

# Hearts in Harmony



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# Hearts In Harmony

**The 5 Keys To  
Heart Harmony**

**Katie & Gay Hendricks**

# Table of Contents

## Introduction

Heart Harmony Key 1 Reconciling Our Fear of Getting Close and Being Alone

### Key 1 Summary

### Key 1 Exercises

Heart Harmony Key 2 Balancing Unity and Autonomy

### Key 2 Summary

### Key 2 Exercises

Heart Harmony Key 3 Recognizing and Resolving Entanglements

### Key 3 Summary

### Key 3 Exercises

Heart Harmony Key 4 Setting Right Intentions & Meaningful Agreements

### Key 4 Summary

### Key 4 Exercises

Heart Harmony Key 5 Handling Conflict

### Key 5 Summary

### Key 5 Exercises

## About The Authors

# Introduction

## The 5 Keys to Heart Harmony



### Introduction

Love is the best thing we do. Love is our glory, and it is our power. Love is so powerful that even a little of it can heal and transform our lives permanently.

Beneath all the strivings for recognition, power, money, and things, what we want most deeply is a total, permanent experience of love.

But what keeps us from feeling it? Why is it that what we most deeply want is also so hard to get and keep?

The reason is this: Love has the power to bring up all our hidden desires, our deepest and oldest longings and our past hurts. When that happens, we either deal with what comes up in a way that lets more love in or a way that shuts it out.

There are myriad ways of shutting out love. We can numb out, lash out and blame, engage in power struggles, or find excuses to start arguments. We can distract ourselves from feeling love with work or personal hobbies. We can lie to ourselves that we don't need to feel love.

But there are only a few secrets to letting more love in. All we need to do is learn what they are and how to use them properly. That is what this book is about.

Our own personal experiences in love and relationships have been the major proving grounds for the ideas and techniques in the book. Through the techniques you'll discover in this book, we built a loving and creative relationship with each other. Ultimately, the question to ask any relationship expert is, "How is your own love life?" We're happy to report that our love affair, which began in 1980, continues to thrive now four decades later. During that time, we have also worked together every day, teaching seminars and seeing clients.

Our clients and workshop participants have been the broader proving ground for the tools we use. Both of us began seeing clients in the late 1960s, ten years before we met so by now we have a combined total of more than 90 years of experience in counseling couples

and individuals. We also stay current with the research literature in both psychotherapy and relationship therapy, due to our main work as teachers of therapists and other professionals.

Our goal in the book is to help you listen to the heartbeat of intimacy and to explore what it actually feels like to overcome the barriers to having ecstatic, creative relationships with other people. We know it can be done, and we want to help you do it. We want to see this kind of intimacy proliferate in the world.

In our view, the opportunities in relationships for psychological and spiritual growth are infinite and the rewards boundless. What could be better than the clear experience of love and having persons with whom to celebrate that experience? Let us open the book of secrets together and discover the surprises that await us.

## **How to Use This Book**

This book is designed to take you through the 5 heart harmony keys. These keys are not arranged in order of importance. They are equally valuable tools for transforming your relationship. However, each key lays a foundation for the next, so go through them chronologically.

### **The 5 Keys:**

1. Reconciling the Fear of Being Close and Being Alone
2. Balancing Unity and Autonomy
3. Recognizing and Resolving Entanglements
4. Setting Right Intentions and Meaningful Agreements
5. Handling Conflict

### **Whether you're single or in a relationship, in this book, you'll learn:**

- How to uncover the hidden reasons you're lacking the closeness and love you really want, so you can transform tension, loneliness, despair or conflict into a relationship in harmony
- How to communicate in a harmonious way so you can creatively solve any problem or issue with your partner
- How to have ecstatic and unlimited joy from love and relationship by removing the subconscious blocks that are keeping you from experiencing intimacy and true happiness
- How to recognize whether or not you're playing out the same relationship script

over and over, from partner to partner or year to year, and more importantly, how to use that recognition to make new choices and open up to creative, positive solutions

At the end of each key, there are a few experiential exercises for you to try either alone or with your partner. These exercises are meant to further your understanding of each of the keys as well as to help you solve the underlying issues that are blocking you from experiencing a relationship in harmony. Do these exercises at your own pace, and repeat them if necessary. Be sure to keep a journal of what you discover along the way.

## Overview of the 5 Keys

We come into relationships with high hopes and a history.

We hope that being in love will bring us to unparalleled heights of ecstasy and joy. We want a partner who will love us unconditionally, support us in our quest for a better life, listen to us when we're feeling vulnerable or down, and be a safe harbor when life gets stormy. We want to be in a relationship with a person who is both our best friend, an empathic confidant and an exciting lover.

The history that follows us into each relationship most often is what prevents us from realizing all the hopes we have for love.

Our history drags in personality problems stemming from past experiences. The love and positive energy that are generated between ourselves and our partner bring the problems up to the surface.

Here are just some examples of personality problems:

- Feeling unlovable
- Intolerance to criticism
- Unexplained moodiness and depression
- Explosive rage
- Needing to be cared for

An odd paradox emerges. Problems like these are often thought to occur because of a *lack* of love. Perhaps this is true back in childhood when the problems are first set in place. We may have not gotten the attention and love from our caregivers we intrinsically needed as a child. But in our present lives as adults, it is the *experience* of being loved that brings the problems to the surface.

Love has the capability to heal us, but the healing process first brings the problems up into the light. When problems like the aforementioned emerge, we often do not know how to deal with them, neither in ourselves or in our partners. We don't even know where they

come from. All we know is that our partner seems suddenly distant and inconsiderate, or we feel an undercurrent of anger and disgust with them. We have no context with which to begin to recognize that the problems are simply a symptom of a far deeper cause. Because we are reacting to the symptom, we do the only thing we think makes sense to do: we retreat, or blame the problems on our partner.

Let's say that the deeper cause of a problem is that you do not think you are worthy of positive attention and love, due to circumstances that happened to you in the past. You will likely feel uncomfortable when you get some. Have you ever had someone tell you or behave toward you in a way that communicated that you're awesome or lovable? What happened in your mind and body as you heard or observed this sentiment? Did you blank out? Disagree with them? Change the subject? Turn away? Act out? Cry?

In that moment, your partner may have thought you were being moody or withdrawn, which is the symptom, but the underlying cause is that you don't feel worthy of positive attention and love, and that's something that began many years ago when your parents rejected you in some way.

Here's an astounding fact: Nearly all of us have resistance to receiving positive energy. That means that every one of us can benefit from learning about the reasons why we block it.

**It is the awareness of *why* we are acting out, being triggered, or feeling rejected that is at the heart of transforming a troubled relationship to a relationship in harmony. It is only after we know the underlying reasons we are blocking love that we can begin to communicate more openly and truthfully with our partner, and work on creative ways to solve these issues.**

A close relationship is like a cosmic searchlight that seeks out the absolute best and the absolute worst in us. When one person connects closely with another, the energies of the two people are combined and enhanced, creating the potential for the relationship to climb to new heights or to blow apart. The reason for this paradox is that a close relationship challenges the two major fears that human beings carry with them: the fear of getting close and the fear of being alone.

Ideally, we would have the capacity for comfortably being very close to other people and comfortably being independent. In fact, few of us are completely at ease and together with ourselves without some significant introspection.

*Key #1, Reconciling the Fear of Being Close and Being Alone, and Key #2, Balancing Unity and Autonomy*, will help you pinpoint the origin of certain problematic behaviors and issues that are a result of both a fear of getting close and being together, and a fear of being alone and losing our autonomy.



One of the common symptoms of a fear of being close or in unity is when you or your partner withdraws from a relationship when things start to feel a bit “heavy”. For example, you’ve been dating someone for a few weeks and go away for the weekend. You spend many hours together, talking about your feelings and about your hopes and aspirations for the future. Upon returning home, either you or your partner pulls away for a while. If it’s your partner who is the one withdrawing, you may wonder what happened and why are they suddenly acting so distant? If you’re the one who withdraws, you may find yourself simply wanting some “space” to get a work project finished, or you’re feeling suddenly very smothered by your partner, who seems to want much more time and attention than you’re willing to give in the moment. Didn’t you just spend several days together? So why are they texting you so much and want to see you again so soon?

This is a very good example of what plays out when there’s an underlying fear of getting too close, losing autonomy, and at the same time, being alone.

Keys #1 and #2 will show you how to practice getting close and how to balance togetherness and independence, so that the arguments, tension and withdrawal that have been an issue in the past can be resolved quickly, without further damaging your relationship. You’ll be able to explore ways to expand your boundaries through loving touch and togetherness, and, if necessary, take time and space to reflect deeply on your needs and commitments.

In Keys #1 and #2, you’ll also learn how to resolve the upper limits problem, which is a resistance to feeling blissful joy. This will allow you to experience a clearer flow of positive energy between your core and the world around you. Life will become a process of rising to higher and higher levels of giving and receiving positive energy.

Key #3, *Recognizing Entanglements*, will help you become aware of the difference between a harmonious relationship and an entanglement. An entanglement is characterized by neediness, incompleteness and inequality.

A harmonious relationship, on the other hand, is one in which both people are awake to themselves, their feelings and thoughts, and are open to the flow of love and attention with one another.

It is important that you know whether the relationship you’re currently in—or will encounter in the future—is an entanglement or a harmonious relationship. By knowing this difference, you can prevent going through life blaming all your problems on the personality shortcomings of your partner. It can stop you from going through life unconsciously creating the same destructive pattern over and over, such as being attracted to men who are just like your abusive or neglectful father/mother/ex.

By recognizing entanglements, you’ll be better equipped to see and deal with issues for what they are, and therefore make informed and intelligent decisions on how to transform

your entanglement into a relationship, or end the entanglement altogether.

In Key #4, *Setting Right Intentions and Meaningful Agreements*, you'll learn how to develop the skill of setting the right intentions and making meaningful agreements that simultaneously serve your own evolution and the growth of the relationship.

Intentions and agreements help you and your partner embrace change and do the work necessary to become a more enlightened person. It is a critical component to a relationship in harmony.

Key #5, *Handling Conflict*, will show you practical, step-by-step ways to handle everyday conflicts that arise. You'll first learn how to recognize hidden conflict, which is particularly useful if you think that you and your partner rarely or never fight. Even the most peaceful-seeming relationships can benefit from bringing repressed feelings and conflicts into the light.

You'll learn how to take responsibility in a way that eliminates the "victim" mentality, ends power struggles, and brings about more equality and improves communication about an issue.

And finally, whether you have recurring money problems, issues around sex or fidelity, or just bicker over the same disagreement, you'll learn the 4-step method for dissolving, rather than solving, any conflict that arises.

As a result of applying each of these five keys, you'll have the tools, insights and techniques to begin to experience a relationship in harmony.

A relationship in harmony is one in which people are awake to themselves, their feelings and thoughts, and are open to the flow of love and attention with one another. In a relationship in harmony, you can be completely yourself and completely close.

Both people know they're whole in themselves; they know they don't 'need' the other person to complete them.

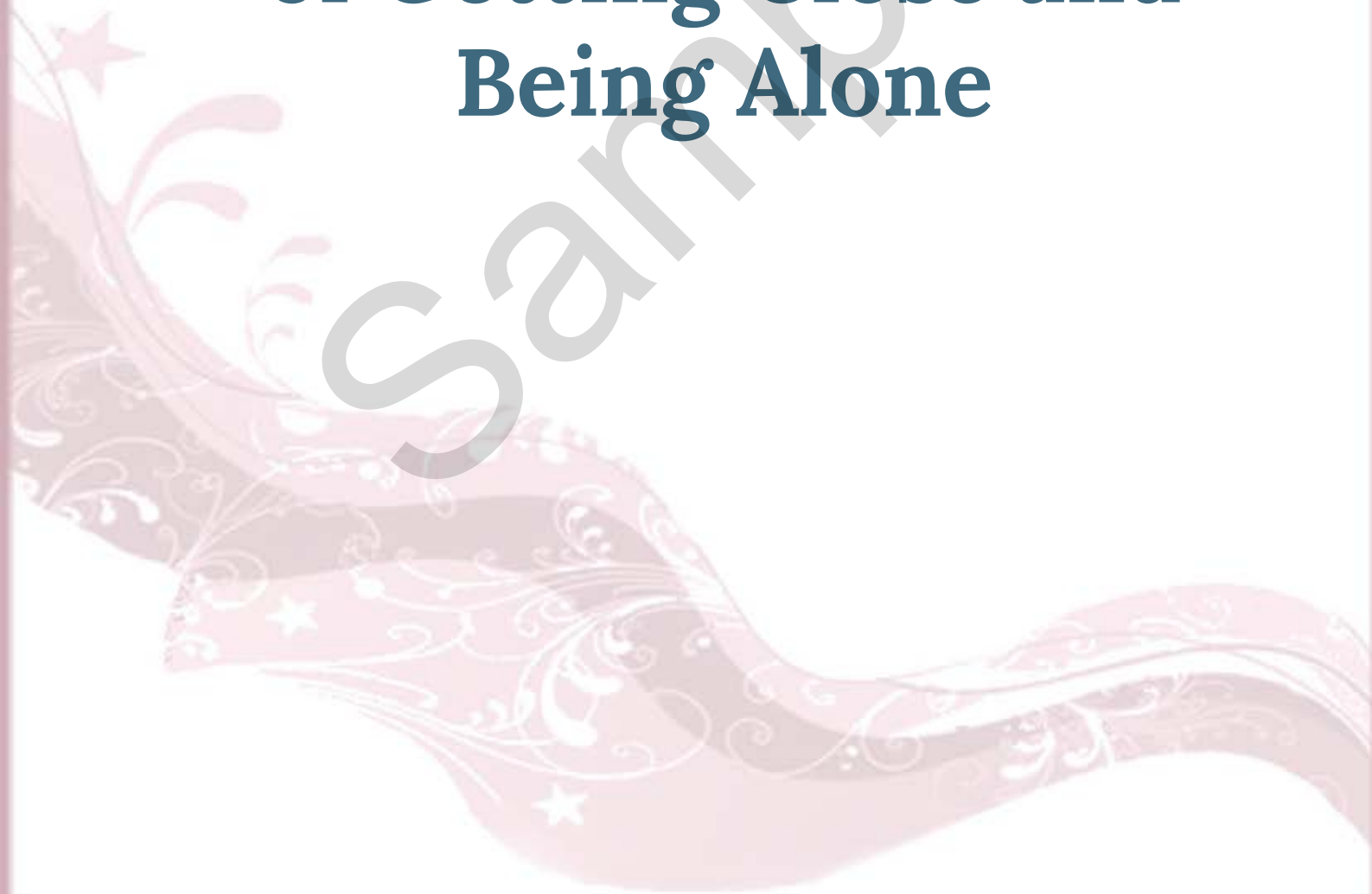
It is about two people celebrating together, not trying to get something from the other. Both persons are equals.

In a harmonious relationship, love is the healing agent that it is capable of being, and you feel more alive, more joyful and more in tune with yourself and your partner than you ever thought possible.

It is what love was meant to be.

# Harmony Key 1

**Reconciling Our Fear  
of Getting Close and  
Being Alone**



# Heart Harmony Key 1

## Reconciling Our Fear of Getting Close and Being Alone



All of us long for love and acceptance. We have since we were born. It's part of our inherent nature to seek a loving touch, a kind smile, and warm embrace. As babies we likely received that unconditional love from one or both our parents.

As adults, we look to love relationships to provide us with the same good feelings of being seen and adored for who we are. There's nothing better in life than having the companionship of someone who loves us unconditionally, with whom we can be totally relaxed and ourselves.

Not all of us had a model childhood, however. We may not have received the love we needed as children. Even if we did, normal experiences like venturing out on our own as toddlers or being momentarily ignored by our exhausted parents can create repressed memories that make us distrust our need for closeness.

Take, for example, the situation of a little girl who runs to her father when he gets home from work. She doesn't know that he's had a very difficult day at work and has a headache on top of it. He pats the top of her head and retreats immediately to his bedroom to lie down instead of listening to her tell him about her day at school. In hurtful moments like these, the mind takes snapshots and stores them away. The snapshots point to a time when we sought out love and didn't get it—we were punished or felt abandoned.

As we matured, we had myriad experiences with our peers and other adults that colored how we feel about ourselves in the context of relationships today. Maybe as adolescents we had a crush someone who rejected us, or even humiliated us. Maybe a beloved teacher lashed out at us unexpectedly in anger. Our feelings of reaching out and trusting were crushed.

We may not remember all these experiences from childhood or early adulthood. Chances are, we never even give them a second thought. Whether we are aware or not, these old memories trigger us. A tightness or panicky feeling comes up when we feel ourselves getting close to someone we admire or are attracted to. We don't know why, but something

about that closeness worries us. That worry causes us to not call back, to pretend we don't care, to lash out, or distract ourselves from our excitement with TV or the internet. We act out in ways that aren't conscious or even rational.

We don't know why the scenes from our past, which we don't even remember, are causing us to feel and act a certain way now. All we know is that we just want to feel accepted and loved but we are at times irritated and shut down. We get stuck between hope and despair.

Most of us don't realize that we are stuck. We experience the irritation but we don't understand that the irritation is a symptom, not the cause of the relationship problem. We try to fix things, but often it gets worse. That's because we're not conscious of the root cause of our suffering in the relationship.

This disconnect between what we *think is happening* and what is *actually happening* is at the core of why relationships often bring up the best and the worst in us.

But we can feel a lot less crazy if we figure out the hidden reason for many of the issues we experience within a relationship.

## **The Fear of Getting Close**

It is a fear of getting close that drives a lot of our troublesome behavior. Consider the following scenarios.

You meet someone you thought was so charismatic and attractive at first, only to find all sorts of faults with them once you got to know them better.

You're in a relationship with someone who changed. They were romantic but became distant. They were kind but became critical. They were easygoing but became uptight.

Or, maybe your partner withdrew once you began to really share some deep, personal feelings with each other. It made you wish that you'd have kept your feelings to yourself and gone along with a shallower version of the relationship.

These are all examples of an unconscious fear of getting close, either yours or your partner's. In each of these examples, either you or your partner were in the process developing more intimacy when something went wrong. What went wrong is that you or they pulled away in order to keep from getting too close.

As much as we may be apprehensive about closeness, we also are drawn to it. For one, it feels very good to get into union with another person so deeply that we lose our sense of self. There is a part of us, some call it the ego, that has carefully established a sense of I-ness or who "I" am, and knowing who "I" am gives us a sense of security. Yet we also thrive on letting go of that security of the "I" now and then to become fully unified with another person or the universe itself.

We also like closeness because it feels inherently good when we mix and mingle our molecules with another person's. For millions of years of evolution, one organism has been mingling with another organism to make something new. So deep in each and every one of us is an evolutionary urge to cast our dancing atoms into a tango with someone else's.

Closeness can feel risky based on our past experiences. As children, we either saw our parents or other adults not getting their needs met or getting hurt when they were most vulnerable. Perhaps we experienced some of these situations ourselves. We then repeat the patterns we observed, but the patterns are not obvious to us. *They become an invisible framework from within which we operate.* The framework tells us that it's risky to open up or lose our sense of self with another person because we'll get hurt.

We arrive in a new relationship with our minds still partially occupied by past events that hurt us emotionally, whether we remember them or not. If you have been criticized a lot in past close relationships, for example, you may get close to someone in the present only to find yourself pulling back out of fear of closeness, because he or she "reminds" you of past critical partners.

## **The Fear of Being Alone**

At the point at which our fear of closeness first arises, we experience massive resistance. The force of the other person's positive attention is pulling us in one direction—toward wanting closeness; and the force of our past conditioning is pulling us in the other—toward a safer space of no risk, which means being on our own again.

But being alone, in charge of choices and connections, also brings up many repressed memories, such as the loneliness we felt on our first day of kindergarten when our mothers or fathers dropped us off and we didn't know anyone in the class. Or the time in high school when we weren't invited to a party and had to spend a long and boring night alone in our room.

We fear the feelings that come up when we're alone, too. When you're afraid of alone, you'll either keep people distant so it won't hurt so bad if they leave you, or you'll cling to them dependently so they can't leave without dragging you with them.

Other ways that the fear of being alone shows up is that you may become very picky about a mate, or check out of the whole dating process altogether. You may develop unreasonable expectations about relationships, so much so that you become anxious and withdrawn whenever you're faced with meeting someone new.

The stress of these conflicting forces of wanting closeness but fearing it, but dreading being in charge of our own creative individuation, causes us to contract and, in effect, to go unconscious. Going unconscious does not mean simply blanking out, though that may occur. It means that we abandon our conscious intentions and begin to run on automatic.

Our conditioned patterns come up from the past and we replay them without knowing that we're doing so. We keep repeating these old patterns, always hoping that we will feel different or experience something better, but we don't. Unless we learn to recognize the fear that is driving these unconscious patterns, we will doom ourselves to always being dissatisfied in our relationships.

## 7 Common Ways We Pull Back From Closeness

It's useful to recognize that some of the problematic feelings and issues that come up in a relationship aren't necessarily inherent problems with the relationship or with our partner. Some feelings and issues arise *because* of our fear of closeness, and if we can recognize that, we can begin to examine the fear itself instead of looking outside of ourselves and (unnecessarily) laying blame on the other person.

Let's say that we have begun to feel close to another person. The increased love and positive energy have stirred up our fears of getting close, and we have begun to engage in actions that will make either us or our partner pull back, thus lessening the fear. You may be wondering what those actions are and how you would recognize them. To help you, we have listed some of the common ways we pull back. Ask yourself if you're experiencing any of these right now. Could it be the result of a fear of getting too close to your partner?

### 1. Going Numb

Going numb is a way the unconscious has of removing us from a situation that we fear for one reason or another.

We lose sensation during a physically intimate moment, or realize we feel less affection for our partner because we are angry at them. Or, we may go into an interior fantasy world, daydreaming about our to-do list or thinking about a movie we want to see at a moment when our partner is trying to get close.

### 2. Making Wrong

When our fear of closeness is operating, we are very likely to find fault with our partners, to make them wrong for something they are doing or not doing. If we can transfer blame to them, we unconsciously think, then we can escape for a little while longer the burdensome responsibility of inquiring more deeply into ourselves.

We may retreat, glower, or brandish a nonverbal sword of grimaces, sighs, sneers, clucks, flounces, significant glares, and other indirect signals of disapproval. We think our partner is doing things the wrong way or not doing enough.

### 3. Running an Old Movie

There is part of the mind that likes to do things the same old way, even if that way has not

brought us much happiness. At least it has kept us alive. When the mind is under stress it reverts to old programming for survival.

We meet the same kind of people and live out the same story or script, over and over. For example, we may tend to be attracted to people who have a lot of problems, so we offer our guidance and help, but then get resentful of the effort.

Our partners recognize, usually unconsciously, when we are playing our familiar role in our old movie (the rescuer); they summon up a matching role (the person in need of help) for fear of disrupting the familiar pattern. It becomes stale and predictable. In this way, playing out old movies becomes a dissatisfactory pattern in our relationships.

A role, or script, will always feel flatter and less alive than genuine expression, so it is not desirable.

#### **4. Power Struggles**

Many couples get bogged down in wrestling with power issues and do not get to a level of closeness that would allow them to create something new for themselves and the world. Power struggles are characterized by a focus on who is right, who is wrong, and who will take responsibility for a problem. They create tension and relinquish us from having to talk to each other about our true feelings and therefore get close.

Many couples get stuck in a stance where arms are crossed and heels are dug in: I'm not going to play. Our partner wants to go back to school, for example, but that will mean that buying a house needs to be put off for a few years, which is something we've wanted for a while. We may find reasons why this schooling is a bad investment or refuse to engage when they want to talk about it. We get locked into a power struggle of who's right, who's wrong.

#### **5. Conflicting Feelings**

The purifying effect of love and positive attention in a relationship will often cause long harbored feelings to rise to the surface.

For example, a man told us of a situation that concerned him greatly. At the peak of making love with his wife, he would find himself thinking angry thoughts about his mother. He would sometimes replay childhood situations that had occurred more than thirty years before. In the process of counseling, he discovered that he had gotten his sexual feelings intertwined with angry feelings toward his mother. Now, when he would feel deep sexual feelings toward his wife, the old anger would be tugged up along with the sexuality. After he allowed himself to feel and explore the old anger, it stopped coming up to cloud his sexual feelings.

Inexperienced and unexpressed feelings get stored in the body. Like the strings of a harp, these feelings vibrate when a particular chord is struck by getting close to someone.



Exploring the subtle ways our body speaks to us can help us in sorting out conflicting feelings so we can clear the channels for closeness.

## 6. Arguments

As we get closer to another person, our fears of intimacy may cause us to start an argument or see to it that the other person starts one.

For example, a man accuses his wife of having a wandering eye. He says that she flirts with other men when they are out in public. She says, on the other hand, that he is paranoid, that he sees flirtation when she is only having a normal conversation with another man. Whose problem is it? Looking beneath the surface, we discover that his mother left his father and him when he was eight years old. Ah, so it's his problem! But wait, her father molested her as a child, forcing her into a pattern with men in which she is seductive with a lot of underlying anger.

The point of this example is that there is never any satisfying way to pin a problem to one person in a two person relationship. The only solution is for both people to take on the problem as their own. Then it becomes possible to know more about how to solve it.

## 7. Illness

Sometimes a movement toward closeness can bring up such deep resistance that the person will become ill in order to pull back. It is common for people to get sick to keep from doing something they have mixed feelings about. A sore throat before a recital, a slipped disc before a vacation—you may have heard of such examples.

Since the act of getting close brings up such powerful emotions, it is easy to see why we might make ourselves sick rather than experience the intensity of feeling. As an experiment, think of the last few times you were sick. Did they coincide with getting close or getting separate from someone?

## How To Practice The Delicate Dance of Getting Close And Being Autonomous

Here are some practical steps you can take with your partner or on your own to help you practice the dance of getting close and being alone without resorting to the resistance tactics mentioned earlier.

**1. Decide that getting close is really what you consciously want.** Not all of us have this as a goal in our lives. Some of us may have other priorities, such as travel, career or spirituality, and closeness in a relationship simply doesn't interest us today. Another reason someone may not want closeness is if they're grieving a loss of some sort. Chances are, though, if you're reading this book, you've already decided that you want a relationship or that you want to get closer to your partner. If this is indeed the case, then making the

conscious decision to get close is important for a couple of reasons.

First, making the decision to get close ends the mixed messages you may have been sending up until this point. Many people waste their time in relationships because they're sending out mixed messages. They say they want to get close with their words, but their actions say "No, I don't." For example, have you ever dated someone who pursued you relentlessly, but once you began to take an interest in them, they began to make excuses about why they didn't have time for a relationship? Maybe you yourself have done this, and you weren't completely sure why. All you know is that the moment you had to start making time for the other person, you lost interest.

Second, making a conscious choice to get close takes you out of being a victim. You're no longer lamenting that "There's someone for everyone but me!" if you're single, or asking "Why is this happening to me?" if you're in a relationship that isn't working.

Just like with any new project, once you choose your path, your resources start to show up and you can recognize them. In other words, once you make the conscious decision to get close, you will begin to see the opportunities for closeness. You will have conversations with the right people. If you're single, you may find yourself saying yes to meeting new people. You may even pay more attention to sources of relationship wisdom that otherwise wouldn't have crossed your radar.

The conscious setting of an intention is a potent step.

**2. Accept that it is your personal resistance to love and positive attention that is at the heart of the problem.** This notion is a tough one to accept, particularly if you have had a great many painful experiences in life. But this awareness keeps us from the deadly trap of thinking that it is the world or other people that are to blame for our relationship problems. Look to the list of ways that we avoid getting close (above) and recognize ways in which you may be using these ways to keep your partner at arm's length, emotionally. Notice it as it happens. With awareness comes understanding. We begin to notice patterns in our behavior that indicate our resistance to closeness. Awareness of what we're doing is important because it brings us to consciousness in our relationship and therefore closer to harmony.

**3. Build new channels in for experiencing and accepting positive energy.** We must learn how to let love in, feel it, let it polish our inner bodies, and appreciate people for giving it to us. We must become adept at giving positive energy to others. At first it can be awkward, like speaking a new language. Simply to say, "I like you" with no strings attached can be a real challenge if we are not used to speaking the language of positive energy. It may activate a whole lot of circuitry in our brain to expose our soft parts, or our vulnerability. We remember times in the past when we were humiliated or when we saw someone be humiliated for being vulnerable and putting out positive energy. Remember in

junior high, when during a school dance you or your friend asked someone to dance only to be rejected or laughed at?

Learning to let our armor down a little bit at a time takes practice and courage, but it's worth it.

**4. Notice what happens in your body as you get close and further apart.** The next time your partner is in your proximity, literally take a step closer to them, then one step away. Sit closer, move closer, or stand closer, and then practice getting a step further away. If you're sitting side by side and you're on your smartphone or watching TV, turn to face them when they speak and turn away from your distraction. If you already turn toward them while having a conversation, see what it's like when you turn away from them and toward a distraction.

What happens in that moment to your breathing? Does tension come up? Do you sense a kind of warmth or a sense of shutting down? When you pause and notice your bodily sensations upon getting just a little bit closer or further apart physically can be very helpful in seeing how open you are to getting closer or more separate.

If you're single, you may have experienced moments of tension or pleasure if your partner or friend gets too close or too far apart in these ways: they text a lot, they don't call enough, they make plans without you for the weekend, they want to be affectionate in public, they don't touch you much in private. Feel into what each of these situations brings up in your body.

Once you have identified what you're feeling, you can share that with your partner (or friend, if you're single). In this way, you create an opening that will allow you to have a genuine connection. It's not about changing your partner or yourself at this point, it's more about sharing the feelings you're both having.

**5. Allow yourself and your partner to go through cycles of getting close and getting more independent.** This is a tough one, because our initial tendency is often to experience fear when we get either closer or more separate. Practice allowing yourself to open up to more closeness and independence in little ways every day. You may wish to go for a walk alone, or make a decision without consulting your partner, such as making what YOU want for dinner or seeing a movie YOU want to see. Or, you may want to take a few minutes out of your work day to call your partner and just talk and share positive energy, if you typically don't communicate with them until after work. A relationship has to be large enough to hold both persons' fluctuations of getting closer and getting more independent.

## Running Against Upper Limits

There's another fear that grips us when we find ourselves getting close with someone and facing the possibility of getting exactly what we wanted—genuine, harmonious love. We

actually resist reaching a state of blissful happiness or excitement.

It may sound counter-intuitive. We think that most of what we do in life is in order to experience happiness and contentment. Why would we want to avoid the very thing for which we are striving? Yet, just like the fear of closeness and the fear of being alone, it is unconscious and it stems from what we experienced in childhood.

In growing up, we learned to limit the amount of energy we feel and express. If your parents were in the midst of an argument when you come in exhilarated with a freshly caught frog, you may have hit a wall when you tried to communicate your enthusiasm to them. Your parents may have asked you what you're so happy about, or told you to be quiet or sit still. You may remember times in childhood when you were feeling enthusiastic about something and hearing from one or both parents such phrases as "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" or "You think everything's great now, but you just wait until later in life."

You may have also heard things like, "Settle down" or "It's all fun and games until someone gets hurt."

Slogans like these are often used to warn people of the dangers of getting too excited, of feeling too good, of getting their hopes up. Many families are precariously balanced, so that it doesn't take much energy to upset the system. As children we learn to put upper limits on how good we can feel so that we can survive and keep the system intact.

It is another way of avoiding our fear of being alone. We learn to fit in and be accepted by being balanced and in tune with the expectations of our family.

Many of the troubles we encounter in life and in relationships come from the way we respond to this fear in ourselves and others.

When we begin as adults to explore ourselves, to experience our feelings and love ourselves, our inner energy starts to build. The increased energy pushes against the limits we have previously learned to live within. When we begin to experience a heightened level of feeling, we create a negative situation in order to bring that feeling back down to a level with which we are comfortable. This phenomenon is what we call running against upper limits.

As we run against upper limits, we enter a zone we have not occupied before, and fear of the unknown comes up. At this point we often do something to bring ourselves back down into the familiar zone again.

Illness and accidents are two of the most common ways we have of bringing ourselves down when we've exceeded our limits. For example, one man noticed a pattern in his life that had occurred in virtually the same way three times. The interesting thing about the