhibit or repress aspects of themselves similar to the ones you were asked to inhibit or repress.)

On the other hand, you may have been initially attracted to that part of your partner that you were asked to repress, those areas that in your partner are naturally open and alive. But later, those parts of your partner may arouse concerns in you, and you may then initiate limitation or repression. If you were asked by your caretakers, for example, to inhibit your thinking, you will be attracted to a person whose thinking function is fully expressive and alive. But in your relationship, you will no doubt ask him or her to limit, inhibit, or repress his or her thinking. You will do this unconsciously, even though you may want your partner to be free in the areas in which you were inhibited. You cannot give your partner the permission you were denied, for your unconscious will prevent it. Since the function was denied you for survival reasons, your unconscious will repeat the same task for the same reason in your current relationship.

RECOVERING THE LOST SELF IN RELATIONSHIP

Repeat the Recovering the Lost Self exercise as it applies to your partner. Think about the statements you make to your partner about his or her freedom to think, to feel feelings, to experience the five senses, to move, to be his or her core self. Use the same chart of statements that you used for yourself.

Thinking	Feeling	Sensing	Moving	Core Self

RECEIVING LOVE

Now draw another circle on a new page and repeat the same steps you followed for yourself. When you have finished, you will have a picture of the parts of your partner that you may be unconsciously or consciously attempting to inhibit. This will result in conflict or acquiescence. If your partner acquiesces, those parts will be lost to his/her consciousness and become part of his/her “lost self.” Becoming conscious of these messages will enable you to support all the functions of your partner.

To recover *your* “lost self,” ask your partner to help you develop the undeveloped parts of yourself. Study each function in your partner that is missing in you and ask your partner to help you develop that function. You can use your partner as a model to learn how to think, feel, experience all your senses, and move your muscles. You may not develop your function in the same way as your partner, however. For example, your partner may be good at thinking and express it as a philosopher, while you might choose to develop your thinking by becoming a businessperson or a biologist.

When your partner offers help to develop a function, or if you choose to develop it on your own, develop your separate knowing by receiving it with your mind and then let yourself feel it in your whole being. Let it be real in your imagination and feelings, and then express it in behavior. In this way, you will develop your ability to receive and to give, and at the same time balance separate knowing and connected knowing into relational knowing.

To complete this exercise, convert all the negative messages about your four functions of self and your core self into positive ones. For instance, convert a “don't be” message to your core self into “it's okay to exist.” Convert a “don't move” message to your muscles into “it's okay to move my body.” Convert a “don't be sexual” message to your senses into “it's okay to be sexual.” Convert a “don't feel” message to your emotions into “it's okay to feel all my feelings.” Convert a “don't think” message to your mind into “it's okay to think all my thoughts.” You might ask your partner to say these positive messages to you. When you complete them all, you will be whole again. You will be able to give and receive in new ways in your relationship, and relate to your environment with both channels of knowing.

RECEIVING LOVE