

Discovering the Real Me: A Student Textbook on
Building Successful Relationships
Book 10

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - How Do I Find My Value?
Chapter 2 - Who Am I?
Chapter 3 - Am I My Own Boss?
Chapter 4 - Resolving Inner Conflict
Chapter 5 - Respect in Relationships
Chapter 6 - Love - The Greatest Value
Chapter 7 - Friendship
Chapter 8 - How We Relate
Chapter 9 - Communication Skills
Chapter 10 - What Do Parents Really Think?
Chapter 11 - Resolving Conflict and Forgiveness
Chapter 12 - Human Sexuality and Integrity
Chapter 13 - The Challenge of Purity
Chapter 14 - Falling in Love, Friendship and Real Love
Chapter 15 - Broken Relationships
Chapter 16 - Preparation for Marriage
Chapter 17 - The Family as the School of Love

Introduction

In this book we will be discussing issues involved with building good relationship skills. As social beings, our ultimate happiness is very much connected to learning how to develop healthy relationships with others. No doubt, the most important relationships in your life involve your own family, particularly your parents and siblings. Although at this point in your life, you are unlikely to be seriously considering marriage and establishing a family quite yet, the day will come in the not-so-distant future when these things will be on your mind. It is never too early to start thinking about and preparing yourself for this most important step in your life.

Think of it this way. You are putting a lot of hours into studying and being in school, aren't you? You are preparing for your future job or career. Yet how much preparation time are you putting into learning how to be a good husband, wife or parent? This will be a major part of your adult life. It will be a large part of whether you are happy as an adult or not. It is certainly worth putting some time and study into.

The Aviator

Howard Hughes was a successful businessman. At the top of his career, he was worth billions of dollars and was the richest man in the world. Hughes was so rich and powerful, he could even affect politics and elections. A Hollywood movie has been made about his life, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Hughes was an aviator as well as a businessman and filmmaker. He won many aviation awards, invented different airplanes, and broke the world record for flying around the globe.

This financially successful and powerful man never understood how to have good relationships, though. He was married and divorced several times and had a lot of Hollywood girlfriends. But he was very unhappy and wound up very lonely. At the end of his life, he limited himself to watching movies alone in his room because he did not trust people. He would not shake hands with anyone for fear of being infected with germs. He moved from hotel to hotel, never really having a home.

He once said, "I would trade all my millions for one happy marriage."



Good relationship skills are deeply connected to the quality of our character. In last year's textbook, we spoke about the development of the heart and conscience and practicing virtues such as honesty, self-control, freedom and responsibility. These character strengths are clearly important if we are to be people capable of forming good relationships.

Because our inner life and thoughts are so important to the types of relationships we make with others, we start with several chapters dealing with ourselves as individuals. The first chapter takes up the issue of our personal value. How valuable we feel definitely influences our ability to relate with others. If we do not value ourselves, neither will we value others. As the chapter points out, however, as we serve others we come to feel our own value more. Therefore, the best way to overcome doubts about one's value is by being concerned about others. This is also the way to discover our true self—the topic of Chapter 2.

The other early chapters—"Am I My Own Boss?" and "Resolving Inner Conflict"—deal with struggles common to you and your friends on your journey to becoming adults.

Then we turn our attention to the important topic of developing relationship skills. We begin with respect, for without this there can be no connection of heart with others and love can never develop. Unfortunately, much in our world today teaches us disrespect for others. We see examples of it on TV shows between parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends, etc. People talk about how proper manners have suffered a decline over the past several decades.



"Oh, yeah?"

Love, the greatest value, is expressed in different ways according to the type of relationship. The love between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives are all expressed differently. The way of expressing love is guided by certain rules of etiquette. The family is the place where we are meant to learn these rules so, as our hearts grow, we learn the appropriate way to express love in our various relationships.

All relationships, whether inside or outside the family, present us with many challenges. In the next several chapters we discuss the elements of true friendship. We will talk about communication issues. As we try to open our hearts to one another, we sometimes find it difficult to understand the other person's point of view. Instead, we

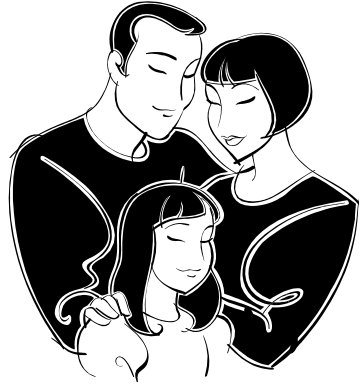
tend to press our viewpoint on others. In our relationship with our parents, we find it particularly difficult to understand them. So we have a chapter devoted to listening to their side. Then, we examine further the problem of conflict and the importance of being able to forgive.

The following chapters talk about love and sex. For teenagers, learning how to relate to the opposite sex is one of the greatest challenges of these years. What is the difference between sexual attraction and love? Between infatuation and real love? Can teenage boys and girls be “just friends” without their relationship becoming sexual? These and other issues will be explored in this course.



Given the world we live in today, guarding one's integrity and sexual purity is a great challenge facing teenagers. Unlike in the past, modern society gives little support for keeping sexually pure until marriage. Teenagers face great pressures to have sex before marriage. Yet studies show that sexual purity and self-control are key factors in preparing for both marriage and our overall character development.

The final chapters of this section talk about the realities of marriage. Unlike fairy tales, marriage is not always living “happily ever after,” but involves constant investment, patience, fidelity, sacrifice and perseverance if true, lasting love is to be found. Even the best marriages have their ups and downs and their share of conflicts. Thus, we should be prepared for the reality of marriage and not be blinded by the temporary highs of romantic love that we may feel. At the same time, we should be certain of the immense and irreplaceable value of marriage and family as the place where we come to learn what love is and as the training ground for all of our social relationships. Creating a loving family is never easy, but when we succeed there is no greater feeling of joy and fulfillment.



Let us begin the next step on the path to “Discovering the Real Me.”

CHAPTER 1 - How Do I Find My Value?

It is important to have a clear sense of our true value in life. Why? It is important because it helps us relate to other people positively. When we know our own value, we treat other people well and develop healthy relationships with them. It is also important to know our value because it gives us confidence as we face new situations and challenges. Yet it isn't always easy to find or recognize our real value.

What do *you* think gives a person his or her value? If we are to believe the ads on television or in the media, our value is determined by whether or not we own the latest styles in clothes or use the hottest new technology. The ads try to convince us that if we buy material things, we will never have to worry about being popular or having lots of friends. All our problems will be solved.

Is our value as a person determined by our wealth? Is a rich person more valuable than a poor person? Certainly people sometimes act that way. They may treat a rich person with more service and respect, probably hoping the rich person will share their wealth with them. Have you ever noticed how people treat someone who is wealthy in your community? Yet, as the story of Howard Hughes showed, the respect that people give a rich person isn't always sincere. In the end, Howard Hughes felt he could trust no one. Did he feel truly valued? No.

Does being famous make one person more valuable than another? Certainly people flock around celebrities, wanting their autographs, wanting to get close to their famous smiles, hoping to be photographed with them, and be part of the glow that seems to surround them like a halo. Less famous people are ignored in a crowd.



It would seem, then, that famous people are more valuable. Yet, again, famous people do not always feel valued for who and what they are—quite the opposite. Rock star Kurt Cobain, who had all the fame and fans a person could want, took his own life. Do you think he felt truly valued? No.

In school people might be valued for athletic achievements, having the best clothes, shoes, and backpacks, having the most developed figure or body, having nice hair, driving a good car, etcetera. But, once again, those are not the true sources of a person's value. Even if it takes a long time to realize it, those things do not last, and they do not build self-esteem. There is always something missing.

Where does our value come from? How can we feel our own value? When we talk about value and, in particular, our own value, there are three terms that are important to know and understand.

One term that is used to help us understand our value is "intrinsic value." This means a person's built-in, natural or inborn value. A second term used to describe a person's value is "objective worth"—what other people see as the person's contributions to society that make him or her a valuable person. A third term used to describe a person's value is "inner worth", or the person's own sense of worth. This is related to how purposeful a person feels his or her life is.

Intrinsic value

Democratic nations emphasize the intrinsic or inborn value of a person. They say that a human being is valuable simply because he or she is human. Such societies are based on the idea that regardless of race, color, beliefs, gender, or wealth, all human beings have the same "intrinsic" or inborn value simply because they are human. Therefore, every human being has certain rights that are protected by law. Each person is allowed an equal say in things through voting because all are considered equally valuable. Again, this is because of a human being's "intrinsic" or "built-in" value. This value is the same for everybody.

Psychologists say intrinsic human value can be scientifically seen through observation. When a baby is born, the baby cries out for and expects to be loved, cared for, fed and nurtured. A baby is born expecting the world to treat him or her as if he or she were valuable and important. Therefore, human beings have an inborn sense that they are valuable and worthy of love and care. They don't have to do anything to earn this value and worthiness. It is built into them.



Value from what a person does

Human beings also derive value from what they do. This is called "objective worth" because other people affirm the worth of their deeds. Someone who is a good singer feels valuable when people applaud. Someone who makes good grades and is offered a scholarship to a fine university feels valuable and worthy as his or her scholastic efforts are rewarded. A person who does his or her job well (however humble that job may be) feels valuable as others notice and appreciate the effort made. Don't you feel a sense of value when someone either compliments you or thanks you for having done something well? You are feeling your "objective worth."

It is also possible for a person to feel valuable for what he or she does even if others do not appreciate it. Indeed, some of the greatest people in history received a lot of rejection during their lifetimes. It was only later that people recognized the greatness of their deeds. Such people persevered in doing great things because they knew they were making worthwhile contributions to humanity.

Inner worth

The greatest sense of value and worth, though, comes from inside the person, and it comes most strongly from doing things for others. When we help someone else, we naturally feel good about ourselves and what we did. Our sense of our own value wells up within us and affirms every part of our being. We feel useful. We feel needed. We feel energized and purposeful. We want to do more in order to experience the rush of joy that comes over us when we do something that benefits someone else. Think of the last time you helped out a friend who needed your help. Didn't you feel a sense of joy or happiness afterward?

Nancy Tells:

"I was so depressed one day after school. It was a rainy afternoon, I'd gotten a bad grade, and I'd had a major fight with my mom. I felt lousy. Then when I was checking my e-mail, I noticed that the president of the student council had written me. She reminded me that I had promised to make a poster for a big charity drive the school was doing. We were going to help the poor people in our community through the funds raised. Well, once I made that poster, all my troubles seemed to melt away. I felt so full of life and hope. 'I can do something!' I thought. I went and kissed my mom and thought I'd go talk to my teacher about improving my grade. Suddenly I had all the energy in the world. I felt sheer joy."



We should never lose sight of our intrinsic value as human beings or the intrinsic value of other human beings. At the same time, our intrinsic worth alone will not make us deeply happy or satisfied. We need to achieve things; we need to accomplish things; and, most especially, we need to help others. Genuinely reaching out to help someone, to make life a little better for others, to lift up a fellow human being, fills our own hearts with true joy. We want to do more for the world then. We feel that we want to spend every spare minute helping others. Our lives take on meaning and purpose. We feel we are needed, wanted, and can use our talents and our abilities to make a valuable contribution to the world.

Two Great Movies Explore the Value of a Human Being

The famous movie, *The Third Man*, is the story of a corrupt businessman named Harry Lime. Harry Lime sold watered-down medicine to hospitals after World War II in order to make more profits. The results of the watered-down medicine were terrible, though. Many children became sick or died because of it. When asked by a friend how he could make people victims in order to gain profit, Lime says, "Victims? Don't be melodramatic." He and his friend are at the top of a Ferris wheel, and he directs his friend to look down at the people on the ground. They look like dots from the great height. "Look down there," Harry Lime says. "Would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving forever? If I offered you 20,000 pounds for every dot that stopped, would you really, old man, tell me to keep my money? Or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare?"

Harry shows by his words that he is a heartless criminal to whom people, including innocent children, are just "dots" from a distance. Their only value to him is how much money he can make from them.

Another great movie, *Schindler's List*, also explored the value of a human being. Director Stephen Spielberg, a fan of the movie *The Third Man*, also has two characters discussing human worth and money from a height. The two men are standing on a balcony. One of the men, Goeth, is the Nazi commandant of a concentration camp for Jews. The other man, Oscar Schindler, is a factory-owner who has employed Jews and who has come to value their humanity. He wants to rescue as many Jews as he can from being killed by the Germans, so he decides to bargain with Goeth for their lives. Schindler says that he will pay a certain amount of money for each Jewish person if they can be saved to come work for him in his factory.

Goeth: (puzzled) You want these people?

Schindler: These people, my people, I want my people.

Goeth: Who are you, Moses? Come on, what's this? Where's the money in this, where's the scam?...

Schindler: It's good for me. I know them, I'm familiar with them, I don't have to train them. It's good for you. I'll compensate you...

Goeth: ...You're probably scamming me somehow...

Schindler: Look, all you have to do is tell me what it's worth to you. What's a person worth to you?

Goeth: No, no, no, no. What's one worth to you?

What is a human being worth? To a man like Schindler, a human being was worth a great deal. In fact, because he valued human life, the real life Schindler was willing to give up all his money to buy the Jews he knew from the Germans. The real Schindler rescued over 1,000 Jews from death at the hands of the Nazis because of his belief in the intrinsic worth of human life.

Indeed, the intrinsic worth of human beings is one reason why we should live our lives thinking of other people more than we think of ourselves. When we do so, it affirms our own sense of worth. By valuing others, we find our own value.

One of the most famous examples of someone who recognized the inner worth of every human being is Mother Teresa. She is considered a saint by people of all different religions—and even by people of no religion! Mother Teresa felt it was important to serve "the poorest of the poor." She went to the streets of Calcutta, India, and helped people who were dying in the gutters because they had no place to go. Sometimes rats were chewing the people's feet when she found them. The people were poor, smelly, dirty, and sick. But Mother Teresa was never disgusted by them. She saw their inner worth and helped them into a bed with clean and cool sheets and gave them all the medicine, water, and care she could provide.



Through this, Mother Teresa herself became valued throughout the world. She won the Nobel Peace Prize. She is at or near the top of every "Most Admired Person" poll ever taken. People who never knew her call her "Mother" and are moved to tears by the story of her loving sacrifices for the sake of others.

Did Mother Teresa have a strong sense of self-worth or inner worth? Indeed, she did. When the Pope gave her a car as a gift, she sold it and gave the money to the poor. When the important Nobel Prize committee invited her to speak at a banquet to receive her prize, she asked them to cancel the banquet and spend the money on the poor instead. Only an extremely self-confident person, convinced of her own worth, could be so firm.

A final piece of advice: Whenever you feel like your life is worthless, look for someone less fortunate than you and help that person out because, as a fellow human being, he or she is worth it. Then both of you will glow with a sense of inner value.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do psychologists say is proof of human beings' inborn value?

2. What is "objective worth"?

3. What is the best way to feel your own value?

4. In the movies *The Third Man* and *Schindler's List*, what material thing do the men compare human value to?

5. Can human value be compared to this material thing? Why or why not?

6. Describe a book you read or a movie you saw where one of the main characters placed a high value on human life.

7. Who are the top five people you know who genuinely think of others before they think of themselves?

8. Do you think Mother Teresa was foolish to spend her time taking care of dying people?

9. What did Mother Teresa want done with the prize and banquet money from the Nobel Prize committee?

Reflection: "Inner Worth"

Think about and describe a time when you helped someone else. How did you feel afterward? How did the person feel?

Chapter 2: Who Am I?

Have you ever looked in the mirror and wondered who that person is looking back at you? Did you ever think about how complex you are as a human being? Have you ever imagined yourself a different person? Do you ever wonder about the potential that lies inside of you? It is natural to want to understand ourselves and to recognize those qualities that make us who we are.



Getting to know you

You can learn things about yourself in many different ways. One of the quickest is by exploring the way you think. It is said, "As a man thinks, so is he." Every minute of the day, all kinds of thoughts are running through your mind. Some of them you respond to; others you may be just barely aware of. What kind of thoughts are they? Are you thinking good things about others, or do you tend to distrust people? Do you generally see the good or bad side of a situation? How are you thinking about yourself? Do you usually think about your weaknesses and faults or about your good side? Do you think about other people's situations? Do you sometimes imagine yourself in someone else's position?



Thinking and doing: cause and effect

The idea that your thinking is connected directly to your behavior is not new. Many philosophers and thinkers have explored this connection. Many look upon the relationship between thinking and doing as one of cause and effect. In other words, the way one acts is the result of the way one thinks. That seems like a reasonable statement, but because we can't see others' thoughts, their behavior sometimes surprises us. For example, if a boy who never stole anything in his life suddenly becomes a thief, stealing everything in sight, his family and friends would be shocked. However, it is possible that this boy entertained thoughts of stealing for some time before finally acting upon them.

On the positive side, people who generally act in a good way do so because of their thinking. Because they think well of others, they have cultivated the habit of treating others with respect. If they see themselves as capable and intelligent, they will likely pursue a career they enjoy and in which they can advance. If they think their family members are tender, caring people, they are likely to trust them with their feelings and share openly with them, creating more closeness. Of course, there are other factors involved, such as a person's experiences, which shape behavior. Nevertheless, the way people think plants important seeds for the kind of lives they will lead.

Fortunately, if we don't like the kinds of thoughts we have, we can decide to change our thinking. In fact, by changing our thinking, we can change our mood and even our destiny. For instance, say that we are in the habit of waking up in a bad mood, thinking: "Oh no, another day! This is going to be another awful day. I feel terrible already. I have that math class that I hate, and I know I'm going to have tons of homework again tonight." Our whole day can be affected by the way we begin it. But suppose instead, we wake up thinking, "This is going to be a great day! I feel great! I'm going to study hard today, and as soon as I get home I'm going to go straight to my homework, get it done, so I'll have time to watch my favorite TV shows." The quality of our life is affected by just such a simple change of attitude.

+ or - ?

The "Glad Game"

Maybe you have seen the movie *Pollyanna*. It's about a girl who always plays a game called "The Glad Game." No matter what happens, you try to find something in it to be glad about.

For instance: the carnival that you were planning to go to has been postponed for a week. What is there to be glad about? Pollyanna would say you could be glad that you have a whole other week of looking forward to the carnival. Sometimes looking forward to something is as much fun as the actual thing itself.

Pollyanna is an orphan who is sent to live with her rich, but selfish and unfriendly aunt. She is given a dismal little room in the house, with no carpet, mirror, or pictures on the walls. Pollyanna is definitely disappointed, but she decides to be glad about something. She is glad there is no mirror so she does not have to look at her own freckles, which she hates. She is glad there are no pictures on the walls because she can appreciate the beautiful view from her window more!

Playing the "Glad Game" may seem childish, but many a great leader has led his or her people through the dark times of history by seeing the silver lining in every cloud, the light at the end of the pitch-black tunnel, and the beam of a lighthouse on a stormy night at sea. You'd be surprised at the power of this game.

Positive thinking: a tool for building good character

Finding the good in every person and in every circumstance is not easy; if it were, everyone would do it. We tend more often to notice a person's flaws or the problems in a given set of circumstances. As with everything else, thinking in a positive way is something that has to be learned, and it takes time to become good at it.

You may begin by pretending for a day that you are on secret mission. Your mission is to notice and write down three good things about the character of two of your classmates with whom you find it most difficult to get along (or you might choose a teacher or someone in your family). At the end of the day, read through your results. The next day when you see these people, remind yourself of the good qualities you noted in them, especially when their behavior bothers you. This is a good test of your self-control. Try to ignore your critical thoughts and feelings and think of the good qualities you found in them.

This simple exercise shows us how difficult it is sometimes to focus on the good in people or in our circumstances. When we do, however, we feel ourselves changing for the better. Therefore, we learn that it is possible to train ourselves how to think, and to control our state of mind.

Beyond learning to see the world and others more positively, why is it valuable to train ourselves to think in this way? It is valuable because it helps us live a happier life each day and to regard others with a better attitude. When we can do this, we treat others better, and we conduct ourselves with greater integrity and sincerity. Therefore, learning to think more positively about ourselves and the world around us is an important skill to develop while we are still young.

Who I am today

One way to get to know who you are is to observe the surroundings you have created for yourself. Pass your hand over your forehead and wipe it clean so that you are looking at the surroundings you have created for yourself with fresh eyes, or pretend you are a friend entering your room, looking into your storage or locker space, looking at your sleeping area, or your desk or closet for the first time.

You may be startled to notice, "Wow, so much green! Everything I have is green. What does green mean to me? It reminds me of growing plants. I'm a person who really wants to be growing all the time!"

You may notice, "Wow, I really lined up those pencils in a straight row. Guess I'm neater than I think I am!"

You may think, "Only a romantic would put so many pictures of flowers on the wall!"

It may be, "There isn't anything in here but balls. Basketballs, soccer balls, footballs. I guess I like ball games! Maybe I'd better sign up for a team."

Where do I come from?

To really understand ourselves, it is helpful to look at where we came from, where we are and where we are going. By looking at the past, present and future, the meaning of our lives can become clearer.

Every individual is a unique human being—unlike any other who has ever lived. At the same time, each of us was born from the union of our parents, who in turn were born from the union of their parents. So, while we are unique human beings, we are also a product of those who gave us birth, inheriting not only some of their physical features but also elements of their character. If you know your grandparents well, you may have noticed aspects of them, both physical and spiritual, in your parents and even in yourself. If you were to explore your ancestry, you might recognize some of their qualities in your immediate family members. Therefore, while we may like to emphasize our uniqueness, it is also important to appreciate our connection to those who came before us

Where am I going?

The next—and possibly most difficult—question we can ask ourselves is: "Where am I going?" Although we may have an idea of the kind of person we want to become, few of us have a solid plan of how to go about accomplishing it. If we are uncertain, we are likely to be pulled this way and that by circumstances and will never attain our goal.

To know where we are headed is a difficult task. While we are young it is worth taking the time to develop an image of the kind of person we wish to become, and how we plan to become that person. An excellent way to develop this image is to look for good role models from history, current events, and the adults in our own lives. Then we can try to model ourselves on the people we admire, ask ourselves what they would do in certain situations and try to do the same thing.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are your character strengths?

2. What are your character weaknesses?

3. Do you generally see other people in a good or bad light?

4. What makes you work harder?

5. What frustrates you?

6. How do you relate to your friends and family?

7. What were you thinking this morning when you woke up?

8. Think of yourself as being 30 years old. What kind of a person are you? What work do you do? What personal relationships do you have? Where do you live?

9. Overall, do you see yourself in a good or bad light?

Exercise: “You and the Mirror”

After reading this chapter, go to a mirror and look at yourself. Then, talk to yourself out loud. First, say three things you *don't* like about yourself. Then, say three things that you *do* like about yourself. Make sure they are real compliments to yourself! Then note how you feel.

The eyes are said to be a window to the soul or spirit. What do your eyes tell you about your spirit?

Reflection Exercise: "Treasure Map"

Close your eyes and ask: "What is my buried treasure? In other words, what are the potential qualities that lie hidden within me?" Using some kind of imagery, think of your buried treasure.

Draw a picture of your buried treasure. Then draw a map with a path leading to the treasure. The path represents your life. Show the obstacles (blocks, hindrances) and the helpers (people, resources, assistance) you have come across along the way. You may draw these as rocks, bridges, or people, if you wish.

Have a conversation with the obstacles and then with the helpers. What do you talk about?

This is an excellent exercise for further exploring your hidden talents, abilities and desires. It can help you confront your limitations and make use of your resources to reach your goals.

CHAPTER 3 - Am I My Own Boss?

Since the day we are born, our parents, or someone in their position, are responsible for us. We depend on them. They provide a home for us, feed us, and take care of us when we are sick. Hopefully, most of the time we are safe and secure and our needs are taken care of in these first years of life. We learn to walk, dress ourselves, start attending school, and our parents are always there feeding us, clothing us and helping us with our homework. Although we have moments of difficulty, make mistakes and our parents scold us, generally we are content with our home and family.



As we enter the teenage years, things may change. Life seems to get more complex; we start experiencing feelings we never had before and conflicts with our parents may start arising more often. The relationship may become strained. We may get angry at all the rules and regulations at home. We may even begin to think that since we are older now, we should have more responsibility and freedom. We may even argue with our parents or get upset with them without understanding why. Some of us may want to spend more time with our friends or go to parties and meet new friends, but our parents seem to want to control us. It also seems that we have to do more and more things around the house to help our parents. What happened? It might be helpful to look at the parent/child relationship from both sides.

Looking at both sides

What parents say...

Teenagers have no respect today; they forget how much their parents have done for them. When they were small, they were such sweet children, but now...they know nothing about life; they don't know what it means to work hard. They just want to waste their money on the latest fads, and spend time partying. They so easily judge others, especially their parents and elders. They want to be treated as grown-ups, but they don't take responsibility for their actions. Instead, they leave their parents to deal with the consequences. Sometimes they like to shock their elders with their behavior. They wear strange clothes, listen to horrible music and behave defiantly. You never know what to expect next. Our children just don't understand what it is like to be an adult.

What teenagers say...

Parents want us to be just like them. They want to relive their youth through us, while we don't want to repeat their mistakes. Parents are just worried about what their neighbors and friends will say. They don't really care about us. Parents are so boring; we have nothing to talk about. Any little thing upsets them. Mom starts crying and Dad shouts. Then we seem to go for weeks without talking to each other. They envy us because when they were young they didn't have enough fun. So they don't want us to have fun and be free. Our parents just don't understand us.

With which side do you agree? Which statements sound familiar to you?

Being a teenager in today's world isn't easy. Being a parent of a teen in today's world isn't easy, either. For both teenagers and parents, all the changes that are happening can be both thrilling and scary.

In growing up, we take one step at a time toward maturity and independence: the first day at school, the first close friendship, the first date, the first holiday away from home, high school and college graduations, the first paycheck, and so on. With these growth steps, children and parents experience joy mixed with sadness, and sometimes they struggle. Tragically, some children become suddenly free of their parents through painful circumstances, such as a mother dying or parents divorcing.

Throughout transition times, it is important for us to always remember how much our parents loved us and still love us. Our parents were the first people to take care of us and teach us. They were the first to show us the world around us. They read our first books to us, and, for better or worse, they have served as our role models of what it means to be an adult. Their example of living unselfishly for us should serve as a way of teaching us how to treat others throughout our lives. When you begin to practice and demonstrate these habits to your parents, they will begin to recognize how much you are growing and maturing and will try to treat you accordingly.



As teenagers, independence often means distancing ourselves from parents. We start spending much, even most, of our time with our friends. We seem to disagree with our parents on many things and want to do things our own way. This may lead into unhealthy and destructive types of behavior like smoking, drinking, drugs and sex. If so, let us think: is such behavior really the mark of adulthood? In reality, it means taking a huge backward step away from true adulthood.

A mature adult takes responsibility for his/her actions, has control over his/her emotions, and seeks to avoid hurting those he or she loves. A mature adult takes the future seriously and works to make the proper foundation for a successful life. He or she doesn't expect parents to help out with every difficulty.

As we grow older, we stop wanting to be treated as children and expect to be treated as adults. Our bodies look grown-up, so we feel it is our due. However, let us ask ourselves: are we really acting like adults, or are we still living and thinking in a self-centered and self-serving way? Do we act in a mature way towards our parents, showing respect, gratitude, responsibility, understanding and fairness?

Let's think for a moment: what are the main reasons for our disagreements with our parents? It's usually over things like money, clothes, friends, or coming home late. But what about the way we handle these situations?

Handling conflicts

Imagine the following scene: Jack has been planning to spend the weekend with his friends, who live far away from his home. Jack's parents don't know these particular friends. Jack's parents are worried because they don't know his friends' parents either and so don't know if they share the same values and attitudes. They tell Jack he can't go with his friends this weekend.

Jack is angry. He thinks he is grown up enough to go and he trusts his own judgment when it comes to his friends and his plans. Jack tells his parents that he is tired of staying home with them and that they treat him like a baby. He tells them that he is going regardless of what they say. Jack senses that he has hurt and upset his parents but he angrily stamps out of the living room anyway, just to make his point.

Was this the right way to handle this issue? How could things have been done differently? First of all, let's look at the situation from Jack's parents' point of view. Why didn't they want him to go with his friends? Was it really because they want Jack to have no friends and no fun? Was it because they want to control Jack's life? No. Jack's parents were probably worried that he might get in trouble somehow with these friends. They were probably afraid that something bad might happen to Jack.

It was important for Jack to understand his parents' fears and to try to relieve them. He could have done this by giving his parents more details about his friends and their parents and the planned activities for the weekend. He could have introduced his friends to his parents and arranged for his parents to talk to the adults who would be supervising the group over the weekend, either by phone or in person. Jack could have explained exactly where he would be and how he would get there. Jack needed to establish trust between his parents and his friends and their parents. Jack could have promised his parents that he would call several times over the weekend and let them know how things were going. He might have made a schedule for how he was going to take care of chores and homework that weekend. All this would have helped his parents feel better about his going away for the weekend.

What should you do if your parents do not like your friends or their parents? First of all, at least listen to their opinion. Of course, you have the right to like whom you will,

but it might be wise to listen to your parents' experience and feelings. You could tell them more about your friends while trying to understand what your parents dislike about them. If your parents resent them calling you late at night or the fact that your schoolwork has gone down since you've been spending time with these friends, you should consider their concerns seriously. If they just don't like the way your friends dress, tell your parents what you like so much about your friends and why they are special to you. Help your parents see their good qualities.

Nancy, 15, Says:

"I couldn't see why my parents thought my friend Linda was so bad. She was my best friend! She was one of the nicest girls I had ever met. With her, I felt like I could stand up to all the peer pressure, because she and I thought exactly alike about everything. My parents even used words like 'tramp' to describe her. Finally, I asked them what they didn't like about her. It turned out they thought she wore too much makeup and was 'advertising' herself. Only I knew that Linda had scars on her face from a childhood disease and she was trying to hide them with makeup. When I told them, they felt sorry for her and they started to get to know her the way I did—as a wonderful person."

The long term

Even as we live in the present and are dealing with day-to-day situations, we shouldn't forget the long-term point of view. As children grow up and mature over time, the parents will also change in their relationship to their children by relating to them as adults. The parents also may become more dependent on their children as they age. As we become older ourselves, we will probably find our respect and esteem for our parents growing. In the end, most children respond to their parents' love with loyalty and appreciation.

Parents hold a special position in the family, which is the basis of their authority. The family is a special kind of community that has been created and nurtured by the unselfish love of the parents. The bonds created there will remain forever. Eventually, we realize that no one else can give us what our parents have given us. Once we begin to realize this, we are on our way to becoming independent, strong and caring adults—ready to become parents ourselves.

My Father When I Was...

4 years old: My daddy can do anything.

5 years old: My daddy knows a whole lot.

6 years old: My dad is smarter than your dad.

8 years old: My dad doesn't know exactly everything.

10 years old: In the olden days when my dad grew up, things were sure different.

12 years old: Oh, well, naturally, father doesn't know anything about that. He is too old to remember his childhood.

14 years old: Don't pay any attention to my father. He is so old-fashioned!

21 years old: Him? My Lord, he's hopelessly out of date.

25 years old: Dad knows a little bit about it, but then he should, because he's been around so long.

30 years old: Maybe we should ask Dad what he thinks. After all, he's had a lot of experience.

35 years old: I'm not doing a single thing until I talk to Dad.

40 years old: I wonder how Dad would have handled it. He was so wise and had a world of experience.

50 years old: I'd give anything if Dad were here now so I could talk this over with him. Too bad I didn't appreciate how smart he was. I could have learned a lot from him.

Ann Landers

Columnist

Questions for Reflection

1. After reading the statements in the text by parents and children, with which side do you agree?

2. With which statements do you particularly agree?

3. With which ones do you strongly disagree? Why?

4. What do you think are the main reasons for disagreements between teenage children and their parents?

5. What is the mark of true adulthood?

6. Do you feel your parents treat you with dignity and respect?

7. Do you treat your parents with dignity and respect?

8. In what ways could you act more maturely so that your parents would treat you more as an adult?

9. What could your parents do to make you feel more like an adult?

Exercise: "Conflict Areas"

Think of three to five typical areas of conflict between parents and their teenage children. For example, a son wants to stay out late on a weekday evening and the parent says he must be home by nine o'clock. Now think of ways in which normally you would respond in these situations from the position of the teenager. Ask yourself the following question: if you responded to your parents in a different way, would it change their reaction? By your response, could you improve the situation and final result?

Reflection Exercise: "Parents' Care"

Why do we need our parents' presence and guidance, even as we grow older? At the same time, why does the care of our parents sometimes seem too much?

CHAPTER 4 - Resolving Inner Conflict

A Story from Zen Buddhism:

Two monks were walking along the banks of a river. They saw a young woman who was afraid to cross. Although the monks had taken vows never to touch a woman, the older monk picked her up and carried her to the other side of the river. The younger monk was angry about it all day. The two didn't speak until sunset, when they were allowed to break their vow of silence. Then the angry younger monk accused the older monk of polluting not only himself but also the whole order. The older monk simply answered, "I put the woman down on the other side of the river early this morning. It is only you who have been carrying her around throughout the day."

We have all had the experience of feeling inner conflict. Surely the younger monk felt a great deal of inner conflict in the above story, which he finally expressed. Maybe he wondered to himself, "Should I bring it up when we start to speak, or should I just try to forget about it?" The older monk makes the point that the younger monk has been "carrying her around throughout the day," meaning that the younger monk has been dwelling on his angry and accusatory thoughts about the woman all day long. The younger monk was in inner conflict. Did he need to be?

We all experience inner conflict. Sometimes it involves making a difficult choice. For instance, the cashier at the store gives you too much change. Do you tell her about it or do you keep the money? Imagine you see your friend cheating on a test in class. Do you tell the teacher, or, out of loyalty to your friend, pretend you don't see?

Inner conflict arises when we must either choose between two conflicting loyalties (loyalty to friends versus loyalty to honesty) or choose to do the right thing when it is more comfortable not to. Either way, the best choice is not always obvious, and while we are in the process of making it, we experience inner conflict.

Some inner conflicts occur when we find ourselves having to choose between two desires—one of a more selfish nature, the other of a more unselfish nature. You, for example, really want to go out with your friends, but your mother has asked you to take care of your little brother for the evening. It may be very hard to choose to do the unselfish thing. The reward is: you will probably feel a lot better about everything once you do choose to be unselfish. Some kind of good fortune and happiness will come your way because you did.



Inner conflict that comes when you did something wrong

Sometimes we feel a sense of inner conflict because we did something that went against our consciences. Such inner upset can affect our emotional and physical health. If you realize that you made a bad move—possibly one that resulted in someone getting hurt—the best thing to do is to make up for it as soon as possible. That is the only way to resolve the pain of such inner conflict. An apology is always a great way to start.

Of course, it is not so easy to admit you have done something wrong. It may help to write out what you plan to say to the person who was hurt. "Jane, about the other day when we..." You can practice it either in your mind or out loud so that when the moment comes, the words will flow smoothly.

You can also:

1. Admit your wrongdoing to a third person whom you trust and respect so that you can examine your action together.
2. Be willing to learn from the pangs of guilt from your conscience and resolve next time to do the right thing. Our conscience is our inborn guide, our moral compass that tries to point us in the right direction. Our conscience will hurt if we have treated others unjustly or made bad choices. We should be thankful to have a sharp and active conscience.
3. Learn to apologize. In this, practice makes perfect. Admitting when you are wrong is not the end of the world and actually can turn out to be a very wonderful experience.
4. Be willing to do something to make it up to the offended person—if possible, even more than what is required.
5. Forgive yourself and remind yourself that mistakes are part of life. Sadly, some people carry their guilt around with them for years, allowing it to destroy what could have been a happy life.

Mike, 14, Apologizes and Makes Up:

"I was really mad at my dad. He'd said I had an attitude and that if I didn't change it, I'd be in big trouble. I yelled at him then. I'm getting bigger now, and I don't have to take so much from him. I was steaming mad when I went up to my room. But then I started thinking about how I hadn't helped him with the car when he'd asked me to and just kept watching TV. Then when my mom asked me to help set the table, I put her off too. I could see by the looks on their faces that they had been upset. So I went downstairs and did what he wanted me to with the car and asked my mom if I could help her now. Then I said I was sorry. It made a big difference. All of a sudden, they were all smiles and they couldn't do enough for me!"

Inner conflict caused by someone who did something wrong to you

At other times, we may experience inner conflict because someone has done something wrong to us. We might be the victim of some injustice, misunderstanding or betrayal. It's nearly impossible to go through life without people stepping on our toes,

insulting us (sometimes not meaning to) or taking advantage of our trusting nature. No matter how much we may try to protect ourselves from the hurts and pains of life, they will happen at times.

If you are angry and resentful or thinking, "Why me?" you probably are taking energy away from other important areas of your life, such as achieving your goals in sports or academics or spending enjoyable time with your friends and family. Emotions like anger and resentment can be as corrosive as acid, hurting you far more than they hurt the other person. It's best to resolve these feelings as well as you can in order to experience inner peace rather than inner conflict.

Here are some tips for dealing with the experience of being treated unfairly:

1. Although it is painful, admit to yourself that something bad really DID happen. You are not making it up. Face the fact honestly that you were betrayed or hurt in some way. Remember, bad things sometimes happen to good people. Just because someone hurt or betrayed you doesn't mean you deserved it.
2. Tell someone you trust about the situation. Many times an older or wiser person can immediately say something to relieve some of our emotional distress. He or she can also sometimes give a comforting perspective—similar things have happened to others, and they endured. Also, that person can give some practical advice about the next step to take in trying to resolve the situation.
3. Write things out. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter and interview yourself on what happened. Use "who, what, when, where, how and why" questions and put it in non-emotional words. Then write out your feelings on another piece of paper. Be honest, clear, and describe your feelings as much as you can!
4. Ask for a meeting with the offender and try to explain your thoughts and feelings on the matter calmly. If necessary, ask for the presence of someone who won't take sides—to help clear up misunderstandings or difficulties as they arise in the course of the conversation.
5. Meditate or pray about the situation. Many people find that talking with God, or imagining a conversation with a loving parent, is a very helpful tool in resolving inner conflict, forgiving others, and coming to deeper insights about themselves and their relationships with others.
6. Forgive the one who hurt you, even if he or she cannot apologize. Maybe the person lies, cheats or has a weak-willed character. The fact is that he or she is creating his or her own future through present responses to life's challenges, and you are creating yours. Your act of forgiveness may help both of you. None of us is perfect. We all make mistakes in our relationships with others, hurting those around us. If, in those times, we would wish to be forgiven, then we must be willing to forgive.

Inner peace

The reward of resolving inner conflict is a sense of inner peace. By doing the right thing, making the right choices, making up for our harms, and forgiving those who harm us, we can feel lighter, more free, and happier. Isn't that worth the effort it takes to address and resolve the things that are bothering us?

Questions for Reflection

1. In the story of the two monks, why did the younger monk accuse the older one? What does his accusation say about him?

2. What are the root causes of inner conflict?

3. How can we resolve inner conflict when we struggle with a choice between two loyalties?

4. How can we resolve inner conflict when we struggle with a choice between right and wrong?

5. How can we resolve inner conflict when we struggle with a choice between our selfish and our unselfish natures?

6. Think of a time when you hurt someone. How could you have applied the 5 points in the text to that situation?

7. Think of a time when someone hurt you. How could you have applied the 6 points in the text to that situation?

8. Were you ever able to forgive someone who hurt you? Tell about it.

9. Do you still hold grudges against someone who hurt you in the past? Who and why?

10. Why is it difficult for us to apologize when we do something wrong?

CHAPTER 5 - Respect in Relationships

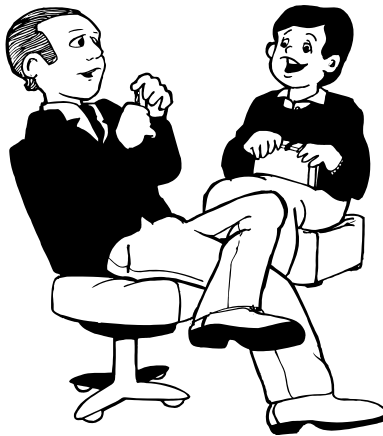
Everyone wants to be respected. Feeling "dissed" or disrespected is the source of a lot of conflicts between people. Since everyone wants respect, what exactly is it?

When we say we "respect" someone, it means that we see value in him or her and treat the person accordingly. We might respect our lab partner because he is always helpful and supportive of others in class. Or we might respect a gym assistant because she is a fair referee.

We may respect specific people for specific things, but being respectful is also a general attitude toward other people that sees them as having value and having good qualities in spite of their mistakes and faults. It means acting toward others as if each is worthy of good treatment.

A respectful person has a certain dignity because he or she affirms basic human worth. Therefore, if we want others to respect us, we should be respectful toward them. A disrespectful person has little dignity and therefore gets less respect back from others.

Respect: to treat someone or something as being valuable.



Why it's sometimes hard to respect others

There are many reasons why we have trouble respecting others. One main reason is that some people expect others to be and act a certain way and then are disappointed when they don't live up to those expectations. It is easy, then, to devalue the person. In these cases, we really need to remember to look for the good qualities in a person. It is far better for us to see a person for who he or she is, not what we expect him or her to be. If we feel disappointed, instead of becoming angry with the person, we need to ask ourselves if our expectations are too high.

A young man once said of his father, "He always tries hard to discover something he can respect in every person. He says he is never disappointed; in fact, he always finds more than he expected to!" These are words worth remembering.

Another reason why we have trouble respecting others is because we don't agree with their opinions or ideas. Each of us is a unique individual, and we each have our own

opinions and beliefs. We should respect other people even if we disagree with their views or even if they are different from us. We can still respect someone while disagreeing.

When people respect each other, they create an atmosphere that helps people feel good about themselves and about each other. They then feel motivated and encouraged to continue acting in a respectful way toward each other and to extend that good treatment to others. Showing respect builds good relationships and helps our character growth.

On the other hand, when we fail to show respect to others, problems occur in relationships. Once disrespect starts, it becomes easier to notice each other's annoying habits or to see each other in a bad light. Have you ever noticed how quickly you can dislike a classmate once you have begun to look at him or her negatively? Maybe the person did something that someone else thought was "uncool" or odd. Pretty soon, those around you begin to call this person names or treat them badly. What happened? Others were not taking the time to respect this person. They were not able to see the good qualities in that person. So, naturally, they could not treat the person with any respect.

When we notice only the things that annoy us or that we don't particularly like—or when we concentrate on external things like stains on their clothing, their messy, unusual hairstyle, or their rude behavior, it is easy to get annoyed simply by other people's presence. Their every action, no matter how harmless, bothers us. Once that happens, our negative feelings toward the person get worse and worse (even if the person is not doing anything wrong) and it is easy to somehow feel that he or she is not as good as we are. We become blinded to the good things they may do; we cannot see any good qualities in them.

However, if we change our attitude to one of respect for others, we don't seem to notice anything strange in others' behavior. Even characteristics that used to cause bad feelings now seem harmless, easily ignored, or even attractive!

The Artist

In his book *Bonds that Make Us Free*, author C. Terry Warner tells the story of two artists. One artist searches the world over for the perfect person to paint. But each person he finds has some flaw of face or figure and he gets frustrated and stops painting.

The other artist uses people around him as the subjects of his portraits. Although they are ordinary people, as he paints, he finds some beauty within each one, which he tries to bring out in his painting. Which is the true artist?

We can be true artists at life if we too learn to see and respect the beauty and good qualities in the people around us.



Terry Warner, *Bonds that Make us Free*, Shadow Mountain Publishers, 2001.

Learning respect

We have talked about what respect is and how important it is in relationships. But, where does respect begin? We know that we learn about how to form social relationships in our families. We learn things like manners. We learn to wait our turn, to ask to have things passed to us at the table, to share with others. We learn to hold doors open for others rather than letting the door slam in someone's face. Our parents instruct us to do things like allow the elderly to go first when getting on a bus or subway and to thank people who have served us. As our parents teach us how to behave socially, they are teaching us respect. They also model respectful behavior to us through the way they treat others and the way they treat members of the family.

If a husband and wife do not respect one another, their children will adopt that kind of disrespectful behavior toward each other, their parents, and others in general. Today, in many societies, children talk back to their parents, swear at them, and even order them around. That is not a truly loving family. Respect should be established first in the family. On the building block of respect, true love can develop.

In our families, we also learn to see things from another's point of view. As teenagers, our ability to see things through the eyes of another should be well-developed. At the same time, we should be concerned with how other people see us in terms of our attitudes and actions, rather than be worried about what we think of others. Why is this so important? It is important because this helps us learn how to reflect on our own behavior and attitudes so that we may continue to mature, becoming better and better people. This also helps us learn how to become more aware of and sensitive to the emotions and needs of those around us. This is also an important characteristic of respect.

Respect is important not only in family relationships and friendships. Today whole societies are infected by an atmosphere of disrespect. Students do not respect their teachers, while teachers do not respect their students. In the workplace, employers and employees show disrespect for one another. The media spreads disrespect in relationships every day through TV, movies and songs. Television shows and movies seem to encourage us to look at others with suspicion and to question their motives when people do something good for one another or show care and concern for others. However, if we learn to show respect to those close to us or in our school and neighborhoods, our communities will soon be surrounded by an atmosphere of respect.

Listening well—a great way to show respect

One of the best ways to show respect is by being a good listener. In class or in a meeting, this means not interrupting when someone else is talking—either the teacher or a fellow classmate. In personal relationships, it means listening very actively to our friend, relative, husband or wife. Listening may seem easy, but it is not. It requires some work, but it is well worth it.

People feel appreciated and genuinely valued when someone listens to them. Don't you? When your parents actually stop talking and listen to you, understand your meaning and are affected by your point of view, doesn't it feel great? Don't you feel respected—affirmed—loved?

Listening means much more than just hearing the words. Listening involves being interested in the other person. If someone feels you are genuinely interested in what he has to say, he will tend to respond back with respect and gratitude. Merely pretending to be interested doesn't work. Relationships are mostly influenced by our sincerity, and being a good listener shows sincere care for the other person.



Some people can't look at the person to whom they are listening or speaking. Rather, their eyes wander around, looking anywhere but directly at the other person. This gives an impression of not paying attention or even dishonesty. Listening involves looking at the person, reading his or her body language and picking up emotional hints from the eyes, the tone of voice, the pauses. It means listening with the heart as well as the head. When we do this, we have done another person the great favor of respecting him or her and validating his or her feelings and value as a person. People love people who will listen to them! (Sometimes they pay a psychologist a lot of money to listen to them!) Listening well makes friends. A good listener will always be in demand because a good listener shows respect for others.

All of us need and want to be respected. Let us begin by first showing respect for others. All it takes is a smile and a simple "Hello." In a world where disrespect has become so common, we can be the first to be unafraid to show respect for others. In this way, respect will flow back to us from them.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are ways of showing respect for ourselves?

2. What are ways of showing respect for others?

3. What is the relationship between respect and love?

4. Why do you think people so often show disrespect for one another?

5. How can you show respect to those with whom you disagree?

6. Even if you know you are right and the other person is wrong, how would you show respect towards this person?

7. What does a person have to do to gain your respect?

8. How should you act if you want others to respect you?

9. How do you feel when someone you care about does something to lose your respect for him/her?

Exercise: “Lists of Respect”

Make two lists with numbers one through five. Label the first list: "People I Respect the Most." Label the second list: "People Who I Feel Show Me the Most Respect." Before making each list, think carefully about the people and what they do that causes you to feel this way about them.

Who are these people—your family members, close friends, teachers, famous actors or singers? Is it more or is it less difficult to respect people you know very well? Is the respect you have for a famous figure the same as the respect you have for your friend?

Reflection Exercise: “Respect”

“When we fail to show respect, problems occur.” Do you agree with this statement? What kind of problems can arise when people fail to respect each other?

CHAPTER 6 - True Love — The Greatest Value

Everyone wants to love and be loved. In one way or another, love occupies the minds of all of us on a daily basis. It is perhaps the most written-about topic of poetry, song and story.

Why do we care so much about love? Love is something that has the potential to bring us great satisfaction and real happiness. We all dream of a love that will fill our lives with joy and last forever. Is there anyone who, deep down, would not want that kind of love?



At the same time, love seems to be extremely unpredictable and mysterious. Most of the stories and songs about love do not speak about the joys of love. There are many songs and poems about lost love, unfaithful love, the search for love, and falling in and out of love. This means that love is not always so easy to understand or to keep.

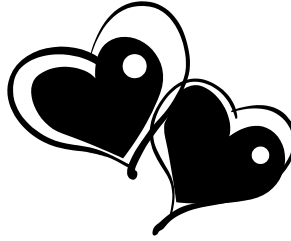
Learning about love

What is love, anyway? Many people are very confused by love. They wonder: is love something you can deliberately go out and get, or do you have to wait for it to come to you? Are some people destined to find love and others not? How can you know when you've found it? Is there such a thing as true love?

Let's look at love. One of the first things we notice is that love requires a relationship between two or more people in order to exist. It requires an "other" besides the self. Therefore, there is something about love that requires unselfishness: love always involves someone other than ourselves.

When one person gives love to another, creating a desire within the other person to return that love, a circuit is created, like electricity. This may create a bond that neither side wants to break. Eventually, the bond created between the two may become so strong that no force in the universe could break it. In this case the two partners become as one being. They can't imagine anything else but to be together in love.

Why does a circuit of love, once begun, sometimes get broken? Selfishness creeps into love relationships when instead they are meant to be focused upon the other person. That is how the circuit—and the heart—gets broken.



The highest and most mature form of love is selfless. It is love that gives without expecting anything in return. It doesn't change just because it doesn't get something back right away. Of course, everyone desires to be at the receiving end of love, but a mature person focuses more on giving love rather than receiving it. Such love is *unconditional*.

Human beings long for unconditional love. When we experience unconditional love, it gives us a deep sense of peace, security, value and well-being. This kind of love says that we are loved for who we are without having to do anything for it. We are loved not because we meet certain conditions, but simply because we have value as human beings.

In an atmosphere of unconditional love, we can feel free to let our unique potential blossom without fear of losing the love that means so much to us. Unconditional love makes it possible for us to believe in ourselves, to feel we are valuable and good. Although it affirms us as we are, unconditional love also inspires us to do and be more.

Unconditional love can commonly be seen in parental love. Truly loving parents do not stop to calculate how much they have given their children and decide that it is enough. They love their child simply because he or she is their child, and they want to give him or her everything they can so the child can have a good life. This kind of love knows no limits—the parents will work day and night for the benefit of their child.

However, a form of *conditional* love is also necessary in order for growth to occur. Parents give conditional love to their children as well.

As children, we often feel that the world revolves around us. It is natural that babies and toddlers are more self-centered than older children and grown-ups. They need to be on the receiving end of love and care. They need those who are bigger and older and more developed to do things for them.

As toddlers grow, though, a little more is expected of them. They learn to take responsibility in small ways. They learn that they cannot act any way they want to without consequences. As they learn to take responsibility, they receive approval and praise from their parents. If they don't, then they are punished or disciplined. This is conditional love.

Conditional love, guided by principles and expectations, is an important side of love. If we really love someone, we naturally want them to do good things and to feel happy about life. Parents give their children conditional love to guide and encourage the children to behave in such a way as to experience this joy. It is always for the sake of the child.

Of course, conditional love can be misused and be harmful, especially if it is the only kind of love that we experience. Love that is too conditional can leave a feeling of bitterness that we are not loved for who we are, but only when we act to please the other person. Such love can feel manipulative and controlling. Rather than feeling free to be ourselves, we may feel we can never measure up. Such love says to us:

"I will love you only as long as you make me look good as a parent."

"I will love you only as long as you are not too much time and trouble."

"I will love you only if you bring home good grades."

If we look closely at these attitudes we can see that there is self-centeredness behind them. Effective conditional love is unselfish. It is given for the sake of raising up the child or adolescent to be the best that they can be—to fulfill the child's potential so that he or she can have the fullest life.

True love

True love is unselfish love. It is always for the sake of the other person. True love may be unconditional or conditional.

A friend's conditional love may be true love: "I won't hang around with you anymore unless you stop doing drugs. I care about you too much to watch you destroy yourself. You're going to have to make a choice—drugs or me." This is love is for the benefit of the other person and is given out of concern for him or her. It is conditional but true, for it is for the sake of the growth and well-being of the other person.

A friend who would allow another friend to hurt him- or herself is not demonstrating true love, even though it might seem like unconditional love to accept the friend under any circumstances. This friend is saying, in effect, "I won't make you stop hurting yourself. Just don't leave me]."

True love seeks the welfare and benefit of the person who is loved, even at the expense of the self. It may be unconditional or unconditional.

Self-centered love

Self-centered love is a different story altogether. Self-centered love is so common, it almost appears to be the norm. It is not, however.

People marry because they think they love one another, but after a while they divorce. If love were truly present, could it simply disappear? Through bitter experience many people come to learn there is a big difference between genuine love and what often passes for love in our world.

Susannah and Jed—Love Forever?

Susannah, a girl in tenth grade, talks about her relationship with Jed: "I thought I loved Jed. We talked about getting married. We got along well and were very close. I thought he was so cute.

Then he started gaining weight. At first, I was okay with it, but after a while he put on too much. I started feeling ashamed to be seen with him, especially since I worked so hard to stay skinny myself. All the things I thought I loved about him didn't seem so important any more. I started getting angry and impatient with him and finally we broke up.

Jed lost weight over the summer and looked good the next year. But by that time I'd lost interest. I guess I realized that all the things I thought I loved about him weren't as strong as I thought they were."

We can easily be taken in by self-centered love. The motivation behind self-centered love is to fulfill one's own needs and desires rather than being truly concerned about the other, but this motivation may be very deeply buried. The person may not even be aware that this is how he or she is "loving" the other.

Self-centered love says things like:

"I'll love you as long as you make me look good."

"I'll love you as long as you have sex with me."

"I'll love you as long as you spend money on me."

When two people are in a relationship, each expecting their wants and needs to be fulfilled by the other instead of thinking what they can give to the other, that relationship eventually will fall apart. This principle is difficult to see, especially at the beginning of a romance when everything seems just perfect. At such times, swept up by the appearance of love, it's hard to see things as they really are. Because the motivation for the relationship is self-centered, though, true fulfillment and satisfaction never come. Sooner or later, the relationship breaks up, painfully. Although no one wants such love, we often find ourselves caught up in it and hurt by it.



It is easy to be fooled by self-centered love. Our emotional and sexual feelings are strong, and they carry us away. It feels like real love. But if we look deeply into our hearts or into the heart of the other person, we will see self-centeredness at work. What we really want from the person we "love" is a flattering mirror reflecting ourselves. We actually care very little for the other person and much more for the way he or she makes us feel about ourselves.

Because self-centered love is so deceptive, it is important not to get physically involved until both people are ready to make a lasting commitment to one another in marriage. Otherwise, sexual excitement blinds us to the real nature of the relationship, and we wind up with broken hearts.

Scientists have found that kind people who love people in general in an unselfish way have happier, long-lasting, love-filled marriages. The teen years are well spent learning how to develop altruistic love toward all people so that you will be better able to love the one special person you will spend your life with later on. This means not concentrating on intense one-on-one romantic relationships but learning to love all kinds of other

people—old people, little children, cousins, friends, classmates, fellow club members, neighbors, acquaintances. Then you are building up the "true love reserves" in your heart that will help you have a better and more loving marriage later on.

The importance of family

One of the best places to learn true love is life in a family. As children and teens, our life is to both learn what love is and to grow in our ability to love truly. This takes time. Through our family, we have the ideal training ground for learning about love. If you stop for a moment and think about your own family, you will begin to recognize some of the love lessons that you have learned from them.

In a future chapter we will examine in detail the role of the family as a "school of love." The more our family surrounds us with an atmosphere of unconditional love, the better for us.

Teenagers who feel unloved and uncared for are those who are most vulnerable in their relationships with others. They tend to enter relationships seeking for love and become easy prey for those who would take advantage of them. So desperate are they for love that they are blind to the motivation of others who offer them their "love" but who do not really care for them.

One of the reasons that young people keep making mistakes involving love lies in the failure of their families to provide them with long-lasting experiences of genuine love. For teenagers who have had poor family experiences, they do well to seek other relatives, grandparents, mentors, friends, and belonging in community institutions set up on the idea of caring for others. These would be churches, YMCAs or YWCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, or library groups. These institutions exist to help people. They are founded on caring for others without asking for much in return. They are founded on true, unconditional love.

Knowing we are loved communicates to us that we don't have to "win" people's love. We don't have to do certain things before someone will love us—such as have the latest shoes, jeans, or cell phone. Nor do we have to do things that we don't want to do, such as having sex with someone or trying drugs with them, just to be loved. We can be free to be who we were meant to be. We can then spend our time developing our character—which will be the basis for the love we will be able to give and receive in our future.

Questions for Reflection

1. The title of this chapter is "True Love—The Greatest Value." Do you think that love is the most important thing in life?

2. How would you define love?

3. Is love just a feeling—or something more?

4. What are the characteristics of love?

5. Explain the difference between conditional and unconditional love.

6. In what situations would conditional love be good for someone?

7. In what situations would conditional love be harmful?

8. Why does love sometimes bring pain and sorrow—or is that really love?

9. What is the difference between true love and fake love?

10. Why does it seem to be so difficult to practice true love?

Reflection Exercise: “Practicing True Love”

Create a fictional person who is able to practice true love. What kind of character does he/she have? How does he/she express love? Try to create this person in as much detail as you can. Is there anyone you know of who is close to being this type of person?

Exercise: "Love Songs"

Think of three popular songs you know about love. Write down at least some of the words to these songs. Are these songs talking about unconditional love? Conditional love? Is the singer singing about true love or self-centered love? Analyze.

CHAPTER 7 - Friendship

Friends are like jewels—something precious to be treasured. Just as we put jewels in a safe place, we should keep our friendships deep inside a safe place in our hearts. We should always appreciate and be loyal to our friends. The support and good feelings they bring into our lives can't be replaced. True friends are rare gems.



Unfortunately, many people go through their lives without ever discovering the great gift of friendship. Then they feel a sense of emptiness in their hearts. People who are lonely and without friends often feel a lack of value and importance, and they are less physically healthy too. Especially for teenagers, having a group of friends who accept and like us becomes one of the most important things in life. We often feel closer to our friends than to our own family.

The friendship virtues of acceptance, understanding and trust

A true friend is someone who accepts and understands us deeply, with whom we can share any problem. We can completely trust such friends, freely sharing the secrets of our hearts. We know that our friends will still like us in spite of our problems; they understand why we are the way we are; they will keep our secrets safe. We all need such friends.

The first step to finding such a friend is to become a true friend ourselves. Do we have the friendship virtues of being accepting? Understanding? Trustworthy?

Of course, being accepting does not mean that we accept any behavior at all in our friends. As was pointed out in the last chapter, that would not be truly loving our friends. If a friend is doing something bad or destructive, a good friend points this out. In other cases, a friend's behavior might be hurting the friendship so that it becomes harder and harder to be accepting. If the behavior is really bothering you, it is best to talk these kinds of things out as honestly as possible with the friend: "I always wind up paying when we get a snack. You say you're short of money, you lost your money, you forgot your money. I don't mind paying sometimes, but not every time. What can we do about this?"

Acceptance means that we like the person basically as they are and we are able to shrug off or discuss things with them that are less than perfect. We accept that our friend is a good person. We enjoy our friend's company. We like it when our friend calls. We enjoy being together. If our friend likes someone or something, we accept that this other person or this new something is worth liking.

Related to acceptance is understanding. Friends understand one another. They understand why the other thinks, acts, or feels a certain way. They can relate. They would think, act, or feel the same way if they were in the friend's shoes. They can empathize

with their friend. Even if a friend makes a mistake, an accepting person understands and sympathizes, accepting the friend even in his or her shame or anguish; trying to help soothe matters and make the friend feel better.

The most important side of friendship is trust. A good friend is there for his or her friend. A good friend is loyal—he or she won't desert you. A friend can be trusted with secrets. Trust between friends is such that they can deeply reveal their thoughts and feelings to one another without fear of betrayal or rejection. A friend will say nice things about his or her friend, even when the friend is not there. A friend will not allow others to say bad things about a friend. A good friend keeps his or her word and is honest. This builds trust into the friendship. Friendship cannot survive without trust.

Friends come to understand, accept, and trust each other over time as they share their hearts and experiences. Do you remember your parents always telling you to share with your brothers and sisters? It may have seemed like a pain at the time, but it was actually training for friendship. You make friends by sharing your time, troubles, joys, help, energy, and secrets. Over time, friends share more and more of themselves with one another as they grow in acceptance, understanding, and trust. This sharing is training for marriage, which scientists say is the greatest friendship in a person's life.

Here is what some teenagers had to say about their friends and their acceptance, understanding and trust:

- *We're like sisters. We don't have to pretend or put on an act around each other. We can just be ourselves. (age 13)*
- *Your best friend is someone who understands you and who likes you regardless of rumors or what anyone else says. ... You can get irritable with each other and still be friends... You can talk about anything with your best friend. (age 14)*
- *You can just be silent. You don't always have to talk or explain everything. Your friend just understands. You don't ever feel uncomfortable. You don't have to worry about losing her. She'll always be your friend. (age 15)*
- *My friend and I have been through a lot together. We've shared good times and also hard times. ... A friend sticks by you, no matter what. Lots of times, if bad rumors about you start going around, people start avoiding you or act like they don't know you. But a friend will never betray you like that! (age 16)*



How do you make friends?

Although most people in the world long for deep friendships, we don't think so deeply about how to develop such relationships. In fact, we develop friendships by being good to others—by caring, making effort, and giving.

In order to grow, friendship needs to be cared for. Some friendships just seem to happen naturally, but even the most spontaneous friendships need some effort. If a friend never calls, never makes the effort to get together, never puts aside other things for the sake of the friend, never gives a present or sends a card or offers an invitation, that person will not be able to keep friends. Friends have to give to one another.

Of course, to have any sort of friendship at all, you need to start one. In order to make friends, go where the people are. Don't wait for people to come to you! Join a team or a club. Volunteer somewhere and try to get to know your fellow volunteers. Walk home with someone and start a conversation. Sit next to someone from class at a game and strike up a conversation. Call someone who has said they'd like to get together and make a solid plan to do so. If you make the effort, you'll soon have more friends than you have time for!

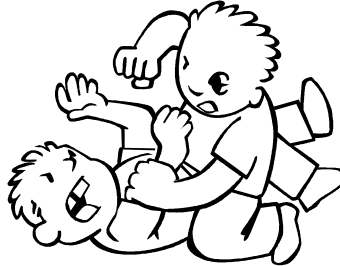
Being a Good Friend

"To have a friend, be a friend." Ralph Waldo Emerson, writer

- **Don't be too dependent and clingy, always wanting your friend to pay attention only to you and having no other friends or things to do.**
- **Don't spend all your time together talking about problems. You'll both get tired of it.**
- **When you say you are going to call or get together, follow through. A neglected phone call, a broken promise can hurt a friendship.**
- **Listen as much as you talk.**
- **Don't make fun of your friend's tastes and opinions, even if they are different from some of yours.**
- **Look nice and be clean when you are with friends**
- **Don't build your friendship up by putting others down. While it may be fun to gossip together, saying bad things about other people doesn't build a friendship. It can also make friends wonder, "If she talks this badly about other people behind their backs, what does she say about me behind my back? Can I really trust her?"**
- **Remember the old saying, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Things may not always be rosy for our friends or for us. The support of friends is important when we are sick, struggling, or going through a hard time. As we need this kind of support from our friends, so we should give it when they are having a hard time. Stick with your friends during the bad times as well as the good times.**

Problems between friends

No doubt you have had fights with your friends. Problems can come up even between the best of friends. If you think about it, it's not surprising that friends sometimes fight. Any time people are especially close, there's bound to be some fighting from time to time.



Below is a list of some of the problems that can involve friends. Take time and check the problems that you've run into. At the end of the list, add any other problems that you've experienced that you did not find on the list.

1. Your parents don't approve of your friend and don't like you spending time together, or your friend's parents don't approve of you.
2. Your friend acts one way when you're alone and another way when you're in a group of people.
3. Sometimes your friend makes rude remarks, criticizes you, or does other things that hurt your feelings.
4. Your friendship is changing. You just aren't as close as you used to be.
5. Your friend easily feels hurt if you spend time with other close friends, or you feel hurt when your friend spends time with other friends.
6. Your friend is too changeable. One day you're best friends; the next day you're not.
7. You have two friends who don't get along with each other. You feel pulled between them.
8. Your friend doesn't keep the secrets you've told her.
9. You are close to your friend, but hardly anybody else likes him. People around you wonder why you're friends with such a person.

Brainstorm some solutions to these common friendship problems with your classmates.

Questions for Reflection

1. What were your first childhood friendships like?

2. How are your current friendships like those childhood friendships?

3. What kind of friends would you like to have?

4. Do you feel good enough to have friends? Why or why not?

5. What do you fear most when it comes to making friends or having friendships?

6. What do you expect of your friends?

7. What do you give to your friends?

8. How can you be a better friend?

9. Are you someone's best friend?

Exercise: "Interview on Friendship"

Conduct the following interview with one of your parents, a grandparent, or another elder whom you respect:

1. When you were my age, did you have a good friend? If so, tell me about this person. How did the two of you get to be friends? What did you like about this person?
2. Do you still know this person? If so, how often do you see him or her? How do you stay in touch with each other? If not, how and why did the two of you end your friendship or lose contact with each other?
3. I'd like to read you a list of problems people sometimes have with their friends. (Read aloud the above list.) Did you and your friends ever run into any of these problems or any other problems? If so, how did you feel about it at the time? How do you feel about it now that you're older? How did things turn out? If you had this same problem today, would you handle it any differently?
4. Right now I'm having a problem with one of my friends. (Explain a problem you may be having with a friend and how you feel about it.) Did you ever have this problem or a similar one? If so, tell me about it. How did you handle the problem? What would you do if you were me? What advice would you give me?

Reflection Exercise

1. Do you have a best friend?

2. What is the main reason that you make friends with someone?

3. What qualities do you like most in your friends?

4. What bothers you most about your friends?

5. What do you think your friends like most about you?

6. What do you think may bother your friends about you?

7. What is the best time you and your friend ever had?

8. What is the worst fight you and your friend ever had?

9. If you don't have good friends, what can you do about it?

CHAPTER 8 - How We Relate

We can divide human relationships into several types. Two fundamental types of relationships are vertical ones and horizontal ones.

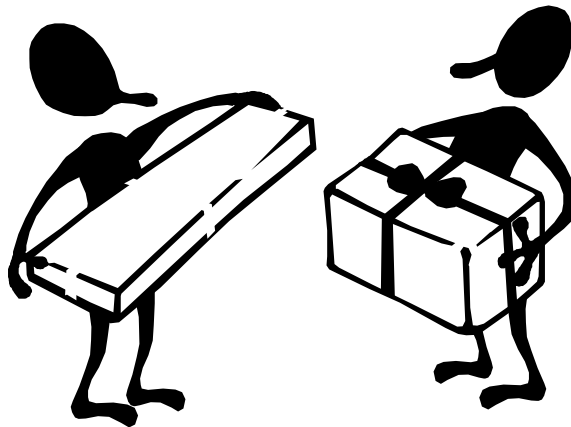
Vertical relationships are those between older and younger, such as parents and children, or grandparents and grandchildren. Examples of this outside of a family would be the relationship between boss and employee or teacher and student.

Horizontal relationships involve those between members of about the same age or position, such as brothers and sisters, husband and wife, friends, co-workers, neighbors.

In a vertical relationship, those in the senior position (grandparents, parents, teachers, other adults) possess some authority over those in the junior position (children, students, etc.). This does not mean that those in the senior position are “better” than those in the junior position or can boss them around in a mean way or mistreat them. It simply means that the seniors have more experience and wisdom, and so should be respected. Also, it means they have a duty to guide younger people with care and concern.



In horizontal relationships, we can think of people as being either on our "right" or "left" side, rather than above us. Horizontal relationships can be thought of as "two-way" because both parties are more or less on the same level and they relate in a mutual and equal fashion.



In vertical relationships, it is often the senior who gives the most to the junior and does the most to keep the relationships going. The junior's job is to respond as much as possible. Like a horizontal relationship, a vertical relationship is also a two-way street,

but it is assumed that the person in the senior position has more to give in the relationship and that the junior has more to receive.

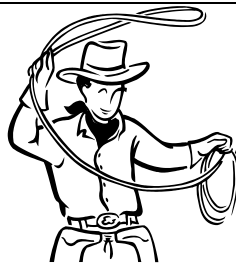
In many cultures, special words or titles are used to show the senior or junior position of people in relationships. This helps them understand how they should relate to one another.

Some relationships involve a combination of both vertical and horizontal. In some groups we may be led by a peer because he or she is more capable and experienced than us, such as the captain of a sports team or chess club. These relationships have a clear order but, unlike those of the absolute vertical type, they can change with time. It may happen that in the future or in another area, we have greater talent and experience and we become the leader over our peers. Recognizing this helps both sides to treat each other with mutual respect.

"I never met a man I didn't like"

We can also divide relationships into those with people we like and with people we don't like. We easily communicate with our friends and with people we feel some bond with, but we are often reluctant to relate with strangers or to those who wish us ill. But sometimes such relationships turn out to be the best of all. In any case, every person deserves to be treated with basic respect—even those we don't know or like.

American humorist Will Rogers was famous for saying "I never met a man I didn't like." What do you suppose he meant by that? Of course, there are always many reasons we can find not to like a person. Rogers was saying that there are also many reasons to like a person—if you really look for them.



Will Rogers: Philosopher-Cowboy "I never met a man I didn't like."

Sometimes we decide we don't like people because of bad first impressions, which may not be very accurate. Studies have shown the following to be the most frequent mistakes made in deciding whether we like someone or not:

- *Inequality.* We tend to overestimate people who are better than us in a way we admire. For instance, if I am a person who is physically weak, I may overestimate one who is physically strong, automatically attaching to him or her other noble qualities.
- *Personal bias.* We have a higher opinion of those who are like us and a lower opinion of those who are not like us. We may not like someone of a different race, nationality, religion, or from a different area with a different accent simply because they are not exactly like us.

- *External impression.* We often judge a person by their outward appearance. For instance, we tend to think a good-looking person is also kind and that an ugly person is not so nice.

These mistakes occur because we already have in our mind an idea of the kind of person we want a relationship with. When we meet people, we reach into our "reserves" of desirable images and, based upon first impressions, judge whether they fit one of the descriptions. However, by "prejudging" like this, we may be missing out on some wonderful and rewarding relationships.

"First Impressions Count"? Patty tells her story:

"We had a three hour ride to get back to the school. I got stuck sitting next to Jasmine, a girl I barely knew. Right away, I thought, "Oh, how am I going to spend three hours being with this person? What could we possibly have in common?" She looked plain and dull. Finally, just to be polite, I asked her what kinds of things she liked to do outside of school. I couldn't believe it. She was an artist. I like art too. We wound up talking about art and music and movies we liked, and the three hours went by so fast. She became my new best friend!"

The best way to relate to people is the way Will Rogers did: like everyone. Treat everyone with basic courtesy and respect, no matter who he or she is and whether you feel like you like them or not. What's on the surface is never the whole person. Make some effort in the relationship, show respect and courtesy like Patty did toward Jasmine. You may find that there is no one you can't like and respect.

A word about diversity

Imagine you are making a drawing of a nature scene. You have only one brown crayon to sketch and color with. That's fine for the earth and trees, but how will you show the sky? How will you show the water? How will you show the different types of flowers and birds? It would be much better if you had crayons of different colors to use.

Diversity makes things more beautiful. Nature is extremely diverse. That is why it is so beautiful and awe-inspiring. There is an abundance of different species of animals and plants.

Human beings are diverse too. We come in different colors, with different personalities, different backgrounds. Sometimes we speak different languages or have different accents. We have different tastes from one another. Yet this is not a bad thing. Instead of seeing people who are different from you in a negative way, see them as part of the wealth of diversity in nature. Each person is to be appreciated for his or her uniqueness.

One thing you can count on: no matter how different he or she may be from you, you have a lot more in common with other human beings than you have different from them.

Exercise: “Two Dialogues”

Please read the following two dialogues:

Dialogue A

Harry (tenth grade student): Hey, Jim, what's up? I thought that biology test on Friday was way too hard. How did you do?

Jim (tenth grade student): I thought the test was fair.

Harry: Jim, you must be crazy. That test was way too hard. I don't have all day to study, you know.

Jim: Maybe the next test will be easier for you, Harry.

Harry: Yeah, maybe. Hey, where are you going now? Do you have a coin for a phone call?

Dialogue B

Harry (tenth grade student): Hey, Bill, what's up? I thought that biology test on Friday was way too hard. What are you trying to do by giving your students an exam like that?

Bill Morgan (biology teacher): I thought the test was fair.

Harry: Bill, you must be crazy. That test was way too hard. I don't have all day to study, you know.

Bill: Maybe the next test will be easier for you, Harry.

Harry: Yeah, maybe. Hey, where are you going now? Do you have a coin for a phone call?

Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything wrong with the way Harry speaks to his teacher? Note that it is exactly the same way he speaks to his friend.
2. Why is the way we speak so important?
3. What does our way of speaking tell others about us?
4. If you were Harry and wanted to tell your biology teacher that you thought a test was unfair, how would you do it?
5. Do you think that there is a certain order in relationships—vertical and horizontal—or should we treat everyone we communicate with in the same manner?

Questions for Reflection

1. Explain the characteristics of a vertical relationship.

2. Explain the characteristics of a horizontal relationship.

3. In what ways are they different?

4. Why do you think we tend to avoid certain kinds of people?

5. What kinds of people do you avoid?

6. What kinds of people are you drawn to?

7. What does the phrase “I never met a man I didn’t like” mean?

8. Should we trust our first impressions of people?

9. Is there someone you know who you did not like at first but, as you got to know him or her you eventually became friends?

CHAPTER 9 - Communication Skills

Learning to communicate well is a very valuable and important skill. On one level, communication involves the exchange of information. On a deeper level, it involves reaching a state of mutual understanding.

Most arguments are due to a failure of two sides to understand each other deeply enough. Due to misunderstandings, we mistrust each other's motives and points of view. Good communication promotes understanding and can help solve and prevent arguments.

Growing up is often accompanied by clashes between parents and children, especially during the teenage years. Many adolescents feel their parents are too controlling. Often they like doing things that their parents feel they're not ready for. This can create a tug of war. The parents naturally want to protect their children from harm until they are old enough to make healthy, safe and wise decisions. The teenagers naturally want to be treated more as grown-ups and to be more independent. These common conflicts call for good communication skills.

How good are you at resolving problems and conflicts? How much effort do you make to prevent them from happening in the first place? Would you like to be able to communicate with your parents and others so that you may both understand each other better? Let us look at some skills that can be helpful.



Sending the message

Communication is both *sending* and *receiving* messages; in other words, talking and listening. When talking to someone about a problem, there are two ways you can express yourself. Either you can tell him that you think he is wrong, or you can tell him how the situation makes you feel.

Telling a person he or she is wrong will cause anger, hurt, and defensiveness. When this happens, communication is blocked and an argument can easily start. If you tell someone, "It's your fault!" or "You're wrong!" the other person is likely respond by saying: "It's not my fault, it's your fault!" or "No, you're the one who's wrong!"

It is better simply to try to express how you feel about the situation in question. Of course, there is still no guarantee that things will go smoothly. However, we have a better chance of being understood by stating our feelings calmly and clearly. The next section shows how to do this.

How to send “I-messages”

There are three steps to communicating clearly in the form of what are called “I-messages”:

Step 1: Describe the situation or behavior that is causing a problem. Avoid name-calling, blaming and accusing, and try to avoid using the word “you.” For example: “When I’m not allowed to go camping with my friends...” sounds much better than “When *you* don’t let me go camping with my friends...”

Step 2: Next, describe how you feel when this situation or behavior happens.

“When I’m not allowed to go camping with my friends, I feel really upset.” This sounds better than “*You* make me so upset when *you* don’t let me go camping with my friends.”

Step 3: Finally, explain *why* you feel this way. “When I’m not allowed to go camping with my friends, I feel really upset because sometimes I want to spend more time with them. They tease me about not being allowed to spend the night away from home.”

If this is expressed in a calm way, you have a far better chance of getting a positive response. At least it will open up a better dialogue where both sides may understand one another better.



What if you express your feelings to your parents but they still come back with a negative answer? When this happens, it is very easy to respond angrily. Then, you’re back in the fight, tossing accusations back and forth. No matter how angry you may feel, try to remain calm. You can say what you need to say without being insulting and loud. Remember—the way you say things is as important as what you say!

Jodi and Her Parents—Can You Find the “I” Message?

Jodi’s parents had told her she could go over to classmate Trisha’s house after school with a couple of other school friends. She was talking about it excitedly with her parents over breakfast, and she mentioned that they were planning to go to the mall.

Her parents looked upset. “You said you were going to Trisha’s house.”

“We are,” said Jodi. “Then we’re going to the mall.”

Jodi's parents looked even more upset. "We don't want you to go to the mall without any parents," said her dad.

Jodi got angry. Her parents were so unfair! What was she supposed to tell Trisha now that she'd already said she could go? But she took a couple of deep breaths. She tried to speak calmly, saying, "When you tell me I can't do something when you already told me I could, it's embarrassing in front of my friends and it messes up all our plans."

Her father said firmly, "We only gave you permission to go to Trisha's house, not the mall."

Jodi swallowed. This was true.

"What's so bad about the mall?" she wanted to know.

"There's been a lot of shoplifting incidents at the mall lately," explained her mother. "Last week, our neighbor's kids wound up being brought to the police station and they didn't even steal anything. They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Our neighbor told me the police are going to round up any kids who are hanging around there without parents until the shoplifting stops."

Even though a part of Jodi felt like saying, "Oh, we won't get in trouble!" she felt a little scared.

"How about this," she suggested. "I'll tell my friends I can't go to the mall. If they're still going, I'll just come home from school. If they're not, can I go over to Trisha's house like you said I could?"

"Yes," said her parents.

Receiving the message

Most of us are experts on how *not* to listen. We stamp out of the room. We ignore and interrupt. We shake our heads and block out the other person's words. However, this kind of behavior actually makes the problem worse because it says to our parents that their feelings and opinions are not worth listening to. Just as we believe we have the right to our feelings and opinions, we should respect the fact that they have a right to theirs. In paying attention, we pay them that respect. This doesn't mean we have to agree. How should we listen? There are three levels of listening:

The first level is called *passive listening*. This means when our parents speak to us, we keep quiet, don't interrupt, and look at them. In passive listening we simply are paying attention.

The second level is called *active listening*. Nodding or shaking our heads and making simple responses like "Uh-huh" are examples of active listening. This encourages our parents and lets them know we are listening. Using simple phrases like "That's interesting," or "I never thought of that," and asking short questions, such as "What exactly do you mean?" or "What is next?" can encourage conversation and open lines of communication with them.

The third level is called *reflective listening*. It is the best level of listening to promote good communication. In listening this way, we become like a mirror, reflecting back what has been said to us. For example, if your parents say, "You never want to do anything with your family. You're always away with your friends," they may be feeling hurt and even a little jealous. You mirror it back to them, trying to get their feelings clear: "You feel I never want to do anything with my family anymore. You feel I'm deserting the family. Is there more?" You invite them to share more of their feelings. "Yes, there is more. We feel like you don't care about us at all—after all we've done for you." The problem isn't really that you spend time with your friends; the problem is that they need reassurance that you love and respect and appreciate them. You can tell them how much you love and appreciate them and think of ways to show them that more often.

What if your parents just don't understand you and you just don't understand them, even after trying to communicate well?

Of course, we may feel hurt and angry. Still, it is better to stick with the type of constructive communication we have outlined above, since defensive reactions or return accusations only make things worse. However, in such situations you may need to find someone else to talk to, such as a grandparent, an older brother or sister, a teacher or a friend.

Improving communication skills isn't easy. It takes effort, commitment and patience. You will find that when you invest that effort in building good communication skills, whether with your parents or anyone else, the quality of your relationships in life will improve. Every day you have the opportunity to develop such skills, not only with your parents but also with many kinds of people in many kinds of situations. With practice and perseverance, these skills will grow and become a natural part of your life.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is an "I-message" as opposed to a "you-message"?

2. What are the 3 steps in an "I-message"?

3. How good are you at resolving problems and conflicts?

4. How much effort do you make to prevent them from happening in the first place?

5. How well are you able to understand your parents' point of view in a conflict situation?

6. How well do you think they understand your point of view?

7. Name and explain the 3 levels of listening.

8. Do your parents ever make fun of or reject your feelings? If so, how do you react?

Exercise: "Mother/Daughter Dialogue"

Read the following dialogue between a mother and her daughter:

Mother: "Where do you think you are going dressed like that at ten o'clock on a school night? Do you always have to sneak around? Why can't you act more like your older sister Marsha?" (The mother is immediately accusing).

Daughter: “Mom, you’re always on my back! I was just going to take the dog out for a walk. Why do you always assume I’m doing something wrong? Plus, you always compare me to Marsha, and I hate it!” (The daughter counters with a defense that her mother is always accusing her, and makes a generalization).

Mother: “You say you are just going to take the dog out for a walk? Am I supposed to believe that? Are you lying again? Is your boyfriend outside waiting for you?” (The mother ignores her daughter’s statement, and comes up with another attack.)

Daughter: “You’re always accusing me! I’m just doing what I’m supposed to do! You never listen to me! You really hate me, don’t you?” (The daughter contributes to the breakdown of the conversation, bringing in more generalizations.)

Mother: “You have no respect! You treat me like a prison guard. Just go to your room. Maybe you can think about your obnoxious behavior and come out with an apology. You cause me so much grief!” (Total communication breakdown.)

Now, playing the role of the daughter, try to improve the communication with the mother by using I-messages and constructive listening techniques. Construct a new dialogue with a better outcome.

Reflection Exercise: “Improving Your Communication”

Think of a person in your life with whom you have difficulty communicating. It seems that you always are in some kind of conflict with this person. It may be one of your parents, a sibling, a friend, etc. Try to improve your communication with this person using I-messages and good listening techniques. Afterwards, reflect on the following questions:

1. Did your communication improve in any way? How?

2. If not, why?

3. Do you think if you tried again, your communication with this person could improve further?

Chapter 10 - What Do Parents Really Think?

In our world with its changing mores and habits, relations with our parents are often hard. It probably would not be easy to find someone who considers his or her family relations perfect. Can any of us say that our parents are always understanding and supportive of us? From our side, can we say that we are always reasonable and mature in our behavior?

When a conflict arises, do you ever try to see the situation from your parents' point of view? Do you understand their concerns in life? Do you think that perhaps they may see problems where you do not?

An important thing to remember is that parents have a lot of experience in life. They can see possible consequences well because they have seen the way life works and the way people act. Sometimes they may be overly protective, but that's because they care and would hate to see anything bad happen to their children. Most parents love their children deeply from the moment they are born and would do anything for them, even giving their own lives if it meant giving their children a better chance at success and happiness.

Let's imagine a meeting of our fathers and mothers. What might they talk about?



Children in their parents' eyes

"I don't know, but in the past couple of years there have been some changes in our family which, frankly speaking, I am not happy about. I feel a gap growing between my daughter and me. I feel her leaving her family for her own world with its own laws. There is no room for my wife and I there."

"Oh, yes, my son seems to think my wife and I are hopelessly old-fashioned. Of course, in one sense, he is right—at school we didn't have many of the subjects he has now, and I just can't understand a lot of his homework. But that's no reason for him to think he is so smart and treat us with such contempt. In everything he says he seems to be implying, "It's no good talking to you about it. You wouldn't understand, anyway!"

"You know, I feel these problems are partly our fault too. Of course, our times were different, so there is this problem of the generation gap. Nevertheless, as we are older and

more experienced, let's not just complain but look for ways to bridge this gap. As far as I remember, when I was 15 I often felt like my kids feel today. I also hated to be criticized all the time. I thought I was already grown up and could determine my life by myself."



"So what do you suggest? Just let them do anything they want? Should we forget about our responsibility as parents? We feed them, wash their clothes, get them up for school, but they are never satisfied! They want absolute freedom! And tell me, please, who will keep them out of trouble? Do they really know how to handle freedom? Do they really know what responsibility means?"

"Look, who are we discussing here—some imaginary teenagers or our own children? Personally, I love my daughter and try to understand her and her point of view. Despite our disagreements, she is worthy of my respect just for who she is. She doesn't need to win my respect by being a certain way."



"Can anyone here say that they have never hurt their child, even by accident? When we did hurt them, how many of us were ready to admit it to them, apologize, and ask for their forgiveness?"

"But we can't just give in to our children! Take my son, for instance. I have approached him in various ways and tried to talk to him. He's not stupid. He reads a lot. But when it comes to school...this year alone his guidance counselor has called me three times: first, he skipped classes; then he was rude to his teacher...Well, I can understand that he is an adolescent and wants to assert himself, or maybe it was just the right weather for cutting a few classes. I used to be fifteen, too. But how can you justify his disrespect toward his teacher? Besides, I don't think he has ever tried to imagine how I feel when I have to meet his teachers or the principal. Oh, yes, he resents all the lecturing. But what about me? Why should I be held responsible for his actions? If he is as grown up as he thinks he is, let him feel the consequences of his actions, I say."

"You know, I think many of our problems are due to our trying to keep control over our children who are trying to grow up. They feel it and start working out their defense. My daughter, for instance, has become sharp and quick-tempered during the past year. I try not to pay attention to it. Instead, I try to show that I regard her as an adult whose opinion is important to me. I've begun to tell her about some of my problems and sometimes even ask for her advice. It seems to help her and it makes things easier for me as well."

"As for me, I am raising two teenage children alone. I work like a horse to have money to feed and clothe them. Sometimes by the time I get home I am so tired. Then I see my elder daughter just sitting, listening to music, without lifting a finger to help as I prepare dinner. If I say something, she makes a face and leaves the house. Meanwhile, in the sink there is a pile of dirty dishes. How can I not lose my temper? Can't she see how hard it is for me? I feel so hurt and lonely. When she runs off, I am left sitting in the kitchen crying."

Hundreds of stars in the pretty sky,
Hundreds of shells on the shore together,
Hundreds of birds that go singing by,
Hundreds of birds in the sunny weather.

Hundreds of dewdrops to greet the dawn,
Hundreds of bees in the purple clover,
Hundreds of butterflies on the lawn,
But only one mother the wide world over.

Author Unknown

"Well, whether we like it or not, our children are going to be under our wing for a long time! In our family, all the problems seem to be about money. My son is three inches taller than me, but he still thinks his mother and I should give him everything he wants. He doesn't want to wear the jacket we bought him last year anymore—it's out of fashion. A CD player is not good enough—he wants a DVD player! And the weekly allowance! Tell me, please, how much allowance does a 15-year-old need? I think they are grown-up enough to solve such problems by themselves, without turning to Daddy and Mommy all the time. I say, 'You need money? Go and earn it! There are a lot of job opportunities out there.'"

"A week ago I found a pack of cigarettes in my teenage son's backpack. I confronted him, 'Are you smoking?' 'Well, Mom,' he tells me, 'I'm not a child anymore!' Then, the other day as I was driving home I saw him with some girl who was wearing a super mini-skirt and too much makeup. It was awful! Of course, he is a desirable boyfriend. He can buy a girl chocolates and take her to the movies. He doesn't see that the girls are not interested in him but in his money and in having a good time. But he won't listen. 'I am an adult,' he says. 'I'll choose to go out with whomever I want.'"

"Oh, you are so right. The subject is better avoided. Take my Helen. She just seems to float from one romance to another. On the one hand I am glad that she is popular. But isn't it too early for such relationships? She doesn't take them seriously. I fear what will happen in a few years when she meets the person she really wants to marry. Will she be capable of developing this relationship to a deep and lasting level?"

"I have quite the opposite problem. My 15-year-old son has fallen seriously in love with my friend's daughter. His whole purpose in life is Kate. If you could only know how I'm afraid for him. He thinks it's true love. Of course, he thinks that no one else has ever experienced such a feeling before and that no one can advise him."

"My daughter has also recently fallen in love with a boyfriend who likes her very much too. Frankly, I am very worried. They are only fourteen! Oh, yes! First love! I understand it. But isn't fourteen too early? Irene and Tim are so locked into each other that nothing else exists for them. They've both rejected their other friends. They live only for each other. At the beginning of the romance, Irene was all beaming, but lately she has become exhausted by feelings she doesn't know how to handle. Our children don't yet understand that love is not simply an emotional high, but something more serious and powerful. Unfortunately, she regards all my attempts to speak to her about it as a parent's usual nagging. How can I protect her from making mistakes and being hurt? It doesn't work to just forbid her from doing things."

"My son is suffering from loneliness. I can see how unhappy and lonely he is, how much he needs support, but I cannot talk to him about it. He keeps it all inside and is afraid to let anyone get close. Does he really think I won't understand?"

Only a Dad

By Edgar Guest

Only a dad with a tired face,
Coming home from the daily race,
Bringing little of gold or fame
To show how well he has played the game;
But glad in his heart that his own rejoice
To see him come and to hear his voice.

Only a dad with a brood of four,
One of ten million men or more
Plodding along in the daily strife,
Bearing the whips and the scorns of life,
With never a whimper of pain or hate,
For the sake of those who at home await.

Only a dad, neither rich nor proud,
Merely one of the surging crowd,
Toiling, striving from day to day,
Facing whatever may come his way,
Silent whenever the harsh condemn,
And bearing it all for the love of them.

Only a dad but he gives his all,
To smooth the way for his children small,
Doing with courage stern and grim
The deeds that his father did for him.
This is the line that for him I pen:
Only a dad, but the best of men.

Conclusion

Because parents are anxious about their children, they suffer when alienation and misunderstandings spring up in family relationships. Most of them care deeply about their children.

There are as many problems as there are families. But there is one thing that unites us all—both parents and children: We want to be happy, understood and loved.

Perhaps some of the comments above remind you of similar problems in your own family. We hope it may help you to see your parents in a new light. Perhaps you can now understand some of their worries and sufferings and see that, in spite of all their faults (and who doesn't have them?) they love you and want the best for you.

Some day, no doubt, you too will be a parent. At that time you will be looking for a path to the hearts of your own children. We hope this lesson may have given you a head start to understand how you will do that.



Questions for Reflection

1. Do you feel your parents generally understand and support you?

2. Do you feel you are reasonable and mature in the way you treat your parents?

3. How would you define the generation gap?

4. When a conflict arises in your home, do you try to see the situation from your parents' point of view?

5. Do you feel that you understand your parents and their concerns?

6. Do you think perhaps your parents may see problems where you do not?

7. What do you think of the comments made by the parents in this chapter?

8. Which do you agree with? Which don't you agree with? Why?

Exercise: "Dear Child"

Write a letter to your future child—boy or girl, you choose! Express all that you hope and dream for and about him or her. Put yourself in the parental role and imagine how you would feel toward someone you brought into the world.

Reflection Exercise: "A Conflict Situation"

Recall a conflict that you had with your parents. Describe it first from your own perspective. Include not only the subject matter of the conflict but also your feelings at the time. Then, try to describe the same situation from your parents' perspective, imagining their feelings. Finally, suggest a possible solution to the situation in which neither side ends up feeling hurt or angry.

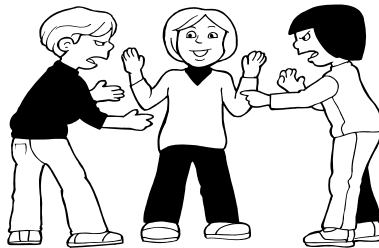
CHAPTER 11 - Resolving Conflict and Forgiveness

We live in a world of conflicts. Most of the boundaries between nations in our world today are the result of past conflicts. Many of the ongoing conflicts in our world, whether they are between nations, races or religions, have their origins in events that began hundreds or even thousands of years ago. The study of human history is the study of wars and conflicts, many of which were never resolved.



From the international to the national and down to the community and family levels, conflict is common. No doubt you have already experienced some conflicts in your own life—perhaps with your parents, a friend or a teacher, or even within yourself.

You will recall our lesson on inner conflict. In fact, most conflicts start within people and then come out in relationships with others. Destructive conflicts have their roots in selfishness and insensitivity, which cause people to do things to hurt others, who then react negatively and hurt back. All of us have been guilty at one time or another of causing others pain. We have also been at the receiving end of the insensitive and selfish actions of others.



Fight with a Friend

"Two weeks ago I had a fight with my best friend, Bill. The worst thing is, it was all my fault. It all started with my teasing him about his new girlfriend. There was nothing special about her, but Bill was really crazy about her and thought of nothing else. For some reason, it really bothered me! Then Bill began to say some nasty things back to me. Finally, at one point I lost it and shouted so loudly that many people could hear (which I normally never would have done). I shouted, "And your father had an affair with his secretary and left you and your mother!" Bill went white, grabbed his bag, and ran out the door.

The minute the words were out, I wanted to take them back. A few days before, Bill had told me about the situation at home. He was very upset about it, and then I betrayed his trust. I feel I'm the worst kind of person. I've tried to make up for my mistake in different ways, but Bill just ignores me as if I don't exist. It would be better if he hit me. How can I show him how sorry I am? How can I ever make it up to him? Will he ever forgive me?"

Few people want conflict. We would all prefer to live in peace and harmony with others. What can we do, then, to resolve conflict?

Forgiveness—the great conflict resolver

When you realize you have hurt someone, you cannot regain peace until the person you have hurt accepts your apology and forgives you. Only in this way can the relationship be restored. Without forgiveness, there is no way to resolve conflicts, no way to find peace. Conflicts multiply and escalate without forgiveness, often expanding beyond the original people involved to include more and more people.

Vendettas—Where There Is No Forgiveness

Vendettas are feuds, usually between families. The original problem is forgotten as the desire for vengeance escalates. There is no forgiveness for the other side's wrongdoings—and no being sorry for one's own.

For instance, near Naples, Italy, two rival families have been fighting for thirty years. Since the first killing in 1972, there have been thirty deaths between the two families. Now, members of each of these rich and powerful families must hide away from one another behind protected walls, living military-style. Their homes are like forts, with barbed wire and guard dogs.

Neither side can forgive the other. Neither can let go of their anger and hatred. Their lives are therefore a constant cycle of revenge killings, with no hope of peace.

All of us need to learn how to forgive those who hurt and betray us, because we all make mistakes. If you have ever experienced the tremendous feeling of relief that comes when someone you have hurt forgives you, it will be easier for you to understand and forgive others when you have been hurt. In every relationship—every friendship, every marriage—there will be times when one will do something to hurt the other. At some point we all face times when we need to forgive and be forgiven.

Let us think more deeply about what forgiveness involves.

Forgiveness involves the ability to put aside our resentment and the desire to punish the person who made us suffer. It involves the ability to overcome our anger and look at the person with a fresh heart. Forgiveness releases the one who caused us pain. It also frees us from our own resentment and anger. By forgiving a person who has offended us, we can experience a deep feeling of inner peace.

If we develop the ability to forgive, it frees us to relate with a wide circle of people. We do not need to limit our relationships to only those who love and understand us. The borders of our world are opened. We are not afraid of possible misunderstandings, because we are strong enough to forgive people.

But how do we forgive?



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the great peacemaker, had this to say about learning to forgive:

We must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he is. An element of goodness may be found even in our worst enemy...there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. When we look beneath the surface, beneath the impulsive evil deed, we see within our enemy-neighbor a measure of goodness and know that the viciousness and evilness of his acts are not quite representative of all that he is. We see him in a new light.¹

By realizing that the person who hurt us is not all bad—any more than we are all good—we can begin to forgive. These are ways to do it:

1. *Resist the temptation to be judgmental.* Remember, you do not know all the circumstances surrounding any event or person.
2. *Learn to be compassionate.* The best method is to use your imagination and put yourself in the other person's shoes. Then ask yourself whether the fault is really entirely the other person's, or whether you need to honestly admit that some of the blame is yours.
3. *Imagine the whole problem in terms of reconciliation.* Visualize healing the broken relationship. Imagine yourself free of the poisons of anger and resentment. In your renewed state, imagine the things you can accomplish with the increased energy that will come to you from being full of forgiveness.

Holding onto anger and hatred will never bring conflict to an end. Someone once said that continuing to hate someone is like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die from it! Actually, the only person who "dies" of poisonous hatred is the one who hates. To forgive is to experience new life and peace in your own heart.

¹ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Loving Your Enemies," *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1963) p. 49.

Questions for Reflection

1. Why do you think conflicts between people arise in the first place?

2. Is it easy to tell who is at fault? How do we do this?

3. What is the way to resolve conflicts?

4. Give some examples of conflicts that have and have not been resolved.

5. Why have some conflicts been resolved and others not?

6. Is it difficult to really forgive someone? Give an example.

7. Have you ever been forgiven for a wrongful act? How did it feel?

8. How is loving your enemy related to forgiveness?

9. Is there a conflict in your life you would like to resolve? How could you do it?

Exercise: “Linda”

Linda felt awful. All year Natalie had said mean things to her and treated her badly. Linda had no idea what she had done to cause such anger and frustration in Natalie. In fact, they used to be friends. One afternoon Linda was walking through the hall at school after everyone had gone home when she overheard two of Natalie's teachers talking.

"I just found out that Natalie's parents got divorced last year," said one.

"Yes," the other responded. "She told me recently that she has to go home immediately after school every day to take care of her younger sister. She cooks for her, too, and barely has time to finish her school work because her mother works late hours and her father has moved out."

- How do you think Natalie felt about herself?

- Do you think that people who feel badly about themselves may tend to treat others badly also? Why? After hearing about Natalie's situation, do you think Linda will see Natalie differently? How do you think she will treat Natalie differently?

Reflection Exercise: “Forgiveness”

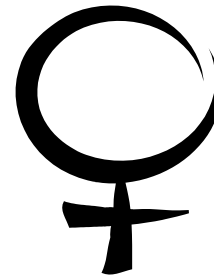
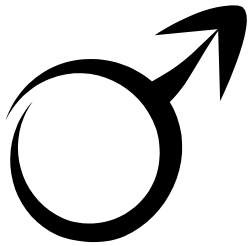
Remember a situation when you felt offended. What were the unpleasant feelings connected with the offense and the person who hurt you? Do you think your offender understood your feelings? Now try to imagine that you are the offender and describe the same situation from his/her point of view. What is the difference between the stories? What do you think caused that person to behave the way he/she did? Did he/she offend you on purpose, or was it accidental? Have your feelings toward your offender changed at all? Can you forgive him/her?

CHAPTER 12 - Human Sexuality and Integrity

On TV, in movies, and in songs, sex is shown as being something people get into pretty easily and without consequences. You don't hear about diseases, unwanted pregnancies, or the emotional and psychological damage that comes from casual sexual relationships in these stories.

In real life, though, things are not so simple. Sexuality has the potential to bring new life into the world in the form of a baby. Physically intimate, it has the potential to spread diseases and germs. Sexuality is also a deep part of the human personality. It is related to the mind and heart as well as to the body. Sex is very, very important and shouldn't be treated lightly. .

Sex in the sense of our gender—male or female—is determined from the moment we come into being. Throughout life, everything we think, feel and do, we experience as a male or female. This is because our sexuality is a gift for differentiating and attracting men and women to one another.



The masculine and feminine natures complement each other. Men and women experience balance, harmony and completion through each other. Because of this men and women sense a deep need for each other, of which sex is a part. Yet sex is not the whole thing and should not be separated from the deeper aspects of men and woman relating to one another on the levels of the mind and the heart.

Respecting our sexuality

In order for sex to have a constructive, wonderful role in our lives, we need to have a deep respect for its power and understand the proper place and time for it. While in a physical sense we all grow to sexual maturity without any effort—it just happens—does this mean that we have the emotional, mental, social, and spiritual maturity needed to handle a sexual relationship? No. Reaching puberty does not mean that we are mature enough inside to have sex.

The following story illustrates the need for preparation and guidance before going ahead with something we may be physically read for, but not emotional and mentally ready for.

You are driving your father's car through the center of a big city together with your 12-year old brother. Suddenly, he asks you to let him drive awhile. He has a strong desire to drive and, being tall for his age, he is physically able to do so. Very confidently he tells you not to worry, assuring you that he can handle it. But you know very well that he is not ready for this. He may kill himself, you, and someone else, too.

If you really love your brother and care about his well-being, you won't let him drive through the center of town. You know he risks having a car crash.

Are we sometimes like this 12 year old boy, thinking we are mature enough to do certain things because we are physically big enough, even though we aren't really ready inside? With our hearts pounding and our pulses racing, we seem to approach the issue of sexuality the way the 12 year old is approaching driving a car. While we may be physically able to have sex, that doesn't mean we have the judgment, skills, and maturity to handle it without getting into a mental and emotional crash.

In nature, nothing reproduces before it has completely matured. If you are given a rosebud, you are given a promise of beauty. You can't just rip it open and enjoy its fragrance, softness and color immediately. If you did, you would ruin it. You can only enjoy a rose if you keep it in a protected place and wait for it to unfold. Then it will share with you all its fragrance, color and softness—all in its own time. In the same way, the beauty of sex can only be experienced after we have reached full maturity in our hearts and characters, not just in our bodies.



Sex and love

Sexual stimulation feels wonderful. It can feel like love, and we all want love. Yet sex and love are not the same thing. It is easy to get them mixed up. What exactly is the difference between sex and love? Sex, of course, is physical. Love is spiritual—it has to do with the mind and the heart. The only place where the two can come together successfully is in marriage.

Human sexuality is not just instinctual and uncontrollable, like an animal's. Human sexuality involves thought, emotion, social relationships, morality and free will. For humans, sex is meant to be an expression of love for someone we have committed our life to rather than simple physical gratification or reproduction. If we try to use our sexuality only to gain physical satisfaction, eventually our minds and hearts will suffer greatly for being left out of the equation.

Sex alone can never substitute for love, nor can it be separated from love. If we have sex, hoping to find love, we certainly will be disappointed and hurt. Love has to come first, accompanied by trust, responsibility, and commitment.

Through the act of sexual love, married couples give themselves to one another in body, mind, and heart. For married couples, sex is a sign of love and an exclusive right they share. Each values the other as the most important person in his or her life, as the marriage vows state: “till death us do part.” At the heart of sexual intercourse is the expression of love arising from a continuous, committed relationship. Sex is the expression of complete trust and security between two people linked in a profound and permanent way.

Cut off from marriage, a sexual relationship is torn from its roots. Outside of marriage, the sexual act awakens that which is most intimate, sacred and vulnerable in the human heart—without being able to fulfill the heart’s deepest desire.

There is a longing deep within the human heart to be in a permanent relationship of complete love with a person of the opposite sex and to raise a family with that person. Sex awakens these desires, but, without the marriage relationship, it does not fulfill them. The result is emotional and psychological destruction.

Sexual integrity

Sexual integrity allows us the freedom to develop and strengthen our character so that we can experience the fullness of love when we are married. Integrity mean completeness or wholeness. Wholeness involves unity between our mind and body, the balancing of all the parts of the self.

"Up on Fong Mountain"

In the story "Up on Fong Mountain" fifteen year old Jessie is being pressured by her boyfriend, B.D., to have sex with him.

In spite of the fact that she likes B.D. very much, Jessie has this to say about her sexual integrity:

"At this point in my life, the way I feel is—my body is my body. And I don't care to share it with anyone. I don't know totally why I feel that way, and I don't think I have to know why. It's just the way I feel. Sometimes in the morning I look at myself in the mirror and I feel proud. I look myself over and I think, hey, yeah, Jessie, that's your body. Terrific!"

When B.D. pressures Jessie too much sexually and in other ways, the couple breaks up. This is painful for both of them. But Jessie's sexual integrity causes B.D. to think over the way he has been treating her. He realizes he has been pushy in a lot of ways and that good relationships are built on cooperation, not just one person having his way all the time. In the end, B.D. decides to respect Jessie's choices, and Jessie and B.D. are happier together because Jessie stood up for herself.

Norma Fox Mazer, "Up on Fong Mountain," from *The Art of Loving Well*, Boston University School of Education, 1993.

Sexual integrity creates order and beauty in one’s character and happiness in one’s life. It allows a person to develop the inner strength and skills needed for a lifetime of love.

Marriage requires much more friendship than romance, and one who intends to marry someday needs to cultivate the art of friendship rather than sexual techniques.

In comparison with sexual integrity, sexual impulsiveness and permissiveness distort a person's character, leading a person to become extremely self-centered. Sexually permissive people are like starving people, scrounging wherever and whatever they can for food. It is as if within them there is an inner emptiness, a bottomless pit crying out to be filled. They are actually starving for love, but they are trying to satisfy their hunger through sex. This only drives love further away, because they are hurting their minds and hearts, the places where love lives.

The desire for oneness with another is a driving force in life. It is a strong desire of the heart. Our deepest desire is to experience total oneness with the person who is our marriage mate for life. Sex is the physical expression of this desire for oneness. Yet we cannot have this type of oneness with one person, then turn around and become one with another. This will rip us apart inside. One marital and sexual partner for life is the way to keep our integrity intact so that we are better able to love and be loved for the whole of our life.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the difference between sex and love? In what ways might they be the same?

2. What is the difference between animal and human sexuality?

3. How would you describe sexual maturity?

4. If you were a parent, how would you talk to your teenage child about the issue of sexuality and sexual desire?

5. How would you describe the spiritual, mental, emotional and moral aspects of human sexuality?

6. Discuss freedom and responsibility in relation to sexuality.

7. Compare mature with immature sexual behavior.

8. Is sex a need or a desire?

9. Is love a need or a desire?

10. With respect to sexuality, how can a person determine if the mind or the body is in control?

Exercise: “TV Critic”

You are a TV critic for your local newspaper. Think about an episode from your favorite TV program and write an article about it from the point of view of sexual integrity. Point out who was mature, who wasn't and what the consequences of each type of sexual behavior were. Point out what you think the consequences would be in real life.

Reflection Exercise: “Sexual Integrity and Music”

Think of your favorite song or songs. Write down some of the lyrics that you remember. Now analyze the lyrics. Are there any phrases or words that have a sexual meaning? What are these words telling people about sexuality? Is it encouraging listeners to be loose or to be careful about their sexuality? Does it express a connection between sex and marriage? Does it focus on the physical aspect of sex, or does it bring in romantic, moral or spiritual aspects?

Was your song ever shown on video? If so and you've seen the video, try to analyze the actions and clothing and movements in the video. What were they saying about sex? What kind of values were they expressing?

CHAPTER 13 - The Challenge of Purity

Let's begin by answering some of the questions that millions of teenagers ask. What is purity? What is modesty? How do you practice these things? What are some of the consequences if you don't? How "far" should you go? What if you've already gone too far?

What is purity?

Purity means very simply to have sexual self-control—to stay within certain boundaries. The result of purity is inner peace and more self-respect. People who remain pure feel more free. They enjoy many things in life more because they are not focused in on one thing—sex. Those teens who remain pure are more free to develop healthy friendships because they don't have to play any kind of dating game.

People who remain pure are like a breath of fresh air and a burst of laughter. Even though the media would have you believe that having sex is the only thing in the world, people who maintain their purity are actually having more fun than people who are engaging in illicit sexual relationships. The lives and hearts of people who remain pure are open to many wonderful adventures and they have many heart-satisfying relationships. They are not dragged down into the emotional entanglement and confusion that premarital sex brings on. They are also free of the fear of disease and unwanted pregnancy. Being pure is a wonderful thing.

Even in today's world, people are practicing purity. In America, the birthplace of the Sexual Revolution, more and more teenagers are choosing to stay sexually pure. Why? Because they don't want to experience the emotional suffering premarital sexual relationships can bring, with their lack of deep commitment and lack of mutual responsibility. They don't want diseases and unwanted pregnancies. They want true and lasting love—which only springs out of sexual purity.



If we do give in to the temptation to have sex before marriage, even if it feels good for a while, we wind up feeling very muddled inside. When we then meet someone who is pure, we feel ashamed of ourselves. The only way to avoid feeling ashamed is to stay pure in the first place.

Another way to look at premarital sex is to think about what we wear each day. None of us would want to wear someone else's stained, used clothes. Yet premarital sexual relationships are the same as wearing stained, used clothes except that the stain is inside us. Maybe no one can see it, but the stain is still there. When we have lost our sexual purity, sooner or later we will definitely feel the difference, and we will regret our decision to have sex without marriage.

How do we protect our purity?

Sooner or later, we will face sexual temptation. What will we do then? We need to prepare for this moment by developing a pure mind, clean speech, modest dress and virtuous actions now. Otherwise, the temptation may be too strong for us.

How do we develop a pure mind? We have to stay away from the mind's "junk food." The mind is an amazing gift. It has the ability to take in information and store it so we can use it later. However, the contents of our mind are not easily erased. What goes in stays. If we fill our mind with images of sexual passion, disobedience, rebellion and violence, how can we ever develop good character traits like being loving, considerate and kind? What goes in is eventually reflected in our actions, speech, or attitudes.

Think of a popular song or advertisement theme that you may have heard recently. After listening to it enough times, don't you find yourself singing along with the music when you hear it on the radio? Doesn't it sometimes play in your mind without you even wanting it to? That is the power of the mind to absorb things. Or take speech. If you are around others who use dirty words and swear all the time, you eventually speak in the same way. The same is true for sexual images. If you surround yourself with sexual images or pornography, it doesn't take long to begin to look at those around you in a sexual way rather than as a loving, caring friend. How we speak also reflects the content of our mind. Telling a dirty joke simply says to others that we regard our sexuality—and theirs—very cheaply.

Dressing immodestly sends a message "For sale—cheap!" It looks like we don't respect ourselves. So how will others respect us? How can we expect them to look at our minds and hearts—the most important parts of us—when we are advertising our bodies so loudly? Dressing immodestly also stimulates lustful desires in others. Even if we think we just look fashionable, if people of the opposite sex begin to express lust toward us, commenting on our clothes or bodies, then we need to think about wearing clothes that are less revealing. We want people to like us for who we are and what we are like inside—not because we are wearing jeans so tight they show every muscle!

Virtuous actions would include avoiding being in tempting situations. Sexual passion can flare up very quickly, so it is important to avoid being alone with a member of the opposite sex, especially in private or dark places. Don't tempt fate by thinking you will only go so far and then stop. It gets harder and harder to stop once you've gotten started kissing, touching each other, French kissing or holding each other very close. Many young people have thought they could control themselves and only go so far only to feel regret later that they gave in to their passion and had sex with someone.

How Is Premarital Sex like a Frog in Hot Water?

Did you know that if you put a frog in a pot of water and heat the pot very slowly, you will soon have a boiled, dead frog?

However, if you put a frog into a pot of water that is already boiling hot, the frog will jump out to safety.

The reason for this is that as the water heats up slowly by degrees, the frog doesn't notice how hot it is getting until it is too late.

Sexual passion is like that. It heats up slowly, by degrees, until before you know what has happened, it is boiling hot and it is too late to jump away to safety.

Often we feel attracted to someone. Thinking that we can control ourselves and our half-formed emotions, we put ourselves in situations where we become closer and closer to that person. Before we know it, we are too close to pull away from the relationship, and we do something that we later regret.

The best advice is: Don't start. Save all your touching, kissing and holding each other for the love of your life. All that saved up passion will make your marriage wonderful! It's like putting money in the bank for a rich future.

But what if it is love?

Many teens ask, "What if you're really in love with a person? What if you're close and committed and you're *almost* married to them? Is sex okay, then?" Well, do you know that 50% of engagements are broken? That's a high percentage of people who thought they were really in love and "almost married."

What if older teens and even some adults tell you, "It's okay as long as you are in love"? But what is love? Most people, even adults, are confused about what love is. It's very hard to tell if it is infatuation or love. Sex in those situations, even if sincere, only multiplies the confusion.

Nine Time Olympic Gold Medalist Urges Sexual Purity

Carl Lewis has been voted the Greatest Olympian of the 20th Century. Some think he is the greatest athlete of all time. Lewis won nine Olympic Gold Medals and one Silver during his career as a sprinter and long jumper. Some people call him "King Carl."

During his career, Carl Lewis won 65 straight competitions in the long jump. He won his last Olympic Gold Medal doing the long jump at the age of 35. One commentator said that he defeated gravity, history, and getting older with that one great leap.

As a sprinter, Lewis was so fast that other runners sometimes felt like they were standing still compared to him. He won one of his Gold Medals by leaving the pack behind him by eight feet—a winning measure unheard of before in the Olympics.

At the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Carl took time out of a busy schedule to address a large crowd of young people who were taking a "Purity Pledge"—vowing to remain sexually abstinent until marriage. The crowd was gathered under the name of "True Love Waits," meaning that true love waits until marriage to have sex.

Lewis urged young people to have the moral courage to remain sexually abstinent until marriage. He told them "Set yourself apart in your group by being a leader and not giving in to what others are doing."

This is a great and appropriate message from a man who so often left the pack behind him as he ran or leaped to glory.



Renewed purity

What if you have already gone too far? Sadly, many teens have done this. Thinking it was love, they went ahead and had sex, only to find some time later that they really didn't love each other. Sometimes one of the partners decides this and suddenly "dumps" the other. The result? Heartbreak, regret, disillusionment, distrust of the opposite sex, depression, and feeling used. Does it mean that everything is lost and that there is no way back?

Even if we make a mistake and go down a destructive path for a while, we can still recover some purity as long as we realize and admit our mistakes. In fact, the sooner we do the better. Renewing purity is not as good as keeping it in the first place, but it is an excellent secondary choice if a person has lost his or her virginity. The person who makes this choice will enjoy many of the benefits of purity once he or she has been practicing it for some time. The essential thing is to be honest.

As a teenager, you do not have to suffer because of the sexually-cheapened culture you live in. With wisdom, courage and patience, you can discover the true and lasting satisfaction that springs out of sexual purity—and become one of the growing numbers of teens who are saving sex for marriage and real love.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is purity?

2. Why can we say that purity brings freedom? What kind of freedom is it?

3. What are some of the other benefits of purity?

4. What are some of the ways to stay pure?

5. How can premarital sex get in the way of learning about true love?

6. How can we develop a pure mind? Clean speech? Virtuous action?

7. What is renewed purity?

8. Is sex okay if you think you really love the other person but are still not married?

9. What are some of the dangers of engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage?

10. How might your choice either to be pure or to engage in pre-marital sex influence other parts of your life?

Exercise: "Movie Review"

Choose a movie and review it. You can follow this format:

- What was the main theme of the movie?
- What were the values of the main characters in the movie?
- Did their values conflict? If so, did this create any problems between the characters?
- What were the values that the movie was trying to teach?
- If sex was a factor in the movie, what was the attitude expressed about it?
- Do you agree with the movie's attitude towards sex?
- Do you agree with the other values the movie conveyed?
- How do you think this movie may influence people?

[illegible]

Reflection Exercise: “Showing Personal Values”

Consider how the way you dress, speak and act shows your inner values. Look at other people and try to understand their basic values, especially regarding sex, by the way they present themselves and act with others. Write down some of your thoughts.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER 14 - Falling in Love, Friendship and Real Love

Growing up involves learning how to handle our emotions. As we enter our teenage years, our feelings and emotions become stronger. Interest in the opposite sex starts to develop. As we experience these changes, important questions start to surface. Primary among them is trying to understand what this thing called love is. Is falling in love the same as real love? Can there be simple friendship between boys and girls without romance being involved? Here are some typical situations:

1. Maya is so attractive. I really like to spend time with her. The other day I invited her to go to the cafe, and she said yes. We had a great time! She definitely likes me! We walked home together and just before she left I kissed her. *Is it love already?*
2. Three weeks ago I met a boy. He's two years older than me, very tall and handsome. I dream about him every night, imagine us going to the movies together, talking about everything. In my dreams I'm so cool, but in reality I'm afraid even to approach him. Plus, he doesn't pay any attention to me. *What can I do?*
3. I really like Rita. We have known each other almost from kindergarten. It's so great spending time together; we understand each other. But why is it that this year all our classmates have begun to tease us, calling us "love birds"? There is nothing like that between us. We are simply friends! *Why can't they understand?*
4. A year ago I fell in love with a boy named Mike. At the beginning it was so wonderful; I felt as if I had wings. The whole world seemed so sunny, happy and welcoming! I felt that my heart was really open for the first time in my life. I was able to embrace so many people. I wanted everybody to be as happy as I was. And Mike loved me too. But now—I don't even know how to explain it. We still love each other, but most of the joy has gone out of the relationship! Now I feel so exhausted all the time. I'm afraid it was too much for both of us. The feelings are so powerful; I simply don't know how to cope with them. *Is this the way love is supposed to be?*

Let's look at some of these issues.



Friendship and love

Let us state from the first that a boy and a girl *can* be just friends. The relationship does not have to become romantic. This is so because a person of the opposite sex is not just an object of attraction. He or she is a full person. If we are in control of our sexual desire and look beyond appearance into the heart of the other person, we can find similar interests and values to share in a friendly way.

Friends of the opposite sex can help us to grow in a healthy way. If we can keep the relationship non-sexual and become close in the manner of a brother or sister, it can actually help us prepare for marriage, since our spouse should really be our closest friend.

That's how one woman felt when she recalled her high-school years. She had learned a lot about relating to men as friends when she was a teenager.

"I remember when we were 15, a whole group of girls gathered together with a teacher, asking her how to create normal relationships with boys. And the main thing she told us was that there is a way to become friends with boys without getting involved in romantic affairs. We simply need to be sincere, not be afraid to appreciate our male friends, and notice and encourage them when they try to do something for us—even if it turns out to be clumsy."

Getting into the habit of being sincere, appreciative, noticing and encouraging with boys helped this woman be that way with her spouse later in life. The trials of day-to-day married life together are not always so romantic, but if a couple knows how to stay friends, it keeps the good feelings (including romantic ones) flowing.

High school is a time to build many friendships, including with the opposite sex, because this should be a time to grow in relating with many types of people. Friendship may grow into deep affection and still be non-romantic. These friends grow close, sharing their thoughts and values, always ready to support and help each other out. They practice the skills of loyalty, trustworthiness, and mutual giving to cement their friendship and their future with someone for whom they will feel more than friendship.

Infatuation or "falling in love"

When we "fall in love" with someone, it can make us dizzy. We see only the good in that person. No matter what others may tell us, we see only beauty in him or her and are blind to everything else. The very mention of the person makes us feel happy and uplifted. The person seems absolutely perfect and totally desirable in every way. This is called an "infatuation." As teenagers we are very idealistic, and we may attach ideal qualities to a person we are attracted to but do not really know very well.

This "falling in love" experience stirs up powerful feelings and thoughts that we probably have never experienced before. It's very romantic, but it's far from reality. Usually when we experience such a feeling for the first time, we are in love with an image we have created in our minds rather than with the person himself or herself. We are often more in love with love itself or even in love with the qualities we think we see in the person that we would really like to develop in ourselves.

These infatuations or falling in love experiences are usually short-lived. It is best not to take them too seriously even though the feelings are strong. After all, we can have strong feelings for someone we hardly know (an image of a movie star on a screen, for instance) or a friend's older sibling. True, lasting love involves getting to know the

person, seeing the many sides of his or her character and developing a deep care and concern for him or her over time. So-called "falling in love" is not really love at all but simply a passing attraction, more based on the "lover's" psychological needs than any deep or real care for the other person.

Identity issues and "love"

Adolescence is a time of growing independence during which children are becoming more separated from their parents. As this separation takes place it is common for teenagers to experience loneliness and to wonder, "Who am I?" To compensate, teenagers often want nothing more than to be accepted. However, in their eagerness for acceptance, instead of taking the time to build loving and sincere friendships, young people find themselves becoming strongly attracted to one person, mistakenly thinking this is the way to complete themselves. They feel they "love" the person because they want so badly to be one with him or her.

From a psychological point of view, the young man and woman are tending to merge their personalities before they have had a chance to form their own identity as persons. This is called *premature bonding*. The bonding process proceeds quickly in the emotional setting of sexual intimacy. The bonding that occurs in marriage is fine for two mature persons who are able to merge their personalities while maintaining their own individuality. But for young people still in the process of forming their identity, falling in love is usually an act of going backward rather than forward in personality development.



Let's try to describe a typical teenage "love" relationship. The couple is obsessed with each other, preferring to be with each other over anybody else. Concentration on studies becomes difficult. Everybody else seems unimportant. The two may keep away from family and friends, spending hours on the telephone or in each other's company. There is an enormous longing for closeness. As they pour themselves into this intense relationship, they "short-circuit" the healthy development of their character. Their passion for each other makes it easy for them to cross the line and become sexually intimate. Their "love," however intense, is very self-centered. It does not enrich those who come into contact with the couple.

Eventually, reality intrudes upon the "love birds." Sooner or later, in response to the problems of daily life, each one's individuality starts to reassert itself. He wants to have sex; she doesn't. She wants to go to the movies; he doesn't. She doesn't like his friends; he

doesn't like hers. Both come to realize that they are not really one with each other. Each possesses his or her own unique desires, tastes, and viewpoints. The two of them are not mature enough to respect and accept each other's differences but feel threatened or angered by them. The relationship becomes more and more difficult. They find themselves falling "out of love" and they break up.

A Teenage Love Story

Anne, a senior, says, "When I was a sophomore, I was in love with Jim, another sophomore. We went to the movies and for walks and talked on the phone for hours and always met at our lockers between classes at school. We were going steady. He was so handsome and clean and gentle. So different from the crowd he used to hang out with before he met me. But then one day he said he was leaving the school grounds to go smoke with his old friends. I got upset. You weren't supposed to leave school grounds, and smoking was against the rules. His old friends were the kind of kids who always got in trouble. I could just imagine what my parents would say if my boyfriend got suspended! He told me to stop "judging" him and his friends. We had an argument and broke up. Now I can't even remember what we talked about so much on the phone, or what we thought we had in common."

Real love is a choice

Building a true and lasting relationship requires self-sacrifice, commitment and lots of personal effort. Whereas falling in love is effortless—it just seems to happen—real love requires the exercise of our will and extending ourselves beyond our limits. Real love nurtures our spiritual development, challenging us to grow in our ability to love. Falling in love does not.

People who fall in love do not feel the need to develop. They are totally content to be where they are. As we have said, they tend to idealize the person they are in love with and are unable to see their lover's faults; they think that the "perfect" other person will bring fulfillment into their lives without them making much effort to complete themselves on their own. Such people have surrendered their will and are dominated by their feelings.

Real love, while involving feelings, is also an act of will and implies choosing to love even when you don't feel like it. If a mother loved her child only when she felt like it, what would happen when her child angered, disappointed, or embarrassed her? Her disturbed feelings could quickly replace her feelings of affection. Fortunately, a mother's love is usually stronger than her changing feelings. If love depended only on feelings, it would come and go too easily.

We do not *have* to love. We *choose* to love. It is important to grasp this principle in light of all the propaganda suggesting that love is almost an uncontrollable feeling that comes and goes like the wind. So many novels, films and TV series are based on the idea that love is a just feeling that happens—or doesn't happen.

True love means living for the sake of another while maintaining our unique individuality. True love takes maturity and self-sacrifice.

This principle corrects a common mistaken idea: namely, that love is easy and requires neither thought nor effort. According to this belief, love does not have to be learned but is simply a matter of following our instinct. Many hearts have been broken because of this misunderstanding and many divorces have taken place once the easy feelings went away. In reality, love takes time and patience to grow and develop on the basis of sincere investment of heart.

Love is an art to be learned and a discipline to be maintained. The art of loving can be compared to any discipline. Once a person masters the basic techniques of art or music, he finds that he has greater freedom to express himself. The same is true for love. As we mature in our ability to love, we gain greater freedom to express that love.

Our business in becoming people capable of real love is to develop our characters and friendships. The more people we can love unselfishly—as friends—the deeper and more lasting romance will be when it comes into our lives.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the difference between falling in love, friendship and real love?

2. How does parent's love compare to a teenage love relationship? Which is deeper?

3. Have you ever been disappointed by a love relationship? What happened?

4. How would you rate your ability to love others?

5. Why are people often fooled by feelings of love?

6. What does love involve besides feelings?

7. How would you know if you really loved someone?

8. What is premature bonding?

Exercise: "Questions and Answers"

How grounded are you in matters involving love? Does physical appearance matter most to you? Are you able to see others for who they really are, or are you easily blinded by your feelings of love? These questions will help you to see yourself more clearly.

1. *Do you believe in "love at first sight"?*

- a) Why not?
- b) No way, this is not love.
- c) Sometimes it happens.

2. *Could you fall in love with a person if your friends treated him/her with contempt?*

- a) Possibly.
- b) Probably.
- c) No way.

3. *Would you go with your partner to a movie you've already seen?*

- a) I would if he/she asked me to.
- b) I would be happy to do so.
- c) No, but we could meet after the film if he/she wanted to see it.

4. *If your group of friends doesn't like your partner, what will you do?*

- a) Discuss it with friends.
- b) Doubt my choice.
- c) I cannot imagine such a thing.

5. *What do you mention first when telling somebody about your partner?*

- a) The external appearance, such as the body, face or hair.
- b) Thinking ability, education level, manners, achievements, behavior, how he or she talks.
- c) I like so many things about him or her that I'm not sure which I'd name first.

6. *Do you know what your partner is doing when you are not together?*
- a) As far as I know I have no rival, so I don't worry about such things.
 - b) Yes, because we always tell each other what we have been doing since our last date.
 - c) We are both free, so he/she may do anything he/she pleases.
7. *Can you imagine your relationship coming to an end sometime?*
- a) I never think about it.
 - b) It will happen anyway sooner or later.
 - c) We are so attached to each other that it will never happen.
8. *Do you feel your life is wonderful only when you are together?*
- a) If a person is in love, that's the way it is.
 - b) Yes, I miss him/her when we're not with each other.
 - c) Life can be wonderful only for those who are in love.
9. *When you are together, do you discuss life's "eternal "or important questions—like what you hope for in the future, what kind of person you want to be, what kind of family you want to have, war, peace, good, evil?*
- a) There is almost no time for it.
 - b) What for?
 - c) Yes, quite a lot.
10. *Do you have the feeling that your partner is a different person now from the one he/she was at the beginning of your relationship?*
- a) He/she is just the way he/she always was.
 - b) He/she has turned out to be a different kind of person than I thought, but this way I like him/her even more.
 - c) He/she is not such a wonderful person as I first thought.

Reflection Exercise: “Four Stories”

Re-read the four little stories that are at the beginning of this chapter, told by people in relationships. Attempt to answer the question at the end of each one.

Chapter 15 Broken Relationships

Sometimes, in spite of all our efforts, relationships of all kinds break apart or fade away. This always involves some pain—from a feeling of regret and a sigh of sadness to the sense that your heart has been broken in two. Recovering from broken relationships is an important part of going on to build successful new ones.

Some relationships, of course, can be restored and renewed, and the pain goes away by itself. Others are unable to be recovered, or at least they will not be the same once they are renewed. In other cases, you may be pained by the break up of someone else's relationship and yet unable to do anything about it. In this chapter we will cover broken friendships, broken romantic relationships, and coping with the divorce of your parents.

Broken friendships

Friendships break up for many reasons. Betrayal—or thinking that you have been betrayed—is a big cause of broken friendships. This would involve a friend letting your secrets out, lying to you, hiding things from you, or going behind your back in some way.

Once trust gets broken in a friendship through betrayal, it is very difficult to restore. It is like gluing back together a piece of broken china—the piece is never quite as strong or pretty as it was before it was broken.

To get over the pain of a friendship broken by betrayal, write your feelings out on paper. Sort them out as best you can. You may never know all the reasons why things happened the way they did, yet you can at least sort out your role in it. If any of the responsibility for the betrayal is yours, sorting things out will help you to understand what to do better next time.

Sixteen-year-old Marissa and Her Friendship with Carla:

"I thought we were best friends. I thought we were enough, just us together, but she seemed to want a lot of other friends. I guess I seemed possessive and needy to her. The way she dumped me for new friends hurt, and it hurt for a long time after, but I realized I needed to make more friends myself. I have made friends, and it's great. But I'm a lot more careful now. I don't let any one person become so important now."

While recovering from the pain of a broken relationship, talking things out with a trusted older person is very helpful. Be honest with them. They can help you look at your relationship honestly and objectively. Their advice may be hard to hear through all your emotions, but over time, it will make more and more sense.

Be good to yourself. Form new interests, even if you don't want to at first. Join a club. Take gymnastic lessons. Invite classmates to go with you for a soda or to a movie. You may not enjoy them as much as you enjoyed your old friend at first, but, in time, they will come to be good friends to you, too. Don't wait for people to come to you—go to them. Let yourself cry when you need to. It is natural to grieve over something that is lost, and a broken friendship is a real loss.

Another common cause for the breakup of friendships is change. A friend moves away. You change schools. A friend is put in different classes or in an accelerated program. A friend's family situation changes radically—a new baby is born, a divorce takes place, a relative moves in. You get an after school job. Whatever the reason, your friendship is affected. You may find that you no longer have as much in common. He's no longer interested in sports and only wants to play video games, yet sports were what brought you together in the first place. She has become involved in student government at school and she doesn't have time now to spend with you, and you drift apart. He became more serious about school and no longer wants to hang out as much. These kinds of changes are painful and it is okay to feel sad about them. They are usually not as painful as betrayal, though, and with some adjustment, your life goes on.

Broken romances

When a romantic relationship breaks off, it can be even more painful than betrayal in a friendship. The feelings of rejection, jealousy, spite, and the unanswered questions are even more intense than when a friendship breaks off. Since most young romantic relationships do break up, an important thing to remember is that they are much more devastating if you are sexually involved. This is another good reason, among many, to not get sexually involved before marriage.

Sex Puts You on Drugs!

Sex actually releases "bonding" chemicals in the brain. When you have sex with someone, oxytocin is released in your bloodstream. Oxytocin is the same chemical that is released in a mother's brain when she nurses her child. It is nature's way of making sure she bonds deeply with her child. If a sexual relationship ends, then, if the relationship breaks up, you feel pain because you are "glued" or "bonded" to that person through chemicals. There is a real sense of breaking apart.

When a non-sexual but romantic relationship has broken off, you may still be devastated. You may feel embarrassed at being "dumped." You may find it hard to walk around school with your head held high. You may feel like getting back at the person or like begging him or her to take you back. If you are the one who dumped the other, you may feel guilty and want to put the other person down to justify having left him or her.

Don't try to get back at the one who dumped you; don't beg. Don't try to put down the person you dumped so you can feel better about yourself. In all cases, behave calmly and with quiet dignity. You may not be able to completely avoid the other person even if you want to, but basic politeness is all that's called for in relating to him or her.

It is also helpful to talk with someone you trust—your parents, a relative or counselor, or your closest friend. However, sharing your feelings with everyone is not helpful. Having one person with whom you can share is far more helpful. No one else needs to know everything you are feeling inside.

As we said, when a relationship ends, a certain amount of sadness or even grief is going to come. Let yourself feel it. Cry if you need to. Write out your feelings. Confide in

people who care about you and who won't tell anyone. Take long walks. Focus on your studies. Work hard on self-improvement so that you feel good about yourself. Work out. Find something that you like to do or find a hobby that will make you happy. Try a new haircut. One day you will be surprised to see that the sun is still shining. You are on your way to recovery!

Getting into intense, one-on-one romantic relationships at this time in your life may be setting you up for an unhappy love life in the future. Since most of these relationships break up, some people say such relationships are just practice for divorce. In the next chapter, Preparation for Marriage, you will learn how to develop healthier long-term relationships with the opposite sex. For now, why not avoid the heartbreak by learning to be friends with many different types of people and not just concentrating on one as a boyfriend or girlfriend?

Divorce

We know that many marriages that began with great hopes and dreams end up in disappointment and disillusionment. Today in many countries of the world, 50 percent or more of marriages end in divorce. Even traditional societies are experiencing increases in the divorce rate. The result is that each year millions of children see their parents separate. Probably among your own friends, there are some whose parents are divorced, perhaps even your own. Although a painful topic, let us try to discuss this openly.



Here are the feelings of some young people who have gone through the experience of seeing their parents divorce. For many children, their worst fear is that they will never again see the parent who moves away:

"I really thought I wasn't going to see him again. The only thing I could imagine was that I would stay with my mom and never see my dad again. I remember actually asking him, 'Where will you go? When will I see you again?' I really did."



Anger is one of the strongest feelings children have about their parents' breakup: *"I've got no feelings for my dad. I see him now and then when he's in town. He doesn't buy me*

any birthday or Christmas present. But it doesn't bother me anymore. I've gotten used to it." This boy's feelings seem to be masking the bitterness of anger. Some children and teenagers do turn their anger into an attitude of pretending not to care and harden their hearts.

In one of the few positive aspects about divorce, some children feel that the relationship with their father actually improved after the breakup:

"When he was at home, which wasn't very often, he never took me out. He was very strict and always criticizing me. But now that my parents have split up, I get on a lot better with my father. He takes me out quite often now and we have a lot more fun."

Another common feeling is shame. Most children of divorced parents do not want their friends to know or do not know how to tell them that their parents have split up:

"I can remember hiding it from my friends. I used to get embarrassed talking about it. I didn't want them to know. I didn't want people's pity."

For many children, there are the emotional problems of trying to adjust to their parents finding new partners:

"I felt pretty jealous. I mean, after you've had your mom to yourself for a while, and then somebody else comes in, and she starts paying more attention to him than you, you get very jealous. I hated it. I was so nasty. I used to sit in the room and give off nasty vibes or make underhanded comments. I frightened quite a few of them off that way."

When parents remarry, this too can introduce new challenges. Stepfamilies have large adjustments to make. The children may feel that if they accept a stepparent, they are betraying their real parent. There are a lot of emotions and feelings to be sorted out.

Many children feel that the whole experience of divorce would have been easier to handle if their parents had only explained and discussed more what was happening:

"I think parents should talk about it with their kids and see how they feel about it. They should explain how things are going to work out—what the arrangements will be. Then the kids will be able to understand what is happening. And the parents should let them know that other families also go through this too."

It is very hard for children to watch their parents break up. When parents fight in front of their children, it can be very painful. Children don't know what to do and feel as if they are being split in two. It seems as if the whole world is falling in around them. If the parents have separated or divorced, the child might feel abandoned or rejected. The child may even blame him- or herself for the parents' breakup.

The parents' break-up is never the child's fault. The parents' break-up is not a reflection on the child or a rejection of the child. The sons or daughters had nothing to do with it. Secondly, even though most children of divorce want to see their parents reunited, this is unlikely to happen. Accepting this may be a step toward recovering from the pain of the break-up.



As with other relationship break-ups, writing feelings out can help a great deal. This can be in the form of letters (not necessarily to be sent) or in a journal. Talking feelings out with trusted mentors, relatives or friends can be a big help. Grieving is important. Feelings shouldn't be buried in an "I don't care" attitude. When that happens, often children then find themselves acting out in very self-destructive ways. Sometimes teenagers become romantically involved too early and too intensely as they try to get rid of the pain of the break up of their parents' love. This can cause even greater problems as those relationships break up—putting hurt on top of hurt.

Crying washes things out, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. When a person has lost something precious, it is natural to feel grief and sadness. Children of divorce should let themselves grieve—and know that, as with other losses, the sun will come out to shine on their lives again.

Reflection Exercise: "A Broken Relationship"

1. What relationship in your life has broken apart?

2. Briefly describe what happened.

3. What are your feelings about the break up of this relationship right now?

4. Is there anything you would do differently in regard to this relationship if you could do things over again?

5. What have you done to allow yourself to grieve over this relationship?

Exercise: Jean's Choices

John and Jean were a dating "item." Everyone knew they were going together. They really liked each other a lot. Then Jean slowly lost interest in John. The romance just faded for her, and she started getting restless, wanting to spend time with more people than just with him. Finally, she told him over the phone that she didn't want to date him anymore. The next day in school, John came up to her locker, acting as if they were still going together. What should Jean say to John?

1. "Look, stupid, I told you last night—I'm not interested any more."
2. "Hey! Great to see you! Where are we going Saturday night?"
3. "I hope you have a good day today. Goodbye."
4. "What do I have to do—hit you over the head to make you understand?"

Exercise: "With Whom Should I live?"

Jane is talking with her best friend Lucy in her family's kitchen. Both girls are seated at the kitchen table.

Jane: (Crying) I love them both, but they can't accept that. They're tearing me apart.

Lucy: What do you mean?

Jane: Well, they hate each other now. That's hard enough anyway, but what's worse is they think I should take sides. If Mom says something bad about Dad, she thinks I should agree. And Dad's the same way.

Lucy: So, what will you do?

Jane: I don't know. I can't sleep; I can't eat; I can't concentrate on anything. My schoolwork is terrible, but I just don't care anymore. I'm just dreading the day when I'll have to make a choice.

Lucy: What kind of choice are you talking about?

Jane: You're lucky, Lucy, you know that? Your mom and dad get along. They really seem to like and respect each other. I never really thought about that until...

Lucy: I guess I am lucky. Strange, isn't it? You never really think about your parents—about their relationship. They're just kind of there.

Jane: Now I'll have to choose between them. With whom I want to live, I mean.

Lucy: Won't the court decide?

Jane: No. That would be easier. But since I'm as old as I am, I have to choose. I love them both. How can I choose one over the other? One of them is bound to be hurt by my decision.

Lucy: I'd hate to be in your position. (Pause) Maybe you could try to make a list—you know, pros and cons.

Jane: (Hurt) Of my parents? I can't do that. I told you, I love both of them.

Lucy: No, I don't mean that. I mean things like where they will live; who will keep the house; whether you would have to change schools.

Jane: I don't know.

Lucy: I think if you did that, it would help you to choose. You could then make the best choice.

Jane: The best choice? Lucy, haven't you been listening?

Lucy: (Squeezing Jane's hand) I know it's hard. But the more you know about the situation, the better. And living with one parent doesn't mean you're rejecting the other, especially if your choice is because one is living closest to your school or something like that.

Jane: I guess.

Lucy: You can visit the other one on weekends and holidays and the summer. You could spend those times with the parent you're not living with. You'll work it out. I know you will.

Jane: I hope so.

Questions for Reflection

1. What consequence of her parents' divorce bothers Jane most?

2. What do you think about Lucy's suggestion to Jane to make a list?

3. What do you think about Lucy's statement: "You never really think about your parents—about their relationship. They're just kind of there"?

4. Was Lucy right to say, "You'll work it out, I know you will"? Why might we avoid trying to give simple answers?

5. If you were Jane, how would you decide with whom to live?

CHAPTER 16 - Preparation for Marriage

It might seem a bit early to start talking about marriage, but if you really think about it, it is not too early. You are preparing through school for the professional field you will enter: medicine, teaching, engineering, business, carpentry, etc. Yet in terms of our ultimate happiness, marriage and family life is far more important than any profession. Shouldn't we also be preparing for marriage with the same seriousness with which we are preparing for a career?

The reality is that many couples jump into marriage, caught up in a dreamy romance like they see in the movies. They are walking on the clouds and feel no need for any kind of advice or preparation. It is difficult for them to believe that daily routine, little irritations, competing attractions, financial pressures and the natural tensions of family life could ever eat away at their love and the joy they feel now. They think this despite the reality of divorce and unhappy marriages all around them. Somehow it never strikes them that such things could ever happen to them. After all, they are in love, and isn't that all that matters?

In actuality, marriage will magnify whatever problems a couple tries to overlook in their present relationship and within themselves. The honeymoon always ends!

Romantic dreams about marriage are often based on the expectation that your partner will be able to meet all your needs and desires for the rest of your lives. People think that their partner will always be ready, able, and willing to perform for them. They think also:

- that they will be happy at all times
- that there won't be any conflicts they can't manage
- that their physical relationship will be good and satisfying
- that if they have children, they will grow up without many problems
- that their love for each other will never change

It is good to have high expectations, but we also need to look at the reality of what it takes to make a good marriage. As Olympic Gold Medalist Evgeni Plushenko said, when you embrace a dream, you have to embrace all the effort you will have to go through in order to make it come true.



It is unfortunate that there is little real training or guidance to prepare people for marriage. Because of this, people go into marriage not ready for the difficulties. When difficulties do arise, they imagine that there is something wrong with them, with their partner, or with the relationship. There is little guidance about how to deal with such

difficulties in a constructive way, so people often choose to divorce. To prevent that, it is best to learn about and prepare for marriage beforehand.

Choosing a Spouse

Choosing a spouse is the most important decision you will ever make. In the past it was common for parents to choose their children's spouses, and it is still common in some cultures today. The parents look for someone whose personality, character traits, and family ties would provide a good complement for their child. It has not been considered necessary that the young couple "fall in love" right away. It has been believed that if both partners tried hard enough and were good and virtuous people, love would grow up between them naturally. Many marriages made like this were indeed lasting and happy.

Today, in most parts of the world this has been replaced by dating or courtship in which the young person seeks for a partner, with varying degrees of involvement by parents.

In courtship, if the initial attraction we are experiencing progresses to a desire to be with this person more and more, the relationship may lead to marriage. Courtship often lasts one or two years. During this time there is a constant evaluation and re-evaluation of values, viewpoints, and mutual compatibility. The process is important because the quality of the courtship will influence the outcome of the marriage. Often the parents are involved in advising or providing opportunities and places to meet during the courtship.

Although love may blossom during courtship, it is only in a committed marriage that love comes into full bloom as the couple invest themselves totally in the relationship. Only then does a couple come to really know and understand each other, developing a deep harmony. Therefore, love can come whether a marriage is based on the couple finding one another on their own and courting or whether the couple is introduced by the parents, a religious leader, or by the community.



The Courtship of Christopher and Cindy

"When I was a bachelor, I joined a local church. This older couple in the church was very friendly to me. They told me they had a daughter, Cindy, about my age, who wasn't married. They said she was working in another state, but she often came home for a visit on weekends. Then they invited me to their house for dessert one of the nights Cindy was home. I knew they were hoping we'd like each other. We did.

I started coming over to her parents' house on weekends and Cindy and I would sit in the living room or on the porch and have popcorn or cake together. Her parents were always in the next room. We got to know each other pretty well just through talking and playing board games and watching TV. After a year or so of this, it just seemed natural that we would be together for the rest of our lives. So I proposed and she accepted! Boy, were her parents happy!"

"Dating" is a little different than courtship. While courtship is done for the purpose of selecting a future spouse and starts when a couple seriously considers marrying and becoming partners for life, dating is thought of as being more for "fun," and it is more casual. It is also more passionate at times and involves less thoughtful consideration of the person as a future spouse. Unlike courtship, dating does not necessarily involve thoughts of marriage.

It has been said that, rather than preparing young people for marriage, dating prepares people for divorce! This is because typically in dating a couple develop an intimate relationship before there is any thought of marriage. When they eventually break up because there was never any real commitment on either side, this sets a pattern for relationships with the opposite sex—quick intimacy and then break-up.

On dates, couples usually look as attractive as they can for one another and spend time only with one another. They go out and do "fun" or satisfying things and see each other only at their best in a setting designed to give them pleasure. It is easy, then, to feel a strong pull toward sexual intimacy. But do they really know each other?

The truth is that it is not easy to truly get to know—let alone to truly love—another person. It takes time and care and the wisdom of previous generations to guide us.

Courtship generally falls under some supervision by the parents. It is understood by members of both families that the couple is at least considering marriage; the couple interacts under more natural circumstances than on a date—they may meet in one another's family homes, accompany one another on family outings, and attend group get-togethers with one another. They are able to see the other interacting with a family or extended family group in a more natural way and in settings they will likely find themselves in during their marriage.

What to look for in a potential spouse is also an important consideration, no matter how the candidate enters a person's life. We should learn what qualities are present in a loving person and how these are developed. We can start by looking at the qualities of people whom we respect and admire. Then we can look to see if these same qualities are in a potential spouse.

It is said that the most important thing in finding a good spouse is becoming a person who will be a good spouse yourself. We can think what qualities we would like our future spouse to have, and then focus on developing these qualities in ourselves. Every person has the potential to be a loving person, but not without sincere effort. If we do this, when the time comes and we meet our eventual spouse, he or she will recognize in us the kind of person who is desirable to marry.

Practical ways to prepare for marriage

What are some practical ways for us to prepare for marriage? First, it is helpful to know the common points of conflict among married couples. If we can understand these and the reasons for them, we can take steps to head off potential trouble spots before they happen. Experts say that these common trouble spots are: sex, money, raising children and in-laws.

Sex

Because of differences between men and women, conflicts and misunderstandings often occur over the issue of sex in marriage. Men tend to have a stronger sex drive and are easily excited whereas women take longer to get excited. Men are stimulated by the simple appearance of a woman's body while women are more stimulated when the man shows real love and affection. For men, sex is primarily a physical event; for women, it is mostly emotional. It is important to understand this and realize that, in marriage, each partner brings a sexual attitude that gives the relationship the potential to be deeply satisfying on the mental, emotional, and physical sides. Appreciating and sympathizing with the opposite sex's point of view (as the second half of a puzzle) is a step toward future harmony on these issues.

Scientists have found that people who are virgins before marriage experience greater sexual and romantic satisfaction in their marriages. It is also important that sex be a special, exclusive relationship between a married couple so that they do not compare one another to past partners but are free to explore the joys of a loving, committed, sexual relationship only with one another. Preserving your virginity—whether you are a boy or a girl—will help cut down on sexual problems during marriage. It also gives you the moral strength to resist improper sexual relationships once you are married, for you will surely be attracted to other people at times. Adultery is a major destroyer of marriages, so practicing self-control now will give you strength to keep sex within your marriage, and keep your marriage happy.

Money

This is another area of conflict for many married couples, as it is very easy to be either too free or too miserly with money. If one or both have memories from childhood of being poor, deep insecurities may have developed in connection with money, leading to emotional conflicts.

Whether we grew up wealthy or in poverty or somewhere in between, it is important to learn how to handle money responsibly. We should know how to keep track of the money we spend, and to learn the difference between spending on needs and spending on

wants and luxuries. Here again we must learn self-control, this time in relation to our desire for *things* so that we spend our money on what is important.

Raising children

Our tendency is to raise our children the way we were raised. The problem is that our spouse grew up in a different family with parents who probably had somewhat different ideas about raising children. This doesn't seem to matter until the time comes when the couple begins raising their own children and suddenly discover they have strong disagreements about how to handle the countless situations that come up.

Before we actually find ourselves in such a circumstance, there is little we can do to resolve these differences. However, by spending time with young children and infants, we at least can learn just how much they need love, attention and time. Rather than waiting until after we are married to think about the reality of having children, we can prepare ourselves beforehand by watching and caring for younger brothers and sisters or children in general.



In-laws

Another source of conflict in marriage has to do with problems in relating to our spouse's family, such as the father-in-law who tries to boss the young couple around or a possessive mother who competes with her son's wife for his attention, unwilling to let go.

In a sense when we marry, we are marrying into another family with all of its past associations and situations. One of our tasks is to win the hearts of our spouse's family so they will trust, accept and respect us. Before marriage, we should learn to get along with many types of people, as we never know what kind of family we will eventually marry into. Our goal is to grow our hearts so that we can be able to enjoy many kinds of personalities.

Here are a few other ways to prepare for a future marital relationship:

Keep your commitments—There is no greater commitment in life than marriage. To be successful in it we need lots of practice in keeping promises. Make sure your words and your deeds are one.

Be open to advice—Learn to be open to advice, especially from your parents. In life we often get into situations where we need advice and guidance from others, and our parents have a wealth of experience to draw from. One of the biggest mistakes teenagers often make is to cut themselves off from a great source of wisdom—their parents. Marriage is such a unique and intimate relationship that we sometimes need our parents' help.

Work through differences—Learn skills, including communication skills, to resolve conflict. Don't avoid people who make you angry. Instead, learn to win their hearts and

work through differences. These skills will help not only your marriage but also your relationship with your future children.

Take the future seriously—When you are young, having fun is of major importance. The future seems far away. But before you know it, you are an adult and you wonder why you didn't prepare better for it—and for marriage. Prepare seriously for your future. No one else can do that for you.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are your expectations for marriage?

2. Are there ways that you are preparing for your own future marriage?

3. What are some of the common mistaken ideas about marriage?

4. Knowing yourself, what kinds of problems do you think might arise in your own future marriage?

5. What kind of life would a married couple live if they did live “happily ever after”? Is this realistic?

6. How old do you think a person should be before he/she gets married?

7. What personal qualities do you think a person should have before they consider getting married?

8. Do you think if two people love each other that their difficulties will automatically work out? Explain.

9. What advice would you give to someone who was just about to marry?

Exercise: “What Do I Want From Marriage?”

My Ideal Mate

Think of your ideal marriage. What qualities would be necessary in the personality of your ideal mate in order to create such a marriage? Make a list.

My Ideal Self

Do you think your ideal mate would like you to have these same qualities in your own personality? Using the list you made, put a check mark near all those qualities that you feel you have at the present moment. Make a plan with a time frame to work on developing the other qualities on the list that you do not yet have. Evaluate your progress on a monthly basis.

Reflection Exercise: “My Preparation for Marriage”

Look at the points in the section “Practical ways to prepare for marriage.” Reflect on how well you are prepared for marriage in the following areas:

1. Your attitude about sex

2. Your ability to handle money

3. Your ideas about raising children

4. How you might relate to your spouse’s family

5. Your ability to keep a commitment

6. Your openness to others’ advice

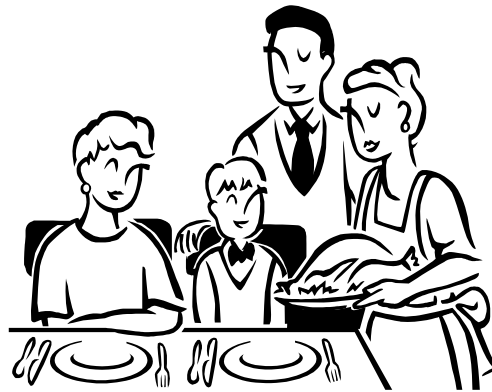
7. Your ability to resolve conflicts

8. Your overall seriousness about preparing for your future

CHAPTER 17 - The Family as a School of Love

What is the most valuable thing to us? Our education? Freedom? Money? TV, or our CD player? All these may be important, but, for most people, none of these is more valuable than their family.

Why do we care about our families so much? Why is love so important to us? It is because we are creatures of love. Our family relationships are the first, closest and probably the most enduring love relationships we will have in our lives. The bonds we have with our parents, brothers and sisters, and eventual spouse make the foundation for our life, and they shape who we become as a person. Through these relationships we learn the most about true love—love for the sake of others.



Although we love our family, we know at the same time that difficulties sometimes occur in our daily living with each other. When we are struggling with something, we may take out our frustrations on our family. At other times, although we know they love us, we can feel oppressed by our parents' demands and expectations. Some people don't experience support from their families, or they grow up in broken families. Teenagers often find it difficult to communicate and express themselves freely at home. Sometimes parents and teens find themselves out of touch with each other. Family life is rarely—if ever—perfect. Yet even an average family is the best place to learn important lessons about love.

"The family is nature's masterpiece."

George Santayana, philosopher

The four realms of heart

The family is meant to function as a "school of love." Through our family relationships we are supposed to experience and learn what love is all about. We do this by developing our hearts through four main stages that proceed in an orderly

development. Each of these stages leads us from being centered upon our own needs and desires to being more and more centered upon the needs and desires of others—in other word, more and more capable of true love.

Since everyone begins life as a child, we first develop our hearts from this position in relationship to our parents. As we grow older, we develop our hearts through our relationships of love with brothers and sisters and friends as well as our parents. As we mature into adulthood, a new realm of heart opens up when we marry. Finally, when we have our own children, we experience a parental heart. These are the four types of heart or "realms" of heart through which each of us learns how to give and receive love: the children's realm, the siblings' realm, the spouse's realm, and the parents' realm of heart.

Just as we cannot attend high school until we complete elementary and middle school, we will not be able to love properly in the later realms if we do not succeed in love in the earlier realms. For example, we cannot expect to become good husbands and wives unless we have first learned to be good friends with our peers and good brothers and sisters. Let us explore the significance of and the progression of love in each of the four realms of heart more deeply.



Children's realm

A child's love is a love that responds to care. A child is naturally self-centered, focused on his or her own needs and desires. He or she wants to be fed, clothed, kept warm and secure, talked to and paid attention to. However, parents would not complain that their child is selfish; they understand that the child is still in a state of immaturity. Their child's needs and helplessness move the parents' hearts to embrace and care for the child. Their rewards are the smiles, happy sounds, embraces, and general responsiveness of a loved, well-cared for child.

As a child grows, his or her ability to respond to the parents' love ripens into taking responsibility in ways that earn the parents' approval. The child learns to tie his or her own shoes, to dress, to use the bathroom properly, to put away toys, to not hit or hurt others, property or pets. The child is rewarded for learning these small responsibilities by the parents' praise. Each small responsibility is a tiny step toward true love—love that is more concerned with the needs and desires of others rather than only one's own.

Siblings' realm

In sibling relationships the heart's ability to share grows. Now the child not only looks up to the parents with love, the child must look side to side to the others who are around him or her. The parents want their child to value and treat these others well. The child must share the parents, the home, food, resources, and toys with siblings. The child must learn to wait for his or her turn. This stretches the child's abilities to love. In the process of learning to love brothers and sisters, classmates and friends, children learn such virtues as honesty, fairness, cooperation, and patience.

As we enter our teenage years, our challenge is to learn to control our emotional impulses toward others—feelings of anger, jealousy, greed, impatience, desire, and the desire to merge our identities into those of others. This is necessary if we are to become people of integrity and self-respect. Keeping purity in our relationships with the opposite sex is also essential if we are to continue to develop our hearts in a healthy direction. All of this is in preparation for meeting our future spouse, so *that* relationship may be one of unselfish sharing and consideration of the other's needs over and above our own.

Spouse's realm

A spouse is as "other" as someone can be. They are the opposite sex, which means they are physically, mentally, and emotionally different than we are. As was pointed out in the Preparation for Marriage chapter, even men and women's approaches to sex are different. On the foundation of the earlier realms, which have taught us to love others, we are ready to share the deepest parts of our lives and ourselves with someone who is fundamentally different than we are—truly "other."

Marriage requires intense sharing of finances, space, duties, thoughts, emotions, and our physical selves. It requires sharing new relatives and responsibilities. It is something that stretches us further and further away from self-centeredness to other-centeredness.

In a marriage, we may play diverse roles. Sometimes our spouse needs us to be a friend, a brother or sister, a parent, even a delightful child. We can be to each other whatever the occasion requires, using the relationships we have learned in the past to enrich this most significant, lifelong one.

This unique and intimate relationship between two people who are so different is the foundation for the highest and ultimate realm of heart—the parent's realm.

Parent's realm

When a husband and wife give birth to a child, the last realm of heart is opened up. The nature of a parent's heart is to provide the child with everything he or she needs, even at a sacrifice of the self. This involves loving another person without expecting anything in return. The parental realm is the most unselfish realm. Loving parents give and forget that they gave, and are ready to give again. If a child is sick, parents will stay up all night to take care of the child. They will give up their own food to nourish the child. They will do without whatever they need themselves so the child can have more.

Parents invest in a child, hoping that their child will be better than they were. They want the child to grow and achieve things they never could, to enjoy life and love to the

fullest in ways they could not. True and genuine parents want their child to be smarter, more creative, more loving and more resourceful than themselves, and they work hard to give the child opportunities to become so. This is love that is utterly focused on the benefit and well-being of another—the highest form of true love.

"I didn't think I could ever love anyone more than I loved my children—until I met my grandchildren! Then I experienced more love than I ever thought possible."

Rick, a grandfather

An extension of parental love is grandparental love. The position of grandparents is truly a royal one. In general, by this time of life, grandparents are released from the need to earn a living and can spend their time loving their families as unconditionally as possible. The parents and grandchildren honor them as the elders in the family and value their contributions. Their years of experience have given them much wisdom with which to guide and protect the family. Having labored over their lifetimes to raise and nurture a family, they can now fully give themselves over to the joys of loving and being loved.



The human family

The four realms help to cultivate our heart to relate to our extended family and on into our social relationships. Eventually, based on our family experiences, we can exhibit altruistic, unselfish love toward all members of the human family.

People who successfully complete the four realms of heart can develop a well-rounded, balanced character, able to relate comfortably with any kind of person. The family is the training ground for relating to the world.

We should feel that people of all age groups are like our own immediate family. When we see an old man on the street, we should respect him as we would our own grandfather. When we see a middle-aged woman behind the cashier desk, we should treat her as we would our own mother or aunt; and when we see little children playing, we should feel concern for them as if they were our own younger brothers and sisters.

Ideally our family relationships should teach us how to embrace people of all races and nationalities as our own brothers and sisters. Rather than seeing them as nameless strangers, we can feel that, like us, they are someone's parent, spouse, sibling and child. The more embracing our love, the richer our life will be. As our family experiences contribute to the development of our emotional maturity, we are being led closer to our own true self: "the real me."

Questions for Reflection

1. What are the values most strongly stressed in your family?

2. Can you remember any events that made you realize the importance of these values?

3. Do you think that these values are similar to those of other families?

4. Which values do you consider most important?

5. Do you think you will try to hand these values down to your own children? Why or why not?

6. How do you think things have changed compared to your parents' and grandparents' childhoods?

7. What does your family like to do together?

8. What does your family quarrel about the most?

9. What are the four realms of heart?

10. How are these four realms of heart shown in your family?

Exercise: “Love Creates Love”

Write the names of all your family members on separate pieces of paper. Fold them up and put them in a box. Then, pull one piece of paper out. This is your “beloved” for the week. For one week you should love and serve this family member, making him or her feel like the most special person in the world. Without being asked, find things to do for this person—for example, washing the dishes, walking the dog, doing the laundry—to make his or her life easier. Make little cards, write a poem, and give flowers—anything that will make this person feel loved and special.

Do at least one nice thing for your beloved each day. Resolve not to fight or argue with this person for that whole week. Notice how the attitude of your beloved changes toward you. Has your love multiplied more love? Are you now receiving more love than before?

At the end of the week choose another name from your box and serve your new beloved with all your heart. After you have served all of the members of your family, start over and make this your way of life.

If your family is interested in doing this activity, then write everyone's name down on separate pieces of paper and have each family member pick one piece of paper. If it is their own name, they should fold their paper again and select another name. Do not let each other know whose name is on the paper. The person whose name is on your piece of paper is your beloved for the week. Serve each other secretly for two or three days without letting your beloved know who you are. After a few days, try to guess who your secret admirer is. Whether your family is large or small, this is a simple and fun exercise that can improve your relationships and create a wonderful atmosphere at home.

Reflection Exercise: “Grandparents”

1. How many grandparents do you have that are still alive?

2. Do you see them very often? How often?

3. Where did they grow-up?

4. Do you know anything about their parents, your great-grandparents?

5. How many brothers and sisters and children did your grandparents have?

6. What do you admire most about your grandparents?

7. Do you think their life, at your age, was similar to or different from yours? In what ways?

8. What are your grandparents’ favorite things to do?

9. Do you think your parents are raising you in a way similar to the way they were raised or differently? Explain.

GLOSSARY

Definitions are taken or adapted from Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1999)

Accomplish—to bring about; to bring to completion

Accordingly—in harmony with

Accuse—to blame

Adolescents—young people between childhood and adulthood

Affirm—to make firm by agreeing with or supporting

Alienation—when people were once close but now feel distant and angry toward one another

Altruistic—unselfishly caring about and acting for the sake of another or others

Analyze—to study; to break down into parts so as to understand

Ancestry—line of birth; elder relatives going back many generations

Aspects—a side of something or a view or dimension of something

Assert—to say or state firmly; to put forward one's rights in a forceful way

Attitude—a mental and emotional position (thoughts and feelings and opinions) that show in a person's words and actions

Authority—power to influence or command thought, opinion or behavior

Avoid—to stay away from; to try not to meet or come into contact with something or someone

Benefits (noun)—useful aid; help; good things

Benefits (verb)—gives some aid; helps; gives good things to

Betray—to fail someone; to be false to someone; to win someone's trust and then hurt him or her

Bias—to prefer things, people, or groups because they are most like you, not because of how good they really are

Blossom—to bear flowers or fruit; to grow beautifully

Calculate—to measure by math

Circuit—to go around in a circle or along a recognized route

Clashes—to come into conflict

Compensate—to pay money to or to pay back what is owed; to make up for

Complex—having two or more parts; not easy to sort out or separate

Concentration camp—a place where prisoners (often political prisoners) are held all together under terrible conditions

Concerns—worries; anxieties; questions

Condemn—to state that someone is wrong, evil, to be pushed away

Conditional—true only in certain cases; depending on certain things being fulfilled

Conflict—a fight; a clash; disagreement; argument

Confidence—faith or belief that you will act in a right, proper or effective way

Confront—to face, especially in challenge

Consequences—what naturally follows from one's deeds; the results of what a person does or doesn't do

Contempt—looking down upon someone or something; feeling disgust at someone or something; despising or hating someone or something

Corrosive—to eat away or rot away or burn away slowly

Corrupt—to change from good to bad; to become rotten or wrong or ruined

Cultivate—to prepare for growth, like soil; to improve or help to grow

Deceptive—fooling, hiding, lying but not obviously or openly

Decline—going to a lower level; going down

Defensive—trying to protect or defend yourself, even when there really isn't a threat

Defiantly—with resistance; saying no to strongly; doing the opposite

Deliberately—on purpose; with purpose; purposefully

Depressed—to be sad; discouraged; unhappy; hopeless about the future

Derive—to get out of or get from

Destiny—fortune; fate; where a person will end up

Dialogue—when two (sometimes more) people are talking

Differentiating—to notice, mark or show a difference in

Dignity—the quality of being worthy, honored or esteemed

Disillusionment—disappointment; feeling one's dreams or hopes or beliefs did not come true

Dismal—gloomy; dark; really bad

Distort—twist away from natural shape or position

Distrust (verb)—does not trust; thinks someone may be lying or dishonest

Diversity—variety; many different kinds

Economic—having to do with money; the exchanges of good and services

Elements—the simplest parts of something

Embarrass—to shame

Emphasize—to place stress on; to show something is important

Equation—a mathematical formula or problem

Escalate—to increase; expand; raise the level of

Esteem—positive thoughts and feelings toward someone; regard and respect for someone

Etiquette—the proper way to act; the requirements of being mannerly and polite

Exclusive—leaving others out

External—the outward or outer part of something

Feuds—a lasting state of hatred and anger between families or related groups; often violent and marked by revenge

Fidelity—being faithful; being true; being loyal. In marriage, it means being sexually loyal to one's spouse

Flaw—a fault, break or weakness

Forbid—to give a strong command not to do something

Frustrate—to block or defeat; to be frustrated means to feel your plans are blocked or defeated

Fulfillment—a dream come true; the feeling of satisfaction that what you have wanted has come to pass; satisfied fully and completely

Gender—one's sex, whether male or female

Generation gap—the distance sometimes found between parents and their children due to changing times and age differences

Grudges—a deep feeling of resentment held over a long period of time

Guidance—advice; giving directions

Immense—huge; very big

Hindrances—things that get in the way and which slow down or stop a person or a process

Ideal—a mental picture of the way you would like to be; the way you would like things or other people to be; the highest, best way you can imagine people or things or the world to be

Image—a picture; a form in the mind; a likeness such as a photo or portrait; the way others see us

Imagery—the use of pictures; the use of pictures in the mind

Imagine—to see something or dream or create something in the mind

Implying—suggesting; saying something indirectly; pointing toward something indirectly

Impressions—first thoughts and feelings about a person, place or thing

Idealize—to look at as if something is perfect and better than it is

Independence—the state of being able to work, live, get along well without much help

Infatuation—a foolish, short-lived affection for someone that feels like love but which is not real and does not last

Inheriting—having something like land or property or qualities passed on or down to a person—e.g., inheriting your father's house after his death; inheriting your mother's talent in music

Insensitive—not having enough feeling for or understanding of another person

Insights—seeing into a situation deeply; understanding deeper than the outside

Instinctual—having to do with something inside that works automatically to assure survival of an individual or species

Institutions—important organizations in a society

Integrity—completeness; wholeness; not being divided; to live up to one's beliefs and words; to live up to a code of honor or high standards

Interview—a meeting where information is asked for and given

Intimacy—a state of being very close, warm, private, personal

Intrinsic—part of the nature or essence of a person or thing; built in to something or someone

Irreplaceable—cannot be replaced; no substitute for; nothing like it

Irritable—easily upset; easily made to lose your temper; touchy

Junior—a person who is younger or in a lower or newer position

Limitations—limits; the quality or state of being limited

Loneliness—being alone and cut off from others; being without friends or companions; feeling sad because of being alone

Lustful—having intense sexual desire, usually for more than one person

Magnify—to make bigger; to make something look bigger through a using special glass or lense

Manipulative—to be a person who controls others or plays with others to fool or trap them

Marital—having to do with marriage

Media—communication systems: TV, newspapers, radio, movies, recording studios

Meditate—to think; reflect; to focus your thoughts on something

Melodramatic—overly dramatic; dramatic in a very theatrical way

Mentors—trusted counselors or guides

Merge—to blend together; to become one

Mistrust—a lack of trust; a state of not being sure about someone or something

Misunderstanding—quarrel; disagreement; fight based on not understanding one another

Motivation—a force that causes a person to act or move; influence; drive

Mutual—having the same feelings or sharing the same actions between two people

Nagging—to keep scolding or accusing or bothering someone

Noble—having a high position or very good qualities of character

Nurtured—taking care of, feeding, so something or someone will grow well

Obsessed—to not be able to forget something or someone—to think of that all the time

Origin—the beginning or start; source

Overall—all over; from beginning to end; including all

Overestimate—to think something is larger, has more numbers or costs more than it does

Peer—someone who is the same age or equal to someone else

Permissiveness—letting everything go; setting no limits; everything someone does is allowed

Perseverance—to keep working or going on even when faced with difficulties

Perspective—point of view; the ability to view things in their true relations of importance

Philosophers—people who seek wisdom

Polluting—to make dirty or impure; to fill with wastes or harmful chemicals

Possessive—to want to hold onto someone or something only for yourself; to not want to share

Potential—possibility; something capable of developing into something

Premature—something happening before it is the right time

Prey—an animal that is hunted by another as food

Profound—deep; wise

Progression—something that goes along in an orderly way

Propaganda—spreading ideas, information as rumors to make your own cause more popular

Psychological—having to do with the mind and the emotions

Puberty—the time when a person becomes capable of sexual reproduction

Purity—spotless; stainless; not mixed with anything that would make it less clean

Rare—not happening often; not found often; valuable

Reciprocate—to give back when something is given

Reconciliation—going back to friendship; returning to harmony; returning to a good relationship

Rejection—to be refused; to not be accepted; to be turned away

Resent—to feel angry at; to dislike

Resolve (verb)—to deal with successfully; to solve a problem; to find an answer to; to decide something firmly

Resourceful—to be able to find solutions; to be able to come up with ways and means to resolve things

Rival—one of two or more trying to get something that only one can, i.e., rivals in love, sports, etcetera; enemy

Sacrifice—to give something up for a belief or for love of something

Scam—a phony deal; a cheating business idea

Scholastic—having to do with schools

Secure—to feel sure and safe; to be protected; to be free from danger or threat

Self-centered—only caring about your own needs, desires or interests

Self-esteem—confidence or satisfaction in yourself

Senior—a person older or in a higher position than another

Sensitive—delicately aware of the attitudes and feelings of others

Significance—meaning; importance

Siblings—brothers and sisters

Source—beginning; cause; origin

Spontaneous—naturally rising up from inside a person; done in the moment, without planning

Stimulating—exciting, awakening

Surroundings—what is around you

Temporary—only lasting for a short time

Term—name; word; condition

Traditional—what is usually done

Transition—the time of changing from one thing to another

Ultimate—the farthest point; the final or last thing; the end point

Unconditional—not limited; without conditions on it; completely accepting

Unique—unusual; one of a kind; being without equal; no one exactly the same as

Unpredictable—you cannot tell what someone or something is going to do

Unselfish—without thought of self; placing the other first

Visualize—to form a mental picture

Vulnerable—open; open to being hurt or attacked; without defenses

Welfare—in a good state or condition; benefit or well-being

Vows—promises; pledges