

Your Relationship



Make it the Best
Relationship Possible

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Introduction

Experts have come together to compile this book to help you understand and enrich your relationship. Because it is an e-book, it has been designed to be easy to read on a computer. Its purpose is to inform, entertain and offer insights. It is not designed to take the place of professional counseling. Reproduce by permission only, please contact original authors. All material is copyrighted by the original authors.

The “F-Word”

Excerpt from *The Relationship Handbook: How to Understand and Improve Every Relationship in Your Life* by Kevin B. Burk

I’d like to invite you to consider a powerful concept. This concept is essential—we must learn how to master it if we want to experience the levels of joy, happiness, love and prosperity that are our birthright. Many of us, however, resist this concept. We use it sparingly, if at all, and occasionally, we won’t even consider it as an option. In fact, for many of us, this concept is so emotionally charged that I hesitate to even name it, because if I call it anything other than the “f-word” it could put our egos on high alert.

You see, in many cases, avoiding this concept is the ego’s front line defense—an effort to protect us from experiencing pain. The ego believes that if we embraced the “f-word” we would be defenseless at best, and at worst, we would be destroyed completely. Of course, it doesn’t help that most of us have a somewhat ego- and fear-based understanding of the “f-word” that makes it less than appealing. The truth is that embracing the “f-word” is the secret to experiencing genuine freedom in our lives.

So, what is the “f-word”? Forgiveness.

In order to improve our lives, our relationships, and our reality, we must learn and practice forgiveness. We must forgive freely, liberally, and often. We must forgive everything and everyone—

especially the people we are the most reluctant to forgive. But let's take a few moments to consider the true nature of forgiveness.

Guy Williams, a friend of mine who also happens to be a minister of Religious Science, suggested this take on the nature of forgiveness. Forgiveness simply means to give as before. When we are angry with someone, when we harbor resentment towards someone, we have stopped giving to him or her. We no longer give that person our love or our compassion. They have betrayed us and caused us pain. And we know what happens anytime we have a painful experience, right? Our egos immediately create a new frame and a new belief in an effort to protect us from experiencing that pain again in the future.

Our egos are reluctant to accept the truth that sometimes unpleasant and painful experiences are unavoidable. Our egos need to believe that they can protect us. Our egos need a scapegoat—something (or someone) concrete that can be identified, isolated and avoided. Holding onto our anger and resentment keeps us separate from the person or persons who betrayed us. This, in turn, reinforces the illusion that we are separate from those individuals, and distances us from the truth that there is no separation: We are all aspects of All That Is. The less we remember the truth of who we are, the more our essential spiritual and life lessons seem to present challenges rather than opportunities. Everyone always does the best they can at any given time, and that's all we can ever expect.

It's worth noting that when we choose to hold a grudge and to remain angry, we carry the pain of the betrayal with us. We experience a small amount of pain each time we think of it. The ego actually wants us to experience this pain, because the little pain will serve to remind us how important it is to avoid the big pain. And the only way to avoid the big pain is to protect ourselves from close, supportive relationships with those who have hurt or betrayed us.

Frequently, the person that we most need to forgive is our self. We betray ourselves each time we listen to the ego and forget the truth

of who we are. And the more we betray ourselves, the more our egos try to protect us (from ourselves, yet!) by strengthening the illusion of separation from the Source. And of course, the more we believe the illusion of separation, the more we betray ourselves, and experience pain. The way to break out of this vicious circle is to forgive ourselves—to “give as before.” We must learn to express unconditional love and compassion for ourselves. As we experience this love and compassion, we will reconnect with our true selves. And the more we’re able to forgive ourselves, the more we’re able to forgive others.

Kevin B. Burk is the author of *The Relationship Handbook: How to Understand and Improve Every Relationship in Your Life*. Visit <http://www.EveryRelationship.com> for a FREE Report on creating Amazing Relationships.

Are You Relationship Ready?

By Toni Coleman

So, you want to fall in love? You are certainly old enough and moving well along your chosen career path. Many of your friends are either married or in committed relationships. You have grown weary of the singles scene and the solitary life. Therefore, you must be ready, right?

Not necessarily.

So what is relationship readiness anyway? Exactly what it says. You are adequately capable of handling the commitment and challenges that a healthy, intimate relationship requires.

How do you know if you are ready? What are the characteristics you need to have or acquire in order to be ready for true love?

There are four primary areas that you should explore in order to assess your present state of readiness.

1. Take an inventory of past traumas and related major issues.

You should mentally review these and honestly look at how well you have already addressed and resolved them.

As you work through each, ask yourself, "Is this impacting me negatively in my present life." Also explore with yourself the possibility that the issue could become problematic once you have entered into an intimate relationship.

If you believe that there are things you have not yet adequately dealt with, you need to go to work on these. If you are unsure, then they bear closer examination. Consider utilizing resources such as therapy or joining a support group.

An example of such issues can include, but not be limited to; emotional, physical or sexual abuse in childhood, parents' divorce, loss of a parent or other loved one, or a past abusive or dysfunctional love relationship.

2. How's your self-awareness and self-esteem?

If you do not possess adequate self knowledge and a positive sense of self; an intimate relationship will be difficult or impossible to sustain.

For instance, do you know yourself well enough to answer the following?

Can you state your most deeply held values?
Do you know what you can't live with or without in a relationship?
Do you have a good grasp of your life goals?
Do you know your own strengths and weaknesses?

Now, do a quick assessment of your self-esteem.

How do you see yourself?
How do others see you?
Remember you present different selves:
at work
with family
with friends
in gatherings with acquaintances

If your answers tell you that you have difficulty accepting and liking yourself, or if others frequently respond negatively to you in your interactions with them, then this is an area you should begin work on.

Self-love is at the foundation of all healthy relationships.

3. Are your past relationships really in the past?

If we don't get adequate closure on painful experiences/issues from past relationships, we are at risk of bringing them into present and future relationships in order to relive and resolve them.

Therefore, it's important to know that you have dealt adequately with any significant hurt or loss and have learned from any dysfunctional dynamics you may have contributed to.

If you find yourself slipping into unhealthy patterns in your thoughts or behaviors as they relate to others; stop, identify, and then deal with that leftover issue.

4. Do you know what you want from a relationship?

We enter into relationships for many different reasons and with many different expectations. Knowing what yours are will help you to determine if this is the right relationship for you.

Too often we "choose" someone using an unconscious level of thought as our primary input. It is there that we hold our deepest unmet needs, fears and desires. Unfortunately, there is often a chasm between our conscious and unconscious selves that keeps this information "hidden" from our rational and thinking side.

Therefore, it is very important to examine all of your feeling and needs regarding any future relationship. Honestly look at what you must have and cannot live without.

You must know what you want and need from a future partner in order to choose the right one for you.

Now, spend some time exploring these four important areas before you enter into a serious romantic relationship. By doing so, you will be helping to ensure that your new relationship will be a healthy and lasting one.

Toni Coleman, MSW is a licensed psychotherapist and relationship coach with over 20 years of experience helping singles and couples achieve their relationship goals. As a recognized expert, Toni has been quoted in many local and national publications including: The Chicago Tribune and The Orlando Sentinel newspapers and Family Circle, Woman's Day, Cosmo Style, Star, and Nirvana magazines. She has been featured on ABC News (abcnews.com); Discovery Health Channel (discovery.com); AOL Online (aolnews.com); Global Internet radio (planetearthradio.com); and (The Larry Elder show) (larryelder.warnerbros.com.) As a weekly contributing commentator on the KTRS Radio Morning Show, (St. Louis, MO), Toni offers dating tips and relationship advice in response to listener feedback.

Toni is the author of many popular articles on meeting, dating, communicating, single life and healing from relationship loss. These can be found on over thirty dating and singles oriented web sites and in several lifestyle magazines. She founded www.Consum-mate.com in 2002 to offer singles the knowledge and tools they need to find and sustain healthy, lasting love relationships. Her monthly newsletter, The Art Of Intimacy, helps thousands of subscribers with its dating and relationship advice. Toni is also the host of SingleLife site at Bellaonline.com, where singles can find articles, information and resources designed especially for them. Toni is a member of The International Coach Federation, The International Association Of Coaches and The National Association of Social Workers.

WATCH WHAT YOU SAY!

By Rita Ballard, GVA, CHT

Everything you say has an impact on others.

I'll never forget the time I was walking through the waiting room where I worked; there was a patient sitting there, looking very unhappy. So I smiled at her as I walked by. On my way back through the waiting room 15 minutes later, she said to me, "thank you for that smile. It brightened my day." A simple little thing, almost unconscious on my part, and yet it meant so much to her.

That was almost 10 years ago, and I remember it like it was yesterday. That smile changed both of us; it had a positive impact on her, and her reaction had a major impact on me. It made me realize how much we affect each other as we move through our individual lives. And most of the time we're totally unaware of it.

During an especially difficult time in my life I was attending a professional meeting, and my supervisor stated to the group that I had a "hardwiring problem." I felt embarrassed, chagrined, and aghast that she felt that way and would say it in front of other people, who were then drawing erroneous conclusions about who I was! For years afterward, any time I had difficulty grasping a concept, I would flashback to her saying that about me, and I'd

think that maybe it was true. Maybe I wasn't like others, maybe I just didn't "get it."

Words are very powerful. They can affect you long after they've been said. They can change the way you see yourself. Words can be bullets or shelters, rocks or loving arms.

"I hate you." "I'll take care of it for you." "You are so stupid."
"You're the best thing that's ever happened to me." These are simple statements, but each is full of potentially life-changing meaning. You only need to put yourself in the shoes of the listener to know how these words could impact your life.

Just think, these kinds of things are spoken every second. With every syllable that comes out of your mouth, you literally have the power to greatly enhance another person's self-perception, or destroy it.

Some people are seemingly oblivious to the power of their words. They spout and spew, apparently never stopping to consider what those words are doing to the listener. They feel justified in "telling it like it is." I doubt that we are ever justified in purposely and thoughtlessly causing harm to another with what we say to them.

The absence of words can also have an affect. When someone does not reply to something you've said or asked, it is impossible to know what that lack of reply is really saying. Do they just consider what you've said to be totally unimportant? Are they too busy to reply?

When I was just starting out in my business, I emailed someone who had the same type of business and asked her questions about how she got started, and what was helpful for her in getting clients. I never did hear back from her. That made me think that she just didn't want to bother with a "newbie." She'd had the opportunity to help someone else, and possibly to further her own career by generating referrals, just by being helpful. But her lack of response made me decide that she was not someone I would recommend to others.

Be careful what you say. Think about the impact your words will have. Words change people's lives.

Rita Ballard, GVA, CHT

Healer's Helper

Virtually Restoring Balance, One Task At A Time!

Rita Ballard, GVA, C.Ht. is a virtual assistant and the owner of Healer's Helper, a virtual assistance business providing administrative support services to healthcare professionals. Rita has an 18-year history in the healthcare industry, has had an avid interest in holistic/alternative health for 25 years, and has been a licensed hypnotherapist since 1997. For more information, please visit www.ritaballard.com www.healershelper.com email Info@healershelper.com or call 877-716-4880.

The Secret Power of Romance

By L.A. Hunter

There are some men who will never understand the importance of romance. They may be lazy or don't feel like investing any of their time for something silly like romance. They're the foolish ones who are wasting time and energy trying to get what they want the hard way.

Then there are the men who know the secrets of romance. For example, on the reality shows such as the Bachelor and Who Wants to Marry (whatever), it's pretty obvious the men who are the most romantic stick around the longest and are chosen in the end.

Why? Not because their rich, good looking, have great jobs, or any of the obvious reasons. They know romance is very powerful. And what do these romantic guys do? Simple things like, light candles, pick flowers, look at the stars, have a picnic or romantic dinner; nothing you can't do with ease.

Whether you want to believe it or not, it is the small things that matter most to a woman when it comes to romance.

Romance is the creation of an atmosphere where she feels unconditional love and appreciation. You can turn down the lights, turn on the radio, take her by the hand and ask her to dance in the kitchen. That's romance.

Hand her a wild flower, ask her to go on a stroll with you and hold hands. That's romance. Get it! What is she feeling? At that moment she is the most important woman in the world, she feels appreciated and loved. Romance can even produce the butterflies in her stomach.

The passion and excitement she will be feeling for you not only manifest itself in sex but will also spill over into other aspects of the relationship. Sometimes it takes a few romantic encounters to get the best results, she may not be used to it, she may have been hurt by you and think you're only doing it for sex. Hang in there, the payoff is within reach. Above all, you will have a fulfilling relationship and you will have fun discovering each other.

L.A. Hunter, Romance Expert and founder of <http://www.RomeosPlaybook.com> has combined hundreds of romantic ideas and other relationship advice into the most complete guide ever published just for men. "Romeo's Playbook: A Man's Guide for Enhancing His Relationship and Sex Life" is a unique guide that looks and reads like a sports playbook; perfect for any man! It is the best husband/boyfriend "How To" book available today.

Everything I Know About Relationship Success I Learned At The Playground

By Stanley J. Leffew

It happened again!

I was enjoying an evening with my little 2-yr. old son at the playground when, BAM, it happened. You ever have one of those moments in life when you know you are being taught an important lesson?

Picture in your mind a chaotic atmosphere of over fifty little children battling for their turn to play on a handful of playground rides and objects.

Recipe for disaster, huh? That's what I thought, too, until my observations quickly picked up something else.

Sure, they were running into one another, crying and trying to get ahead of each other for the rides. They were walking across other children who had fallen down in front of them and were pushing one another to get their turn. They were running to their parents for comfort after getting their feelings hurt.

As I stood there taking in the scenery before me, those little blessings of life showed me some important lessons about

relationship success. If you will indulge me a moment, I will share with you what I found out.

Relationship Success Lesson #1 - The Principle of Fun:

Not much to say here! It's simple; these kids loved to have fun.

In adult relationships, life throws curves at us constantly. Responsibilities come at us from every angle. It takes conscious effort to remember to have fun together in life. I emphasize the word, "together". I'm not talking about the type of fun where the husband plays golf and the wife shops.

The "heavy" takes its toll on relationships, and we do well when we give our relationship a time-out from the heavy and lighten up. Couples who play together, stay together.

Relationship Success Lesson #2 - The Principle of Fascination:

As I stood there watching, it was interesting to see how the younger children reacted to the older kids. It didn't take much observance to see that they were taken by and fascinated with them.

Fascination! While it is not a word often associated with relationship success, if you want thriving relationships, you may just want to give it some precedence.

I was blessed earlier in life to have a couple who had been married over twenty-six years model this for me. Whenever anyone saw them together, they were holding hands and playfully giddy as if they had just started dating. When I asked what caused her to be this much in love with a man after so many years of marriage, she responded, "He fascinates me."

Let that sink in a moment.

Are you an interesting person? Would you consider yourself intriguing? Do you have interests in life that cause other people to want to be around you, or are you often bored?

A few things to note:

- * Bored people are boring people.
- * Having interests will help make us more fascinating in life.
- * In the world of relationship enrichment, "Couch Potatoes Need Not Apply".

Relationship Success Lesson #3 - The Principle of Forgiveness

As I stood and watched, two children were running on the playground in opposite directions, and I saw it coming before they did. They each circled the same object until they literally met in the middle. Two more kids came around and did the same thing.

Tempers flared, emotions ran high, tears ran down their cheeks and feelings were hurt. Less than two minutes later, they were off running and playing together, and all was forgotten.

What would happen in adult relationships if we learned how to do that? Instead of internalizing everything, we learn not to take it all so personally. Instead of holding grudges, we learn to hold hands.

Children have soft hearts - life can sometimes harden them.

Sheds a little light on the phrase, "Except you become like little children", doesn't it?

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Stanley J. Leffew is the Author of, "How To Be Wanted For a Lifetime of Nights and Not Just a Night of a Lifetime". His website is based on this same theme. Find out for yourself why leading-with-the-body in life and relationships feeds desire but fails to satisfy the longing of the heart for love, companionship and intimacy by visiting <http://advice-for-lifetime-relationships.com>

14 Relationship Principles to Live a Successful Relationship

By David Krueger MD

Each relationship combines two individual stories to coauthor a new relationship story. The implicit contracts authored by each party in a relationship become unspoken assumptions that can facilitate or derail the relationship.

A crucial part of communication in a relationship is to make explicit the hidden assumptions and implicit expectations. To see the point of view of the other and to communicate that understanding, each must respect the other's point of view. Understanding and respect are not synonymous with agreement.

The ultimate freedom is not to rely on someone else's response to determine how you feel about yourself.

Ineffectiveness of communication, simply feeling that what you said was not heard or registered by the other, may result in irritation or anger. So often the content of the discussion is focused on with greater intensity, rather than the process initiating the derailment of feeling ineffective in not being heard.

14 Relationship Principles

1. Each person has a point of view. Communication is the establishment of a common ground to understand different points of view to create a mutual, collaborative agreement or plan.
2. Developing empathy with another is predicated on doing it with yourself first. Empathy is a way of listening to yourself as well as to another person with resonance of an entire experience of feeling, thinking, perceiving, and behaving.
3. Rapport is from the French word *rapporter* which means to be in touch or contact with a person, including yourself.
4. With emotionally charged subjects, reflect back to someone what you hear them saying before saying what you will say. This reflection assures the other's sense of effectiveness in knowing that you register what was said, and better positions him or her to hear your point of view.
5. What someone believes is more important than what they know.
6. Requiring that others respond to you in a particular way renders inauthentic the person and their response.
7. We are always communicating; there are many languages, and some even use words. "Do not the most moving movements of our lives find us all without words?" (Marcel Marceau)
8. What you don't do is as important as what you do.
9. Strike while the iron is cold. Known when to be reflective and invoke principles. When a child is drowning is no time to teach rules of swimming.
10. There are few true emergencies in life. "I'd like to think about that and get back to you" is a response.

11. Everyone fails empathically with another at times. Most important in a relationship is how the empathic ruptures are learned from to then come together with greater understanding. At times the most important thing may not be what you have done, but what you do after what you have done.

12. To forgive someone is to free yourself.

13. You cannot change yourself by first trying to change someone else. To have someone live an unexpressed part of yourself can be both unsatisfying and addictive.

14. The only person you can change is you. Attempting to change someone else's mode of processing or personality style won't work, and will create derailments. Quicken software will not change to WordPerfect.

Relationship Principles Applied to Marriage

1. Marriage is the most difficult and complex contract someone can enter into that they will ever know. Communication is vital as an ongoing effort. Remember to reflect back what you hear the other saying first, in order to maintain effectiveness in communication.

2. Discuss how to facilitate meeting needs, as well as needs of love and connection in the relationship.

3. Be present to yourself and to your partner.

4. Limit spending the currencies of worry, regret, remorse and suffering.

5. Distinguish self issues from relationship issues and commit to work on both.

6. Collaborate on how to maintain romance, sensual pleasure and the "in love" feeling; when these experiences evolve over time, it does not have to mean a diminution of love, romance or excitement.

7. Recognize gender-specific and unique individual characteristics. For example, creating pleasure for a woman may include the romantic experience of candles, music, and a special dinner. The same pleasure for a man may include a certain dress, lingerie, and a graphic sexual encounter.

RELATIONSHIP EXERCISE

These reflections are designed to clarify and facilitate the developing a more satisfying relationship.

1. How did we do in our last conversation? How do I feel about that?
2. What patterns in our relationship and conversations do I want to expand? To change? To not create?
3. How do I feel around him/her?
4. Am I being all of myself in the relationship?
5. What judgements do I make of myself around this person? What judgments do I make of him/her?
6. What judgments or criticism do I assume and expect?
7. What do we each want from the other?
8. What do we each need from the other?
9. Am I relying on this person to provide some need or want that I could provide for myself?
10. How could I better support my partner?
11. What could I communicate to him/her know more about what I want and need?

12. What do we do for fun? How can we expand what we do for fun while taking into account our individual interests and definition of fun?

David Krueger, M.D. is an Executive Strategist/ Professional Coach who mentors executives, entrepreneurs, and authors. <http://www.executivestrategist.biz>
execstrategist@aol.com He is author of 11 books on success, money, work, and self-development. This article is excerpted from Dr. Krueger's 12th book, soon to be published, LIVE A NEW LIFE STORY: The Essentials of Change, Reinvention, and Personal Success.

True Love and Chemistry: Exploring Myth and Reality

By Toni Coleman

When you think about the qualities found in a true "soul mate" relationship, what one word comes up most often on the top of your list?

Is it CHEMISTRY? Probably.

Just the mention of this term conjures up powerful feelings and images for anyone who has ever been in or seeking a love relationship. It is often described as a feeling that leaves you breathless, excited and weak in the knees. Palms sweat, the heart races and the body tingles with nervous anticipation.

It is believed by virtually everyone that true love cannot exist without chemistry. Therefore, the conclusion most would-be lovers come to is that if they experience these intense feelings towards someone, they have the basis for an ideal and lasting relationship.

Right? Maybe not. For this definition of chemistry is limited to one's physical response to another person. It lacks an entire dimension that resides in our values, beliefs, personalities and worldview.

In order to know you have the right connection with a potential (or existing) partner, it's important to have a basic knowledge of what

real chemistry consists of, instead of embracing only the myths that surround it. This can be difficult to do. This intense, physical passion is the stuff that Oscar winning movies and best-selling books are made of. So, take a step back for a minute and see if you recognize yourself in the following.

Sarah is a thirty something, very attractive and successful, professional female. She has been in a relationship for over a year with a man who is unfaithful, disrespectful and incapable (unwilling) to make any commitment to her. Yet, when he makes late night "booty calls", forgets her birthday, or stands her up repeatedly - she remains available and willing, in spite of her general unhappiness and upset over their "relationship". Why? "I think I have mistaken great sex for love. I feel this intense chemistry and physical intimacy when we are having sex, even though he offers me nothing else. Over time, it has left me unhappy and feeling badly about myself."

John is an attractive, intelligent, 30 something male who owns his own successful business. He's dating a woman that he thinks he is in love with. He has knowledge that she has been out with other men. She cancels dates and is often critical and emotionally distant. She refuses to discuss commitment or taking the relationship to the next level. Yet, she turns to John for emotional, physical and financial help whenever she feels she needs it. Why does John continue to see her? "She's beautiful and the sex is great. We have such strong physical chemistry. It's almost like an addiction for me. My friends can't stand her and even I know she's not really a "keeper", but it's hard to walk away."

These vignettes are great examples of how physical chemistry can be mistaken for the real thing. The attraction on one level is strong, yet these are not relationships that have the right elements to grow into happy and satisfying partnerships.

So, what is missing?

Kahlil Gibran defines it as "spiritual affinity". It's the hidden element of chemistry. It's when two beings meet and connect on a deeper level. It can only be felt in the heart and soul. It's about friendship,

respect, humor and the feelings of warmth and contentment that come when you are in his/her presence.

People often report finding one without the other. This is understandably a cause of great frustration and confusion about whom should we choose and why. In order to understand this better, it is helpful to know how and when each facet of chemistry occurs.

Physical attraction (or lust) generally begins during our first contact with someone. It can DEVELOP into something more over time, yet some pull is there from the beginning. The chemical that results from this attraction (and intensifies it) is phenyl ethylamine - or PEA. It is a naturally occurring substance in the brain. Essentially, it is a natural amphetamine. It stimulates us and increases both physical and emotional energy. The attraction causes us to produce more PEA, which results in those dizzying feelings associated with romantic love. Another substance that is released by PEA is dopamine. This chemical increases a desire to be physically close and intimately connected.

When these chemicals are being secreted in larger doses, they send signals from the brain to the other organs of the body. If you wonder why you or someone is attracted to the "wrong" person, it may be because you are high on the physical response to these substances, which overwhelm your ability to use your head and exercise "good judgment and common sense".

"Spiritual affinity" develops over time and repeated contact. When these feelings begin to emerge, the brain produces endorphins. These are more like morphine and result in an increased sense of calm that reduces anxiety and helps to build attachment. As relationships move into this phase they are characterized by more comfort, commitment and friendship.

Generally speaking, all "soul mate relationships" require at least some measure of each of these. The important thing to remember is that they come in stages, which is not to say that the physical attraction passes as one moves into a deeper connection.

However, it changes. We cannot sustain those intense emotions as we travel down the road to commitment and a shared life. However, in healthy relationships those moments of intensity can and do occur for brief intervals at intermittent times.

Remember not to confuse great sex or deep friendship with romantic love. Instead, look for a measure of both of these in your feelings for another. For then you have the ingredients that lasting love is made from.

Toni Coleman, MSW is a licensed psychotherapist and relationship coach with over 20 years of experience helping singles and couples achieve their relationship goals. As a recognized expert, Toni has been quoted in many local and national publications including: The Chicago Tribune and The Orlando Sentinel newspapers and Family Circle, Woman's Day, Cosmo Style, Star, and Nirvana magazines. She has been featured on ABC News (abcnews.com); Discovery Health Channel (discovery.com); AOL Online (aolnews.com); Global Internet radio (planetearthradio.com); and (The Larry Elder show) (larryelder.warnerbros.com.) As a weekly contributing commentator on the KTRS Radio Morning Show, (St. Louis, MO), Toni offers dating tips and relationship advice in response to listener feedback.

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Balancing Mars and Venus in Each of Us

Excerpt from *The Relationship Handbook: How to Understand and Improve Every Relationship in Your Life* by Kevin B. Burk

When we think of ourselves first and foremost as human, we've taken the first step towards regaining our balance. Gender does not define who we are. Gender is nothing more than a biological point of view. Once we take 2,500 years of ego- and fear-based conditioning out of the picture, the main difference between men and women is whether we have indoor or outdoor plumbing. We are not our bodies. Our bodies are nothing more than a suit of clothes worn by our spirit. The main differences are that our spirits wear our bodies for longer than our bodies wear our clothes, and our bodies are harder to dry clean. Men and women do have different points of view, but what matters is that we are all human. And every human has equal amounts of masculine and feminine energy.

It would be easier to embrace this truth if we had a better understanding of exactly what "masculine" and "feminine" really mean. Our current definitions are inexorably linked to gender, sexuality, biology, and the ego-based lie of male superiority. We have lost touch with many of the qualities that were once associated with the feminine. In order to rediscover these qualities,

we have to go back more than 2,500 years and explore the culture of Ancient Greece.

The Ancient Greeks were the last civilization to include reasonably healthy feminine archetypes. Of the twelve Gods in Olympus, five of them were women. Until very recently, though, we only embraced three of the feminine archetypes. Women could be sex objects, in which case they connected with the archetype of Aphrodite (or Venus, in the Roman pantheon), the Goddess of Love, Desire and Beauty. Women could be wives, in which case they connected with the archetype of Hera, the wife of Zeus and the Goddess of Marriage—who, despite her tremendous strength and cunning, was repeatedly forced to be subservient to her philandering husband. And women could be mothers, in which case they connected with the archetype of Hestia, the Goddess of the Hearth and protector of the home. These three archetypes embodied the sum total of the feminine for more than 2,000 years. The male ego successfully suppressed the powerful female archetypes of Athena and Artemis, who collectively embody feminine strength, skill and mastery.

Athena was the Goddess of Wisdom, Reason and Purity. Severing our connection to her archetype was no small feat, as Athena was one of the most revered and respected of all of the Olympians. In fact, the city of Athens is named after her. Athena was fair, just, and an incredibly powerful warrior. She was the embodiment of feminine strength. While Ares, the God of War (and the Greek counterpart to Mars, the Roman God of War) was wantonly destructive, childish, violent, aggressive, and ultimately a coward, Athena was proud, strong, and courageous. More importantly, Athena would only fight in order to defend the city—she would never initiate any conflicts, and she always preferred diplomacy to warfare.

Athena is the archetype of the female warrior. Female warriors are in no way inferior to male warriors: Time and again, women have proved that they are in every way equal to men on the battlefield. The difference is that female warriors do not fight in the same way that male warriors do, nor do they fight for the same reasons. Male warriors fight to attack, while female warriors fight to defend. The

female warrior archetype has returned, however. We see it when Sarah Michelle Gellar beats up vampires and saves the world (while still maintaining every ounce of her femininity) in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and when Lucy Lawless battles warlords, gods and monsters alike in *Xena, Warrior Princess*. More recently, we see Guinevere portrayed as a warrior in Walt Disney and Jerry Bruckheimer's 2004 film retelling of *King Arthur*.

Artemis, the Goddess of the Hunt, is the archetype of the female athlete. In every way, she was the equal of her brother, Apollo. Artemis has returned as a useful archetype for women today, thanks to the popularity of women's athletics. Women now have role models and opportunities to explore their physical strength, and test and improve their skills through competitive sports.

We have always measured "masculinity" based on strength, power, and skill, but these qualities are as present in women as they are in men. Women were supposed to be delicate flowers who needed men to protect them. The truth, however, is that while men may have the edge over women in terms of brute strength, that women often surpass men in skill and dexterity. Once we take biology and reproduction out of the equation, men and women are very evenly matched. So what then, are the truly "masculine" and "feminine" qualities? The masculine principle is focused, expressive, and direct. The feminine principle is diffuse, intuitive, and receptive. The feminine principle provides the container to support the masculine energy. Masculine energy expands, and feminine energy contracts. Any action can be "masculine" or "feminine" in nature, depending on how it is applied. Warrior energy on its own is neither masculine nor feminine. It becomes masculine when we attack in order to expand our borders; it becomes feminine when we fight to defend and protect our tribe from invasion.

It's true that men tend to be more in touch with the more "masculine" or yang aspects, while women tend to be more in touch with the more "feminine" or yin aspects. But not being aware of or familiar with our complimentary nature doesn't mean that we can't learn about it and express it. This, in fact, is the reason that men and women form relationships with each other. Our partners

are our mirrors, and when men and women relate to each other—whether that relationship is sexual or not—what we see reflected is our complimentary nature. We see the parts of ourselves that we haven't integrated or owned yet. And through our relationships with the opposite gender, we learn how to connect with and own these parts of ourselves, and experience true balance. We need to learn to acknowledge, accept and embrace these two complimentary natures. We each have both Mars and Venus within us, and we need to learn how to appreciate and express them both.

Kevin B. Burk is the author of *The Relationship Handbook: How to Understand and Improve Every Relationship in Your Life*. Visit <http://www.EveryRelationship.com> for a FREE Report on creating Amazing Relationships.

Victoria's Secret DISCLOSED

By Stanley J. Leffew

SHHHHHH, don't tell anybody, but, I know the secret.

It all started with a simple shopping spree. I had decided to surprise my wife with a new purchase of special clothing essentials from every man's dreamiest of feminine wardrobe stores.

Yes, it was Victoria's Secret.

After spending a few hours there, I mean, a few minutes, something became very apparent to me. It was very obvious to anyone with a trained eye and the gift of observance. It became very apparent that I was the only man in a store mainly comprised of women who was shopping alone.

At that moment, I could sense it. Obviously, I was Ted Bundy, Osama Bin Ladin and Saddam Hussein, all rolled into one.

Now, I'm being humorous, but every man who has embarked upon a shopping mission such as this can empathize with me.

Should I get cotton? Should I get satin? Should I get silk? What about lace? Of course, you have to touch the cloth and check the size to find just the right purchase, which causes even more feelings

of suspicion as you lift each garment from the table it is displayed on. "I sure hope they don't think I'm some kind of pervert", I remember thinking.

After several, seemingly unapproachable moments, a young lady decided she would close the chasm that existed between us and, sheepishly I might add, ask if I needed some help. In this store where every piece of clothing is practically of an intimate nature, she assisted me in finding the sizes I needed.

Through all my humorous discomfort something began to dawn on me. While I didn't go in on a mission of finding out what Victoria's Secret "secret" is, I think this experience may have disclosed it.

Stay with me a few minutes and I will share with you what I think.

It is something that seems to have been misplaced in our desensitized sexually liberated culture.

THE SECRET

Let's say that someone walks up to you and hands you the keys to two different cars. One of those cars is an old Subaru Justy and the other a brand new Ferrari. Do you think you might handle the Ferrari a little different than you would the Justy?

Of course you would, we all would.

We would probably wash the Ferrari a lot more. We would probably make sure the Ferrari was garage kept. While we may let just anybody drive the Justy, the Ferrari would be virtually unattainable for anyone to drive.

What's the difference?

VALUE!

We always treat differently what we value.

That, I believe is Victoria's Secret, secret. For years this franchise has made a living by placing high value on the female anatomy. You can't experience a shopping escapade like the one mentioned above, see all the colors and the different fabrics designed to help a woman feel special, without seeing it.

THE APPLICATION

I wonder, have we cheapened the human sexual experience and personally lost the proper placement of value our creator has given our bodies?

When we show little concern about how we place our bodies on display. When we could care less about leaving anything to the imagination. When our mentors are the people showing the most skin.

Have we lost the issue of VALUE?

When program after program on TV reports teenagers engaging in sexual conduct with multiple partners on the back of a school bus. When high-school age kids are admitting to sexual encounters in the double digits before they graduate. When human sexuality is considered little different than an amusement park scream machine that anyone and everyone can ride if they wish.

Have we lost the issue of VALUE?

Remember, we always treat differently what we value.

Are we failing to value sexual intimacy and the bonding it brings to relationships? Are we failing to value the sacredness and oneness such an act produces? Are we failing to realize the lofty value our creator has given our bodies to be able to anatomically take part in the creation process?

The next time somebody who belongs in a kennel (Snoop Dog) or someone who belongs in a bag (Eminem), through music or actions

tries to impress upon you that "Girl's Gone Wild" actions are where body dignity is found, remember "Victoria's Secret". Your body has value, period.

The value you place on your body will be reflected in how you use it.

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Stanley J. Leffew is the Author of, How To Be Wanted For a Lifetime of Nights and Not Just a Night of a Lifetime. His website is based on this same theme. His site's unique Newsletter takes it's subscriber into "The Coffee Shop Of Make-Believe" for life and relationship empowerment. The Coffee Shop is OPEN at <http://advice-for-lifetime-relationships.com>

Romantic Gift Giving

By L.A. Hunter

Giving a gift with a romantic impact will guarantee that she will feel special and appreciated.

One way you can achieve this is by putting the gift into a container and filling it with red silk rose petals. For example, give an ice bucket filled with the rose petals and a bottle of wine. Give a basket filled with rose petals, Bakers Dipping Chocolate, which you can pick up at the grocery store, pretzels for dipping and an aromatherapy candle. Have strawberries stashed away in the fridge for dipping also. If you're not a big shopper, fill a box with the red rose petals, crinkled up dollar bills and for an added touch, a brochure to a spa or weekend getaway.

Appliances are not an option! If she's asking for an appliance ask another family member to give it to her. If that's not possible at least turn it into a romantic gift. If it's a blender she is asking for, fill it with the rose petals and a piece of jewelry. If a toaster is in her future, give her some coupons she can redeem for breakfast in bed.

Are you proposing this Christmas?

On Christmas Eve, use a red ribbon and tie the ring to the tree or simply set the ring box on a branch. Surround the tree with red rose petals; you can even sprinkle them on the tree branches. If you

want, surprise her with a romantic dinner at home or simply ask her to share a glass of wine while watching the Christmas tree lights. If you have a fire place, you can start a fire or buy a video that simulates a fireplace.

If she doesn't discover the ring on her own say, "I think Santa came early this year." As you're pointing to the ring say, "What is that on the tree?" When she discovers the ring, pop the question. This is best done alone with no visitors. You want her to say yes because she loves you, not because she feels pressure with everyone watching.

Taking just a few minutes to think about turning an ordinary gift romantic, will make a lasting impression on your relationship.

L.A. Hunter, Romance Expert and founder of <http://www.RomeosPlaybook.com> has combined hundreds of romantic ideas and other relationship advice into the most complete guide ever published just for men. "Romeo's Playbook: A Man's Guide for Enhancing His Relationship and Sex Life" is a unique guide that looks and reads like a sports playbook; perfect for any man! It is the best husband/boyfriend "How To" book available today.

Other Resources

To receive Our Free News Letter, "ALEX MAX FASHION WORLD" with a List of the Sexiest Perfume Oils & Exotic Herbs and explaining The Reactions they can cause...friendship, sexual attraction, personal power...etc just log on to <http://www.alexmax.com> and Click Contact Us And E-mail us your Request for our Free Newsletter. Parfumeur Alex Max of Alex Max New York LLC and Alex Max Beverly Hills.

You can visit Peggy Carey, 'The Zest Lady' at www.a-1essentialoils.com for a FREE Essential Oil User's Guide. Peggy Carey is pursuing a PhD in Parapsychic Science and is working on obtaining certification as a Nutritional Consultant. She is an Aromatherapy/Wellness Consultant, and holistic health instructor and writer.

New downloadable book by Royane Real titled "Your Guide to Finding Friends, Making Friends and Keeping Friends" available at <http://www.royanereal.com>

"Learn the amazing, PROVEN technique of how to take control of your life immediately, predict your own future, by creating it , and achieve all that you desire with **this astonishing 7 minute exercise**. In a down-to-earth, and sincere style, Fraser J. Hay guides you through the entire process of how your mind works, and how you can re-program it instantly to start generating positive results in all areas of your life. Downloaded over 11,000 times in 31 countries around the world, the mindswitch method, is the ultimate personal success technique for taking control of your life, and achieving the results you want. Prove to yourself that it works in 7 minutes or less. Get your FREE copy now." <http://www.mindswitch.co.uk>