

DEEPENING YOUR
PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS:
*Developing Emotional Intimacy
and Good Communication*



DR. MAX HAMMER

With DR. BARRY J. HAMMER
and DR. ALAN C. BUTLER

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GOOD COMMUNICATION**

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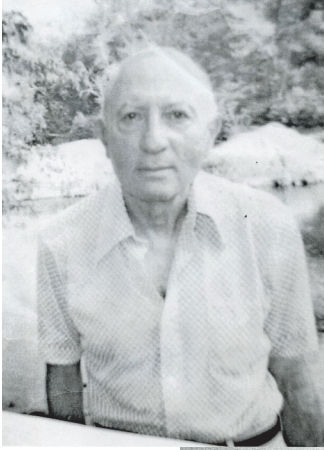
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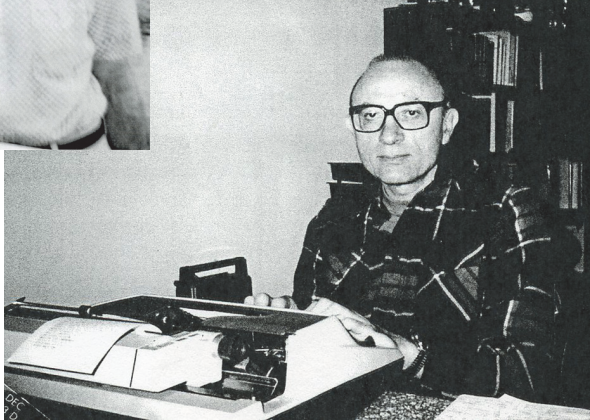
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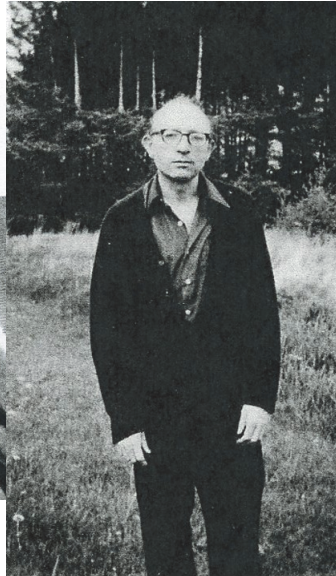
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Dr. Max
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Dr. Max Hammer



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The late **Max Hammer, Ph.D.** (June 16, 1930-June 14, 2011) is the primary author of this book. His distinguished career as a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Maine spanned nearly three decades (1961-1990). As a beloved and talented teacher, supervisor, researcher, and writer, Dr. Hammer profoundly influenced students and colleagues alike with his understanding of the psychological and spiritual growth process. He also had extensive experience as a practicing psychotherapist.

Dr. Hammer was years ahead of his time in his writings on psychological and spiritual growth, or developmental transformation, as well as in his understanding of the actual and potential impact of humanistic and transpersonal psychology on contemporary society. As a practicing psychotherapist, he published almost thirty articles in the field of psychological health and psychotherapy, as well as two previous books on the topic. He served on the educational board of the *Journal of Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, and the *International Journal of Symbolology*. Furthermore, Dr. Hammer was a member of the American Academy of Psychotherapists (AAP), the American Psychological Association (APA)—Division of Clinical Psychology, Psychologists Interested in the Advancement of Psychotherapy (PIAP), and the International Society for the Study of Symbols. This book, (and those to follow), is primarily comprised of Dr. Hammer's original writings, thoughts, lectures to students, and contains invaluable insights into human psychological and spiritual development, interpersonal relationships, society, and the future of humanity.

Alan C. Butler, Ph.D., helped Dr. Max Hammer write the original *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript on which much of the present book is based. Dr. Butler is a clinical psychologist and recently retired from his full-time position as staff psychologist and pre-doctoral psychology internship

director at the University of Maine Counseling Center, a program that he developed in 1978. As a cooperating associate professor of psychology, he also taught undergraduate and graduate students for over thirty years. Both he and Dr. Max Hammer remained close colleagues, and utilized the initial material from the *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript in their “Personal Growth” classes, seminars, and supervision of students. Dr. Butler continues to work part-time in private practice as a clinical psychology consultant and psychotherapist.

Barry J. Hammer, Ph.D., has extensively edited and expanded the *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript on which this book is based. He is the eldest son and lifelong confidant of Dr. Max Hammer. Barry Hammer has a doctorate in the history of world religions from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, as well as a master degree of theological studies (MTS) degree from Harvard Divinity School. He has taught university courses on the history of world religions, and has a longstanding interest in the relationship between psychological, spiritual, religious, and societal transformational development and counseling.

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INTRODUCTION

By Barry Hammer

This book presents an understanding of psychological factors that can contribute to enhancing, or undermining, emotional closeness, genuine caring, and good communication, in all kinds of personal relationships. The authors of the original manuscript on which this book is based—the late Dr. Max Hammer, and his colleague, Dr. Alan Butler—were both professional psychotherapists and professors of psychology at the University of Maine. Together they wrote an incomplete manuscript for a book, originally entitled, *The Psychology of Self-Growth*, which included three chapters and other written materials focusing on psychological dynamics of human relationships, and another chapter with additional written documents focusing on the process of developing psychological self-understanding and healing of emotional pain. I, Dr. Barry Hammer, the eldest son of Max Hammer, was asked by him, prior to his decease, on June 14, 2011, to publish his writings posthumously. My father gave me permission to organize, edit, and expand his writings in whatever manner I deemed most appropriate, as long as I remained true to his intended message. Dr. Alan Butler also has given consent for me to publish the *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript, as two separate books: this book, discussing human relationships, and another book (or books), focusing on the process of “Creative Self-Understanding,” or the development of psychological self-understanding, and the healing of emotional pain and related inner-conflict. The latter book, not yet published as of this date (Summer 2013) is tentatively entitled, *Psychological Healing Through Creative Self-Understanding and Self-Transformation*.

The nucleus of the current book is taken from three chapters co-written by Max Hammer and Alan Butler, in the original *The Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript. The current

titles of these chapters are: “The Basic Components of a Real and Lasting Relationship” (chapter 1 in this book; formerly chapter 6 in “The Psychology of Self-Growth” manuscript); “Enhancing Real Communication and Experiential Connection” (chapter 2 in this book; formerly chapter 7 in the original manuscript, originally entitled “Enhancing Real Communication and Relationship”); and “The Essence of Love and the Healthy Love Relationship” (chapter 3 in this book; formerly chapter 8 in the original manuscript). In this book, I am also including another, shorter, document from the original *Psychology of Self-Growth* manuscript, “The Process of Non-Labeling and Living in Communion with All Aspects of Life” (originally entitled, “Exercise in Non-Labeling and Living in Communion with All Aspects of Life”) as chapter 5 of this book because it provides insight into principles of communion extended from the sphere of personal human relationships to one’s relationship with other, non-human, aspects of life. I have edited and extensively expanded the three original chapters, and I also added other chapters and appendices, based on typed notes and personal correspondence as dictated to me by Max Hammer, over many years. He also gave me permission to include my own understanding of his ideas, and some related ideas of my own, consistent with his views. I worked closely, and resided, with my father for many years, serving as his writing collaborator, confidant, secretary, and housekeeper. This enabled me to develop both an in-depth and a broad understanding of the development and transformational significance of his ideas, which he communicated through daily written notes and verbal conversations as well as through the original manuscript, *The Psychology of Self-Growth*.

My father viewed psychological principles involved in developing deeply caring human relationships as being inseparable from similar, corresponding, spiritual principles. This was consistent with his understanding of the spiritual reality of love, meaning the natural, intrinsic, relatedness of being between individuals, which enables them to transcend, at

least at times, the ego's sense of absolutely separate psychological space. In this state, individuals experience a genuine sense of empathic communion and harmonious attunement with one another. His view was that the spiritual reality of love is a level of life energy substance, or essence, that connects individual life forms to one another, just as various waves and bubbles in a vast ocean are connected by their commonly shared water substance, of which they are each individual forms.

This book is, truly, a labor of love, a product of the Spiritual Reality of Love revealing its own self-understanding through the authors. In this book, the living spirit of love is teaching how to open one's relationships to the presence of true love, or warmhearted genuine caring, as well as how to recognize and avoid various kinds of egocentric pitfalls that undermine the development and preservation of experiential closeness, genuine caring, and good communication in human relationships.

Part of the basic focus of this book is to help readers understand egoistic, or divisive, factors that block the development of real love, or genuine caring, empathic understanding, and emotional closeness in human relationships, including not only intimately romantic love relationships, or committed exclusive partnership relationships, but, also, various other kinds of familiar personal relationships, such as with family members, friends, and colleagues. We do not need to learn how to love or deeply connect to the real being (living energy presence) and experience of other individuals because it is as natural as breathing. We just have to learn how to deeply understand, and, thereby, let go of, egoistic factors that block and undermine real love. These egoistic impediments include being sidetracked or distracted away from true love or caring empathic communion through some kind of pseudo-love experience, such as an intense infatuation with an idealized image or a preconceived interpretation of another person, and with how the other enhances one's own idealized self-images, or sense of worth. These kinds of

pseudo-love experiences can also include the ego's basically narcissistic, psychological deficiency needs that the other person is expected to gratify, all taking place in one's own mind, which distracts one away from direct contact with what is actually arising in the other individual, through empathic communion with them. Projecting such idealized images, preconceived interpretations, and predetermined psychological needs upon others functions as a kind of perceptual filter or smokescreen, blocking direct experiential contact with the "real them" in the present moment. Emotional closeness and caring feelings arise naturally when individuals relate to what is experientially real in one another and openly, honestly communicate what is experientially real in themselves.

This book will explain how the ego is a narcissistically self-preoccupied sense of separate, disconnected, identity—a false sense of self, an illusory inner voice, which sabotages the development and preservation of emotional intimacy, trust, and good communication in human relationships in order to preserve its fundamental sense of separate self-awareness, selfish self-gratification, prideful self-aggrandizement, and self-will, or excessively oppositional willfulness. My father defined the ego as, most essentially, a conceptually defined sense of self, or identity, consisting of the thought "I," viewing itself as the subject, knower, narrator, identity, or "I-entity," of a continuous inner monologue, incessant "mind chatter," or "personal life story daydream fantasy." The ego or separate knower derives its basic sense of identity, psychological inner content, or self-knowledge from various conceptual presumptions, beliefs, interpretations, and ideas about oneself and other individuals. This inner monologue functions as an incessant process of separate self-awareness, which keeps the conscious knower and its energy investment continuously recoiled upon itself, and, thereby, divisively blocks empathic contact with what is more experientially real in oneself and in others. That recoil of conscious attention and energy investment in separate self-awareness and

preconceived presumptive interpretations of oneself and others functions as an impediment to deeply caring or loving empathic communion with others.

Thus, the ego, most essentially, is a contracted sense of separate self-awareness that is too self-preoccupied to flow outward by deeply, fully, investing one's conscious attention and caring, or feeling-energy, in self-forgetful empathic communion with, and unselfish caring for, other individuals, which real love or true psychological connection requires. The ego's basic psychological need to continuously compare and contrast itself to, and compete against, other individuals, as a means of defining itself as absolutely, totally, exclusively other than them, reinforces the ego's sense of distinct, differentiated, identity. However, it also functions as a kind of psychological barrier blocking empathic communion with others, as well as impeding the experience and expression of genuine warmhearted caring for, existential relatedness, or close energetic connection to, others. Most essentially, the ego is a contrary flow of self-created mental and emotional activity, a distracting counter-flow, or a continuous, basically autistic (self-preoccupied), inner monologue, incessant inner noise, or preconceived chatter, taking place in one's own mind, which impedes optimal contact with actual experience in oneself, and in other individuals. This incessant inner monologue, or continuous "mind chatter," involves reacting to one's own presumptive, interpretive, ideas of oneself, other individuals, and one's interactions with them. This distracts one's conscious awareness from being sensitively or empathically alert to the living energy presence and actual experiential states of oneself and other individuals, in a given moment. That lack of alert openness to the actual experiential dynamics of oneself and other individuals impedes good communication, which in turn undermines the development and preservation of deeply, genuinely, caring feelings, emotional intimacy, harmony, and trust in one's significant interpersonal relationships.

In contrast to the ego, functioning as a dualistically separate, psychologically disconnected, sense of identity and continuously recoiled self-preoccupation, the real self, our intrinsic real being, naturally experiences itself as non-dualistically connected or existentially related to others, and naturally empathically attuned to their experience, rather than defining itself as absolutely distinct from, or “over-against” others, as the ego typically does. This distinction between the “real self” as a relational self and the ego as a dualistic, divisive, recoiled, contracted, or absolutely separate, sense of self-awareness coincides with Martin Buber’s view that the “I” of the I-Thou relationship is a different kind of “I,” or self, than the “I” of the I-It relationship.¹

In contrast to many books that focus on attracting real love into one’s life when it is not currently available, this book focuses on the process of developing real love, in already existing relationships, grounded in good communication processes. Therefore, this book clarifies and distinguishes the various psychological factors that can either facilitate or undermine the development of genuine unselfish caring, experiential closeness, and good communication, particularly, clear, open, honest, sincere, constructive, nonjudgmental/non-blaming, empathically understanding communication.

This book will discuss the process of connecting with other individuals deeply, not with biased interpretive distortions, but rather, with insightful empathic communion and genuine caring. It will explain how to avoid relating to others in a superficial, judgmental, selfishly manipulative, illusory, presumptive, or preconceived manner. We will discuss the joyful experience of becoming self-forgetful, or dropping the ego’s divisive, unreal, sense of separate self-awareness, by being deeply invested in others, fully attentive or totally present to others, in the here and now. Along these lines, we will explain why unselfish real love is the true “elixir,” “tonic,” or “ambrosia” and “nectar” for which the heart naturally hungers and thirsts, as its true nourishment, involving a greater sense of inner wholeness and fulfillment,

as suggested by some of the lyrics of the old song, “People Who Need People”:

With one person
 One very special person
 A feeling deep in your soul
 Says you are half now you’re whole
 No more hunger and thirst
 But first be a person who needs people
 People, people who need people
 Are the luckiest people in the world.²

Our discussion of the natural human hunger to connect to others in deeply caring, or truly loving, personal relationships will also involve understanding why seeking any form of basically selfish gratification cannot be deeply, fully, and enduringly satisfying. A related discussion will focus on letting others touch us deeply at an emotional level, and impacting others in the same way, with good communication and mutual empathic understanding, even at the risk of experiencing possible emotional pain. This can also bring enhanced self-understanding, liberating transformational insight, psychological healing of inner conflicts, constructive resolution of interpersonal and social conflicts, empowered creative functioning, as well as a greater sense of genuine well-being, involving the experience of true joy, vitality, fulfillment, blessedness, or experiential contact with the true grandeur and goodness of the essential reality nature of life as love. This book will discuss how principles of optimal human relationships can be applied to enhance intimate partnership relationships, friendships, parent-child relationships, and a variety of other personal relationships. This can also enhance society as a whole by facilitating the development of greater compassion, harmonious cooperation, solidarity, belonging, and mutual empathic understanding among all sectors of society, as well as alleviating various kinds of social disorders that are rooted in the ego’s estrangement from other individuals.

This book will be especially useful to relationship counselors (e.g., marriage counselors, family counselors, conflict mediators, and community organizers), as well as people seeking to enhance or deepen their own personal relationships. Although this book can be relevant, illuminating, and useful to various readers, it is particularly dedicated and directed to those who are willing to courageously risk the experience of possible emotional pain in order to deepen their personal relationships and interpersonal communication processes, as well as enhancing their level of insight into what is experientially real in themselves, and in others around them. Thus, this book is likely to be most relevant for readers who enjoy functioning in an openhearted, open-minded, non-defensive, spontaneous, non-predetermined, sincere, and authentic manner. They are grounded in their own core integrity and openness to what is most vibrantly alive, creative, and profound, in themselves, as well as in others.

Some of the basic components of a real, lasting relationship that will be discussed more extensively later in this book (especially a more detailed description of the basic components in chapter 1) are summarized as follows:

1) *Relating to the person and not the persona.* One is in a real relationship with another individual to the degree that one relates to what is actually experientially real in the other person, from moment to moment, rather than relating to what the other individual offers up as a self-concept, or to the concepts, images, and presumptive interpretations that we project or superimpose upon the other. In addition, one must offer up to the other what is experientially real in himself or herself, rather than some idealized conceptual self-definition, or predetermined psychosocial mask, with which one is identified.

2) *Growth-oriented rather than object-oriented:* An optimal real relationship offers opportunities for transformational developmental growth of liberating new insight, leading to more fulfilling ways of functioning, or living, rather than being locked into predetermined ways of relating and functioning, as well as preconceived views of oneself, the other person,

and the relationship itself. Openness to liberating new insights can significantly enhance the functioning of each of the individuals in the relationship as well as enhance the functioning of the relationship itself, arousing what is most creatively empowering, productive, revealing, constructive, vibrantly alive, healing, transformational, and spontaneous in each individual, as well as in their relationship. Later in this book, we will also discuss how a pseudo-relationship, egoistic relationship, or object relationship is devoted to making an object of the other person, meaning the person views the other as a defined interpretive label and controlled possession, or an “It,” in Martin Buber’s terminology,³ rather than empathically tuning into their living energy presence and experiential states, or what Buber calls the “Thou,” and valuing the other individual and one’s relationship with them for its own sake, primarily, rather than just valuing them for the sake of some kind of egoistic gratification that they are expected to provide. That kind of preconceived, controlling way of relating to another individual restricts rather than enhances the transformational growth of each individual, and of the relationship itself, in contrast to relationships in which greater levels of openness, flexibility, insight, and creative transformation exist. When the other person relates to you with what is experientially real in themselves, it will naturally trigger in you a spontaneous experiential reaction, which if observed non-dualistically and nonjudgmentally, will yield creative self-understanding,⁴ which in turn will serve as the basis of transformation into more fulfilling levels of psychological functioning, or psychological growth. (We are using the terms “creative self-understanding” and “genuine understanding of others” to refer to insights that come from direct experience and from openness to the deepest core of one’s own being—unrestricted and undistorted by any preconceived interpretive presumptions). In contrast to a growth-oriented relationship, an object relationship exists if one relates primarily not to the whole person, but rather, to the particular aspect of another individual that one can exploit for one’s own gratification. In such a relationship, there is an attempt to prevent the other person from outgrowing old habits and growing

in real self-understanding and self-transformation because that prevention of growth guarantees that one will not lose the particular aspect of the other individual that one is using for self-gratification. For example, a dependent person makes you feel strong, so you don't want her to outgrow her dependency.

3) *Unconditional acceptance of the whole person*: One is open to and nonjudgmentally accepting of the whole of the other person, and not just selectively focusing upon whatever partial aspects of them relate to one's own perceived need for gratification. Unless you are first able to accept yourself unconditionally, you are not free to accept the other person unconditionally, and be in a real relationship with them. For example, if you label yourself as weak and insecure, and you seek to compensate for those traits through the relationship, you will look for and accept only strength and security in another individual, and reject all other contradictory traits.

True love is not selective, not a positive value judgment, not a conditional intense valuing, an extreme approval, a conditional acceptance, of preferred or desired partial aspects of the other individual, but, rather, love is an unconditional acceptance of and appreciative empathic attunement to the whole other person, including their indivisible whole life energy presence and all of its natural expressions and genuine experiential aspects. The whole of the other individual is perfect to us, or beyond conditional approval and disapproval, but not perfect as an idealized image of unrealistic infatuation projected onto the other individual, conditionally value judged extremely positively for partial aspects or qualities of him or herself that conform to our own selective preferences, expectations, needs, and fantasies; instead the beloved is unconditionally accepted as being of absolute value as a living energy presence. When we truly love someone, we do not conditionally value them only when they conform to our own selective needs, expectations, and idealized images of them; instead, we view them as having inherent unconditional value because of their intrinsic whole being or distinctive living energy presence. *To truly love someone is to relate to, appreciate, and cherish what is actually, naturally real*

in them rather than projecting imaginary idealized images and valuing that in them. We intuitively recognize that the beloved simply feels right for us, they simply belong with us, their energy presence feels like a naturally compatible “good fit” with ours. We intuitively recognize a deep sense of natural inner familiarity with the distinctive life energy presence of the other individual, so our love or caring is not dependent or conditional upon the other individual conforming to some kind of idealized image of perfection, demanding expectations, or preconceived roles. That intuited sense of natural relatedness of being, inherent belonging, or inner familiarity enables individuals to remain unselfishly devoted to one another and to unconditionally remain together “for better or for worse,” as suggested by the traditional marriage vow, but also applicable to other kinds of non-marital caring relationships. True love is enduring, not temporary, for it is not dependent upon any conditional reason (there is no “I love you because. . .”); it is not conditional, because our intuitive recognition of natural relatedness of being or inner familiarity does not depend on changing circumstances or upon altering or distorting the other person’s natural real being, experience, and expressions. True love is free of conditional valuing based on self-seeking motives, so our love does not depend on, or is not conditional upon, having the beloved provide us with intense feelings of excitation and gratification (be they sexual, sensual, intellectual, emotional, entertaining, financial, etc.). We love the other person for their own sake, and are contented to relate to what is actually experientially real and spontaneously natural in them, regardless of whether they gratify particular needs, ideals, fantasies, and expectations that we may value.

True love is sufficient unto itself and therefore unconditional because it is fully satisfying to the core of our being, even if it does not satisfy the ego’s conditional expectations and needs. True love can be unconditional and without excessive self-seeking motives because it arises from an intuited sense of contentment, relaxed security, and inner wholeness of being, in contrast to relationships focusing on seeking

gratification of insatiable, often unreasonable, impatient, intensely demanding needs arising from the ego's basic sense of deficiency, discontent, or lack of intrinsic wholeness, security, and well-being. Because love is the essential core of life energy, it is the one basic comprehensive passion, which subsumes all of the natural constructive wholesome passions of life within itself. Perhaps all, or most, hungers, appetites, yearnings, or aspirations, are ultimately derived from, and satisfied by, the hunger to experience the connective energy of loving warmth in the core of the heart, as an optimal experience of wholeness, security, sweetness, beauty, grandeur, charm (wonder-full enchantment), and joyful vitality. True love unconditionally accepts, warmly embraces, and cherishes, all that is truly real and natural in the beloved, because true joy, vitality, and beauty is found only in what is real and natural, and cannot be found in seeking any kind of imaginary ideal or preconceived demanding expectation, which only imitates the true goodness of life energy, like a lifeless statue, doll, idol, photo, or portrait. The true goodness of the essential relational reality of life as love can be found, contacted, experienced only when we are contented to contact the immediacy or undefinable mystery of another person's whole being without any preconceived agendas of the controlling, selective, distorting, manipulative ego-mind.

4) *No manipulation*: Manipulation converts the other person into an object for your own exploitation. Manipulation can be overt, viewing relationships as forms of combat, such as battles to be won and objects or possessions to be manipulated, maneuvered, managed, controlled, which affirms the ego's power to control, as its illusory sense of security. Subtle forms of manipulation can involve insisting on tangible signs and symbols of love, as a way of enhancing the ego's fragile sense of self-esteem and emotional security, rather than developing the ability to directly, intuitively, empathically experience another individual's love for oneself, without demanding such tangible signs and symbols as "proof."

5) *Communication and Understanding*: A real relationship requires a sense of existential relatedness, inner

connection, or shared experience, derived from a mutual understanding between the two individuals, at any given moment. This understanding involves a process of empathic communion, producing immediate, non-presumptively mediated, experiential knowledge of the other individual. True understanding is possible only when communication is open, honest, nonjudgmental, and unimpaired.

6) *Commitment*: For a real relationship to exist, or develop, there must be a commitment to unconditional acceptance of what is naturally real in the other individual, without necessarily condoning inappropriate attitudes and non-constructive behaviors that are not intrinsic to the other individual's natural being, but rather, acquired or learned patterns. Commitment involves being devoted to the constructive developmental growth and well-being of the other person, and to openness and honesty in communication even when it might possibly result in emotional pain, discomfort, or constructive conflict in the relationship.

7) *Investment*: Investment involves a mutual reaching out to the other for contact. Each individual must go outside oneself and give of oneself to the other, and not expect the other to go the whole way in bridging the psychological gap between the two. The investment is like a seed we plant in the other, and permit the other to plant in ourselves, with the hope that the other will nurture it with the warmth of their caring so that one day it will grow and blossom into a flower of fulfillment. The one in whom we invest is the one we entrust with our most fragile self, and we are risking that the other will shelter it so that there will be an opportunity for it to grow or be outgrown rather than being rejected and buried by us.

8) *Compatibility of values*: To accomplish deep mutual understanding and experiential intimacy, the two individuals must share a compatibility of values. Their primary value, that which they hold most dear, and are least likely to surrender, should be basically the same for the two, or at least compatible. Basic compatibility produces mutual empathic understanding of one another. Thus, the compatibility of basic values serves as the uniting force that connects the two

individuals although their more surface values differ. Even though, over the years, one or both individuals may grow psychologically, develop new interests, or change in his or her bodily appearance, their sense of union or psychological connection is unaffected because it exists at a deeper level.

9) *Respect*: Without it, a relationship is object manipulation. Respect involves permitting the other to be a separate and whole person in her/his own right, rather than just an extension of you. Respect grants the other individual the natural right to have interests and needs of his/her own, apart from you. You recognize that the other individual is not your possession. You treat the other individual as an adult, as intrinsically equal in value to you, which means not taking the other individual for granted. Although this person may always do certain things for you as an expression of caring, you should not come to expect these things to be done for you, and never demand anything. Instead, recognize that all that the other person does for you comes out of caring, not obligation.

10) *Empathy*: This involves the ability and willingness to feel what the other person is feeling. It involves the ability to transcend one's own psychological boundaries and to "stand in the other person's shoes," psychologically speaking, or to empathically tune into the other individual's experiential frame of reference or view of reality. This involves the ability to perceive and experience the world, or particular situations and issues, as the other person does. Without it, one is not able to make full experiential contact with the other person, which is necessary to provide optimal understanding and experiential closeness.

11) *Trust*: Trust involves a relative state of assurance that if one leaves oneself vulnerable to the other individual, he/she will not take advantage of that state of vulnerability to inflict emotional pain upon you. Trust implies accepting a degree of uncertainty. It is a risk or a feeling of some degree of vulnerability. Without trust, a real relationship cannot survive because you hold yourself back in terms of what you expose and give to the other individual.

CHAPTER 1:

THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF A REAL AND LASTING RELATIONSHIP

“No man is an island.”
—John Donne

Relating to the Person and Not the Persona

Before one can come to understand what is real or healthy in specific kinds of relationships, one must first have a clear understanding of the essential components underlying all real relationships, including developing a real and healthy relationship with oneself, grounded in creative self-understanding. To be real as a person, one has to be the self that is experientially real (i.e., be open to experiencing one's actual feelings, emotions, impulses, desires, needs), which is spontaneously changing from moment to moment in oneself, rather than pretending to be some kind of a static conceptual persona, or preconceived self-defined identity, a non-changing set of ideas about oneself in the form of a psychological or social mask, role, or idealized image that one has erected and identified with. The same is true in regard to establishing a real relationship with another person, and being able to utilize that relationship as the means of gaining creative (spontaneously arising, nonselective, genuine) self-understanding, as well as a deep and meaningful understanding of the other person.

To establish a real relationship with another person, one must be able to go beyond the person's physical appearance and superficial psycho-social masks, predetermined facades, or personas and make full contact with the whole

of the psychological person, the experientially real person, or the other person's actual experiential states and living energy presence, which changes from moment to moment. One must also be aware of, and communicate from, what is experientially real within oneself from moment-to-moment, rather than have one's reactions guided and determined by stereotypical responses related to the various psychological and social masks, roles, and functions that one has assumed, such as being a parent, teacher, student, psychologist, lover, homemaker, boss, and the like. One is in a real relationship with another person to the degree that one relates to what is experientially real in the other individual, from moment to moment, rather than relating to what the other offers up as a self-concept (being identified with static ideas, images, or self-definitions), and/or to the preconceived concepts and images that we superimpose upon, or project onto, the other individual. In addition, one must offer up to the other what is experientially real in him or herself, rather than some predetermined conceptual self with which one is highly identified and invested.

Growth-Oriented Rather Than Object-Oriented

Creative self-understanding grows through relationships with others only if you are involved in a real relationship. If you are not expressing or communicating what is experientially real for yourself, you are not in a position to learn anything real about yourself. You are also in a better position to gain creative self-understanding if the other individual also is relating with what is experientially real in him or herself. When the other individual is relating to you with what is experientially real in him or herself, then that will evoke a particular experiential reaction in you. That openness to what is experientially real in the other person and in yourself will produce the creative self-understanding that is the basis of transformational psychological growth if you relate to your encounter with the other individual, and the experience that it arouses in you, non-dualistically and nonjudgmentally,

without biased preconceived reactions. *Therefore, a real relationship offers opportunities for growth of self-understanding and self-transformation*, whereas a pseudo-relationship or object relationship is devoted to making an object or “possession” of the other person. By doing so, it makes the other person just a psychological extension of you. This is in order to use some particular aspect of the other person as a means of avoiding some kind of emotional pain and enhancing the ego’s sense of worth, security, excitement, and other deficiency needs in some way.

Thus, an object relationship rather than a real relationship exists if you relate not to the whole person, but primarily to the particular aspects of the other that you can exploit for your own gratification. Typical examples of such selective object exploitation involve using the other person primarily for purposes of experiencing some kind of pleasurable erotic, exciting, or comforting sensation; fulfilling some kind of fantasy projected onto the other individual; making the other person be a “security blanket” (i.e., providing us with some form of emotional, social, sexual, or financial security and gratification); or manipulating the other person to say and do things that enhance our own sense of worth or self-esteem. In such a relationship, there is an attempt to prevent the other person from growing psychologically. This guarantees that one will not lose whatever particular aspect of the other individual that one is using for self-gratification. For example, if I value someone because she is weak and dependent on me, so that I can continue to see myself as psychologically strong, in control of the relationship, and, therefore, secure, then I will do whatever I can to keep her from outgrowing her dependency. If she were to no longer be dependent, then I would lose the sense of security.

Unconditional Acceptance of the Whole Person

Thus, in a real relationship, there is no overvaluing of a particular aspect of the other person’s physical or psychological self, such as sexual attractiveness, psychological strength,

intelligence, kindness, etc., to the neglect, rejection, or exclusion of other aspects of the person. You are open to and nonjudgmentally unconditionally accepting of the whole of the other person, instead of conditionally approving of only some aspects that can contribute to your own perceived need gratification. Therefore, you are able to let be whatever the other person experientially has to be, because you are not trying to control or influence them, subtly or overtly, to gratify your own perceived psychological needs.

However, in a pseudo-relationship, or an egoistic relationship, if we cease to serve as a source of the other individual's gratification, then they are likely to discard us and search for another individual to whom to relate who will better fill their needs and feelings of deficiency. If you come to realize that someone values you and will stay in the relationship with you only because and only as long as you possess certain desired attributes, then this kind of conditional acceptance, or conditional approval, inevitably makes you feel very insecure in the relationship. You recognize that you cannot always be physically attractive, kind, intelligent, sexual, submissive, or provide whatever other kind of selfish gratification the other is valuing in you and for which you are being used. In addition, you cannot feel free to be and express your spontaneous self for fear that whatever you are being may be viewed by the other person as contradicting what the other person expects you to be. As a result, the other individual might reject your spontaneous self and the relationship along with it. If you are to feel free to be yourself and grow transformed in your psychological functioning, then you need to feel a sense of unconditional acceptance from the other individual and a sense that the other is relating to the whole of you, instead of feeling only a conditional kind of acceptance.

In a conditional relationship, we realize that our acceptance by the other individual is conditional upon our continued ability and willingness to gratify the other's demands, expectations, or needs. Thus, for example, if you recognize that you are being valued by the other individual only as long

as you continue to serve as a kind of psychological security blanket through your strength and protectiveness, then you may not feel free to share other aspects of your experiential reality, as it spontaneously arises from moment to moment. You are not free to be your weak and needy self when that is spontaneously real for you, for fear that the other individual will no longer feel secure through your strength and protectiveness because the other will no longer see you as having those qualities. If you are unable to let yourself be a certain way, then you cannot have access to that aspect, and therefore, your ability to understand yourself becomes restricted. Hiding certain aspects of your own being from another person, and perhaps also from yourself, produces psychologically painful and unhealthy self-estrangement and self-conflict, as well as impaired communication. In addition, chronic tension and frustration arise from blocked energies invested in rejected, repressed, aspects of your own being, such as particular feelings, needs, or spontaneous inclinations that are deemed unacceptable by another person, and thus, by oneself as well.

It is also important to recognize that you will continue to relate to the other individual as an object as long as you are relating to yourself in the same way. For example, if you make a defined object of yourself, by labeling and identifying yourself as being weak and insecure, and you are seeking to compensate for these rejected traits in yourself through a relationship, then of course, you will continue to seek to find what you call qualities of strength and security in the other individual. As a result, you will likely reject in the other person all traits, such as perceived weakness and insecurity, which contradict what you feel you need the other individual to be in order for you to experience gratification of your psychological needs for emotional security and worth in and through the relationship. Unless you are first able to accept yourself unconditionally, you are not free to accept the other individual unconditionally, and be in a real relationship with her/him, and encourage her/him to relate to the

whole range of what is experientially real in yourself. That selective, judgmental way of relating to others and to yourself produces estrangement or psychological distance from the other, as well as from rejected aspects of yourself.

Psychoanalytic object-relations theory, as well as Martin Buber's concept of the I-It relationship, involves relating to an internal idea, image, concept, and need-based desire of another individual in one's own mind, projected onto the other actual individual in the world, rather than being open to directly contacting the actual experience of the other individual with empathic sensitivity, as in Buber's concept of the I-Thou relationship. According to Wikipedia's digest of the psychological object relations theory of Ronald Fairbairn, "When the needs of the child are not met by the parents (e.g., *dependency needs* and the need for affirmative interactions), a pathological turning away from external reality takes place. Instead of actual exchange with others, fantasied, private presences are established, the so-called internal objects. To these internal objects the child relates in fantasied connections, the internal object relations."¹

According to Fairbairn, these fantasy images can focus on only a particular aspect of another person, rather than the whole person. Fairbairn envisioned the child with largely unavailable parents as differentiating between the responsive aspects of the parents (the good object) and the unresponsive aspects (the unsatisfying object). The child internalizes the unresponsive aspects of the parents and fantasizes those features as being a part of him because they are not available in reality. This defense mechanism is known as "splitting of the ego," where the good and the bad parts of the parents are kept apart, and where there is no possibility to feel ambivalence. For example, when a mother is depressed and denies this, the child is unable to connect completely to his mother. Therefore, the child identifies itself with this denied part of the parent and becomes depressed itself.²

Similarly, Martin Buber suggests that encountering another individual with a predetermined agenda of selective

conceptual interpretation and desirous expectations is a distracting obstacle to directly contacting or “meeting” the whole being of another individual with one’s own whole being:

The relation to the Thou is direct. No system of concepts, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between I and Thou. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of its isolation into the unity of the whole. No set purpose, no greed, and no anticipation intervene between I and Thou. Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dream into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about.³

According to Buber, the I-It relationship involves viewing another individual as the sum of various divisible qualities or traits, rather than viewing the other as an undefined indivisible whole being, as in the I-Thou relationship:

So long as love is “blind” that is, as long as it does not see a *whole* being, it is not truly under the sway of the primary word of relation. Hate is by nature blind. Only a part of a being can be hated . . . The human being who was even now single and unconditioned . . . has now become again a He or a She, a sum of qualities, a given quantity with a certain shape. Now I may take out from him again the color of his hair or of his speech or of his goodness. But so long as I can do this, he is no more my Thou and cannot yet be my Thou again.⁴

No Manipulation

Those who, in the extreme, relate characteristically to others as objects are often referred to as manipulators. Manipulation of another person is one of the severest obstacles to the

establishment of a real and lasting relationship. Manipulation converts the other person into an object for your own exploitation, which is antithetical to accurately perceiving and caring about the other person as he/she actually is, for his/her own sake alone, apart from how you expect that person to gratify you. The person is not a “thing,” a possession, or a commodity to be manipulated, controlled, and exploited for your own use and pleasure. Instead, the other person is a real, separate, and complete human being who yearns to be experienced, understood, and related to as he/she really is. The other individual will not long tolerate being dehumanized, by being made into an object and exploited. Instead, the other will likely rebel against this kind of treatment, and terminate such a relationship because the majority of one’s natural human needs cannot be met through such a relationship.

Basically, the manipulator tries to control others because he is frightened and rejecting his feelings of vulnerability. When such a person feels vulnerable or insecure, he becomes fearful because he is convinced that overwhelming pain or destruction is sure to come. In the past, he has learned that such pain was inevitably forthcoming whenever he was vulnerable. He never permits himself or herself to love, need, or be dependent on anyone, because he feels that these yearnings will give others a sense of control over him, which makes him feel weak, helpless, and thus, vulnerable. He does not trust people, and is convinced that others will hurt him and take advantage of him if he is not always one step ahead of the other person by manipulating and controlling the other individual in some way.

The manipulator tends to divide people into two basic categories, the weak and the strong—the manipulators and the manipulated—as a psychological equivalent of the principle of predation, also known as “the survival of the fittest,” “the law of the jungle,” or a “might (and manipulative cunning) makes right” mentality. The person gains a feeling of pride, worth, security, and identity in seeing himself or herself as strong, controlling, deceptive, and manipulative, but he or

she believes that you are a “sucker,” “despicable,” or a “nothing” if you are needy, honest, or trusting. All traits such as passivity, softness, tenderness, gentleness, sensitivity, conformity, conciliation, compromise, or accommodation are negative and despicable in the manipulative person’s view because they all carry the connotation of weakness, impotence, vulnerability, insecurity, and humiliation. Therefore, he or she is constantly trying to make himself or herself strong and prove that he or she is strong. However, what he or she calls strength invariably becomes a form of toughness, hardness, or insensitivity. He or she does not recognize that this strength is really toughness, and that such insensitivity is really a form of weakness rather than strength. Toughness is really a hardening or numbing of oneself, psychologically, as a defense mechanism against the experience of pain. It is therefore a form of fearful escape from anticipated pain. All forms of avoidance and escape are really a reflection of fearful weakness rather than strength. Real strength of character exists only when there is no need to escape from pain. Real strength exists only when you are honestly facing and accepting the reality of your painful feelings. Then these feelings can be effectively dealt with so that they can be dissolved in their most natural and complete way.

Manipulation can take subtle and passive, as well as overt and active, forms. Some people manipulate others by acting helpless and inadequate so that other people would do things and take care of them. For example, a man who feels ashamed of demonstrating his need to be taken care of may habitually get drunk as a way of making himself helpless, and thereby, forcing his wife to minister to him. A woman may use consent to sexual relations as a way of manipulating her partner into giving her some kind of personal indulgence. Even though one’s means of manipulation may be more passive or subtle, they are no less controlling or exploitative.

Power and control are the basic motifs of the manipulator’s life. It happens in relationships as well as with the person’s own feelings. The person interprets anything that cannot be

controlled as a sign of his weakness, which makes him feel very impotent, helpless, fearfully insecure, and, therefore, vulnerable. Another reason for controlling feelings is the fear that being emotionally involved with others could lead to being taken advantage of by those who recognize his neediness and emotional insecurity. Therefore, the person relates to others very superficially, deceptively, and artificially, rather than intimately, genuinely, and intensely. The person often uses speech to deceive, control, and keep others at a psychological distance, rather than for purposes of really communicating and sharing what is experientially real for the person. That person enjoys fooling and deceiving other people and takes pride in the power to do so. The person loves to play the insincere psychological game of “put-on,” in which he or she feigns honesty with others. The need is always to be one-upping on everyone, or else the sense of security is jeopardized. Relationships with others are fundamentally battles to be won as well as objects to be manipulated, maneuvered, managed, controlled, or exploited, which he uses as a means of affirming his power to control others. This enhances his pride and validates his sense of worth, security, and identity.

The manipulator is very egocentric, narcissistically involved, and devoted to his own goals, especially his own gratification and prideful self-aggrandizement. The person wants others to love, need, and commit themselves to the person, but he or she will not permit himself or herself to love, need, or be committed to another person. If he or she marries, it is usually not for true love, but only to gain a convenient sexual object, financial security, or the prestigious position in society that the marriage can bring him. The manipulator uses the marriage, or the relationship, to egotistically better himself or herself, in some way. The mate is basically only a showpiece, to be displayed to others, and to be used for the achievement of his own personal goals. The manipulator believes that it is only the attaining of self-serving personal goals that will finally bring the absolute, enduring, sense of security, worth, and identity that he or she craves. This type of person is an opportunist

who relates to others only if it is clear that it will accrue some advantage. The manipulator disguises his or her true feelings and motives, and learns to be a good actor and role player. This person will say and do almost anything to win, and all those who play with him or her are eventually left bankrupt and bereft of all that they once had of value.

A more subtle form of manipulation than that described above tends to typically center on the use of relationships for the elevation of one's own very low sense of self-esteem, or sense of worth. If you are this kind of person, then you insist on the signs and symbols of affection more than real affection. You care more about being given certain words and performances, which to you are "proofs" of love or being highly valued, than you do about what the other person is really feeling toward you. Because at some deep level you are convinced that you are unlovable, which implies being viewed by others as worthless, you demand constant overt demonstrations of whatever connotes signs of love to you. You do not trust your own feelings to intuitively and empathically recognize the presence, or distinctive energy vibration, of true love, so you insist on receiving demonstrable proof that you are loved. For example, you demand that the other person make constant sacrifices on your behalf. If the person values money, then he or she should spend it on you instead of something else. If time or career is valuable, then you insist that the person should spend more time with you, and less time on the things that bring him prosperity, relaxation, pleasure, and fulfillment. You are in constant competition with everything and everyone that your loved one values. You need the person to tell you constantly that he or she loves you, and every occasion like a birthday, anniversary, Mother's Day, etc., must be remembered. If you are female, you may insist that he bring you flowers and candy, or some other very special gift. If you are male, you may insist that she cook your food exactly the way you like it, or give you sex whenever you demand it. All of these demonstrations become synonymous with the tangible symbols of affection.

You feel that you need these demonstrations and symbols of affection to elevate your feelings of worth and self-esteem. Being committed, above all, to your egotistic need for self-esteem, you subtly condition the other person never to be honest with you if it is in any way critical of you, but only to give you supportive and ego-building statements. This inhibits real communication, which prevents a real relationship from being established.

Although there is nothing intrinsically wrong with giving favors, gifts, or spending money on another person, if these become a substitute for genuine love and caring, the relationship cannot be real. Instead, it will be like a hollow shell, attractive on the surface but inwardly empty. No matter how much consideration, attention, compliments, gifts, or sacrifices you receive, you will never feel secure through these means alone because you have made yourself incapable of feeling love directly. By turning away from your own negative feelings about yourself, you have conditioned yourself to be insensitive to the actual experiential truth of yourself, and have, in the same way, dulled your empathic sensitivities toward others. Consequently, you are not able to perceive and feel the other person's loving feelings toward you, and, therefore, you can never feel really secure in the relationship. The only way you can really be certain that you are loved is not through the symbols that you are given (for example, it is not terribly difficult to utter the words, "I love you," yet the uttering is not the loving), but only by your direct experience of the other person's energy of deeply invested, sincerely caring warmth and love for you. This is the only means of achieving a real sense of security in a relationship.

Communication and Understanding

Every human interaction is not a genuine relationship. For a real relationship to exist, there must first be a sense of existential relatedness between the two people. A sense of relatedness is established when there is mutual experiential understanding between the two at any given moment. It must

be the kind of understanding that involves direct or immediate experiential knowledge of the other individual, and not just factual information or assumptions about the other. That kind of mutual empathic understanding is the bond that relates the two, and for that moment makes them one, as a kind of communion or “two as one.” They feel psychologically connected to each other by empathically understanding each other’s experiences. This could also be described as a process of attunement, or tuning into each other’s energy presence and experience, rather than being self-absorbed in your own mind, holding a presumptive conceptual image or predetermined interpretation of the other individual. True understanding between two people is possible only when communication between them is clear, open, honest, and unimpaired. Communication (including nonverbal and verbal communication) is the means of establishing a bridge of inner psychological connection or mutual experiential understanding between two people. It produces the understanding necessary to span the gap between two people living in their own separate, insulated psychological cubicles or “telephone booths.” Good communication is the life’s blood of a real relationship because the sense of understanding, relatedness, and vitality dies when communication is shut off or becomes obstructed. Because communication is so vital to the establishment of a real and lasting human relationship, the next chapter will be devoted entirely to a discussion of how the capacity to communicate can be enhanced. This present chapter will continue to concern itself with the other basic components that produce a sense of experiential relatedness, or psychological connection, necessary to establish a real and lasting relationship. These include, commitment, investment, compatibility of values, respect, empathy, and trust.

Commitment

No one can ever honestly say that he or she is free of all commitments. All of us are committed to something or other. Our commitments determine the theme and direction that

our life takes, and are the means by which we organize our lives. Most people are committed to the gratification of their egoistic needs for psychological self-protection, or preserving their preconceived self-definitions, involving identity self-affirmation, as well as validating self-consistent cohesiveness and enhancement, or aggrandizement, of one's sense of identity, but do not always consciously recognize that commitment. Even to declare that you are free of all commitments reflects the commitment to be free of all commitments. This kind of person who vigorously declares the importance of being free of all commitments usually is referring to monogamous commitment in intimate relationships. Rather than an absence of commitments, one will usually find in these people that they, too, are governed by a commitment to what may be called "freedom." What is often meant by a commitment to freedom is the commitment to reject all imposed demands that restricts their ability to come and go in the relationship as desired, so that the person is free to indulge his or her impulses and needs.

At a deeper level, this expressed rejection of commitments, or the commitment to freedom, often reflects a psychologically adolescent level of personality development (regardless of one's physical age) in which one has fears of being overpowered or controlled by others because of extreme pressure or control experienced during childhood. The forced recognition of their feelings of impotence of will, and the fearfulness which resulted as the consequence of such imposed control, made the person feel humiliated. This leads one to believe that he or she is impotent to deal with control exerted upon them from outside, so the person must feel the freedom to leave a relationship at the first signs that demands are being imposed upon them. All commitments are seen as being demands for forced submission, which aggravates the sense of impotence, fearfulness, and humiliation, as well as the related fear of being psychologically incorporated or absorbed into the other person, which is typically perceived as a threat to the ego's ability to retain its foundational sense of separate self-awareness, self-gratification, and self-will.

Submission to commitments, or any form of coercion, control, or frustration of their immediate needs and impulses, tends to bring on and validate the hated feelings of weakness, helplessness, or impotence of will, which have become synonymous with feelings of insecurity, vulnerability, and doubts about one's sense of psychological separateness and identity. This is the essence of the psychologically adolescent pattern of rebellion and conflict.

Recognizing that we all make commitments of one kind or another, the issue now is what kinds of commitments does a real and lasting relationship require. Fundamentally, there must be the commitment to the unconditional acceptance of the other individual, relating to the whole of that person, and not just to some exclusive fragment or aspect of that person. Furthermore, the commitment must be to the transformational growth and well-being of the other, and to honesty in communication, even though it may result in emotional pain, or produce conflict. It is not substantially different from the commitment that a parent makes to a child's well-being, which may result in some pain for the child when the parent must bring him/her to the doctor for a necessary injection, or give him some bad-tasting medicine in order to insure his rapid recovery from illness. Just as the parent may have to accept the temporary resentment from the child for being forced to confront some unpleasant or painful reality, the person in a real relationship is committed to the well-being of the other individual, and of the relationship, and, therefore, offers up honestly what he feels must be shared for real communication to remain intact even if it brings conflict and pain. Without these kinds of commitments, a real relationship cannot endure because once the other individual feels that you are not committed to his/her well-being and natural growth, he/she will feel that he/she is used or exploited as an object, and, therefore, trust and real closeness will die. The same will result if people are not clear and honest in communication. Therefore, without these commitments, the intimate contact, sharing, communication, and understanding, cannot exist, or, at

least, cannot endure. When that real sense of relatedness is disturbed, the relationship ceases to be real.

Thus, the commitment need not necessarily be to the continuation of the relationship, although in some relationships, both individuals may prefer such a commitment, and, therefore, such a commitment should be made. However, an engagement or wedding ring does not necessarily guarantee, by itself alone, that the relationship will or will not be real or will endure. The important point that we want to make here is that if both individuals are committed to being honest and open in their relationship, then conflicts that can be resolved will be resolved, and the relationship will endure. However, if through honesty, clarity, and openness in communication, both individuals discover that their differences and conflicts are not capable of being resolved, so that the relationship can be comfortable and can continue to be real and meaningful, then a mutually agreed separation can take place in the constructive best interests of both.

Investment

To invest emotionally in another person is to select that person from a universe of people as someone who will be special to you in terms of providing the means by which you will continue to achieve creative self-understanding and transformational psychological growth through the relationship. That particular person is the one to whom you will reveal the whole of yourself, including those parts of yourself that have not been shared with others—those most precious as well as negative parts of yourself that you have always kept private and hidden. To invest in someone is to acknowledge to yourself and to the other person that the other individual is really important to you as the means by which you will attempt to gain certain forms of gratification. This gratification may have always eluded you before, either because it was not forthcoming from others or because you were too fearful and vulnerable to risk revealing particular feelings or needs. In addition to selecting

a particular person to value above all, or most others, because of the particular gratifications that they are perceived as being able to provide to you, the special value of another person may also, or even more so, be derived from perceiving that he or she provides a meaningful opportunity for you to express and thereby experience the essential, abundant goodness of your own being by unselfishly serving, caring for, gratifying, or being constructively needed in some significant way. As St. Exupery suggests in *The Little Prince*,

“It’s the time that you spent on your rose that makes your rose so important . . . People have forgotten this truth,” the fox said, “But you mustn’t forget it. You become responsible for what you’ve tamed. You’re responsible for your rose.”⁵

In a real relationship, investment involves a mutual reaching out to the other for experiential contact. Each person must make a psychological advance toward the other and not expect the other to do all of the pursuing or reaching out for contact. People must go outside of themselves and give of themselves to the other person, and not expect the other to go the whole way in bridging the psychological gap between the two in order for real contact to exist. When two people invest their whole beings in each other, it is as though each takes root in the heart of the other. The investment is like a seed that we plant in the other and permit the other to plant in ourselves with the hope that the other will nurture it with the warmth of their caring, so that one day it will grow and blossom into a flower of fulfillment. In order to grow psychologically, we must risk revealing and expressing the parts of ourselves that have long been held back or suppressed, so that through their full revelation and expression, the parts that need to grow can develop, and the parts that need to be outgrown will be outgrown.

The risk lies in the fact that the other person may not relate to these parts of ourselves as we need them to in order to

continue letting ourselves be all that we need to be. In all of us, there are parts that we have hidden because we recognize that society would judge us negatively for being and expressing those things. When revealed and understood, these parts can be outgrown. Other parts may have been hidden because they are so basic to our identity, or so precious to us that we prefer not to offer them up to anyone except someone who we feel will accept and appreciate those qualities in ourselves. These are the parts that will grow more developed in us when we can risk revealing and expressing them. If we take that risk, there is always the possibility that the other person may reject what we have revealed about ourselves, and we tend to see that rejection as a severe blow to our sense of worth and a threat of destruction of our psychological self. The one in whom we invest is the one in whom we entrust our most fragile self, and we are risking that the other will shelter it so that there will be an opportunity for it to grow or be outgrown, rather than being rejected and therefore reburied again. Thus, in investing, there is an aspect of responsibility toward the other that is born, not out of obligation, but out of genuine caring.

The following section, taken from the book, *The Little Prince*, is offered in the hope that it may provide a deeper and more subjective appreciation of what is meant by emotional or experiential investment.

The fox said, "Go and look again at the roses. You will understand now that ours is unique in all the world. Then come back to say goodbye to me, and I will make you a present of a secret."

The little prince went away, to look again at the roses.

"You are not at all like my rose," he said. "As yet, you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one. You are like my fox when I first knew him. He was only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world."

And the roses were very much embarrassed.

“You are beautiful, but you are empty,” he went on. One could not die for you. To be sure, an ordinary passerby would think that my rose looked just like you—the rose that belongs to me. But in herself alone, she is more important than all the hundreds of you other roses: because it is she that I have watered; because it is she that I have sheltered behind the screen; because it is for her that I have killed the caterpillars (except the two or three that we saved to become butterflies); because it is she that I have listened to, when she grumbled, or boasted, or even sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is *my* rose.”

And he went back to meet the fox.

“Goodbye,” he said.

“Goodbye,” said the fox. “And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

“What is essential is invisible to the eye,” the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

“It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important.”

“It is the time I have wasted for my rose,” said the little prince, so that he would be sure to remember.

“Men have forgotten this truth,” said the fox.

“But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . .”

“I am responsible for my rose,” the little prince repeated so that he would be sure to remember.⁶

Without the deep investment of your own subjectivity, experiential self, caring energies, and guts, if you will, in the other person and in the relationship, then the relationship is not real and is only a superficial form of recreation,

a basically inconsequential game to be enjoyed and won. It becomes a joy ride that ends once the kicks or intense pleasurable sensations are over, instead of the two being sincere or serious with each other as a real relationship would demand. A real relationship is not a casual, expendable, fling, affair, temporary liaison, or whatever name one gives to a relationship to reflect that it is intended merely to be a bit of casual recreation, an inconsequential pastime, a time-limited adventure. Many who play at relationships are really fearful of the investment because they are afraid that if they were to invest in the other, the pain would be unbearable should the relationship end before they are ready for it to end. This attitude or expectation often is related to early childhood experiences in which an investment in parent figures resulted in great frustration and pain to the child. The child, now an adult, still believes that such pain would be as overwhelming as it was when experienced as a child, and therefore, he continues to avoid any such investment. Those who do not invest may enter into relationships with their body and head but never their heart.

Others who do not invest in relationships, but just play at relationships, are those who view the nature of relationships and life as being essentially just a series of amusing episodes, temporary hedonistic encounters to be experienced and milked dry, drained of all they are worth, and then left to move on to the next little adventure. They see themselves as being like the bee whose role it is to flit from flower to flower, leaving something, taking something, and then being off again. They often equate the living of life and the gaining of fulfillment with the accumulation of a wide variety of different experiences and sensations. They feel that to endure in a particular relationship too long is to feel cheated out of the various other experiences that other relationships can offer. It is as though life is a bowl of goodies, and they were going to make certain that they taste them all.

These kinds of people know only superficial breadth but never depth in relationship. They are constantly skimming the surface of relationships but never diving fully in with

their whole being. They are convinced that their own personal fulfillment lies in experiencing a large quantity, or wide variety of superficial relationships rather than in one deeply invested relationship. They erroneously believe that all parts of themselves will be aroused through these many varied, relationships, and they will thereby attain fulfillment. They do not recognize that only different parts of their superficial self will be aroused through these superficial, expendable relationships, but never aspects of their deeper self, which can be revealed and expressed only when there is the trust and security of a deeply invested relationship. Without the arousal and expression of the deepest parts of ourselves, fulfillment will always elude us.

Those who cannot invest deeply in a committed relationship, and therefore, lack the intense experience of self that such an intimate relationship brings, become dependent for a feeling of intensity upon the sensations created by the newness of relationships, and upon the thrills and amusements that the relationship offers. This becomes their means of continually feeling “high” or “hyped-up,” which is an artificial sense of feeling alive. It also serves as the means of disguising their deeper feelings of emptiness, boredom, meaninglessness, and depression. Because one soon adapts to sensations that may initially seem intensely exciting, the relationship soon becomes a matter of “familiarity breeds contempt,” as the exciting sense of arousal, inner aliveness, and euphoria that the ego can derive from such a relationship gradually diminishes with the passage of time. In a real relationship, familiarity is not of sensations, but of the person, per se, which brings a greater sense of intimacy, understanding, and relatedness, which produces an enduring sense of joy and vitality that is real, and not an artificially induced, ephemeral “high.”

Those who cannot invest in a relationship stay in a relationship only as long as it is, in their terms, “good.” This usually means that the relationship must not become serious; there must be no sign that either person is beginning to invest in the other or in the relationship. It usually also refers to the

fact that the relationship must be entirely free of demands, expectations, hassles, or conflicts of any kind, and must offer no inhibitions or frustrations to the immediate and complete indulgence and gratification of all of one's impulses and needs. These people are in the relationship only for the "ride," and they get off once it no longer offers good times, fun, or gratification of the ego's hedonistic psychological and appetitive needs. They are dominated by the pleasure principle at the sacrifice, at times, of what is real and realistically appropriate.

In these no-investment, or recreational, object relationships, the two individuals play and toy with each other. Their real feelings are never out-front. They take turns "putting-on" each other. A purposeful game of deception is being played at the other's expense. The object of the insincere, devious, psychological game that they call a relationship is to get the other to gratify them maximally without having to give anything more of themselves than is absolutely necessary. If they reach the point of feeling successful at this game, then they consider themselves as having won the game, and it is then time to move on to the next relationship and play the game anew. Many people who play such a game previously felt defeated and humiliated in their attempts to gain the necessary gratification of their basic needs, and so they make up their minds never again to be defeated in a relationship. It is as though each victory they now achieve is an attempt to undo their earlier feelings of humiliation and defeat in the attempt to raise their sense of self-worth. Such relatively psychologically immature egoistic individuals are seldom satisfied with the partner and relationship that they already have because the ego is always tempted to look elsewhere in the hope of finding greater levels of gratification of its limitless, insatiable, psychological deficiency needs as epitomized in the adage, "the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence."

Those who use a relationship to manipulatively play psychological games with each other in this way are engaging in

a form of mutual psychological “masturbation.” They are invested in narcissistic fantasy and sensationalism. They never get to know each other or themselves deeply. They relate only with a part of themselves and not with their whole being, and therefore, their relationships cannot be real. It is as though they were living their entire lives as one big fun party. But one day, when all the partying is over, as eventually it must be, they are then abruptly confronted with the incredible emptiness and meaninglessness of their lives. This kind of life is a dead-end street. It leads nowhere but to enormous confusion and loneliness. People cannot be narcissistic self-indulging children all of their lives without great pain being the eventual consequence. It is better to risk great pain now through the investment in a relationship in order to become the fulfilled psychologically mature adult that you are truly capable of being.

There is an incredible waste of yourself and your life, if you live this superficial lifestyle of relating to others in a nonchalant “hit and run” fashion. You have planted many seeds of yourself in your various relationships, but you have let them lie fallow, so to speak. You have not stayed long enough in any relationship to witness any of these seeds blossom or bear the fruit of love, growth, or fulfillment. Just as a garden, farm, or orchard that is not carefully cultivated will not bear the best possible harvest, a relationship that is not nurtured by persistent expressions of heartfelt unselfish caring and devotion to the well-being of the other person and of the relationship likely will not yield an optimally abundant, deeply satisfying, level of true love, happiness, fulfillment, and transformational development of inner beauty and substantiality of character.

Compatibility of Values

To accomplish the mutual understanding necessary for a real and lasting relationship, at some deep level, two individuals must share a compatibility of values. Their primary value,

that value which they hold most dear, and are least likely to surrender, should be the same for the two of them, or at least compatible with each other. It is that basic compatibility of values that aids the empathic ability necessary to produce the kind of understanding and relatedness of being necessary for a real relationship. For example, if at the deepest levels of their being, one of the partners holds to spiritual values, and the other holds to materialistic values, or if one holds to the importance of a deeply caring, substantial, relationship and the other does not, then even though some degree of understanding of each other can be achieved at a superficial level, it is clear that a deep-rooted sense of understanding, union, relatedness, and commonly shared purpose in life is not likely to be achieved. In the words of Antoine de St. Exupery, "Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction."⁷

The compatibility of essential values serves as the constant enduring factor that unites the two partners, even though the two may lack compatibility in terms of their interest, for example in, sports, other recreational activities, social relating, or sexual contact. The compatibility of essential values is the constant that continues to unite the two in a deep sense of relatedness even though over the years one or the other may grow a great deal psychologically, or in spite of the fact that the appearance and functioning of their body deteriorates with age. Their sense of union is at the deepest level of their being and remains relatively unaffected by more surface changes. Your essential values determine how you basically see life and function, and if those values are compatible between the two people in the relationship, then it becomes the primary means by which each attains a feeling that their own experience of what is real and important in life is being shared and affirmed by the other individual. When at the deepest level of their being, two people share the same view of reality, then the relationship will remain close, meaningful, real, and enduring, even though on the surface the world brings all kinds of challenges into their experience.

Respect

Respect is an essential component of a real relationship because, as is true with the other essential components, without it what remains is a form of object manipulation. Respect is not a sense of fear, awe, or admiration, as it is commonly interpreted, but rather, it refers to the recognition and appreciation of the integrity of the other person. To respect the integrity of the other person is to permit the other individual to be a separate, free, and whole person in her/his own right rather than just being an extension of yourself (i.e., someone who must be totally devoted to gratifying your needs and surrendered totally to your will). To respect the other is to permit the other to have a life, to some degree, apart from your own. It is to grant the other person the right to have interests and needs of their own apart from yours, and perhaps even apart from involving you at all. Respect means that you do not attempt to “own” the other person as if he or she were a possession of yours. Respect also implies treating the other individual as an adult, and as equal in value or worth to yourself. It means that you do not talk down to the other person and to treat the other as though he/she were a dependent child, a rebellious adolescent, just an employee, or an inferior of yours in any way. The role that you play in life may be different from the other’s role, but it must not be seen as being superior. The intrinsic worth and freedom of the other person must be granted unconditionally, and not be regarded as something that has to be constantly earned.

Lack of respect may arise in a relationship even when respect formerly existed. This tends to occur most often when two individuals have related or lived together for a considerable length of time. When each individual becomes extremely familiar with the other, there sometimes develops a tendency to no longer experience the other as a psychologically separate person, but rather, to now view the other individual as an extension and possession of yourself. This may result in taking the other person for granted. What the other has done

for you for many years out of caring and a strong desire to do these things for you, you now come to expect as though they were your due. Now you begin to demand, and no longer request, that these things be done for you, as though it were something that the other person owed to you, or was obligated to do. You must constantly remind yourself that the other person is not your underling or servant, and that all that the other person does for you arises out of caring for you, and not out of a sense of obligation. Therefore, you need to appreciate what is done for you, and that appreciation must be communicated to the other individual, if the relationship is to continue to be respectful and experientially real.

To not respect the other individual, to see and relate to the other as just an extension and possession of yourself, obligated to constantly surrender to your personal will, is to violate the other person's boundaries and freedom as a psychologically separate person. Even though this may provide you with a temporary feeling of control, security, and superiority, it will ultimately make the other person feel inwardly suffocated, or deprived of necessary psychological space, and not as a person in their own right. Sooner or later, that person would inevitably rebel against this threat of psychological nonexistence.

Empathy

Essentially, empathy refers to the capacity to participate in the other person's subjective life or experiential realities to feel what another person is feeling. This involves not just a detached factual intellectual understanding, but a kind of caring participation in the other individual's experience, as a kind of communion or inner contact with them, not just viewing and understanding them from the outside, so to speak. Thus, empathy involves the ability to transcend one's own psychological boundaries and to stand in the other person's psychological "shoes," or experiential viewpoint. It involves the ability to perceive and experience the world as the other person does.

This empathic ability is essential for establishing a real relationship because without it, you are not able to make the full and direct experiential contact with the other individual necessary to provide optimal understanding of the other, as the basis of psychological closeness in the relationship. Each of us wants to feel that another person knows us from the inside. We need to know that the other individual recognizes and genuinely cares about how we feel, and why we feel it. Only then do we feel truly understood and genuinely cared about. This empathic ability to appreciate the other person's feelings, experiences, and point of view is the necessary forerunner for the development of the capacity for establishing communion, which means to be in union psychologically with another person's consciousness or their experiential states. This is the necessary state of deeply invested non-duality, communion, or attunement that produces optimal creative understanding of the other person, or nonselective, participatory, insightful, experiential understanding, just as it enhances self-understanding through what deeply invested empathic communion with the other individual arouses in yourself.

The capacity for empathy is very much related to the degree of one's psychological maturity. The less mature person tends to be egocentric, and therefore, unable to sufficiently understand another person's point of view. One way that psychological growth from the child and adolescent to the adult level of functioning (regardless of one's biological age) can be measured is through the transition from a basically egocentric self-preoccupation to a capacity for more empathic awareness. Children tend to be more absorbed in their own narcissistic viewpoint, focusing mostly on their own needs and wishes, whereas the adult's empathic ability reflects the first step in her/his interest and ability in establishing a real love relationship with another person. Individuals of any age can be functioning predominantly at a child, adolescent, or adult level of psychological development.

If you find yourself characteristically unable to be empathic with particular kinds of people, you need to explore

what is making you so riveted to your own narrow point of view and unable to understand the point of view of the other person. The more you practice being empathic, listening to the other's feelings and messages with undivided attention, the more you mature, and at the same time, enhance your capacity for relating and loving.

Empathic communion involves tuning into the other person's holistic experiential energy field, which underlies and provides deeper insight into the essential significance of the specific words and behaviors that they express. Empathy involves the ability to not only listen to another person's spoken words, per se, but also intuitively discerning or communing with the speaker's underlying experience and intentions that have given rise to those particular words. Thus, it is important to make experiential contact with the actual being or living presence of the speaker being conveyed through their words and/or through their nonverbal expressions and energy tone. Thus, empathy is a process of deep listening that involves contacting another person with an open heart, not just with the mind and senses, as suggested by the following passage from John Powell's book, *The Secret of Staying in Love*:

Listening in dialogue is listening more to meanings than to words. It is listening with the heart more than with the head. Dialogue itself is more of a heart-trip than a head-trip. Such listening is a pondering rather than a quibbling over the meaning of words. In true listening, we reach behind the words, see through them, to find the person who is being revealed. Listening is a searching to find the treasure of the true person, as revealed verbally and non-verbally. There is the semantic problem of course. The same words bear a different connotation for you than they do for me. Consequently, I can never tell you what you *what you said*, but only *what I heard*. I will have to rephrase what you have said, and check it out with you to make sure that what left your mind and heart arrived in my mind and heart intact and without distortion.⁸

Furthermore, empathy involves being open to directly contacting another individual's communicated message, experience, and being without superimposing a selective, biased, distorting filter of one's own preconceived interpretations and value judged, demanding, expectations upon the other person, and what they are communicating.

A good listener has an abiding respect for the inexhaustible mystery of the human person and its infinite varieties. Each experience in dialogue is a new discovery, an adventure into the previously unknown. He does not have definite, prefabricated, inspected-and-approved expectations or anticipations concerning the person of the speaker and his revelation. Having such expectations about what you can and cannot say gets one trapped in the "should-ought" box, and the one category that is not applicable to the riches of human emotions is that of should-ought.⁹

Trust

Trust is probably the most fundamental of all the basic components of a real and lasting relationship, and is, in one way or another, involved in each of the other components. Essentially, trust refers to that relative state of assurance that if you leave yourself vulnerable to another, in some way, that person will not take advantage of that vulnerability to inflict pain upon you. Trust must not be confused with a sense of certainty, a guarantee or a sense of control over the other person. Trust is not the same as a feeling of complete invulnerability or "un-hurt-ability." There are many people who really are seeking a sense of certainty when they say that they want to be able to trust another individual. Trust implies an aspect of uncertainty, a risk, a feeling of vulnerability, to some degree.

If you are not willing or able to let yourself risk or feel vulnerable because you are convinced that emotional pain is certain to be forthcoming, and that the pain would be

overwhelming and destructive to your sense of self, then you will never be able to trust another person. The more insecure you are in regard to your ability to handle pain and the more insecure you are in regard to the ego's sense of protection, identity, and worth, the greater will be the feeling of vulnerability, and the inability to trust. As long as we are convinced that our sense of self is tenuous, we will be afraid that even the slightest attack upon that self could destroy it. Therefore, we will be less likely to trust that other person, meaning that we will be less likely to leave ourselves exposed and vulnerable to the other individual. Hence, the ability to trust is related not only to the other person's proven worthiness to be trusted, but is related even more so to the degree to which we reject, and deem unacceptable, our own feelings of vulnerability. If we are committed to not feeling vulnerable, we will make ourselves perceive faults in the other individual to justify why we should not trust the other individual. Thus, for example, if your girlfriend or boyfriend breaks a date with you at the last minute, do not be too quick to accuse that person of devious intentions. Rather, observe your own thoughts and feelings, and see what kind of harsh things you are saying about your own sense of worth, identity, and security. See if you can trace the origin of those feelings, and perhaps you will discover that the negative self-judgments applied to yourself and to the other are really unwarranted.

In many cases, your feelings of mistrust toward your boyfriend or girlfriend may really be justified at this moment and not really be your own problem. There are some people who deliberately try to create a sense of mistrust in the other individual in order to keep the other person feeling insecure about the relationship. These people believe that you must prevent the other person from trusting you too much and feeling too secure in the relationship because it will lead to their taking you for granted. They deliberately try to keep the other individual feeling "loose" and insecure about the relationship and their feelings toward the other. Sometimes beneath this attitude lies a conviction that the other person

sees the relationship as a form of conquest. They believe that if the other individual finds out that you really care about them, they will either start taking advantage of you or else they will consider the conquest as having been made, and will then turn to another relationship. Operating under this belief, they will deliberately try to make the other person feel jealous or insecure.

Some will try to make the other person feel jealous for a different reason. They believe that the expression of jealousy on the part of the other is a reflection of how much they are loved, which they use as a boost to their insecure sense of worth, as well as using it to enhance their sense of security in the relationship by providing evidence that they are important enough to the other person to arouse feelings of jealousy. Deliberately making the other individual feel insecure and mistrusting is a very dangerous and destructive policy if one is truly serious about building a real and lasting relationship. Playing the game of “hard-to-get,” or making the other person feel jealous, strikes a very serious blow to the sense of security in the relationship, and, therefore, undermines trust. Without that sense of trust, people will feel too vulnerable to give of themselves. This means that you will not only be cheating yourself out of what you really want from the other individual, but even more importantly, it will eventually lead to the termination of the relationship. In a real relationship, some feeling of loyalty, faithfulness, or devotion must exist because without it, no real sense of trust is possible. It should also be noted that the ability to trust another person is directly related to the ability to trust your own feelings. If you cannot trust what you feel, you can never feel certain that what you are feeling about the other is correct. Therefore, you will never be able to trust the other person for fear that your own feelings may be lying to you.

Trust is also related to the need to feel that the other individual is dependable and reliable, especially in times of crisis. You also need to know that the other person is reliable in terms of the promises or commitments that they have

made to you. This permits you to risk and put yourself in vulnerable situations without having to feel overly threatened. For example, if you are under great stress because you have to meet some approaching deadline and require the other's help in order to meet it, you have to feel comfortable that the other person will come through for you, or at least try to do their best for you at those times. If at the last minute, the other person tells you that he/she cannot be available to you after having given his word and promise that he would be available, then lack of trust and feelings of resentment are bound to arise because the other person has contributed to your sense of vulnerability.

Without trust, a real relationship cannot survive. Without trust, you hold yourself back in terms of what you feel free to expose and give to the other person, and that inevitably leads to feelings of separation and resentment. Any time you block aspects of yourself that need to be expressed to the other person, feelings of resentment are the usual consequence. Therefore, if you are really serious about building a real and lasting relationship, all that you can do to invest in helping the other person come to trust you will be sure to pay handsome dividends later in terms of what the other will feel free to give you of themselves and in the psychological growth that will accrue to both of you.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY OF
CHAPTER 1
THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF A REAL
AND LASTING RELATIONSHIP

The primary basis of a real, enduring, and deeply satisfying personal relationship involves relating to the real person, not to the persona or psychosocial “masks” in one another. This involves relating with what is experientially real in oneself, and relating to what is experientially real in one another, rather than imposing predetermined egoistic psychological needs, demanding idealized expectations, and presumptive interpretations on the other person and the relationship, as well as offering the other person artificially contrived, predetermined, psychosocial images and roles. Only by deeply exploring into egoistic psychological needs, commitments, motivations, and perceptions with which oneself, and/or another person to whom one is relating, may be, consciously or subconsciously, identified can those impediments to emotional closeness, trust, unselfish caring, and truthful, open, constructive, good communication in a relationship be overcome. A real relationship also involves unconditionally accepting and empathically tuning in to the whole range of another individual’s being (or living energy presence) and experience, rather than selectively valuing and relating only to partial aspects of the other person that impact the gratification of one’s own perceived needs. People in healthy relationships respect one another’s freedom, natural integrity, and well-being as well as being devoted to psychological growth, including developing greater self-understanding, constructive functioning, and outgrowth of psychologically immature patterns that are antithetical to psychologically healthy, constructive, personal relationships, and psychologically mature responsibility. That is, individuals in healthy

relationships are devoted to growing in what is experientially real and psychologically constructive, while outgrowing false perceptions and psychologically non-constructive ways of relating and functioning. Thus, healthy, real, relationships are psychologically growth-oriented, rather than object-oriented (i.e. relating to the other person as an object or possession to be controlled and manipulated to gratify one's own perceived needs). In healthy relationships, there is a strong investment in reaching out to one another for experiential contact, rather than expecting the other person to bear the whole responsibility for keeping the relationship alive, and being overly self-preoccupied and selfishly demanding. In all of these ways, psychological self-understanding and self-responsibility is the key to developing good communication, unselfish caring, and emotional intimacy in personal relationships.

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