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ARIELLE FORD

HOW TO CREATE DEEP INTIMACY IN IMPERFECT RELATIONSHIPS



Arielle Ford is a leading presence in the personal growth and contemporary spirituality movement. She is the bestselling author of eight books including Wabi Sabi Love. She believes that with a simple Wabi Sabi shift in perception, couples can discover the beauty in themselves and their partners, leading to a deeper, more loving and more fulfilling relationship.

Ken: Arielle, I'm inspired by your concept of Wabi Sabi love. Can you explain what it means and why it's such a healing approach to intimacy?

Arielle: Wabi Sabi is an ancient Japanese aesthetic that honors all things old, worn, weathered, imperfect and impermanent. And it seeks to find beauty and perfection in imperfection. Imagine that you had a beautiful vase—with a long crooked crack down the middle of it. The Japanese might take this vase, put it on a pedestal and then shine a spotlight on the crack. Wabi Sabi love is about learning to honor the cracks in ourselves, and especially in our mate.

This brings us to a place where we can be more at peace, have more joy, have deeper love, and more fun. Because we can be whining, complaining, bitching and moaning for years about the things that drive us crazy and nothing ever changes. But when we seek a shift in perception about these behaviors, then we change. We don't even have to tell our partner what we're doing. Only one person has to make a difference. Because we're living as if the problem's "*over there*."

One of the biggest parts of Wabi Sibi love is to begin to take personal responsibility for how we're reacting to the stuff that we think is "over there." And if we can make up a new story about it, we can start to have more love and laughter in our life.

I want to tell you a quick story that really illustrates this. It's about my friends Jerry and Diane. Every single morning Jerry wakes up, goes in the kitchen and slices a poppy seed bagel, which spreads thousands of little black poppy seeds all over Diane's white tile floor. And every morning Diane gets up and she gets on her hands and knees with a wet paper towel and wipes up the little black poppy seeds. And most mornings it's really not a problem for her.

But one morning she was having a particularly bad day and she was really grouchy. And while she was picking up the poppy seeds she had this thought, "I wonder what it would take to never have to do this again?" Which was followed by the thought, "Oh, that would mean Jerry's no longer with me." And she began to cry. And from that day on those poppy seeds now meant she had another day to spend with Jerry. So she made this little Wabi Sabi shift in perception. The thing that suddenly made her crazy was now something that was a very big reminder of something and someone she loved the most.

Ken: So when we do that, we experience a shift not just in our relationships, but in ourselves as well.

Arielle: Yes. And isn't that what we want? And there are lots of ways to do it. It just requires a little intention, some attention and a willingness to do it.

There are so many people out there thinking, "Oh, I can't have a serious relationship until I heal all my baggage." And yes, working on your baggage is a good thing. But the truth is, when you're with somebody who loves you and is your safe place to land and has your back, you can have a rapid ascent into healing.

We all know that fifty percent of first marriages end in divorce. But sixty two percent of second marriages, and more than seventy percent of third marriages end in divorce. And why? Because so many of us have been brainwashed by society to seek perfection. We're seeking the perfect mate. We're seeking that we be perfect, our bodies be perfect, our children be perfect. HGTV wants our houses to be perfect. And there is no such thing as perfection. In fact I want to lobby the world that we need to change the word perfection to "pure fiction."

Ken: I love that!

Arielle: Yes. If we don't learn to love the cracks in ourselves and in others we can never be happy. Because we're in a constant state of upset and frustration and disappointment when things aren't perfect. But if you could just give yourself a break and give your mate a break and go, "Oh you're just being a little Wabi Sabi today. I love you anyway. I love your Wabi Sabiness." Think of them as a piece of driftwood. Think of yourself as a piece of driftwood. What could be more Wabi Sabi than an ancient, pitted, rotting piece of wood that has its own innate beauty?

Let me tell you a story. In the mid 1980's, I used to have a PR firm in Beverly Hills. And I had a lot of clients who were art gallery owners. So I subscribed to all the art trade publications. One day I was reading one of them. And the cover of the magazine had a black and white photo of a big Ming vase with a crooked crack down the middle of it. And the headline said Wabi Sabi.

So I started reading the article and understanding what Wabi Sabi was all about. And when I finished the article I glanced down at my skirt where I had this big spaghetti stain from lunch. And I had really been beating myself up over it, that I was such a slob. And I looked down at that stain and I started to laugh. Because I realized that I could make up a new story about it. My story was no longer that I'm such a slob. My new story was that I have such a big appetite for life, and such a big appetite for food that I'm not only going to get my food on me when I eat, I'm probably going to get it on you, and that's okay.

Ken: What I appreciate so much about that your book is just that—its simple generosity of spirit. You don't dive in looking for the pathology and trying to fix it. You find a way to laugh. That's really refreshing.

Arielle: Well that's really the essence of Wabi Sabi love, is finding a way to laugh, to take the significance out. Stop making everything such a big deal. Because that's where we're getting tripped up all the time. And, you know what, it's not all going to matter. So let's make up a new story about it. And since we're making it all up anyway, let's make up stories that empower us and support us and inspire us.

At the same time, though, I do want to give a disclaimer: You cannot Wabi Sabi your way out of bad behavior, addiction or abuse! If any of that is going on you need professional help. Run, don't walk to your nearest therapist.

Ken: Yes, right. Or twelve-step program. Arielle, what would you want to share with single people seeking love?

Arielle: Well the first thing is, is start being a Wabi Sabi artisan with yourself. Stop trying to be perfect. And then realize everybody else is imperfect. So when you're dating give people a break. Don't be so hard on them. Don't try to figure out in the first ninety seconds; "Is this my soul mate?" "Is the person I'm going to spend my life with?" Approach dating with this idea, "Can I make a new friend? What can I learn and discover about this person?" And see who they are as a human being.

Ken: That's so true. Arielle, is there one exercise from your book that you could share with readers?

Arielle: Yes. One of the "feelingizations" that I guide people through is called a Heart Lock-In, an exercise created by the brilliant people at the research institute called HeartMath. It's a very simple process where you put your attention on the area around your heart. And you remember and re-experience feelings of love and appreciation and gratitude. And I've got a prerecorded one on my website. If you're in a state where you're really upset with somebody, this process will take you to feelings of deep love and compassion for the person that you have the upset with.

Ken: Arielle is there any last thing that you want to share?

Arielle: Yes, there is. It's a Sam King quote "We come to love not by finding the perfect person, but by learning to see an imperfect person perfectly."

Ken: Thank you so much, Arielle.

JUDITH ORLOFF, M.D. THE POWER OF SURRENDER



Judith Orloff, M.D. is a psychiatrist, intuitive healer, and NY Times bestselling author. Her most recent book is the national bestseller *The Ecstasy of Surrender: 12 Surprising Ways Letting Go Can Empower Your Life* (Harmony Books, 2014). Dr. Orloff's other books are *Emotional Freedom*, *Second Sight*, *Positive Energy*, and *Intuitive Healing*. Dr. Orloff synthesizes the pearls of traditional medicine with cutting edge knowledge of intuition, energy, and spirituality. She passionately believes that the future of medicine involves integrating all this wisdom to achieve emotional freedom and total wellness.

Ken: Judith, I'm honored and delighted to interview you and to have you share your insights on the subject of surrender. What is surrender? How can it lead us to deeper intimacy and meaning in our lives?

Judith: I'll start with what surrender is *not*. It is not failure, defeat, holding up the white flag, or weakness, as it is traditionally defined. I define surrender as being able to give yourself wholly to something, in a flow that's intuitively attuned. That means you make choices of what you want to flow with and what flow does not feel good. It's basically listening to your inner voice about the direction the flow of life is taking you in, and making decisions in sync with that. For example, let's say you meet somebody who doesn't fit your picture. But yet there's a flow and a connection there. Surrender might mean letting go of any previous ideas you had about who the "perfect person" might be.

Ken: That's really an important point for people seeking love.

Judith: Yes, and when you're in a relationship with somebody that you want to love... when you decide, "I really want to go with this", that's where the surrender comes in, in terms of letting go more and more with your heart. Not being guarded, not just keeping your foot on the brakes. Surrender means going with the flow of that relationship as best you can and not guarding your heart. At the same time the person has to prove to you that they're trustworthy.

Ken: Right. So, surrender must also involve real discrimination.

Judith: Yes, and that's where intuition comes in. You can't surrender with your head or your ego. The surrender comes from your heart. And that's an evolution in human consciousness, making decisions that are in synch with the heart and intuition rather than just the linear mind. And so it's about sensing where there's a connection and not forcing things. And also there's a chapter in the book on removing barriers that keep you from love, rather than just searching for love.

Love is ever-present, but we have to remove the barriers that keep us from love. And one of those patterns is being attracted to unavailable people. Or confusing lust with love. Or trying to "fix" somebody into your own image. Those are patterns that don't work. So the surrender process is identifying those patterns; letting go of them and healing them so that you can be ready for love.

Ken: How do you know the difference between healthy and unhealthy pulls toward surrender? What about when it feels like love and every part of you wants to surrender, but it's not a healthy relationship?

Judith: I think it's simple; if someone's unavailable, it's unhealthy. And there are signs of unavailability I describe in the book that people need to look for, such as being in a relationship with somebody else, not introducing you to their friends and family, or only being there intermittently for you. That's not a healthy love, that's dysfunctional love. I don't mean that judgmentally, but it happens all the time.

People are always wanting to surrender to things that are bad for them. It's just natural, the bad-boy, bad-girl syndrome. And the work I suggest with that is to own the bad boy or bad girl in yourself so you don't have to have your partner act it out for you.

People are always attracted to what's not good for them. But this book is about making a discriminating choice. For instance, are you attracted to unavailable people? Look for the signs of unavailable people and begin to heal the pattern. Often single people want to find a partner who is unavailable so they can reform them and subconsciously that means they're healing the pattern with their parents. But it almost never works, you can't reform an unavailable person. I wouldn't go in with any expectation it's going to happen. And it won't heal your primary relationship with your parents. Maybe finding a surrogate parent would. That's one thing I suggest as a solution to this dilemma. This is what I did; I found three surrogate mothers for myself, because I needed a different kind of maternal nurturing than my mother gave me. And so I got that energy through different women in my life, older women who were maternal and were able to accept me unconditionally. There is a section in the book on surrogate parenting, where you find adults who love to nurture and are capable of it. You just find them and you can be re-parented by them.

Ken: So, through these healthy, safe relationships, we can build and strengthen our capacity to surrender.

Judith: Yes, when you find somebody's who's capable of loving, you want to gradually surrender to them. You want to go with that and play with that energy and notice where you're holding back or guarding, or afraid. And together heal and enjoy and connect and play and go deep.

Ken: So we can practice for a romantic relationship by learning to surrender to the healthy relationships in our current life.

Judith: It's not just about surrendering to romantic relationships, it's a whole attitude of living in terms of letting go to the flow of life instead of over-thinking, second-guessing, fighting or controlling. The way I define surrender in the book is knowing when to go out and assert yourself and make your goals happen, and knowing when to let go. It's a twofold process. It's not that you sit around passively and wait for life to happen. That's not what surrender is.

Ken: Right, the surrender you describe is dynamic. It involves discriminating; saying "no" as well as saying "yes".

Judith: Sometimes you say no and you surrender to the no. But it's the giving yourself wholly to something. That's what surrender means in Sanskrit; giving yourself wholly instead of vacillating. When you say no, do you punish yourself and second guess it? No, surrendering is, "Ah, no", and letting it go.

Ken: How can you tell the difference between resistance to surrender that's based on old fears and a resistance to surrender that's based on a healthy sense of discrimination?

Judith: In the book I talk about how to find an intuitive yes and an intuitive no. You have to listen to how your gut is responding to somebody. If your sex hormones are totally taking over and you're really attracted to someone but your gut is saying, "Be careful, this is bad news", then you're discriminating. Hopefully you listen to your gut. Or if your energy gets sapped around somebody, versus if your energy goes up around somebody you have to honor that, that you don't want to marry that person who's draining you. It's an energetic compatibility that your intuition can relay.

Ken: So you learn to listen to that, the intuitive yes and the intuitive no. That's great.

Judith: Your head isn't going to help you here.

Ken: There is a certain quality of grace in the pages of this book. One of the book's themes is that there's a piece of work we *don't* have to do. That there's a flow we can rest in, or rest on, instead of creating unnecessary work for ourselves.

Judith: Yeah, life's not out to get you. But it's extremely strenuous, and relationships are mirrors so they're initiation by fire, because you're raw, you're open, all your stuff is there if you really surrendered in the relationship. It can be intense, it's not always easy, because it's spiritual growth. In relationships, each person is a spiritual teacher for the other. And you have to hang in there, you can't just leave every time something comes up that's uncomfortable. And you have to be able to honor the emotional expression of each other.

About a month ago I was going through a lot. Along with the book tour, I had a house remodeled. I had to move out of my office. I just had tons of stuff. I was trying to handle it all and I had incredible frustrations. So one night in the middle of the night I just started weeping and sobbing. And the man I'm with, he didn't say anything, he just wrapped his legs around me and held me, but I went on for a while. It was nice that he didn't say anything. But the next day he said, "You were crying for a really long time." And I said, "Well how long was it?" He said, "Twenty minutes." And he said, "In man time that's a long time." He was fine with it because he's comfortable with my emotions. But I think for some men, and some women it's uncomfortable to surrender to that intensity of emotion and sob and heave and wail and cry, the whole thing that goes along with really getting into it. But it's important for each person to become less and less afraid of the other's emotions. And also if someone starts crying during lovemaking, the partner often thinks he or she has done something wrong. And that's the exact opposite, he (or she) has done something right. If we are able to drop into our passion or tears that's a great thing.

Ken: It's such a powerful thing and it shocks people when it happens.

My last question is: In your book you teach that joy and ecstasy are within our reach, that these currents of connectedness are within us and around us and that when we surrender we find healing, adventure and fullness of heart. Can you share a process readers can use to deepen into surrender?

Judith: Take a deep breath, breath slowly, try and bring yourself to the moment. Because when you're fully present in the moment, that's where the ecstasy is, but what keeps you from feeling is your mind and your ego. But if you take a deep breath and begin to breathe in the ecstasy and not project into the future or be in the past and just try and enjoy the beauty that surrounds you, you could begin to let the ecstasy in. And you could even drink water very slowly and savor each drop. There's a way of slowing down an action. And when you slow everything down you can feel the ecstasy. But if you're rushed you become numb, you can't feel it. When you're thinking, or in your ego, you can't feel it, it just doesn't come through. The ecstasy comes through the sensation of the heart. And when you slow everything down in the moment and feel through your heart wherever you are, whatever you're doing, it's there. That's the great mystery, it's always there. It's just people don't know it because they're not sensing with their heart.

Ken: That's inspiring. Is there anything else that you would like to say or add?

Judith: Just that writing this book has changed me so thoroughly and so positively in terms of my lightness of being and my happiness level and my health, my attractiveness, my everything, just by virtue of letting go what doesn't work for me. And not fighting so much with everything.

I can't predict what your readers will have to let go of but what I do know is that it will exceed their wildest expectations in terms of positive results.

Ken: Thanks so much, Judith.

CHIP CONLEY

EMOTIONAL EQUATIONS, LOVE AND MEANING



Chip Conley is the New York Times Bestselling author of *Emotional Equations*, and *PEAK: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow*. He is the Founder of Joie de Vivre Hospitality, and has created more boutique hotels than anyone in the world. Chip speaks around the world on how to find meaning at the intersection of business and psychology. He recently traveled to Bhutan to study its Gross National Happiness index, the country's unique method of measuring success and its citizens' quality of life.

Ken: Chip, I'm delighted to interview you. Your life and your work have inspired so many of us. You are someone who struggles to make your life reflect your values—even when doing so is hard. Much of your audience Your concept of emotional equations is an extremely helpful tool for understanding the deeper workings of our emotional lives, and I'm very pleased to share it with my readers.

Can you explain emotional equations and tell us how you discovered them?

Chip: I was reading *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl during a very difficult point in my life. Frankl's perspective is that meaning is the fuel of life. He writes about getting to test that theory while he was in concentration camp: Can the idea of meaning actually keep people alive?

Well, I was going through a really tough time about four years ago. I was the CEO of a company with 3,500 employees. When you're a CEO or any kind of leader, you're the emotional thermostat of those whom you're leading. At that time, I felt that my emotional thermostat was very low. A lot of things were going wrong in my life, and I was almost in a state of desperation. I felt like I needed to take the profound content of *Man's Search for Meaning* and turn it into something that was actionable on a daily basis. Math is about relationships--the relationship of numbers--but I decided that maybe it could be about the relationship of emotions. Specifically, I wanted to find a meaning equation that was solution-driven, simple and concise. At the time I had no idea that there was going to be a book in it. I was just trying to fix my life.

This is the equation I started with: despair equals suffering minus meaning. Let me explain the "sacred algebra." If you're going through a period of suffering, like Victor Frankl in a concentration camp, or me in my own mental prison, it's as though everything is going wrong, as though you're in a downward spiral. When you're in that place in life, suffering does feel like a constant.

If you believe in Buddhist philosophy and thinking, the first noble truth of Buddhism is that suffering is ever present. So think of suffering as the constant. Think of meaning as the variable. If you remember back to algebra, there is often a constant and a variable in an equation. If suffering remains the constant, then when you increase meaning (the variable) despair goes down.

Despair equals suffering minus meaning.

Let me do the simple math so that it makes sense....

8 = 10-2. Despair (8) equals suffering (10) minus meaning (2).

8=10-2.

So if meaning goes up from 2 to 3, the despair goes down from 8 to 7.

When meaning goes up, despair goes down. This equation helped me to see that meaning and despair are somewhat inversely proportional, so the more I could find meaning in my life, the more I would reduce my despair.

And so, when I came home from a really rough week at work, I began to do an emotional inventory. And of course 2008 was just a terrible year, and 2009 looked to be even worse. I would come home and ask myself “So what emotions did I learn this week? It was like I was a kindergartener learning my emotions. Did I learn humility this week? Vulnerability? Authenticity? Courage? And then I’d make a list of each of those and then write three or four sentences about how I was going to use that emotion to serve me next week. I know this sounds almost like elementary school homework, but I considered it emotional boot camp and knew that I was starting to exercise emotional muscles. It’s like you go back to the gym in January, and when you start again, you realize you have physical muscles in your body that you didn’t know existed. When you’re going through a really difficult time, and going through emotional boot camp, you start realizing you have emotional muscles in your body. And that’s what I did. I actually focused on those muscles and asked “how is humility serving me? How is vulnerability serving me? How are courage and resilience serving me?” I got to a place where I started feeling better about things, and as I felt better about myself, I started to teach emotional equations within my company to our leaders, particularly the equation I just described. Because as we went into 2009, it was very apparent that it was going to be a terrible year. And that’s how it all started.

Ken: Do you have any thoughts on how this same equation might apply to heartbreaks around relationships?

Chip: I have *lots* of thoughts on that. I had a relationship that ended three years ago in the worst time of my life; two or three years which were a “dark night of the soul.” Initially, of course, all I felt was the suffering. But then, I started to look for the meaning within this ending. It was not my choice, frankly. The relationship was a bit of my life preserver. I see clearly today that this eight-year relationship was not a bad relationship, but it was not a soul-nourishing one. It was not one that helped me to live up to who I am as an individual. In fact, it was sort of holding me back. It was providing me comfort, I will tell you that—and at a time when I felt very uncomfortable. But I realized what a toll it was taking on me. You know, there are lots of ways to provide comfort to ourselves that can create a toll on us. We eat too much. That creates comfort, and it creates a toll as well. We watch too much TV. That creates comfort and then our brain goes dead. In my case, my relationship was giving me comfort, but it wasn’t nourishing me in ways that would take me to the next place in my life. So yes, I think that it’s very useful to be able to look and evaluate a breakup—especially when it’s not your choice—and think “Okay, what’s the meaning of this? What’s the wisdom? What emotions am I feeling and how are those emotions going to serve me?” It really helped me get clarity about what I was looking for in my next relationship.

Ken: Are there any other emotional equations that relate specifically to our deepest intimate relationships?

Chip: This equation may seem very familiar to people who are familiar with the course in miracles, or abundance theory or even the law of attraction. The idea is that there are two primary motivators in life, and they get in a wrestling match every day. Love and fear. And here is the relationship between love and fear in an equation perspective: If you have love minus fear, you get joy.

Joy is a different emotion than happiness. J.D. Salinger who wrote *Catcher in the Rye* once wrote, “Happiness is a solid, and joy is a liquid.” Now in essence what he was saying is that joy is what comes from deep inside you, while happiness quite often happens due to certain circumstances. So since joy equals love minus fear, when you can shrink fear down to close to zero, (who knows if you can do that very often!) then interestingly enough, the way the equation works is that joy equals love. And I have to tell you, when I’m in my most joyful moments, when I really feel most full of joy, I also feel most full of love. The love and the joy do feel synonymous. They feel like there’s an equal sign between them. And that’s how the math works... Joy equals love minus fear. If you have fear equal zero, then it’s just joy equals love. So, how do I use that? I use that as a reminder on a regular basis. When I’m full of fear, I’m real clear and I ask myself, where’s the love in this? Quite often, you know, love and fear are a zero-sum game. I like to think of it as a pie chart. I call it the joy bubble. The joy bubble has two pieces to it. It has love and fear, and the way a pie chart works is that the bigger love is, the smaller fear is. The bigger fear is, the smaller love is. So, building the love is a way to eradicate the fear. So I use that when I’m feeling a little tender around somebody, maybe somebody that I’m dating and it’s a new thing, and I feel a lot of

fear. I realize all that fear is getting in the way of not just my love, but actually my joy too. And you know, for all of us in life, we tend to be a lot more magnetic and attractive when we are full of joy.

Ken: Could you speak about gratitude and its relationship to happiness?

Chip: Happiness has a lot to do with practicing gratitude and practicing gratitude is a form of generosity. I want to speak about practicing gratitude for a moment. The fastest way to feel happiness on four different continents is to feel gratitude and to practice it. It’s probably true on all seven continents but on four continents there are actually studies that show this. Just to experience gratitude and to practice it. And if you just experience it but don’t practice it, then it’s like buying a birthday gift for someone and not giving it to them. So, you know, make sure you give it to them and do it in an authentic way, and what you find out is another domino effect, because when you’re giving gratitude to people, that does tend to come back.

Ken: Your story, both personally and professionally, is the story of someone who has really lived that as a mission. Is there any last thing you want to say to readers who are on their own intimacy journeys?

Chip: I’d like to say something about curiosity. The truth is that curiosity is a life-affirming emotion. When we’re most struggling with something, I think one of the best things to do is to really be curious about what’s to be learned from it. It’s easy to jump to conclusions quickly. The initial reaction you have seems like the key thing you’re supposed to learn from it, but that’s not always the case. Sometimes the biggest learning is coming soon. I learned that at a point when I had a collection of friends who committed suicide, and I certainly imagined it myself. I didn’t ever get to that state of trying to do anything. Yet who knew that two years later I’d have a New York Times bestseller and I would’ve sold my company, whose very survival I was struggling with, and that I’d be in a place where I really felt the liberation of my emotions.

Ken: Chip, this was wonderful. Thanks so much.

Chip: Thank you, Ken, for giving me the opportunity to connect with your readers.

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

THE ESSENTIAL STEPS TOWARD FINDING LOVE



Marianne Williamson is an internationally acclaimed author and lecturer. She is the author of ten books, four of which were # 1 New York Times Bestsellers. Her *A Course in Weight Loss: 21 Spiritual Lessons for Surrendering Your Weight Forever* was selected by Oprah to be one of her Favorite Things in 2010.) Marianne's other books include *The Age of Miracles*, *Everyday Grace*, *A Woman's Worth*, *Illuminata*, *Healing the Soul of America* and *The Gift of Change*.

I'm most honored to have Marianne Williamson share her insights with readers of this blog. Marianne is an internationally acclaimed author and lecturer, and one of America's most beloved spiritual teachers. She is the author of ten books, four of which were #1 New York Times bestsellers. In this interview she articulates her vision of the spiritual path to love; a vision she will be teaching in her Enchanted Love Workshop.

Ken: Marianne, thank you for so much for sharing your insights with readers of this blog. Your work has helped so many people embrace a whole new understanding of spirituality. For me, your lectures and writings have been truly life-changing.

Marianne: Thank you so much.

Ken: What guidance would you offer single people who are searching for a healthy, loving relationship?

Marianne: Our key to transforming anything lies in our ability to reframe it. There is a current mythology in our culture that anytime we meet someone and have that "enchanted evening" experience, that experience of looking into the eyes of the other and falling hopelessly in love-- that this is nothing more than a delusion; a mutual projection, a fantasy that will only last until reality sets in.

The spiritual perspective is exactly the opposite. It says that this enchanted evening experience was in fact a temporary experience of enlightenment; a kind of temporary gift from the gods to show us the romantic mountaintop, so that we will have such an appetite for it, such desire to return to its bliss, that we will be willing to do the inner work necessary to climb back up there ourselves.

That moment when most western psychotherapeutic traditions would argue that reality set in, is actually the moment when, from a spiritual perspective, unreality set in. It's the moment when the personality-self, in its egoic nature, reasserted itself. At that point, due to childhood wounds and past triggers, we could not avoid the temptation to attack, to defend, to find fault, to make conditions on love, to withhold our approval, and so forth.

Enlightenment is the key to everything, and it is the key to intimacy, because it is the goal of true authenticity. Moving through the ring of fear that surrounds our illumined self. Working through all the issues that lead us to attack, defensiveness, anger, neediness, controlling ways, grasping, avoidance. Those are all ego. And as we surrender those things which form walls around our hearts, then we attain the true authentic self.

And when we are in that place of illumined authenticity, then we are at our most intimate. Because how much more intimate can you be than the realization that we *are* each other? And we become more intimate with life itself, because we are truly "naked and unembarrassed."

At that point the specific "assignments" of love, including the intimacy assignments, flow naturally. And we go beyond just being able to attract that love. We are able to do the even more important work--and that is to hold on to it once it gets here!

Ken: Marianne, what about the people who are saying, "That all sounds great, but love never seems to get here. I'm too old. I'm physically handicapped. I'm out of shape." What would you say to people who are despairing of the possibility of finding love in their life?

Marianne: Many people are despairing of the possibility of finding love. And some of the people who are despairing the most are in their thirties and forties and looking just great. Physical circumstances have very little to do with either our capacity to love or to attract love. No one can say this stuff doesn't work until they've actually tried it. And few of us have tried it.

Love knows how to form itself. God will do his work if we do ours. Our job is to prepare ourselves for love. When we do, love finds us every time.

Ken: What would you tell readers about how to prepare themselves for love?

Marianne: The ego mind both professes its desire for love and does everything possible to repel it, or if it gets here anyway, to sabotage it. That is why dealing with issues like control, anger, and neediness is the most important work in preparing ourselves for love.

No one is longing to meet a desperate needy, angry, withholding, controlling person. If your beloved is out there they can't pick up your signals if you're dwelling in those spaces within yourself. That's number one.

Number two: Spirituality is about the intersection of the human and the divine. So not only is there inner work to be done, there's also outer work to be done. You might open the door to your own house or apartment and take a brutally honest look: Is this someplace that would feel like home? That would feel comfortable and comforting to the person with whom I desire a romantic attachment?

There are so many assaults on the dimensions of love these days. From computers and televisions that are on all day, to various electronic equipment that we keep in the bedroom, treadmills in the bedroom, and so forth. We arrogantly assume that the nervous system doesn't really need to be coaxed into romance. That romance comes from some other place.

Well, if you're under thirty years old, that might be true, because evolution over millions of years has invested a lot of hormonal power into your wanting to have sex no matter what the environment is, just so that the species can procreate.

After about thirty, nature has gone on to better candidates and we become more personally responsible for creating both internal and external environments that foster romantic and erotic love.

So many of us have not attended to the deeper issues in ourselves; in our minds, our hearts, and in our external manifestations that keep love at bay. We instead concentrate on making a list of what we're looking for in another person. We would be better off making a list of the aspects of our own lives that we can either point to as places where we are prepared for love, or point to and recognize as places where we still need work.

Ken: So, in a way, you're saying "Start right where you live, right in your home."

Marianne: Inside and outside. One of the problems we have is that Madison Avenue has suggested that this would cost money. The ego says, "I don't have time to cultivate romance." Or, "I don't have the energy." Or, "I don't have the money."

It doesn't take money to have a beautiful robe. It doesn't take a lot of money to put fresh flowers in the house. It doesn't take money to turn off the television and cultivate real bonding time.

And even though modern life in many ways is nothing short of exhausting, we need to take responsibility for what is necessary to combat the stress and exhaustion of modern life.

There are serious lifestyle decisions to be made if you wish romance in your life. And it's not that those issues are difficult so much as that they are *different*. The ego would call them silly, even cheesy:

"Candlelight, really? Soft music, really? Take the food out of the plastic container, really? Pick up the clothes off the floor, really?"

But those things genuinely affect brain chemistry. And the brain, as I've said--once you're over thirty, anyway--needs to be coaxed. The part of the brain that is watching the television and is on the computer at the same time, preparing to jump onto the treadmill for 15 minutes, might be able to lead into sex, but it would be hard put to lead us to romance, or to real authentic human connection.

You have to make a space in your heart, in your mind and in your life itself for authentic human connection.

Ken: Marianne, these insights are at both challenging and hopeful. Is there anything else you would like to share with single readers?

Marianne: Real intimacy; real love has to do with a joining of the mind, a joining of the spirit, a joining of the heart.

If we want the real thing, we have to create and cultivate a sacred space for it. Making the time, saying the prayers, doing the meditation, dealing with the issues in ourselves. Practicing greater generosity, greater mercy, greater compassion, greater forgiveness to the person who is in front of us in order to experience what intimacy really is.

I also realize, as a student of The Course in Miracles, that these spiritual keys that seem to have nothing to do with romance, have everything to do with romance. Because they have everything to do with our capacity to bond with another human being. Facing our own fears, our own issues, our own character defects, our own wounds. And knowing that until and unless we deal with them, they will keep us separate and incapable of love.

Ken: So, by dealing with these issues, we will be more able to open our hearts and our lives to love.

Marianne: Well, when we do those things love is simply there. Love is all around us all the time. Love is the ethers that we swim in. Love is the amniotic fluid of the soul. The issue is that we, with our fears, our attacks, our judgments, our blame, and our constant emphasis on the realm of the body rather than the realm of love, eclipse the experience of true love.

And the work of intimacy, of course, is to learn to both show your own illumination, and to see it in a way that the physical eyes cannot reveal. In a way that only the heart can reveal: the illumined beauty in another person.

Ken: Marianne, thank you so much. These are immensely important insights.

Marianne: Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity, Ken. Once again, that's what my upcoming workshop will be, and also I'm writing a new book about this. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to work some of it out.

GAY HENDRICKS THE HERO'S JOURNEY TO LOVE



Gay Hendricks, Ph.D., has served for more than 35 years as one of the major contributors to the fields of relationship transformation and bodymind therapies. Along with his wife, Dr. Kathlyn Hendricks, Gay is the co-author of many bestsellers, including *Conscious Loving* and *Five Wishes*. He is the author of 33 books, including *The Corporate Mystic*, *Conscious Living* and *The Big Leap*. He and Kathlyn founded The Hendricks Institute, which is based in Ojai, California and offers seminars worldwide. In 2003, along with movie producer Stephen Simon, Dr. Hendricks founded The Spiritual Cinema Circle, which distributes inspirational movies to subscribers in 70+ countries around the world. He appears frequently on radio and television shows, including OPRAH, CNN, CNBC and 48 HOURS.

The search for real love is a hero's journey. Its aspiration is profound, its risks frighteningly real. And the map single people are given is often dangerously misleading. The aim of this blog is to help remedy that.

I'm honored to have the opportunity to interview Gay Hendricks, Ph.D. Dr. Hendricks is one of the most inspiring visionaries in the field of conscious intimacy. He is the founder of The Hendricks Institute, which offers seminars worldwide. Along with his wife, Dr. Kathlyn Hendricks, Gay is the co-author of many bestsellers, including *Conscious Loving* and *Five Wishes*.

Ken: Gay, thanks for sharing your insights with my readers. Your work has been an invaluable support for countless single people. *Attracting Genuine Love* was particularly a great help to me in my single years.

Gay: Oh, my pleasure, I'm glad that the different parts of my work spoke to you in some way.

Ken: You teach about the importance of loving the parts of yourself that are hardest to love. Could you talk about how you personally came to this insight?

Gay: I had come to a place in my life where I realized that I had never been able to find the love I wanted. And I'd always located the problem outside myself. That it was a failure on the part of the women that I'd brought into my life. That they hadn't loved me correctly.

And so one magic day in 1974, I was walking around out in the woods near a cabin I was living in. And I asked myself a question which turned out to change my life. I kind of posed it to the universe: "What is the one thing we humans are doing wrong, that keeps us from attracting the kind of love we need?" And to turn that around positively, "What is it that we need to be doing on a regular basis that would allow us to have the kind of love we want and need?"

I had gone looking for that question in a thousand different books, but I had never really just turned it over to the creative powers of myself and the universe for an answer.

And so I did that and I got the most amazing answer--on an unexpected channel. Instead of a kind of intellectual text answer that printed out in my mind, I got the answer in the form of an energy experience. I felt this real deep benign rush of powerful positive energy through my body. And after that subsided--it probably lasted for minutes--I just stood there and enjoyed it and let it flow through me.

And it left behind an answer in its wake: The reason that human beings, myself included, don't attract the kind of love we want and need is because we haven't loved a part of ourselves. And the unloved part of ourselves does the attracting unconsciously until we learn to love it in ourselves. And then we can attract what we consciously really want.

Up until then our love life is being run by our old unconscious programming that may have been dipped in a bath of abandonment, or dipped in a bath of divorce and conflict. The unconscious aspects of whatever you got bathed in while growing up start attracting people into your life that fit this matrix.

For example, I've probably counseled two or three hundred people who said that because of growing up in a family where there was addiction, they automatically attracted an addict into their life as a mate. And then the addiction became a big struggle, even though the person themselves may not have been a practicing addict.

So that time in the woods was the big moment of realization for me. On the spot, I just started loving all the parts of me that I had never loved before. I remember wandering around out there for probably a half an hour, just loving things--like anger, or the fact that I was overweight--that I'd never allowed myself to accept or love in myself. Or the fact that I was not in a relationship at the time; that I was lonely.

Up until that moment, those things had been sealed away somewhere in me. But once I got this idea that they could be loved and accepted I just kind of brought them out, each one at a time and practiced loving each one.

And so an hour later I felt like I'd been totally reborn. And in a sense I had, because immediately things started changing very rapidly in my outer life. I think that the principle that's so important for people to know is this: If you can open up and really accept and love the previously unacceptable and unlovable parts of yourself, then suddenly you don't have to keep attracting things that trigger those mechanisms from the outside world.

Ken: Can you offer readers a process they could do to learn to love those qualities in themselves--even if they've never been able to do that before?

Gay: Yes; here's the central process that I talk about in my book, *Learning To Love Yourself*. If one of your readers was sitting in my office, this is the process I would lead them through:

First of all, ask yourself a wonder question. And a wonder question is a question that usually begins with a kind of sincere "hmm, hmm?" And it needs to be a wonder question because it needs to be a question that you don't know the answer to, but are sincerely interested in.

So here would be the wonder question to open the door to this area. "Hmm, what it is it in myself that I most need to learn to love?"

Ken: Great.

Gay: Hmm, what is it in myself that I most need to learn to love? And to sincerely wonder about that. And don't worry about if you get an answer right away. It's the kind of question that you really need to kind of wonder about for a little while before you start getting the good stuff that bubbles up.

But I guarantee you; I haven't seen anybody yet that didn't have things begin to surface after a few minutes or a few hours of wondering about that; the real issues that were troubling them inside that needed to be loved.

So, step one is to open the gate with the wonder question.

Step two is to think of someone you know for sure you love right now. Or maybe if you can't think of someone, think of something that you love. Like walking on the beach at sunset, or horseback riding. But preferably think of a person that you know right now for sure you love.

Now, in step three, give that same love to that unloved part of yourself. Love that unlovable part of yourself just like you love the person you picked.

Ken: What if, in doing this exercise, you feel things like pain, numbness or grief instead of love for that part of yourself?

Gay: Well, that's wonderful, because it should invite up any of the feelings about whatever you find unlovable. There are only three or four basic things that people feel unlovable about.

For some people, their unlovable feeling doesn't really have much of a name to it. It's just a feeling of being fundamentally wrong, or fundamentally bad in some way. Or that they've done something wrong. So it's more of a generic, "I've done something bad" feeling.

But then there are some specific ones; for example, people that have gone through abandonment. That was a big issue for me due to the circumstances of my early life. So down inside me was this old loneliness that caused me to overeat. I'm no longer overweight, but there was a time when I weighed 320 pounds. And I came to find out that all of this was driven by this feeling of gnawing loneliness; of being left alone. And then trying to eat to make that feeling go away.

But when I loved that feeling, when I actually just welcomed it out into the light and loved it, it lost its grip on me. And so it didn't propel me to the refrigerator anymore.

Ken: So for some of us, this exercise might not necessarily lead to an immediate feeling of liberation and love like it did for you. It could be something that you need to do again and again, in waves and in steps. Is that right?

Gay: Yes. I also want to let you know that since that one magical day in 1974, I've found thousands and thousands more things that I hadn't loved about myself as I go along through life. And so it's a lifelong process. It's not a one time immersion in the baptism of consciousness and then you're saved for life. It's a process; you're always going to be coming up against things that you find unlovable in yourself in the outside world.

And so in learning to love all of those, you expand your capacity constantly for love. Love works kind of like this; instead of going to the gym once a year and doing 100 pushups, it's much better to go to the gym once a day and do two pushups. You'll end up at the year with a much stronger body. So don't think of love as something that you only get dipped in once. It's something that you learn to use as an active force in your life as you go forward through the challenges of life.

Ken: I think that is so central, because so often personal growth work involves a big bang experience. But you're talking about an actual life skill; something that people can do again and again in their lives, which ends up leading them to self-love and loving relationships.

This is a beautiful story, and a very valuable process. Is there anything else that you would want to share with single readers?

Gay: Well I'm glad that they're catching on to the idea that it is an inside job. There are so many people that, in a sense, prey upon single people by providing solutions that are either temporary solutions or illusions of solutions.

Ken: Gay, this will be a real gift for many readers. Thank you so much.