



***7 Steps to Enhance Your
Relationship Now***

with
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7 Steps To Enhance Your Relationship Now

Relationships, it seems, make us grow the most. I wish that every high school senior were taught emotional intelligence and management, relationship communication skills, and how to choose a relationship well. Unfortunately, we don't come away from high school with knowing who would fit well with us, how to communicate effectively, or what to do with hard emotions as they get stirred up because of discord. We're left to bumble our way through as best we can, and I'm sure we can all recount numerous, and perhaps some hilarious and some disastrous ways, we've fumbled in our bumbling! In relationships, though, I believe we are too prone to throw in the towel when we might actually have a great foundation to build on. This e-book is designed to help your relationship grow, or to help you get back on track if you're in bumbling mode!

Put into practice, these steps will help you enhance or improve your relationship no matter if your connection is strong now, or you are disconnected. These steps will serve to make your connection stronger.

Learning how to love someone over a long period of time takes hard work, and what we put into our relationship is what we get back. That is true in life and in relationships.

What we give out is what we get back.

Step One: Train your mind to help you hold positive emotions every day, even in the face of adversity.

Gratitude and generosity of spirit always wins.

Why is this so?

The world is made of energy, including you, and all energy has a vibration.

Case in point: You've been asked at sometime in your life, no doubt, to look around any object-bed, desk, chair, anything...to see a white glow, or aura, that everything emits. The same is true for you.

Within us, emotion is vibration, too.

To illustrate, I often give an example from my piano lesson days to show my clients how this is true. Two tuning forks help demonstrate the fact of life that everything is vibration. Here's how it works: Strike one tuning fork to get it vibrating and emitting a sound. Next without striking the other tuning fork, simply hold the un-struck tuning fork up in front of, and a short distance away from the first tuning fork, and the un-struck tuning fork will begin to vibrate at the same rate as the first one, and emit the same sound.

The same is true for us as we experience any emotion. We are being a tuning fork to those with whom we come in contact. For example, have you ever been in your car and feeling great and then someone comes along in their car, in a bad mood, and some untoward move on your part that doesn't even cause an accident causes the other person to exhibit rage? Their vibration, or what they gave out to you in that moment might have caused you to react the same way.

It's certainly happened to me. I find myself later wondering how I went from being calm and happy to upset and how someone could be so unkind! But really, I have control of keeping myself calm, happy, and relaxed even in the face of such rudeness. It's a matter of practicing that every day. It takes time to develop. You'll be amazed with the results if you play around with this concept with anyone with whom you come in contact.

With your partner or spouse, negative interaction causes further negative interaction until one of you can muster the wherewithal to give out positive emotion. This leads to step one.

Practice calmness and curiosity even in the face of challenging times in all situations in life. Findings from neuroscience research show that when we are able to access calmness we are also able to feel a greater sense of clarity. By holding onto calmness and curiosity, not only are we being the positive vibration in the interaction with others, but we are also able to solve problems with more clarity.

With your partner, develop a signal, such as time out, to use when you get flooded with emotion in an argument. Agree to wait until you both are feeling calmer before you resume your discussion. Try to enter into the discussion feeling a generosity of spirit toward the other person. Listen to understand and not just use the time while your partner speaks to try to come up with your next point in the argument to get your point across.

Repeat that strategy as often as is needed to move through the discussion to both people's satisfaction. Make definite appointment times with each other, and respect that commitment to be available to each other until each has reached a level of satisfaction with the issue. If no resolution is forthcoming, don't wait to get help from a professional. Most people wait until one or the other is "out the door", so to speak. At that point, sometimes it is hard to establish a re-commitment to work through issues. You just both need to learn to how to be different with each other.

Step Two: Show Appreciation for Each Other.

Love is not about how much you say 'I Love You' but how much you can prove that it's true.

Appreciation will deepen your bond.

Putting your spouse or partner first for consideration will instigate a sacred reciprocal response.

Native Americans have a term they call--"sacred reciprocity". For them, never taking without giving back and showing thanks is an abundant way to live. Abundance is returned through appreciation. They use the knowledge of energy exchange to increase their happiness. I heard a Native American person say once, "I'm not generous because I am selfless! I'm generous because I'm selfish! I want to have more abundance, so I give back."

Focusing on, and being liberal in your generosity of spirit or appreciation for your partner will cause a reaction within them to want to give back to you on many levels.

No one can be for us 100% what we need, or provide everything we need. Our needs are all different. Therefore, we have to be willing to admit that fact, and find ways to get some of our own needs met. Moreover, our partner may not have a temperament to provide some needs, and we fantasize how we "wish" they were instead. For example, if your spouse is, say, a helper type, and not a more aggressive type it isn't fair to expect them to be the one to go out to find social connection for the partnership. So instead of focusing on what your partner is not, try bringing forth that generosity of spirit and appreciation for who they truly are, what you loved about them initially, and take charge of developing your own social connections. Your relationship will grow in other satisfying and fulfilling ways.

Even small ways of showing appreciation will yield big results.

Does your spouse get your coffee each morning? Try saying something regularly like: "*You know I just have to tell you that I feel so {special, cared for, important, etc.} that you get up early to make the coffee! Thank you so much for being so kind!*"

Respectful communication is part of showing appreciation. In your communications, begin to have the intention of listening in order to get to know the inner world of your spouse or partner. When we feel understood, our loving feelings for the other are increased. Often we get frustrated in heated arguments and just try to get our next point ready instead of listening to understand.

Use paraphrasing to reflect back in your partners own words what they said to you to let your loved one know you're hearing them, and care about understanding what they are trying to convey. For example, these words would be useful: "I heard you say _____. Did I get it right? What did I miss or leave out?" Repeat until each has had their say and feel understood.

A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst and it sparks extraordinary results. Wade Boggs

STEP THREE: Practice Extreme Self-Care.

"You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe deserve your love and affection."

— [Gautama Buddha](#)

Often I see couples who have not scheduled time to give to themselves in ways that are basic to the spirit. Everyone needs to feel filled up with energy; otherwise, you won't really have energy or enthusiasm to give out to others. When you're drained is when doing for others feels like giving from a place of obligation and resentment versus giving from a place of joy and generosity.

To illustrate this I think of passengers who are told by the airline attendant that if the cabin pressure drops and the air masks fall down during flight, and you have children, you must put *your* mask on first. If you don't you won't be able to be there to put it on your child.

It is your birthright to feel calm, happy, relaxed, and full of joyful energy.

What do you need in terms of play, rest, time out, or creativity? This is not being selfish it is being wise. Because in terms of self-care, what is good for you will be good for the relationship. Both of you need to plan time to get this in your life. Support each other in getting it. That is another way your generosity of spirit can come into play for your partner.

The exploration of whether self-care is present in my couples' lives and helping them explore ways to get it and support each other in maintaining it on an ongoing basis has been a factor that has turned some relationships around. They are often simply too stressed out, tired, and bereft of any kind of life of their own to want to continue in the relationship. Shared custody

begins to look like a more attractive way to live because at least they would have some time of their own.

Even busy parents need to be developing themselves personally outside the roles of mother and father.

STEP FOUR: Find ways to get more fun in your life together.

Give yourself permission to have fun. Shared fun is a bonding energy that carries you through hard times.

There is an old idea in the couples therapy field that there is an invisible love bank present in relationships. All fun bonding experiences shared go into this invisible love bank, which carries the relationship through hard times. However, it only takes a few negative events to cause huge withdrawals to the love bank. Therefore, couples need to be diligent in adding the fun bonding energy to the love bank regularly.

Sex is among events included in deposits to the invisible love bank. If your sex life has waned, first remember your sex life, or love making, is really just a form of play! So the more you play outside the bedroom, the more it will be easy to play inside the bedroom! There are many books on the market for helping get play started in the bedroom. One I often refer couples to is: "100 Nights of Grrreat Sex: Secret Sealed Seductions for Fun Loving Couples" by Laura Corn. It is designed for you to take turns with the suggestions offered, and *you can just skip over anything you feel uncomfortable doing.*

Any event that is bonding goes into the love bank. From my perspective, both of you are 100% responsible for helping the love bank get filled, so taking turns or being pro-active with helping come up with how to fill the love bank is shared responsibility. Make it fun though, not a chore.

If you move into the space of feeling like it is a chore to come up with ways to have fun, you're probably needing to go back to step three!

STEP 5: GIVE LITTLE SURPRISES TO YOUR PARTNER OR SPOUSE

In his book, "The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts", Gary Chapman introduces the concept of all humans preferring a certain style of expression or demonstration of love that is as unique to each person as thumbprints. This is developed in us out of our past

experience, fantasies, and expectations. Couples will likely have a different love language preference.

Learn what your partner's love language is, and practice generosity of spirit in making him/her happy with little surprises. In the South, we call these little unexpected surprises "sercies". Every once in a while strawberries will show up in my kitchen. My husband knows how much I love them, but he doesn't particularly care for strawberries. When this happens, I know he's had to have been thinking about me. In turn I know he took time, I feel important, cared for, special and happy. It makes me want to do more for him, give him more, and keep that "sacred reciprocity" flowing between us. Everyone wants to be thought about during the day other than face-to-face time.

It has occurred more than once that I had a couple in my consulting room and the husband will look at his wife and say: "I can't imagine how you can think I don't love you! I wash your car all the time!" What is happening here is the husband is telling his wife, unknowingly, that his love language is acts of service. In other words, what registers with him inside, in his heart, is any act of service done for him. So, I look at the wife and say, "Maybe you want to wash his car sometimes."

The small surprises that matter most to people are ones that don't cost much.

It doesn't cost much to spread a picnic in the living room floor with candles and a glass of wine on a rainy day. It says to your spouse or partner, "You are worth the time it takes me to do this for you!"

Thus far, you may have noticed the fact that learning how to create the relationship of your dreams requires you to be open to change, teachable by your partner, and trainable. It also requires a diligence in learning how to be different with each other over time. These are much easier to attain if you know you have others in your life who "have your back" so to speak.

This leads to Step 6.

Step 6: Develop a social network of people who are supportive of your relationship becoming and remaining vibrant. Have at least three people you can trust to call on for support.

Find others who share your philosophy of developing a loving, supportive relationship over time. Notice I didn't say "over the long haul". To me, those words seem to have a heaviness indicating a chore is involved, or a burden is present to have to carry. Hopefully, when you decided to commit to each other you had the attitude and emotions of hope, joy, optimism, and commitment. Tap into those emotions and attitude and develop a community of others

who share that perspective to inspire you, to encourage you, to be there for you, and offer support when things between you are not ideal. Call on them and ask for encouragement during hard times. Of course, there is always clergy, and therapists who can offer professional support.

Spiritual communities are ideal for developing this type of support system, and can offer an outlet for developing a spiritual life together, which will serve to draw you closer as well.

Just knowing there are others who want you to make it long term will add to your sense of hope, commitment, and joy.

Step 7: Know your purpose in life, and develop ways to live it more deeply into the world.

"There is nothing so rewarding as to make people realize that they are worthwhile in this world." -Bob Anderson

Studies conducted by Barbara Fredrickson, Professor of psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, along with her colleagues in the department of psychiatry in the School of Medicine, show that people who know their purpose in life feel more fulfilled, and live more passionately than people who seek simple gratification.

A large number of parents in my practice have shared that they aspire to raise well-rounded, socially acceptable, and optimistic kids when their children are very young. Then as the children grow, and the routines have become set of going to work, helping kids with homework, and just trying to keep the household running the feelings of inspiration and enthusiasm wane. It slowly dawns on them that they have confused the role of mother or father with their purpose in life. Perhaps they have taken some meaningless job just to help keep the coffers stoked to support family, and the drudgery takes its toll. Stress overtakes any hope of having a life of your own, or fun in your life again, and pessimism sets in.

Another scenario that plays out is one of the childless couple who have acquired career positions they chose based on someone else's dream (perhaps encouraged by mother or father), or fact that a particular career will bring in an elevated salary. They work long hours (I've often heard 60 hours, especially during the economic downturn), spending most hours at work and have little time for self-care or time for the relationship.

These two scenarios illustrate how your relationship can become at risk for affairs, divorce, and becoming another statistic.

You were made for a reason.

You were made to be cherished, seen, heard, understood, and valued. You were meant to be known by some segment of the world for your unique talents and strengths. No one has your same blueprint, perspectives, abilities, and inner resources. We (the rest of the world) need you to figure out what your Divine Purpose is so that our world will be enhanced by it.

Here is, perhaps, the most important take away from this E-Book, because it is the factor that will bond you on the deepest level.

When you decide to and take action toward living into your Divine Purpose, and allow your spouse or partner to support you in becoming more of who you really are, your relationship will find a joy that establishes a bond that few circumstances, or other people can break.

Giving out of generosity of spirit to each other in this way causes a higher level of happiness on an ongoing basis because life takes on a deeper sense of meaning. In relationships, according to John Gottman, Ph.D, and based on his twenty years of relationship research, when we creatively find ways to support each other in developing a life of shared meaning it causes a strengthening of the relationship, and a turning toward one another during times of conflict.

Finding and living your purpose, while most satisfying, does come with a price. Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate how balanced your life is, how much meaning it has for you, and determine if it is time for a shift. Often times when life is out of balance and we are not living our purpose, we project our unhappiness onto our partner or relationship. We mistakenly believe we need to change people in our lives, when what needs to happen most is to listen to what our own hearts are trying to tell us about our own inner life. Perhaps it's time to let go of the high salary, or big car for more fun and engaged living.

How do you find shared meaning? Talk about your ideals and aspirations. Share what you dreamed of becoming as a child. Go to keirse.com and take a free personality test. Once you have your type, Google it, and discover that it will reveal some of your strengths as expressed in your temperament. Ask people who have known you a long time what strengths they see in you. Find and read books together on the subject of finding your purpose in life.

See reading list for recommendations.

Conclusion

Make a contract with each other to commit to taking these steps together now. Talk about each one together, and listen with the ears of your heart to how this information sits with your partner or spouse. Commit to learning to be different with each other, knowing you'll need to cut not only your loved one some slack, but cut yourself some slack in the learning process. Plan for mishaps and setbacks, and when these happen revisit this information and re-commit. A lasting relationship is built on a theme of renewal, regeneration, and recommitment. It takes engaging creativity with a joyful heart and hope for the future, and a willingness to take responsibility for past mistakes. Forgive your partner for those, and yourself, knowing this is all part of the journey together. After all, this is what love is all about.

I'm picturing you with your backs together looking out onto the world with a renewed sense of purpose for yourselves and your relationship. I wish you lots of love, peace, and joy!

Many Blessings!

Karen Pierce, LCSW

Recommended List of Books

"You Are The One You've Been Waiting For" Richard Schwartz, Ph.D

"The Untethered Soul" Michael Singer

"The Relationship Cure" John M Gottman, Ph.D.

"10 Lessons to Transform Your Marriage" John Gottman, Ph.D.

"The Life You Were Born to Live: A Guide to Finding Your Life Purpose" - Dan Millman

"100 Nights of Great Sex: Secret Sealed Seductions for Fun Loving Couples" Laura Corn

"The Five Love Languages" Gary Chapman

About the Author



A native of North Carolina, Karen graduated with honors from Queens University in Charlotte North Carolina, and received her Masters in Social Work from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a concentration in clinical mental health. She holds certifications in Family Mediation, the Internal Family Systems model of psychotherapy, and facilitating the Enneagram Model of Transformation. She has also served in helping teach other therapists in the role of Assistant Trainer for the Center for Self Leadership in Chicago, Illinois. Her writing has been featured in Today's Charlotte Woman magazine, and she has been hosted on National Public Radio.

With over 15 years of experience, as described by her clients, Karen's style is compassionate, educational, and interactive. She works to draw out the inner strengths and resources of her clients. She enjoys working with adults on issues that include couples and relationship, anxiety, depression, life transitions, career counseling, spirituality, dream work, men's issues, women's issues, grief, and more.

Riding horseback, hiking, playing with her two dogs, and gardening with her husband of 23 years are activities Karen pursues when not working. Her avocation is studying cross-cultural healing practices of indigenous peoples, and creation spirituality.

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