

Stronger Relationships

Workbook

"... there are things which are untrue in this reality but are true in the other" Chamalu

Nude-Thinking Counseling

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workbook



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Introduction

Welcome to Stronger Relationships. I applaud you for making the choice to dive deeper into this subject. Connecting with others on a deep and honest level will bring you love and help you grow as a human being. The fact that you are open to discovering what is true for you, where you can still learn and how to 'up' your game, is only to be respected. Change begins with yourself and only then can your relationships move to the next level. It will be quite a ride!

So go to it. Cry, scream, swear, laugh, your way through and remember to keep an open mind and never ever judge yourself for whatever you are feeling or thinking. Embrace what comes up for you, this is your truth.

Some exercises may touch you deeply and others a little less. It's all good. You are not doing it wrong, it is just not where your issues lie. Great!

For those of you who would classify themselves as 'single', please know that you have tons of relationships already that will also benefit from the work you will do. And keep in mind when that special someone does show up that you will be more prepared and capable than ever before.

Am I giving you a guarantee that your relationships will all be blissful and awesome after this program? Hell no! The tricky thing about relationships is: you are not in them by yourself. And change can freak people out, getting honest can bring things to light that you have been ignoring for years. This is not for the faint hearted. But knowing that you have put the best of yourself in the relationship and you showed up for that other person, is the recipe for magic. And many love magic and some simply don't.

You will discover that this program is not all about theory and endless talk. This is about you, so the focus is on your work. This work will contain exercises off course, but I will also ask you to do some honest soul searching, to get feedback from the people around you, to take time to digest and implement the insights in your life. As you practice you will discover new layers to question and work on. Don't be discouraged by that, it is only natural as every relationship is unique and will go through different phases.

You know I am going to encourage loads of hugging and sharing, so get ready for it by setting yourself a daily goal of at least 5 hugs. Enjoy!

Big hug, Georgina (that's 1 hug in the bag for today)

How to get the most out of this program

1. Plan time out to do the work. Not just read and look at the video's, but to then follow up and do the exercises/thinking/sharing. Find the right pace for you.
2. Take notes, write down your thoughts and insights throughout the process. This will benefit you later on, as this will always remind you of what you already know as you encounter new layers.
3. It may also be useful to note which exercises you would like to do on a regular base, to keep you awake in your relationships. To make your personal regime, and please do get creative with that and add other material.
4. Keep alert and noting down as you practice and implement.
5. Find a buddy, someone who will support you as you work on this. Who is your sparring partner, who is honest, and will challenge you when you are avoiding stuff. Someone who is kind and loving and is available for you. This may be your romantic partner, but remember that he/she will have their own stuff to deal with and may therefore at times struggle with what you are sharing. So choose wisely.



Every interaction is a Relationship

Definitions

It is not vital that everything in life is strictly defined, but sometimes you must make an exception. It gets very vague and messy if I keep talking about relationships from my perspective and you are reading/listening with your perspective of that same term. And I am not just talking about the you and I right here right now. This is a really key misunderstanding that happens between many people. So here it is: every interaction is a relationship.

That means that if you stop to pet the neighbourhood cat, that you two have a relationship going from the moment you spot the cat, engage with the cat, while you are walking away from it to get home and during the period you don't see the cat. What?? Why am I bringing cats into this? Ok, lets try the bus driver. That starts when you decide to take the bus, wait for the bus, are taking the bus and here is where it differs... as you get off the bus you let go of that connection.

So why does one continue and the other does not? When we expect to have another encounter then we keep that line of connection open.

“Ok, I get it, but do we have to be so all inclusive?”, no we don't. What I am trying to do here is break the thinking pattern that a relationship is always about 2 people who date, fall in love, have sex, live together etc. That a heterosexual monogamous romantic relationship is the blueprint for all relationships. I challenge that. In fact you already know this to be untrue, since your very first relationship of deep meaning was most likely to be with a parent or sibling. The next one was maybe a pet or friend. There were other family members and teachers. You see where I am going.

Now I am going to make a bold statement: we are all polyamorous. And no, no, that doesn't mean you cannot have a monogamous romantic relationship. But do you really consider yourself to be mono-amorous? Surely your heart is big enough to hold more than one person? I realise that polyamory is claimed as a term by those who live a non-monogamous lifestyle. Both are lifestyle choices, religious principles, that I fully respect. Mono/poly whatever. But as a human being we have the capacity to connect to many other human beings on all kinds of emotional and spiritual levels. That is what makes the subject of relationships so complex and fascinating.

But I agree, let's narrow it down. While you work through the program, I invite you to focus on your inner circle. Those people that you consider to be close. That know you pretty well, you hope. And later on you can apply what you learn on any relationship of your choosing. Deal?

Every interaction is a Relationship

Fantasy trap

Pfew, now that we have that out of the way it is time to get real about stuff that isn't.

“OMG we will be the most amazing friends, have tons of fun, and we will be there for each other through thick and thin.”

“We will be blissfully happy for the rest of our lives, have lots of sexy times, be succesful and will never hurt each other.”

Many of us have pre-conceived ideas about the form a given relationship should take. And not just the form (ie friendship, romantic partner, family, sports buddy). But also the emotions that are allowed, the level of intimacy rewarded, the excitement level involved, the growth available, the in/exclusivity in the rest of your life, the appropriate subjects to be discussed, the level of openness and honesty, time spent together, what it will look and feel like, and perhaps even the life-expectancy of that relationship.

Most often we are not aware of these lists that we check as we engage with the other person. But at times we do find disillusion and disappointment. The connection is not meeting our expectations. And yes, people can be shits, but the more likely explanation, when this is a structural thing in the relationship, is that there is a fundamental mismatch between your expectations of that relationship and what is really showing up in it.

Let me take a moment to point out that the above does not mean

- a. that this is about your sexual fantasies, or fantasies of how your life will unfold.
- b. that it is wrong to have these images in mind, these expectations. They also help you set some standards. But knowing that this is what plays a role, becoming aware of your requirements, does give you the choice to either let them go or not. Both are valid. Do not judge yourself for this.

The trap

When I was a young teenager I had this amazing friend, a boy, and we were very close. We could spend hours talking, hanging out, the usual teenage stuff. And after many years my friend started getting more physical and romantic with me. Or at least he tried. Bless him, I cut him down so many times. There was no opening in my mind, in my perception of him, to shift from the friend box to the boyfriend box. My idea of a boyfriend was deeply rooted in the Knight in Shining Armour idea. And my knight would be taller, more experienced, more mature, have a deeper voice, and swoop me off my feet rather than clumsily try to put his arm around me. My dear friend never stood a chance, not because he wasn't made of the right stuff, but because I could not see it as I was stuck in my fantasy.

Every interaction is a Relationship

That is the trap: it blocks our view. In staying in the fantasy, in holding on to that image, we cannot see what other options are right in front of us. It can limit our appreciation of the unexpected extras that came with this relationship. And it narrows the playing field we allow ourselves and the other to explore together.

This desire to live the fantasy can influence our behaviour in many ways, as you can imagine. If the requirement list of that fantasy is so fundamental to your idea of happiness, you will try and force it on each relationship. And let me remind you, both of you can be doing this at the same time, creating all kinds of conflict or misconception. And in the meantime we cannot see the other for who they are, for how they show up for you, for who you could be with them. The path of growth together is as constrained as the boxed fantasy.

So the key is awareness and the willingness to let in some new ideas. Perhaps even erase some of that picture and fill in those new blanks together. And remember to leave some room for surprise.

Exercise 1

While you were reading you must have already started some of those lists for yourself. Great! Let's get into that and practice getting some of this to the surface.

Step 1: Get your notebook out and write down the 2 key relationship types you want to explore. This can be your romantic relationship, friendship, family relation, relationship with your child (yes, so sorry to burst your bubble, even here the fantasy shows up), etc.

Step 2: Purge. Write down as many expectations, images, beliefs, requirements, needs you have about each.

Step 3: Find a quiet place (perhaps at another moment in time) and visualize these relationships separately. Go fully into the most perfect experience of what and how that relationship could be, in your fantasy. When you feel like you have fully relived the fantasy, add to or change the lists you started.

Step 4: As you review the lists, highlight the elements that are an absolute must. These indicate your standards for these relationships.

Step 5: Now look at 1 or 2 examples of these types of relationships in your life. Where did they meet your fantasy? Where did they, the relationship with them, add new elements? What did/do you perhaps not see or appreciate? Can you recognise any behaviour you might have exhibited in order to force the fantasy on the relationship? Don't judge, this is all about inquiry, insight!

Every interaction is a Relationship

The ideal human for me

When you appear in my life I expect you to be perhaps 80% perfect. And that not only means that you look a certain way, behave a certain way, have a certain lifestyle, think a certain way, it also means that you fulfill my needs. All of them!

Did you just giggle in recognition or because it's so silly? Or both. Come on, let's be honest. We do this. And yes, as we get a little older and wiser we will scrap quite a few of these ideals. But the desire to have our needs fulfilled will never decline. Our needs are key to the joy and reason for living. No way that we will scrap those off the list. In the next chapter we will discover the 6 basic human needs.

How does this differ from the fantasy trap? This is fully focussed on the person who comes into the relationship. So it is a double whammy. We have wants for the relationship itself and for the people we have them with.

Exercise 2

Paint a picture....

Write down what you envision for a romantic partner

1. What does he or she ideally look like, or what physical elements attract you most? 'He/she' will from here be 'they'
2. What are they doing with their life? What ambitions do they have? What is important to them? What are they passionate about?
3. How do they conduct themselves with others? What communication skills are important for them to have? What are their manners like?
4. Where do they stand on your key issues (family, kids, emancipation, religion, etc)?
5. How do they make you feel? What is the chemistry between you? How do they perceive you? Where are you on their priority list?

Why did I choose a romantic partner for this exercise? Because we generally have the most extensive list for those. But do try it for other people, like your best friend or boss. It is fun to see that lot's of things will still come up.

Why is it important to have this insight? Because this is how much pressure you are putting on yourself to find that person. These are the expectations you will put on the other. This is what you will fight over when they cannot or do not provide this for you. And this is what you will fear to loose if ever they were to leave you.

Every interaction is a Relationship

So what is the solution? Give up? Stop expecting anything? No. In my opinion it is in awareness that we also find the empathy for ourselves and the other in those moments that you realise you are only human and have not managed to bring this to the table. It can also be a basis for very open and clear communication, because you now have the words written down to express. You can make yourself understood. And your partner will be able to see for themselves if this is something they are willing and able to provide for you.

You will find that the list will change over time. As will the prioritisation of the elements. Coming back to it every few years is worthwhile.

