

# MODULE TWO - ADJUSTMENT

## STAGE RE-BUILDING SEVEN

### **SELF-CONCEPT From Feeling Bad to Knowing I am Worthy**

It is OK to feel good about yourself. You can learn to feel better about yourself and gain strength to help you adjust better to a crisis in your life. As you successfully adjust to this crisis, you will feel even better about yourself. For some people it as if they are experiencing a personal identify crisis, you may be seriously creating strains on your current relationship now with friends and also in the future.

When I was a child, my father continually warned me about getting a 'big head' and becoming 'stuck on myself.' Then I went to church and learned that I had been born sinful. At school it was big boys and those with all the brains who got all the attention. Finally I married so there would be someone who thought I was worthwhile. It made me feel good that someone cared. But then she started to point out my faults to me. I finally reached a point where I began to believe I was truly worthless. It was then that I decided to leave the marriage. Carl.

Your self concept is the skeleton which support your personality. Here we can see that when the self-concept becomes fractured, the whole personality begins to fragment.

Apparently we learn much of how we feel about ourselves at an early age from the significant people around us including our parents as well as siblings, relatives and teachers. This basic level of self-concept is later influenced by our peers especially during our impressionable

teenage years. You can read more about this process in the articles section of my main website. As an adult your partner becomes a primary source of validation and feedback and greatly affects your feelings of self-worth.

Many relationships that end in separation developed a pattern of interaction which was destructive to the self-concept of both parties. In fact some become so destructive that the people may not be able to end the relationship due to feelings of worthlessness (I shall be covering this later in terms of dependent relationship structures).

For example the battered wife thinks that she deserves the emotional and physical abuse. She is unable to leave the relationship because she does not believe she would make it on her own. Many people have suffered the erosion of their self-concept in bad relationships before and may consequently seek relief in separation and ending the current relationship but only when they realise, on reflection, how this was a positive step to take.

However for many, until they realise this all important fact, the paradox is that when the physical separation comes and the relationship ends, self-concept hits an all-time low. When the relationship 'fails' the identity suffers.

Studies have shown that people with a good self-concept were better able to adjust to end of a relationship and this research endorses what common sense tells us: a good self-concept makes adjustment to a crisis in our life easier. During this period it is reassuring to know that your concepts about self can be enhanced because we can see this as period where we can relearn, grow and change.

**Step One** seems obvious but often understated. You must make the decision to change and to find that inner source of emotional energy which can be called a soul, a psychological ego or a life force connection to do this. Everything in our life is often affected: our work, relationships with other people; the way you parent your children; your choices about a future partner and most of all the way we feel about ourselves.

Enormous changes may occur in your personality as you improve your concept of self. The decision is the first and perhaps the most difficult step but if your commitment is firm then the steps that you follow become easier to explore and integrate into your day to day life.

**Step two** is to change the way we look at ourselves. For example most people can easily list say twenty things they do not like about themselves so now we need to list twenty things we do like about ourselves. Easy? Go ahead and spend five minutes with pen and paper. During the seminars I have run over the last twenty years many said 'how about two things I like about myself instead of twenty?'

I once received a phone call late at night from one of the seminar members and there were groans and comments such as 'Steve, when I came home from teaching at the school earlier this evening and started the list of things I like about myself it took me an hour to come up with the first one. It took almost that long for the second one and now it is 10.30pm and I only have five things on my list!' Clearly this was the most important homework in the ten week seminar for this person and given this is such an important task so take time to do it so you can complete the list and move on to.

**Step three** which is to say positive things about yourself aloud to others. Good things may be easier to write to ourselves privately than to say out loud. All the old messages inside our head start with 'Don't act stuck up and conceited!' Work hard at ignoring such messages and take your list and share with a good friend. Get the courage in place to break this negative pattern and realise that it is normal to make good comments about yourself. However it does take courage to say them out loud.

Often the reason for this anxiety is that the voice, what I term the internal critical parent, links to statements directly or indirectly made to you during your formative stages of childhood and teenage years. In one seminar Charlie said that he could not do step two because his parents had told him 'not to get a big head'. He was a good athlete in school and the exercises could have helped him build confidence in himself but the parent voices were louder and he had learned to be 'humble'.

As an adult he could not say good things about himself because he still felt his parent's voice in his mind. The statement may sound ridiculous to you but it certainly was not to Charlie

**Step four** is a tough one for many: re-examine your relationships with others, and make changes which will help you break destructive patterns and develop a new you.

Much of your self concept is validated by feedback from others. Which of your relationships, be they friendships, family relationships, work relationships are constructive and which are negative? (Take a look at the articles I have written on Life Transitions to learn more about the

key dynamics.) Changing your relationships may be very difficult due to our tendency to follow old patterns and find relationships that reinforce your present level of self-concept. But I believe that if you sincerely want to feel better about yourself, you will need to invest in positive relationships and those are the ones where they help you feel good about being you.

**Step five** get rid of the negative self-thoughts in your head. We all hear messages in our head - nurturing and critical parent to use terms I work with from Transactional Analysis and these voices can be from our parents, significant adults during our formative years such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers, such as 'be careful and don't let success go to your head. Remember it is wrong to be conceited and selfish. You think you're so clever, don't you?'

Such messages are destructive and prevent you from improving your concept of self. They were originally designed to discipline and control but unfortunately for many they turn out be neither helpful nor productive in our adult life. As adults we can make the decision to choose whether we want to continue to listen to such messages. In transactional analysis we take these messages from your parent or child and analyse them with your adult to see if they are rational and appropriate messages at this time in your **ADULT life**. Then we hold on to accurate valued statements and dispel inappropriate messages and beliefs.

We will work on these feelings so write or record some of these messages so you can work with me on preventing them controlling your current and future life.

**Step six** may sound like a stupid activity but it worked well for Jane in a seminar. I suggest that you write positive notes to yourself and pin them up around a private space in your home. Notes that compliment or reflect positive things about you. A week later at the seminar discussion she reported how this exercise grew to 100 notes to herself, even placing one on the toilet! She became a different person, herself concept improved one hundred fold and so writing notes to herself appeared to make the difference. Such a dramatic change is rare but shows the power of active effect.

**Step seven** is to open yourself up to hearing positive comments from others. People tend to hear only what they want to hear. If you have a low self-concept, you will hear only negative comments that people make. When someone praises you, you deny it; you ignore it, or rationalise it by saying 'Oh, they're just saying that but they don't really mean it.'

Some people protect themselves from positive comments because their basic self-concept says that positive comments don't fit with their view of themselves. So the next time someone praises you or compliments you then try to let the compliment soak in rather than defending yourself against hearing it. When you can hear positive comments then you will feel better about yourself.

**Step eight** Make a specific change in your behaviour. Determine a part of your personality which you want to change. Maybe you would like to say 'hello' to more people or to be on time for work or to stop putting off small jobs. Decide to change the chosen behaviour every day for a week.

Make the change easy so that you can accomplish it and feel a measure of regular success. In essence do not set yourself up for failure by deciding to make an impossibly big change in the first week. Perhaps you will want to write out your progress on a calendar to reward yourself each day and then at the end of the week you can look back and realise what you have practically accomplished. The first week is step one the second week is step two which focuses on another small change and so after a few weeks you will notice significant changes in improving your self concept.

**Step nine** is great fun and I practice it all the time. Give and get more hugs! Break through the isolation which has grown around you and a warm, meaningful hug from a friend reinforces far than spoken words can. A hug heals us and improves our self-concept more rapidly and it frees us, makes us warm inside and immediately improves feelings of self-worth.

**Step ten** suggests you work hard at meaningful communication with another person. Some of the most significant growth people were able to experience after the ending of a relationship was whilst communicating with friends. So ask for and give honest feedback about each other and say things that you have never said to anyone before.

**Step eleven** has to do with therapy. As we work together we create a safe space and guidance from someone like me who has over thirty five years professional experience shortens the time it takes to change your self concept. Thankfully now, in 2014 as I write, therapy does not have the stigma that it once did when I started out at the beginning of 1980

because most therapy now is personal growth whereas in the past therapy usually meant mental illness.

As we work at these exercises we are focusing on losing the poor view you have at present of yourself as this rebuilding block will probably affect more aspects of your life than any of the others in the rebuilding programme.

Please give yourself adequate time to deal with this important area. When you are comfortable with most of these items you have moved through to the next stage of rebuilding. **CHECKLIST** So for our next session we will focus on the following to discuss and explore.

1. I am willing to work hard to improve myself concept.
2. I want to improve myself concept even though I understand that it will change many aspects of life.
3. I like being the person I am,
4. I feel I am an attractive person.
5. I like my body.
6. I feel attractive and sexually desirable.
7. I feel confident most of the time.
8. I know and understand myself.
9. I no longer feel like a failure because my relationship has ended.
10. I feel capable of building deep and meaningful relationships.
11. I am the type of person I would like to have for a friend.
12. I am attempting to improve myself concept by using the 11 steps listed in this section of the rebuilding programme.
13. I feel what I have to say is important to others.
14. I feel I have an identity of my own.
15. I have hope and faith that I can improve myself concept.



16. I'm confident that I can solve the problems facing me.
17. I am confident that I can adjust to this crisis in my life.
18. I can listen to criticism without becoming angry and defensive.

## STAGE RE-BUILDING EIGHT

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### FRIENDSHIPS: Where Has Everybody Gone?

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The support you receive from friends is very important and can shorten the time it takes to adjust to life transitions. Friends are more valuable than your former partner at this point in the rebuilding process. You can develop friends of both sexes without becoming romantically or sexually involved with them however ending a relationship is threatening to many who are in a relationship so some may slip away from you at this point in time.

Maria and I had lots of friends and family around all the time. Most weekends we'd have dinner parties or go over to her sister's place, or meet locally with two or three other couples. Since we split up, none of those people ever call me or drop by. How come married people don't seem to want us around when we are single? Paul

When we go through the process of separation some people insist on being on their own. They tend to withdraw and feel uncomfortable being around people. Then you will notice others who are continually clinging to other people as though they cannot be alone for a single minute. Always walking arm in arm they plan ahead so that they have do not have part of the journey to walk by themselves.

There are four common reasons why we separate from those friends we had when we were in a relationship:

**Number one** is that when we are ending a relationship you suddenly become more eligible as a future partner and may be viewed as a

possible partner for one of the people in another relationship. So whereas you were formerly invited to all the parties as a couple because you were safe, now you are single you can be seen as a threat. Suddenly people are looking at you as eligible and invitations to certain friend's parties diminish accordingly.

**The second reason** we tend to lose friends is for some people those who have ended their relationship create a very polarising situation for others. Friends tend to support one or other partners thus we tend to lose the friends who have sided with our former partner.

**The third reason** is probably the most important: the fear that 'If it can happen to you, it can happen to me' so the ending of your relationship is very threatening to many relationships around you and the basis why many such 'friends' appear to slip away. Although you may be feeling rejected quite honestly it is their problem and a reflection on them rather than on you. So, instead of feeling rejected understand that the ending of your relationship has caused them to feel very insecure.

**The fourth aspect** of friendship which is important to understand while you are going through ending your relationship and rebuilding is that people in committed loving relationships are considered to be part of mainstream, accepted couple orientated society and separated people become part of the single subculture, a part of society which is less acceptable to many. So to be pushed out of the acceptable mainstream culture into the 'questionable' singles subculture is a difficult adjustment.

As you begin the rebuilding work on friendships you will find that there is a three stage process involved.

**The first stage** when you are hurt, lonely and depressed is that you avoid friends unless it is very safe to be with them.

**The second stage** begins when you can at last take the risk of reaching out to people even though the fear or rejection is still hanging around.

**The third stage** is becoming comfortable with people finding out that you are single and beginning to enjoy people without the fear of being rejected.

Experience shows that it is important not to become involved in another long term, committed relationship until you have emotionally worked through the ending of the previous relationship. Becoming involved too soon results in carrying the unresolved emotional issues for the past to the current relationship. A healthy process might be described as 'learning to be a single person because many people never learned to be independent of individuals before they entered a committed relationship'. So if you haven't learned to be a single person it is quite easy to hide in another relationship. Why, because your emotional needs are great when you end a relationship and so the comfort of another relationship is appealing. Nevertheless there is the truth in the paradox that when you are ready to face life alone then you are ready to enter a relationship.

Sometimes it is hard to tell whether your current relationship situation is limiting personal growth. The best criterion might be to ask 'Am I learning to be a single person?' If you feel you are losing your identity because of your friendship then you probably need to back off from it.

It is possible to develop a close, nonsexual, non-romantic friendship with another person male or female. This may be the way it happens for

you: you tentatively make friends, but you are very cautious because of your fears of closeness and intimacy. The friendship becomes important, and you suddenly realise that you want very badly to maintain this friendship because it feels so good.

You have a feeling down inside somewhere that if the quality of this friendship changes to a romantic, sexual one, it will be less meaningful, and it will become not so special anymore. Then you realise that you want to invest emotionally so that it will continue to grow. Such a friendship brings a free and exhilarating feeling. It also destroys the myth about never becoming a friend with someone be they of the opposite or same sex.

While you are working to develop new friendships you may also be hearing a barrage of negative comments about committed relationships in the singles subculture. There are people who rant and rave and shout from the hilltops that they will never get trapped into being a partner again. They compile long lists of all the painful and negative aspects of committed relationships. And if there is someone who decides to enter a new relationship, they even send cards of sympathy to the couple!!! You need to realise people are threatened by relationships as some people are threatened by ending them. Perhaps a bad relationship led to feelings that they could never have a happy future relationship, so they project their unhappy biases about committed relationships on to others.

I admit that there are a lot of unhappy people in relationships as there are a lot of unhappy single people but I think that this is due to the individual personalities. Some people will be unhappy wherever they are and the nature of the relationship situation has little to do with it.

Building a support system of close friends will shorten the time it takes you to adjust the ending of your relationship. We all need friends who can throw us a life line when we feel like we are downing. A friend who we can talk with is a real 'life saver' during a crisis. If you have not developed such a support system, then you need to start doing so.

**Checklist** to assess your progress with friendships in order to prepare for our session. Remember that friendships do not just happen - like anything worthwhile, it takes continuous effort.

1. I am relating with friends in many new ways since the ending of my relationship.
2. I have at least one close friend.
3. I am satisfied with my present social relationships.
4. I have close friend who know and understand me.
5. People seem to enjoy being with me.
6. I have both single and married friends.
7. I have discussed ideas explored in our sessions with an important friend.
8. I communicate frequently about important concerns with a close friend.

## STAGE – RE-BUILDING NINE

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### **LEFTOVERS HAVE TO BE CLEARED**

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Earlier experiences are extremely influential in our life and the attitudes and feelings we develop in relationships with parents, family, friends and partners are bound to carry over into new relationships. Some of these attitudes and feelings are helpful in new relationships and others are not.

As we have explored earlier common leftover problem, even for adults, is an unresolved need to rebel against constraints such as parental rules. Recognise the valuable leftovers so you can keep and nourish them and then work at changing those which simply get in the way.

Thelma was talking about how hard it was with her former partner. 'Sometimes he sounds like his father when he criticises me and I just can't help but fly off the handle at him. It's not fair for me to do that, but I can't stop it.'

Steven reported that he grew up with a father who was always criticising him to his face but then would tell others how proud he was of his son. He decided that he wanted to be praised to his face so in choosing a partner he found a woman who he thought would give him lots of praise. After a period of time in their relationship, he realised that he had chosen a critical woman even though he had tried not to. 'I don't understand what happened- I never thought I'd choose someone like my father.'

Rick and Paul had a very respectable committed relationship, with a lifestyle very much like that of their parents. Suddenly Paul's behaviour changed. He began to associate with a younger crowd, started all kinds of activities which he had never tried before, and took more time for himself, apart from the relationship. One day he reported back to Rick that he felt too confined in the relationship and that he was going to have to go off and 'get his head on straight.'

So how much are you carrying in terms of leftovers from earlier days? You may have learned to carry extra weight in your past relationship or perhaps in your relationships with parents, school chums, friends or others while you grew up. Time to unload those unneeded burdens. You may have thought that you left all those hang-ups behind in your former relationship. So maybe you didn't realise they existed until a new relationship came along and then you were forced to look into your back pack to see what you were carrying.

Our relationships with others are partially an attempt to fill up the deficiencies within ourselves. We develop a pattern of interaction based upon such feelings of rejection, loneliness, a need to feel guilty, or on a more positive note, feelings of happiness. We accept our feelings in relationships with others.

One example from an early series of seminars was Carolyn which she and I called the stray cat syndrome. Carolyn had learned to bring home stray cats probably since childhood and she told me how good she would feel when she could play 'Florence Nightingale.' Then the stray cat starts drinking too much alcohol and Carolyn tries hard to rescue them from the perils of alcohol. Peter her partner drinks more (after all



he is getting a lot of attention from drinking!). Finally Carolyn would reach her martyr's tolerance limit and either she leaves the relationship or he leaves. Then she proclaims loudly to everyone how good it feels not to be taking care of that drunken bum. She starts going out with a friend and finds a man she is sure 'will never be an alcoholic' and they finally decide to enter a committed relationship. The pattern starts repeating and he begins drinking too much. Carolyn again provides care, giving him his 'milk in a saucer' every evening when he comes home until one day it suddenly strikes her 'I decided to commit myself to another alcoholic!'

Carolyn seems to have a need within her to take care of stray cats. It makes her, at one powerful level, feel good. She will continue, either consciously or unconsciously to need to care for another. Here it is easy to see the critical need to examine leftover patterns and to discard those which are really hurting us and our relationships.

Often a new relationship will provide a method of working on the leftovers. They may arise and you may become angry at that person and express your irritation. He or she reacts, 'Those comments don't fit me, and I don't know what you are talking about. I am listening to what you say but it doesn't seem to apply to me so where is it coming from?'

If you are now becoming more aware of your feelings and the voices talking inside your head you may be able to express your irritation and then tie it in with an earlier relationship. Sometimes people even use the old person's name in their anger, and that is a real clue to where the problem is coming from. Listen to the voices, do some reflecting, and when the new friend says that does not fit with them, try to discover who it does fit with. When you begin to recognise who it is you are

actually angry with analyse your feelings for insight into what makes you behave this way. Communication with another person is helpful at this time because it provides a sounding board to bounce your feelings off just as the wall at school bounces back the ball and demands you handle the ball.

In the shell stage one does what one should do; in the rebel stage what one should not do and in the love stage what one wants to do. OK many times the behaviour in the love stage will be similar to behaviours in the shell stage but the motivation behind it is entirely different because instead of trying to please someone else you are trying to please yourself.

So what does this have to do with rebuilding? Well as it happens many marriages are built on the foundation of immaturity with one partner stuck in the shell stage spending their whole life trying to please and do what others want. Eventually they get fed up with this shell existence as the inevitable pressures of personal growth become present creating a tremendous strain on their partner in the relationship.

	SHELL	REBEL	LOVE
VOCABULARY	"What should I do?" "I'll do whatever you want" "Take care of me" "You're everything to me" "I only want you to be happy"	"If it weren't for you..." "I don't need your help!" "Leave me alone!" "I'll do it anyway." "If it feels good, do it!"	"I've considered the alternatives." "I'll take responsibility for my choice." "It may not work, but I want to try." "You and I can both enjoy ourselves."
BEHAVIOUR	Compliant, obedient. Caregiving (obliged) Consistent, predictable. Careful, no-risking Obligations, not choices	Self-centered, selfish Irresponsible, blames others. Erratic, unpredictable, careless Childish, "plays" with young folk Sports cars, flashy clothes, sex	Self-enhancing, respects others. Responsible, flexible, open. Willing to risk, learns from mistakes. Makes choices based on facts.
self	Being to trust self Being to take risks Begin to communicate openly Begin to accept responsibility Begin to try new behaviour	Try positive growth activities; classes, recreation, exercise, friendships, hobbies, community. Enter personal development/transformation work (with spouse?) Talk to spouse, friend, therapist Maintain moral, ethical balance	Work at self-awareness Work at self-acceptance Work at open, honest communication. Develop close, non-romantic friends Express anger assertively Maintain balance of independence and interdependence in close relationships.
GROWTH STEPS			
partner	Encourage partner's growth. Lessen dependence on partner. Cooperate in therapy if needed. Prepare for turbulence when 'rebellion' starts!	Maintain stability, patience. Allow partner to grow up. Be available to talk with partner Encourage joint therapy. Recognise rebellion is against shell, not you!	

**In preparation for our session please complete the following checklist.**

1. I am aware of the leftovers I am carrying from the past relationshipS!
2. I am working on my leftovers rather than blaming others for them.
3. I am building relationships that will help eliminate my left overs.
4. I understand that I will have to change attitudes and awareness within me in order to rid myself of leftovers.
5. I am avoiding becoming emotionally involved with stray cats :-)
6. I have identified whether I am in the shell, rebel, or love stage in my growth and development
7. I have thought about my partner growth and development in terms of shell, rebel and love stages.
8. I have thought about my parent's development in terms of the shell, rebel, and love stages.
9. I have identified positive ways of rebelling in contrast to more negative, destructive forms of rebelling.
10. I can understand and accept those elements of my partner's behaviours which were related to the rebel stage.
11. I realise the shell, rebel and love stages are something that may happen several times in my life.
12. I am attempting to do the self-care needed to remain strong and stable
13. I will attempt to get rid of as many leftovers as possible before I get into another long-term, committed relationship.

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## STAGE – RE-BUILDING TEN

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### LOVE.....

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Many people need to relearn how to love in order to love more maturely. Your capacity to love others is based on your capacity to love yourself as I explore in The Power of Caring series. Learning to love yourself is not selfish and conceited in fact it is the most mentally healthy thing you can do. There are a number of specific steps you can take to increase your self love and connection with your true self.

Love is like sitting with my back to the fireplace I can feel the warmth without every seeing the fire.

Love is the greatest gift you can receive but you have to give it to yourself. Peter

Over the past thirty years I have asked thousands of people to do this exercise in the adjustment seminars and it normally proves a very difficult assignment for most people to do. A typical separated person says 'I thought I knew what love is but I guess I don't' In fact many people feel inadequate about their definition of love. Love is like a diamond and you can view it from many different directions and there is no right or wrong way of defining it. There is only the way you feel about love.

In our society many people have stereotyped love to be something you do for somebody or to somebody. Very few people realise that love is something that should be centred within you and that the basis of loving others is the love you have for yourself.

To begin this section let me present a somewhat cynical definition upon which many relationships are based 'Love is the warm feeling that you get toward somebody who meets your neurotic needs.' This is a definition of neediness rather than love. Because we are not whole and complete people but have emotional deficiencies we try to fill those emotional deficits by 'loving' another person. What we lack in ourselves we hope to find in the other person in other words many of us are half people trying to love someone in order to become whole. My experience working with people has given me the following idea about love coming from a whole person who is more mature in their life.

Perhaps you have heard the expression 'warm and fuzzy with a fish hook in them'. A warm fuzzy is a nice gesture that you give someone such as saying I love you. Unfortunately many of us are still struggling to fulfil ourselves. So if a life is empty then when a person says 'I love you' it probably means 'Please, please love me.' The other person finds the warm fuzzy statement attractive so swallows it, and is hooked. Saying 'I love you' from an empty heart of emotional connections tends to be manipulative, while love from a heart of connections and embracing who we are as a unique individual allows others to be themselves and to be free to share in our lives.

A common problem in society is that falling in love is the most acceptable reason for entering a committed relationship however falling in love may have more to do with loneliness than with warmth towards another person. Falling in love to overcome loneliness is not actually love. It is rather a feeling of warmth which comes from breaking down the barriers that have kept us from being intimate with other people.

Sometimes one does not love the other person, but loves instead the idealised image of that person. When the difference is realised, one becomes disillusioned, falls out of love, and the relationship is dissolved. If a couple can grow past the stage of loving their idealised image of each other, there is the possibility that they will be able to love in a more mature manner. For some, this growth will occur in the relationship and their love for each other will mature. For others, maturity comes only after the dissolution of an immature relationship.

I have seen many people loving with an immature love: Love equals doing something to somebody or for somebody; Love equals taking care of someone; Love equals 'never having to say you're sorry'; Love equals always being strong; Love equals being nice.

Shirley had believed that love equals being nice and she was trying to improve an unhealthy relationship. Ken asked her in the seminar why it was not working for her to be nice. Shirley replied, 'I guess I just wasn't nice enough.'

Many (most?) of us, while growing up, have not received enough unconditional love - love that was given by parents or others just because we were, not because we earned it by being 'good'. We adopt immature forms of love toward others because we have not been loved unconditionally. Nevertheless we can come to realise that mature love equals loving yourself for being what you are, and likewise loving another person for who he or she is. When we can feel such “unconditional no-matter-how-you-act-love” we have learned what I call mature love. Mature love allows you fully to be yourself with the person you love.



In my experience it difficult for many people to give up the immature forms of love because that is the way they have always received their strokes, attention, and good feelings. Yet eventually they recognise that they had to keep striving harder in order to earn the love they were seeking It is like settling for second best taking whatever strokes we can rather than going all the way to get really good strokes by learning to love ourselves.

Building on my experience I have found that many people write that love is caring and giving and making the other person happy and that very few people include in their definition of love a mature idea of self-love. If the centre of your love is in your partner and the relationship dissolves the centre is suddenly remove and this makes ending of your relationship even more painful. What might it be like if you have become a whole person and learned to love yourself? If the ending of your relationship does happen then there would still be pain and trauma but it would not be so devastating for you and you would still be a whole person.

The ending of a relationship is very traumatic for those who have not centred their love within themselves and learned to love themselves. Many end up feeling unlovable or that they are incapable of loving another person. So naturally many try to prove to themselves that they are loveable and search for another relationship immediately. In the section of sexuality we explore how some become sexually promiscuous in developing all kinds of relationships with anyone who comes along. Clearly they have confused sex and love, feeling that if they go out and find sex and with it will come the love they have been missing and needing for so long.

The old Beatles line, ‘All the lonely people – where do they all come from?’ expresses for me the vital needs so many people have who have never learned to love and be loved. In our modern society it has become increasingly easy to love other people and not allow oneself to be loved so here, by wanting to love another person you may really be hiding your own need to be loved.

We can see how the need to be unconditionally loved is not met in our lives for when we are a child love appears unconditional by the basics of food clothing, shelter, care and physical affection so the child has no question that this love is infinite and omnipotent. Then what happens with age, maturity and awareness? We become aware that another can stop loving another for any reason or that the love may be ended by death so for adults it is emotionally difficult to accept unconditional love. What I am putting forward is to approach such an apparent problem by learning to love yourself unconditionally with a simple acceptance of yourself for what you are: a unique individual with no one else in the world like you.

Naturally it is difficult to love yourself if you haven’t been loved as a child and this is where a spiritual relationships become important because if you can develop faith in a Supreme Being who gives unconditional love which has been difficult for you to accept within yourself then you experience value of being loved for who we are and not for what we do for someone else. Here we experience unconditional love and once we have such a connection then we can extend the same unconditional love for others.

Back to science for a short while to define consciously so we can build a bridge to our emotional self. Psychologists place a great deal of

emphasis on personalities. One way of looking at such psychological diagnosis is that they are all trying to define different ways that people are compensating for a lack of love and if we could peel back these diagnoses down to the heart and core we would find that the basic problem is that people have not learned to love and be loved.

In my series 'The Power of Caring' which I created in 1989 I continually return to this simple and yet for many elusive connection where I am emphasizing unconditional love so strongly because it is such a vital quality for human growth. To know that I am valuable enough just because I am me and to be loved regardless of how I act. However in my work I continually find that the belief that love is doing something to or for somebody and so rather than love being centred within us it is clearly always centred within someone else. This naturally leaves us feeling how our energy is constantly being drained from us rather than experiencing such energy expanding and filling our day to day lives.

**Take a break and then return and take a look at some of the common ways of exchanging and thereby exploring different forms of love.**

**Friendship LOVE** is not as loaded with emotion and feeling for as the relationships starts with liking each other, and then this liking just grows into something more which might be called love. It is cooler, lacking in the passion of romantic love. Sex is not as important to the friendship lover, often developing long after the relationship has begun. This is one of the most stable styles of loving and it is not unusual for people who develop this style of loving to remain good friends even if

the relationship ends because their love was based upon mutual respect and friendship rather than strong emotional feelings.

**Game Playing Love** regards the relationship as a game with certain rules to follow and game players are not as interested in intimacy as romantic lovers in fact they may have several simultaneous relationships in order to avoid closeness and intimacy. Such lovers tend to make up their own special rules and their relationships will follow whatever rules are most convenient.

For example there is the needy style of loving that tends to be full of possessiveness and dependency. This style of loving is very emotional and such intensity makes the relationship unstable. The people involved tend to have difficulty maintaining the relationship because they feel intense emotions such as jealousy, possessiveness which naturally results insecurity. Some look for another relationship within a short time in order to be happy based on an immature style of dependent and possessive love.

**The Practical Lover** takes a realistic look at their partner and decides, on a rational and intellectual basis, if this love is appropriate. This sort of partner will make sure that there is a similarity in spiritual or religious; political; financial views on handling money as well as family life. Naturally they will include exploring any failings in their partner's family, socioeconomic statuses, characteristics in the way that they look as well for some genetic makeup. The practical lover will choose to someone with whom it 'makes good sense' to love.

**The Altruistic Lovers** may be somewhat 'other person' centred in being very willing to meet the needs of the other person. When this is carried to the extreme the altruistic lover may become the martyr based

on meeting other people's needs by giving all of their energy, money and time to the other person. Then there is the **Authentic Altruistic Lover** who is someone with a full heart and enough inner strength to be able to love another person in a very unselfish manner and it interesting to note from my experience and the experiences of my colleagues how such a person has a powerful spiritual belief.

Each person is obviously a mixture of these styles and there is no one style that fits us all at all times. Understanding your own mixture of styles is very important when you enter a committed relationship or partnership with another person. One couple with whom I was doing marriage counselling had a great deal of difficulty because he was a friendship lover and she a romantic lover. She felt that his cool love was not love at all and he felt that her romantic love was unstable. His style of loving was to take care of her, provide for her needs and stay with her in the relationship as proof of his love for her. When she asked him to say 'I love you' and to express other romantic thoughts and feeling so that she felt loved he could not answer. They had difficulty in communicating and understanding each other's viewpoints because their basic beliefs about what love was and was not were incompatible.

At this point and as a guide how about the question 'How do we learn to love ourselves?' and as we have seen the answer is not always easy so here are some specific exercises that will help with learning to love yourself. However before beginning think of a time in your life when you started to make changes which may be been when you first had difficulties in your relationship or when the two of you first separated or, for that matter, when you decided to work with me in rebuilding.

Make a list of changes that you have made, the personal growth that you have experienced since that time and the things you have learned about yourself, others and of course life. Consider the feeling of confidence you have gained from learning these things and getting more in control of your own life. That confidence is what provides you with good, positive feelings and then length of your list may come as a pleasant surprise.

I am indebted to Virginia Satir who devised a method of helping people learn to gain more self-love which I would like to introduce you to. She asked people to make a list of five adjectives that could describe them. After you have made this list of five adjectives go through a put a plus or a minus sign after each word to indicate whether you think this a positive or negative adjective. After you have done this, look at the minus adjectives and see if you can find anything positive about that particular word in terms of a quality or aspect of your personality.

A woman in one of the seminars listed the adjective 'bitchy'. When questioned about it she said how her husband constantly referred to her in this way. As she began to talk about it to the group she realised what he called bitchiness she called assertiveness in the sense a positive way to stick up for herself. So once she now understood that difference of labels she was able to accept that as a part of herself and now feel good about it.

After all that is what self is: learning to accept ourselves for what and who we are. As Carl Rogers stated, when we learn to accept ourselves for who and what we are, then that often gives us permission to grow, change, and become something different. Where we can embrace the next unfolding stages of our life. However for as long as you don't

accept a part of who you are you will naturally have trouble changing that part. We all need to discover that 'it's okay not to be okay' in certain areas of our life. We have all had traumatic experiences that have left us wounded and times when we did not feel loved. But those experiences are a part of our life and living such a life. We are not perfect because we are human beings and when we learn to accept some of the non-okay things about us then we are in balance where such balance allows us to be authentic.

How does one learn to love another person? What causes the feelings of love for another person to begin? Perhaps it was a kind and thoughtful deed they did; maybe by doing something that met your needs, or they made you feel good about yourself. So, if you were to set aside a period of time tomorrow to do something that really felt good and made you feel okay about yourself then that could be a way of learning to love yourself more fully and completely. After all, it would be you that was capable of doing something kind and loveable for you.

In my work and in my own life the most important method of learning to love yourself has been to give permission to love yourself and if you can decide that it is okay, and not selfish or self-centred to love yourself maybe you can allow yourself to move into a place where you have feelings of self-love?

As we finish and prepare of our next one to one discussion the growth that you have achieved is something that no one has done for you and so no one can take it away from you. Your life is in your control, through a real heartfelt knowledge about yourself and others. To that extent you are not at the mercy of other people anymore. Let the good feelings of your development at this stage in your life become heartfelt.

Let yourself just feel love for yourself for a while because it is not just okay to feel love for yourself, no it is more than okay, it is the way life is meant to be.

**CHECKLIST** for our next one to one session.

1. I feel I am loveable
2. I am not afraid of being loved
3. I am not afraid of loving another
4. I have an understanding of what I believe love is
5. I am living a lifestyle that is in balance with my definition of love
6. I feel comfortable with meeting my own needs rather than feeling and labelling myself as selfish
7. I am able to accept love from others
8. I am able to express love to others in a way that makes them feel loved
9. I am able to love myself
10. I have experienced a great deal of personal growth since my crisis began
11. I am trying to develop my immature, needy, dependent parts of love into a more mature style of loving