

Chapter One

The New Love Relationship

There is a new love relationship on the horizon. This is not a new person or opportunity for romance. Rather, it is a new way of relating that is changing how men and women view the nature of love and how they express themselves to one another.

What we are expressing as men and women today is the yearning for more depth and satisfaction in our relationships. We are unsure that this level of closeness can be achieved; yet the craving for more pushes us forward in the search. We are seeking physical and emotional intimacy; quality time together; passion; growth, both individually and in the relationship; a deeper sense of love and commitment; and the ability to express oneself fully to a partner and to have him do the same. Couples and singles alike agree—great communication is a *must* for all of their relationships.

Growth and Discovery

Many of us today are in a process of personal growth and discovery. At first, we have an increasing sense that something is missing. We make painful realizations about our partners, our lives together, and ourselves. Sometimes, we lose a love in the process. Gradually, however, each of us learns to understand and validate what we need.

Sometimes, the truth is that we simply need to find someone else, someone who shares our values, who wants what we want. Most often, however, it is an issue of *how we relate to one another*.

We need new ways of looking at love. We need a deeper understanding about what real love is and how to bring that into focus. We are seeking a deeper, more satisfying connection with the person whom we love.

What we want is something new, something beyond the ordinary, *a whole new way of relating*. We are beginning to become aware that there is more available in a love relationship than we have experienced in the past. What we are beginning to visualize is a new model, or new paradigm, of romantic love and man/woman relationships.

The New Model: Soul Partnership

We, the men and women of today, are redefining romantic love, lifetime partnership, and marriage. From this process of redefinition, a new model is emerging, which I call Soul Partnership.

In a nutshell, *Soul Partnership is a connection between equals in which the primary purpose of the relationship is for personal and spiritual growth*. For an increasing number of people, Soul Partnership is replacing the old model of love relationships that has been handed down for generations. As we will see, this is not happening quickly, nor is it an easy process.

We are demanding more than ever before from our relationships. Meanwhile, as this new model of love is evolving, we are struggling to understand how to relate to our romantic partners *now*.

Soul Partnership is an innovative way of relating, and it requires a brand new view of love relationships, their purpose, and the structure for maintaining them.

Soul Partnering is the process of creating and maintaining this dynamic and active new approach to love, encompassing the new model of man/woman relationships, as well as the tools for making it happen.

Soul Partnering is a process that calls us into focused action on a day-to-day basis. To make this transition to Soul Partnership and to maintain that over a lifetime requires powerful, positive, open-hearted communication. I call this way of communicating Soul Talk.

The New Tools: Soul Talk

The key to Soul Partnership is *communication*—the ability to speak from the heart and soul. In essence, Soul Talk is the language of Soul Partnership, designed for creating and sustaining a relationship in this new model of love. For couples, Soul Talk is intended to assist you in opening your hearts and deepening the love connection that you share or to revive the connection that you may have once felt and have now lost. For anyone, Soul Talk is necessary as you incorporate the concepts of Soul Partnership into your life and your love relationships.

Soul Talk is about speaking and listening in some unique ways to one another. It allows two very different individuals to understand one another, resolve conflict, and deepen and enrich the love they share.

Soul Talk combines tried-and-true communication concepts with innovative new distinctions and techniques. With conscientious use, Soul Talk alters the way that we speak and listen to all of our loved ones, especially the one with whom we are most intimate. The learning and practice of Soul Talk changes the course of our lives and our relationships in a much more positive and loving direction. This happens through *understanding certain distinctions* and *utilizing certain ways of interacting*, such as:

The Power of Intentions

Often, the ways we as men and women talk to one another lead to power struggles. Selfish intentions (“I want what I want”), both conscious and unconscious, inhibit the flow of the conversation. This distinction helps shift the focus away from self-centeredness toward the good of the relationship, allowing a much deeper understanding between us.

Creative Communication

Typically, when emotions run high, we communicate as a reaction to our negative feelings. This leads to escalating conflict and painful issues that come up repeatedly with no resolution. Learning to communicate from the most creative and loving part of ourselves allows us to avoid most conflicts before they happen.

Listening Empty

Most of us put our efforts into talking, with each person trying desperately to get across our own point of view. With practice, we can learn how to listen to one another in a unique new way, allowing both points of view to be heard and respected. Listening empty helps us heal our hurts together and resolve our own conflicts. This technique is so powerful that its use can bypass the need for couples' therapy.

Compassionate Listening

When we struggle, we often listen to one another with judgment, causing each to feel invalidated and wounded, and eventually to avoid sharing thoughts and feelings. Using this tool as partners, we learn to break the cycle of communication-avoidance so that we draw closer together, even during difficult times.

Intuitive Listening

Often, we listen to each other to "get the facts," missing the subtle unspoken language of the heart and soul. This technique helps us understand and utilize our intuition when listening to our partner, opening up the relationship to a richer, more loving level of connection.

Speaking to Empower

Most of the time we are unconscious of the power our words hold over one another. Thus, we often speak in ways that leave the other person feeling "one-upped" and emotionally drained. Developing this skill shows us how to esteem one another in every conversation, reinforcing an uplifting connection in all our interactions.

The Healing Apology

An important step in healing the hurts that are a normal part of every relationship, but that usually go unfinished, is apology. As partners, we can learn to make sure they are lovingly resolved and put in the past.

Heart-and-Soul Forgiveness

Not just an intellectual exercise, this skill builds forgiveness that truly dissolves resentment.

Gratitude, Acknowledgment, and Appreciation

Probably the most powerful tool, this one fills the emotional bank account of our relationship to overflowing.

Life Enhancement

I believe these tools offer rewards that go beyond our relationships. The mastery of these skills and the others that follow can take a lifetime. Yet, with them, the journey is one of insight, discovery, and personal enrichment. To become proficient with these tools requires increasing mastery over both mind and emotions. Thus, to learn and practice them enhances both personal and spiritual development for any individual who chooses to follow that path.

In a relationship, the opportunity is to deepen our understanding of one another and manage our conflicts with grace and compassion. The relationship itself naturally becomes clearer as we get better and better at Soul Talk. We gain greater insight into our attraction to one another, the challenges we face to continue our connection, and the healing steps that we must take on our journey through life as Soul Partners.

Soul Talk helps couples determine the appropriate direction for their relationship. Through using these processes, couples take the steps to a conscious Soul Partnership if that is what they choose. The skills help to revive a weakened connection or deepen a strong one.

Soul Talk can help separating couples maintain the threads of what brought them together in the first place. Thus, these tools enable you to move apart gracefully and lovingly, if that is the appropriate step.

Soul Talk paves the way to the new model of love. To see where we are going, we need to revisit where our culture has been with regard to relationships. Let us look first at the old model of love that we are leaving behind and why we are doing so.

Romantic Love: Past and Present

People in prior generations typically chose someone who would help take care of business: raising children, running the farm or family enterprise, providing protection from the dangers of being alone in the world. A loving and growing relationship based on the presumption of equality would never have entered their minds. Love, when it happened, was a bonus.

Couples of earlier generations took a huge risk with their happiness when they chose a life partner. If it worked out, they found a measure of love and companionship, and for many, that was the case. For many more, it was not. Regardless of what they found in their marriages, they accepted it. There were few other options available.

Staying together, regardless of the quality of the connection, became the top priority. Being happy together was a much lower priority.

Transition into New Values

Our view of relationships and their purpose has changed. It is no longer enough just to get along, to function as a family unit, or to handle the business of survival. If that is all there is, we eventually become restless and dissatisfied.

Some say that the frequency of broken romances and split marriages is a sign of disaster, that it is evidence of the loss of the family values that have built our culture. Perhaps there is some truth in that idea, but I firmly believe there is a higher truth at work in all of this heartache.

As human beings, we are in transition, and thus, so are our relationships. Our focus is shifting away from the basics of survival and toward one of enlightenment. We are centering our lives today on new values, such as the realization of our potential as human beings and spiritual and personal growth. These are concepts that would have bewildered previous generations. Indeed, they are concepts with which we are just beginning to grapple and about which we have an incomplete understanding.

The majority of us today are searching for a special kind of partnership that endures, not because it *should*, but because we want it to. We do not *need* our relationships, at least in the sense that previous generations did. We *want*

romantic love with a special partner, but we can survive very well without it. Thus, our priorities are shifting from love relationships as necessity to *love relationships by choice*. We are moving toward something much better, toward relationships for the right reasons that serve a higher purpose.

An Evolution of Love

Love relationships today barely resemble the ones of yesterday. What many of us saw in our parents' marriages contrasts strikingly with our own ideal vision of love. Our parents were "role bound" in their relationship. They fulfilled certain functions together and they followed certain unwritten rules. Mom kept the house in order, cared for the children, and cooked the meals, while Dad worked outside the home. They rarely displayed affection for one another and they conversed mainly about the necessities.

Neither spoke about wanting more from their relationship, nor did they model open, honest communication. They seemed content to live with what they had created together. We, however, want very different things out of marriage.

One recent article revealed that 75 percent of college women surveyed in 1965 said that they would marry a man they did not love if he met other criteria. Not anymore. A recent Rutgers University study found 94 percent of people between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine agreed with the statement: "When you marry, you want your spouse to be your soul mate, first and foremost."¹

This is a huge shift in a new direction for love relationships, and it is not just by happenstance. It is a reflection of our changing needs as human beings. More importantly, it is a representation of the power of the human potential movement over the last fifty years.

Self-Help and Love Relationships

The human potential movement is, in a nutshell, the study of what it means to be a self-actualizing human being. In the past few decades, this study has moved outside of the exclusive inner circle of scholars, theologians, scientists, and philosophers—once an inaccessible domain for most people—and into the mainstream of society. Today, most of us read self-help books, attend

workshops, and even watch television shows that explore human nature and help us understand ourselves.

Because of this “mainstreaming” of the human potential movement, our growing knowledge of human psychology and emotional make-up is now accessible to the average person. Most of us have made some degree of informal study of romantic love and the dynamics between men and women. Terms such as *intimacy*, *commitment*, *codependency*, and *significant other* are now part of the everyday lexicon.

Psychotherapy is no longer exclusively for the mentally ill or hopelessly neurotic; it is almost a necessity of modern life. It is also the place where many have discovered the world of self-help and personal growth. This is a very recent phenomenon in our history as human beings. The relationship concepts and terminology that we casually converse about today would have been considered a foreign language just two generations ago.

What have we learned so far? About love, we have learned a great deal. We now know that *equality within a relationship is imperative*. Healthy love is only available once we acknowledge the other person as a peer and equal. We also recognize that *there are differences between us that need to be honored*. Though we are equal, we are not alike—a distinction that allows us to accept one another as unique beings of differing genders.

The awareness of these basic realities between men and women has given us a better foundation upon which to build our love relationships. Certainly, the opportunity to love and accept one another has been enhanced through this self-help and study. Yet, despite all of the knowledge gained, our ability to actually relate well to one another has far to go.

Ironically, in the age of global communication, we seem unable to talk meaningfully in our personal relationships. We exchange voice mail and email, but stumble through face-to-face conversations. With our romantic partners, we are struggling to learn new ways to connect that will take us to the next level in our quest for fulfilling relationships.

The next level of understanding needed is to examine the deeper purposes served by our attraction to one another and our presence in each other's lives. This new level of study will lead us directly to the concept and the practice of Soul Partnering. We need to then take these new concepts into our daily behaviors

and methods of communication so that love is deepened, fulfilling, even uplifting, and then lifetime relationships become a possibility.

Our world has changed, and with those changes come new choices. We rarely take time to realize how much freedom modern conveniences give us; yet once we do, we then must make a choice about what to do with the time and energy we are afforded. Do we utilize the extra time and energy to zoom forward into a fast-paced day to pursue more goals that drive us to an even faster pace so that we can accumulate even more money and possessions? Do we fall into bed exhausted and depleted at the end of the day, only to rise the next and do it all over again? This cycle, we realize, brings us no closer to inner peace and satisfaction.

Instead, we can choose to gratefully acknowledge the gift of those extra minutes and energy, stopping each day to focus inward, perhaps to meditate, pray, read, or practice some sort of spiritual exercise, with the intention to forward the growth of our spirit.

Increasing numbers of people are making these practices a part of everyday life. We are experiencing the desire for, indeed the necessity of, that which promotes inner peace, personal growth, and spiritual direction. We are choosing the path of spiritual enlightenment in addition to participating in the world in much the same way that others do. Yes, we have cell phones and email, but we also endeavor to balance a progressive lifestyle with the quest for personal growth and inner fulfillment.

Most of all, we want to know that our lives have meaning, that we are growing emotionally and spiritually. Our development is therefore directing itself to the exploration of what it means to be a human being on a spiritual journey. We are seeking out the next, and perhaps last, great frontier—the evolution of the human spirit.

Spiritual Evolution and Romantic Love

The quest for self-actualization and spiritual enlightenment is affecting our relationships. We are departing from the patterns of previous generations that married for life, regardless of the degree of happiness and fulfillment. We are no longer willing to remain in abusive, draining, stale, or unloving relationships just because it seems like the right thing to do.

As we seek greater inner peace and as we engage in a process of personal growth, we naturally expand that energy to our closest relationships. Thus, the desire for a better, more loving relationship is a direct and natural outgrowth of the quest for spiritual and personal enlightenment.

Our quest is worthwhile, yet not easy. We must honor our search for personal and spiritual growth while also learning how to honor our relationships. The challenge before us is to explore fresh relationship concepts, create new ways of speaking about them, and adopt more empowering ways of communicating with one another.

Because the old relationship rules and roles are being abandoned, everything is tossed up into the air; *nothing can be assumed*. Virtually everything must be discussed and sorted out between us. Thus, our need for better ways to communicate and relate has grown tremendously as a result of the shift away from the old model of love.

Embracing the Challenge

Exploring these new concepts is potentially stressful for a relationship. The temptation is to look at your partner and offer advice, rather than to look inward. It works best, however, to use these ideas for your own growth and then bring that to the relationship to support and uplift one another.

As you read, focus primarily on your own learning, on the way that you communicate and interact with your partner. Endeavor to open your heart to your partner, communicate your loving intentions, and trust that process to reveal to you both over time the true direction of your relationship. In this way, you set the stage for the possibility of Soul Partnering. Keep in mind that, for most of us, Soul Partnership is a *possibility*, something toward which we are aiming.

This framework is intended to provide enlightenment about the general direction in which we are all moving in love relationships, conscious of it or not. By focusing mainly on learning and practicing Soul Talk in your relationship, the rest will naturally unfold.