

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Relationship Rescue

Phillip C. McGraw

## **CONTENTS**

ABOUT THE BOOK

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALSO BY PHILLIP C. MCGRAW

TITLE PAGE

DEDICATION

PROLOGUE—Get Real: Reconnecting with Your Core

ONE—It's Your Time; It's Your Turn

TWO—Defining the Problem

THREE—Blowing Up the Myths

FOUR—Eliminating Your Bad Spirit

FIVE—Reclaiming Your Core: The Personal Relationship Values

SIX—The Formula for Success

SEVEN—Reconnecting with Your Partner

EIGHT—Fourteen Days of Loving with Honesty

NINE—Red Alert: Relationships Are Managed, Not Cured

TEN—The Doctor Is "In"

CONCLUSION—A Personal Letter from Me to You

APPENDIX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

In his bestselling book, *Life Strategies*, Philip McGraw's powerful straightforward advice helped people to take responsibility for their own lives and break free from self-destructive habits and situations. Now, in *Relationship Rescue*, McGraw turns his expertise to relationships, explaining how to repair and maintain them using his unique 7-step relationship rescue plan. He can help you to:

- Diagnose what's wrong in your relationship
- Take personal responsibility
- Learn to live with love and harmony
- Embrace relationship truths
- Learn the formula for success in a relationship
- Renegotiate your relationship
- Escape wrong thinking

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Phillip C. McGraw is the person Oprah Winfrey credits with helping her win the Amarillo 'mad cow' trial. A trial scientist with over 15 years' experience in the psycho-legal system, he is president of a litigation consulting firm and leads a team of experts from many fields.

Visit Dr. McGraw's websites at [www.drphil.com](http://www.drphil.com) or [www.relationshipprescue.net](http://www.relationshipprescue.net)

Also by the author:

*Life Strategies: Doing What Works, Doing What Matters*

*The Life Strategies Workbook: Exercises and Self-Tests to  
Help You Change Your Life*

# Relationship Rescue

Don't Make Excuses!

Start Repairing Your Relationship Today

Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D.



*This book is dedicated with love and gratitude to my wife,  
Robin, who never stopped being a wife even though she  
became a mother,*

*to my sons,  
Jay and Jordan,  
who continue to inspire me to want to  
“do it right,”*

*and in loving memory of my father,  
“Dr. Joe” (alias the “old man”),  
a man of deep passion and emotion who overcame huge  
odds to positively impact so very many.*

## PROLOGUE

### GET REAL: RECONNECTING WITH YOUR CORE

IF YOUR RELATIONSHIP is in trouble, big trouble or small, I'm going to tell you straight-up how to fix it. I'm not going to try to be cute or glib, and I'm not going to hit you with a lot of clever buzzwords. I'm not going to use a bunch of psychobabble or the *en vogue* theory *du jour*. I'm going to give you the straightforward, no-nonsense answers that work - answers that have always worked, but have just been buried in a deluge of pop-psych nonsense.

But there is a serious and outcome-determinative precondition that you have to meet if you expect to successfully rescue your relationship and reconnect with your partner. *You* have to get real about *you*. And when I say real, I mean one hundred percent, drop-dead, no-kidding real. No defensiveness, no denial - total honesty. Get argumentative, be rigid, be defensive and hardheaded, and you will lose for sure. While the focus of this book is rescuing your relationship and reconnecting with your partner, the vehicle to achieving that is you. Not you and your partner, but you. Reconnecting with your partner cannot and will not happen if you do not reconnect with yourself first.

I promise you, you can change your partner from daylight to dark, you can dump your partner and trade up to a better one, but it won't make a damn bit of difference unless and until you decide to clean house inside yourself first. This

journey does not begin with you and your partner; it begins with you. You have to take your power back and become the kind of person who commands quality, inspires respect, and settles for nothing less than an active and abiding love. That change begins from the inside out as you get back in touch with who you are and as you decide what to do with your love, your life, and your vision. Your clarity and your purpose must become crystal clear. The fix, the rescue, depends on you. To proceed with any other mind-set is to guarantee failure, miserable failure. That's why I have to begin by getting you right with you. I know you aren't being true and right with yourself, or you wouldn't be in relationship trouble and you wouldn't be holding this book.

In fact, if you are in a relationship that has gone awry, a relationship that is laced with pain, confusion, or emptiness, then by definition I know you have lost touch with your own personal power, your own dignity, your own standards, and your own self-esteem. You've allowed yourself to accommodate pain and disappointment and self-destructive attitudes. You have rationalized away many of your hopes and dreams, you've settled for so many things you did not want, you've allowed apathy to set in, and along the way you've probably let your partner mistreat you over the years. But most important, you've mistreated yourself. You've blamed your partner or other circumstances for your place in life rather than making the effort to find the true answers within you. You've lost touch with that part of you that I call your core of consciousness - that place where you are absolutely defined, the place within you where your greatest strengths, instincts, values, talents, and wisdom are centered. Think back; there was a time and a place when you knew who you were and knew what you wanted. You believed in yourself, and your life was full of hope and optimism. You were in touch with your core of consciousness. You were centered on this God-given core

that uniquely defined you. And you can be centered on this core again.

This is not silly self-help talk. This may well be the most important concept you'll ever seek to master. I've studied successful people my entire life. I always wondered why these people create wonderful, rewarding relationships and lives when others just as talented muddle through with mediocrity. We all know people who get all the breaks and opportunities, yet who still can't do anything with their lives. And we know others who seemingly come out of nowhere to defy the odds and overcome immense challenges to carve their niche in the world. What I've discovered with stark and undeniable clarity is that the ones who do well are so in touch with their individual core of consciousness, so aware of their self-worth and their sense of personal value, that they not only treat themselves with enormous self-respect but they inspire others to treat them with equal respect. They live with an empowering inner clarity, one that gives them the unshakable confidence that they and they alone can determine the quality of life. They have tapped into their core of consciousness, claimed their right to a fulfilling life, and have refused to accept less from themselves or anyone else.

The truth is not always easy to hear, but it always remains the truth - and I'm not going to let you hide from it and, in so doing, cheat yourself. So listen to me: if you don't scrape away all of life's layers of distortion, negative input, and doubt-inducing messages, and get back in touch with your own core of consciousness, then no matter what else you learn, you will have such low standards that you will continue sabotaging your relationship. You will remain mired in pain, guilt, anger, and confusion. You can bet on it.

That's why I'm coming after you first. You must reclaim your own power and strength so that you can build something extraordinary for yourself. The power I'm talking about is not the kind of power that will make you more

domineering over your partner. It will not give you more control over your partner; nor will it allow you to win more arguments.

This is not about power to take things from people so that you have more for yourself. It's about the power to give and to lift up those around you. What I'm talking about is the power that comes from depth and conviction – the power to inspire, the power to create, the power to experience your life and relationship at a totally different level. It is the quiet, calm power of dignity and worth. When you tap into your own core of consciousness, and you start creating your own experience, you will notice that the world, including your partner, will start to relate to you differently. As Emerson once wrote, “What lies behind us and what lies in front of us pales in comparison to what lies within us.”

So that is your precondition. As you go forward into this book, you must contemplate everything that's presented with an eye toward how it can get you back in touch with yourself – how it can get you back to that core of strength that has been there since you were born. As you read, think about how you will put honor and nobility back into your heart and mind so that you can begin to engage the world from a position of strength instead of weakness. Commit right now to requiring more of yourself, for yourself, in every area of your life. With every page you read, I want your head to lift, I want your chin and your chest to come out, not as an act of arrogance but as a message of determination. Tapping into your core of consciousness, rediscovering your inner strength and drive for greatness, can be the single most significant act of your life, and your greatest gift to your relationship partner.

## CHAPTER ONE

### IT'S YOUR TIME; IT'S YOUR TURN

IT HAS BEEN fifteen years since I sat with Carol and Larry in my psychology office. They were a pretty typical couple - typical because they were having relationship problems. Like so many other couples, they were once absolutely certain that their deep love and optimism would make their relationship last. They had come together because they wanted to, because the idea of a life together felt so right, because they believed their union was the one thing that would complete them. They approached their relationship seriously, made sacrifices, and promised they would offer up their hearts and souls to each other.

And now here they were, trying to understand why the very thing that they once thought would make them so happy had left them feeling trapped, overwhelmed by an unspeakable feeling of disappointment. They were hurting, second-guessing themselves, wondering how something could go stagnant and painful so quickly. Carol swallowed, touching her throat with her fingers as tears slid down her cheeks. Larry stared out the window, his shoulders sagging, his chin propped on his fingers. Their relationship had become defined by a quiet desperation, punctuated by angry silences, which alternated with animated attacks on each other's character - and in a last-ditch effort they had dutifully sought out professional help. "I am so tired of

feeling alone,” Carol told me. “I feel like I want to scream or hit something, but I don’t know what and I don’t know why. We used to be so fresh and so alive – and now our love has become cold and bitter and lifeless. Is that it, is this all there is?”

I started talking, giving Larry and Carol the same platitudes, the same conventional wisdom, that I and every other therapist in the country had been doling out for years. You’re going to have to commit to solving your problems, I said. You need to communicate better, see things through your partner’s eyes, try to resolve each and every one of your differences, remember your marriage vows. Just as I had been taught, I was acting warm and genuine as I trotted out all the usual responses. But suddenly all I could hear myself saying was blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah, blah. As I sat there, I asked myself, “Has anybody noticed over the last fifty years that this crap doesn’t work? Has it occurred to anyone that the vast majority of these couples aren’t getting any better?”

Here were these two people, searching for answers, and I realized I was telling them things about “the nature of relationships” that weren’t going to make a damn bit of difference. My profession’s advice was all well and good if life was an ivory tower or if our clients lived in some sitcom-like Ozzie and Harriet existence. But it did little for those relating in the real world with real problems, real children, real financial demands, real competition for affection, real stress. The vast majority of relationship advice offered in our society not only did not work, it didn’t even come close to working. That was true then and it is true now. Research shows that over two-thirds of couples, married or otherwise, who attend relationship counseling are worse or at least no better after one year. The divorce rate in America refuses to drop below fifty percent, and twenty percent of us will divorce not once but twice in our lifetime. Clearly, pleasant and generic instructions on how to “communicate” better or

theoretical musings that give you great “insights” about relationships just weren’t going to cut it fifteen years ago and won’t cut it now.

That day with Carol and Larry was a turning point in my life. I decided that if I continued imparting the conventional wisdom, I would be cheating them and everyone like them out of any chance they had to turn their relationship around. I resolved right then and there that I was going to get real about why relationships were failing in America and what needed to be done to turn the tide. People needed a solid, practical way to reframe their lives and their lifestyles in order to create a healthy relationship rather than live in such a way as to maintain and support a bad one. It didn’t matter that I had more degrees than a thermometer. I decided that I was going to have to be willing to get my hands dirty in the ugly side of life, stop dispensing easy advice, and meet the Carols and Larrys of the world where they were in their lives as well as in their relationships.

That’s what this book is all about. I’m going to tell you what I believe is the truth about what you have to do to meet your needs and the needs of your partner, and exactly how to rebuild the foundation of your life so that you can have a fulfilling relationship.

What I am going to tell you will not have a thing to do with textbook communication theories like “active listening” or “relating with empathy.” I’m not going to cry with you, and I’m not going to gently hold your hand. I’m not going to try to make you and your partner feel better by having you write mushy love letters to one another and then put roses on your pillows at the end of the night. If you are looking for something to read that will act like a quick salve on your emotional wounds, then I recommend you give this book to someone else – because I want to shake you back to your very core, to wake you up, and then help you start designing a memorable life and a memorable relationship.

I admit, I am pretty much an in-your-face, tell-it-like-it-is sort of person. And I want you to know that this book is not going to make things easy for you. This book is designed as a clarion call – an unapologetic command that you strip away all your defenses and fears, that you break through the clutter of your past, that you raise your standards of personal excellence, and that you stay diligently on course so that you may get what you want in your life. My mission is to help peel away the layers of confusion and distorted thinking that have dominated your relationship, peel away the false world you have constructed, put you back in touch with your inner core of consciousness, and help you find the answers that work.

And I recognize that means that a whole lot of you need a lot of answers. Relationships in general, and marriages and families in particular, continue to disintegrate before our eyes. Families are losing their focus, and domestic violence, abuse, and emotional dysfunctions have gone vertical. The epidemic is like a train careening at an ever-increasing speed down a steep hill – and if you're reading this book, that means you, too, are probably on that train and could very well be barreling toward disaster.

I know you had no intention of getting on this train. All you wanted to do was love somebody and be loved right back. You believed a relationship was the one thing that would complete you. You weren't an idiot, you weren't some masochist who looked for a relationship so that you could suffer, and you sure weren't lazy. Nonetheless, here you are. And we both know that no matter how much willpower you have to keep hanging in there, there is a line out there where, if pushed across, you will say, "That's enough, I won't take this another minute." You know yourself well enough to realize that if you cross that line, it will be the beginning of the end. You know your dignity and your heart can take only so much, and if it is violated one too many

times, then you will finally dig your heels in and this deal will be over in a flash.

That line may still be looming way out in your future somewhere, or at this very moment you might be walking that line like a tightrope. But I'm here to tell you that I want to keep you from crossing that line. You may not know how or why your relationship got into such a mess, but I do know. I know what you're going through, and I know how it all happened to you. What I'm about to say may sound arrogant, and if it does, I am sorry for being so blunt. But after having been to hell and back with thousands of couples in a variety of settings, I've gotten street smart. I know how to get your relationship under control and back on the right track. And if you stay with me through this book, I'll show you what you've been missing, and I'll lead you to clear answers, starting with this one: you are not inadequate or incompetent when it comes to a relationship. The brutal and sad fact is that the deck has been stacked overwhelmingly against you.

## **It's a Wonder You've Made It this Far**

If you know anything about me through my recent writings or my television work, then you know I am the last person on earth ever to tell you that you are a victim or that there is somewhere besides yourself to look to as the cause of this or any other situation that now defines your life. But the very society that has taught you that it is good and right and natural to share your life with another person, the same society that in large part defines and measures success by how you manage your relationships and your family, never bothered to teach you how you are supposed to do that.

Think about it: the requirements for a driver's license are tenfold the requirements for a marriage license – to drive, you at least have to take a test to demonstrate some level of knowledge and competency before you are turned loose.

Yet our collective society is willing to turn you loose with someone else's life for two bucks and a signature down at the courthouse. You probably got your only lessons about being in a relationship by watching your parents. The problem with that is they no doubt had less instruction and knew less about relationships than you do. You went to school and learned how to read and write, add and subtract, but you never went to a class that taught you how to understand your emotions. At no time did you ever receive any systematic education about what to expect in a relationship or how to behave in one. No one ever taught you how to relate. No one ever taught you how to select a good mate. No one ever taught you how to be a husband or a wife. And no one ever taught you what to do when things went wrong. If you think about it, no one even taught you how to define what "wrong" was.

As a result, you probably chose your mate for the wrong reasons and then proceeded into your relationship with ill-defined skills, goals, and expectations. And then came the double whammy: when you went looking for help, most of those in the "helping professions," with their textbook therapies and psychological theories, seemed to have absolutely no understanding of how to help you. It is amazing to me how this country is overflowing with marital therapists, psychiatrists and psychologists, counselors, healers, advice columnists, and self-help authors - and their approach to relationships is usually so embarrassing that I want to turn my head in shame.

It's time for the double-talk and fuzzy thinking to stop. In this journey, the one through the pages of this book, you won't be relying on theory and bad information. You will be relying on techniques and realities for creating and managing a healthy relationship. Instead of resorting to another round of expensive therapy or reading some warm and fuzzy euphemisms that could very well keep you from doing those things that can genuinely help you, you're going

to learn the truth – and the truth is that your relationship is in trouble because *you* set it up that way.

Read that sentence again: your relationship is in trouble because *you* set it up that way. And let me be real clear, I'm not saying that you set it up that way because you were in a bad mood once in a while. You didn't set it up that way because of something really outrageous that you did one time five months or five years ago. You set it up that way by actively, consistently, and efficiently designing, programming, and choreographing your entire lifestyle to generate and then support a bad relationship. You have chosen to live in a way in which no other result could occur.

I will say this over and over before you finish this book: it is not possible for you to have a seriously defective long-term relationship unless you have generated and adopted a lifestyle to sustain it. Every single person in every walk of life has a lifestyle that supports who and what he or she is. If you are a healthy, vibrant, efficient, and productive person who is in touch with your core of consciousness, then I know without question that you have a lifestyle that supports that manner of living. If you are an emotionally pained and relationally troubled person who has lost touch with your core of consciousness, I know that you have a lifestyle that supports that too. You cannot have a bad relationship unless your lifestyle is characterized by stress, pressure, distraction, and a harried and chaotic existence. Moreover, if you are living in a dysfunctional relationship with another person, it's because you have a dysfunctional relationship with yourself.

I'm not blaming you; I'm just telling you how it is. A bad relationship cannot exist if it is not fed and nurtured in some way. If you think I am wrong, just look out your window. If you see weeds in your yard or in the field next door, they didn't just happen. Some way, somehow that weed had to get started. And what's more, it had to be fed and nurtured in some way. It didn't grow in concrete; somehow the

environment had to support its very existence or it could not be.

I'm not saying you necessarily chose any environment or lifestyle consciously, and I'm not saying that you generated your dysfunctional relationship on purpose. But I'm telling you that the reality of your relationship along with your overall lifestyle and your relationship with yourself are one hundred percent inextricably intertwined. If you have not designed and carried out your life to create or allow distance instead of intimacy, combativeness instead of cooperation, blame and rejection instead of accountability and acceptance, you cannot maintain the erosion and pain that you are now experiencing. Problems don't flourish in isolation. They have to have help and nurturance.

As an example, simply compare the lifestyle of someone who is chronically and morbidly overweight with the lifestyle of someone who is fit, energetic, and of normal weight. I will promise you that both of these people have designed their worlds to sustain what they have become. The overweight person will use food differently. You will find that he or she lives to eat, while a person of normal weight eats to live. This is a painful truth, but it is the truth. When it comes to your relationship, you have chosen to live patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior that have generated something that is not giving you what want. You are living to suffer instead of loving to live. That has to change, and it has to change first before anything else will begin to fall into place.

I have no doubt that many of you at this very moment are saying, "Wait a second, Dr. Phil. All your talk about getting me straight is just great, but you have no idea what a jerk my partner can be. You have no idea what manner of hell my partner brings into my life. I'm fine about making my life better, but what about my partner? Why all this total focus on me? I'm just one-half of this deal!"

Trust me, I do know what you may well be living with, and I promise you, your partner will get his or her turn in the barrel. But in all likelihood, your partner isn't sitting right beside you reading this book. You're the only one reading it. My only input, my only influence, is with you, so that is who I am focusing on, and if you are smart you will do the same. But I do know it takes two to tango, and if you are able to change yourself, if you are able to create a different lifestyle and environment in which your relationship takes place, if you are able to regain your power and reclaim your right to dignity and respect, then your partner is going to be seriously affected.

You can't control your partner. You can't make changes for your partner. You can't tell your partner what to do. But you can inspire your partner. You can give your partner a whole new set of behaviors and new set of stimuli to respond to. If you drop out of the destructive mind-set and vicious circle of mutually frustrating interactions that are causing your relationship to implode, if you drop out of the fight and start living a new way, it's going to be real difficult for your partner to continue spewing and seeking venom. You can stop sabotaging yourself and your relationship, and you can start inspiring the kind of reactions you want from your partner. In the face of such constructive input, he or she can't fight alone, argue alone, or continue to be offended. Your partner can pout for a while, perhaps withdraw and be suspicious for a while, but eventually he or she is going to feel pretty stupid sitting over in the corner while you seem to be getting so very much happier and so much more optimistic and at peace with yourself.

## **Rescuing Your Relationship Means Rescuing You**

Besides, what's the alternative - to allow your current lifestyle to persist, a lifestyle that with each passing day broadens the gap between you and your hopes and dreams? This isn't brain surgery or quantum physics here - what you are doing, how you are living, is not working. Plain and simple, it is not working. If you do not push yourself to find out what it is in your lifestyle that isn't working, what it is about your lifestyle that has created and supports this negative relationship, you will continue to suffer. You will continue to work on the wrong things that have nothing to do with the status of your relationship at the expense of that which most certainly determines its success or failure. You will try to believe that it's okay to forget some of your dreams, telling yourself that at least you are "secure" and "comfortable." You'll find yourself relying more and more upon the language of losers, telling yourself that you know you "should" do something about your plight and that you'd like to change but that you just aren't sure where to start. When you choose the behavior, you choose the consequences, so you must start choosing differently right here, right now, by being open to this book and everything in it.

So now you know where we're headed. If you are going to rescue your relationship, the first lifeline we have to throw is to you so that you can pull yourself out of your emotional swamp. By changing how you treat yourself, you alter the most important element of the entire equation. It means altering the environment in which your relationship exists and changing the priorities that dictate your time and energy. You must redesign the backdrop or context in which your relationship occurs. Until you begin to live with dignity, respect, and emotional integrity, you will not have that quality and level of interaction with anyone else. As I like to say, you cannot give away what you do not have. If you don't have a pure and healthy love and regard for yourself, how can you possibly give that to anyone else? And if you

can't give it to anyone else, then how can you possibly expect to have it reciprocated?

I am not suggesting that you become someone you are not. I am suggesting you that become the best of who you are. Right here, right now, you can stop hurting, and you can start changing your life. You may feel like you are lost in a maze from which there is no real exit, no route that leads back to your core of consciousness and all of the strength and wisdom that resides there. Well, I'm all about creating a route and an exit for you whenever and wherever you want it. I'm no longer caught up in ivory tower ideology. All I want to do is create good results. I'm prepared to kick a hole in the wall of the pain-ridden, unhappy maze you've gotten yourself into, and provide you clear access to action-oriented answers and instructions on what you must do to have what you want.

But as I said, I need your help. You have to be willing to admit that when it comes to conducting a relationship, whatever you are thinking and feeling and doing is not working. You have to be willing to move your position on some very deep beliefs and long-held emotions and behavioral patterns. When I say "move your position," I mean that you must be willing to utterly change the way you think, feel, and act in relationship to yourself and your partner. This can be harder than you could ever imagine. I am asking you to give up your security blankets and free-fall. I am asking you to hit the erase button on ideas that you may have been holding for ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years. I am asking you to wipe the slate clean and start over in your thinking. Bottom line, I am asking you to believe once again that you are a qualified person who deserves a quality relationship. Getting back in touch with your core of consciousness will remind and convince you that there is nothing wrong with you that justifies your having less than a rewarding relationship in which you can live, love, and laugh every day of your life.

Are you ready to embrace a new kind of thinking, a new belief system, a new way of looking at yourself and your partner? To see if you're ready to move forward in this book, answer the following questions.

**Question**

*Can you forget what you think you know about managing relationships?*

**Question**

*Can you decide to measure the quality of your relationship based on results instead of intentions or promises?*

**Question**

*Can you decide that you would rather be happy than right?*

**Question**

*Can you stop playing the blame game and recognize that it is a new day?*

**Question**

*Can you be willing to move your position on how you approach and engage your partner?*

**Question**

*Can you be willing to get real and be honest with yourself, about yourself, no matter how painful it is?*

**Question**

*Can you stop the denial and be completely, totally honest about the state of your current relationship?*

I know that right now it may be difficult for many of you to honestly answer yes to all of those questions. Either way, don't give up, at least not until I tell you two very important things.

## **Bucking the Trend: You Can Make Your Relationship Work**

First: it is not too late. If you do not allow yourself to believe and accept that, you will think your way out of this relationship before we have the chance to save it. You may think your relationship has failed, you may feel like you have tried everything, you may feel tired, deflated, and defeated, but I'm telling you, you have to get that thought out of your head or you are dead in the water with an anvil tied around your ankle. No matter how many times you've been hurt - no matter how many times you've been disappointed, no matter how many times you've believed it could be different only to get slapped in the face again - you have to be willing to give yourself one more chance. Even if you have hurt so long and so badly that you aren't at all sure if you care whether your relationship survives; even if you're not sure you can ever subject yourself to any more pain from a relationship; even if you do not feel motivated or very hopeful, you can start getting out of your ditch if you will just say to yourself, "I *wish* I felt good about my relationship again." That's all we need. If all you can muster in your mind and heart is to say, "I wish I felt good about this relationship again, and I wish I felt lovingly toward this person again because I know that at least at one time in my life, those emotions felt good," then that is enough of an ember for us to fan into a flame.

Second: you are not alone. You may feel bewildered and demoralized right now, engulfed by the loneliness that comes with a deteriorating relationship. You may feel intimidated and overwhelmed by what may seem like insurmountable problems or hurts that tend to run so very, very deep. But I want you to know that from now on, you have a partner. You have a partner who is willing to walk with you through this intimidating maze of emotion and who

is willing to interact without judgment or criticism, but with the willingness and courage to tell you the truth. I am going to be that partner for you. I have now counseled thousands of people and taught tens of thousands in seminars, helping them create and maintain the key relationships in their lives. I have learned what you know and, more important, what you don't know about sharing your life with another person. I have designed this approach to meet you at whatever point you find yourself in your relationship and give you the power to make changes - power that can come only from learning the absolute naked, unvarnished truth. Indeed, once you learn the real truth about how you got into this mess, and then once you learn what you can do to get rid of the mess, you will shudder to think you almost walked away. You are closer to success than you could ever imagine if you just have the courage to get real with yourself.

We will not proceed in a random fashion. The strategy for rescuing your relationship involves seven major steps. First, we will focus on defining and diagnosing where your relationship is now, because you will never be able to change what you do not acknowledge. Only if you are able to define specifically, precisely what is wrong with you - as well as what is wrong in your relationship - will you be able to set reasonable goals for change. I'm talking about taking your understanding about yourself and your relationship to a whole new level. It is one thing to say, "It hurts; I don't like the way I feel; something is missing." It's another thing to get to what is structurally, behaviorally, philosophically, and emotionally not working. Only when you figure out what the problem is can you match a solution to it. You will be amazed at the power this knowledge gives you as you pursue the rescue of this relationship.

Second, we must rid you of wrong thinking. As I stated earlier, you haven't suffered just an absence of information; you have suffered a poisoning of your thinking by an infusion of wrong information. This wrong information - the

“myths” that abound about relationships – have sent you down the wrong road, pursuing the wrong alternatives to poorly defined problems. If you have misdiagnosed the problem as we just discussed, and then unknowingly embraced faulty thinking in these popularized myths, you are living a life where you are resorting to the wrong treatment for the wrong problems.

Third, it will be important to blow the whistle on your own negative attitudes and behaviors and the specific ways to do irreparable harm to your own relationship – in other words, how you interact in ways that are in direct opposition to the healthy self that is defined in your core of consciousness. You can’t get defensive here and start complaining about your partner, because I promise you that based on results, you are going to find plenty to fix in yourself before you ever get to focus on your partner. You either get it or you don’t, and only when you start “getting” how and why your relationship is not what you want will you be able to start shaping it into what you do want. The fact that you are the focus should be great news because you can control you!

Only then, after understanding the full extent of your wrong thinking and bad attitudes and actions and the powerful impact they have on your relationship, can you move to the fourth step, which is to internalize a set of what I call “Personal Relationship Values” that will become the new foundation for your relational life. It’s these Personal Relationship Values that lead you back to your core, emotionally tune you in to the best parts of yourself, and behaviorally set you up to give your partner positive things to respond to.

Then comes the fifth step, in which you will be taught one of the most basic and powerful formulas active at the core of human functioning: the specific formula for a successful relationship.

**RED ALERT:** The formula will do you no good until you've mastered the first four steps. Without completing the first four steps, you are likely to blow your chance to apply the formula effectively. Be patient enough to prepare for success. The will to win is eclipsed by the will to prepare to win. So don't jump ahead and try to work the formula. You will get there soon enough, and if you do the work, you will arrive ready.

In our sixth step, we begin the reconnection process. Many of you have allowed the connection with your partner to remain broken for many years. For others, it is simply weakening, and distance is beginning to creep in. Either way, whether preventative or remedial, this will be the time to reopen negotiations, to work through a series of critical steps in order to learn how to deal with your own needs and your partner's needs in a way that sets you up for success.

One of my mantras is that you have to name it before you can claim it. You have to decide what you really want out of your relationship, what you want from yourself and your partner - and we will learn how to do that. As part of that reconnection process, you will go through a highly structured and powerful fourteen-day program where you and your partner begin to enact your new life - where the process of reconnection actually takes place before your eyes.

Finally, in our seventh step, you will learn how to manage your relationship once you have reconnected with your partner. Let's be honest. Neither you nor your partner were born yesterday. You have lots of emotional baggage, and we will spend considerable time on how to make sure that emotional baggage gets jettisoned so you can have a fresh start and a new chance in your relationship. And to make sure you are prepared for what lies ahead in the real world, I will give you another chapter that deals with the issues that define day-to-day life in a relationship, including topics as

intimate as sex and as volatile as fighting and physical abuse.

## **Relationship: Project Status**

To accomplish these seven steps, you must do one thing, starting right now. You must put your relationship on what I like to call Project Status. This means that you must consciously decide to actively, purposefully work on improving your situation each and every day. I don't mean that you need to "want to" or "intend to" work on it. I mean *do it*, every single day. Discipline yourself to do the work. You make time for other things in your life every day - you're able to take out the trash every day, you're able to get the children to school every day, you're able to get to your job every day - and your work on your relationship should be no different. You are going to have to set aside time each day to get this relationship recharged and to do the specific things that are assigned over the course of this book. You will get out of this project what you put into this project. It may mean that you must consciously reschedule or forgo other activities in order to make the time needed to work on the relationship. It may mean that you change your long-term schedule in terms of everything from weekends to vacations to allow you to deal with the relationship's demands. Putting your relationship on Project Status means that it becomes of great conscious importance to you.

Putting your relationship on Project Status also means you must be committed for the long haul. A tried and true formula fits the need here: Be - Do - Have. Be committed, do what it takes, and you will have what you want. Don't decide to work on your relationship for some preset period of time. You have to commit to work on this "until." You have to work on this until you have what you want, not until some arbitrary time limit expires. I suspect that it took you a

good while to get things this screwed up, so give yourself equal time to get the relationship right.

Throughout this journey there will be setbacks, there will be pain, there will be disappointment, but there will also be change. Stay committed to facilitating that change. You have to be committed to the long-term development of an entirely new lifestyle of thought, feeling, and action. It is not enough to have some sort of “desire” or “hope” that you will develop a better relationship. You must be willing to reach down and find that long-hidden hunger for excellence that lurks somewhere inside you, and then you must be willing to unleash it.

You must take a stand that you are going to defy the odds, defy your own insecurities, and defy the conventional wisdom that has failed you so miserably. Set this personal standard for yourself from the very beginning. Adopt a philosophy of passion that says, “I will not quit. I will not allow my hopes and dreams to be pushed aside.” Never forget, this life is your only shot. This is no dress rehearsal. You must be willing to reach for what you want and reach right now. And if you are willing to settle for less, then that is exactly what you will get.

Finally, to be in Project Status means that you don't forget about the importance of your relationship with yourself. You must demand nothing less than the best of yourself and for yourself. You must tell yourself that it is not wrong to want it all. It is not wrong to demand dignity, love, honor, and romance in your life. You must decide that you are worthy of everything that you want. You must decide that peace, joy, and abundance in a relationship is not just for other people. It is for you. It is not selfish to want it, it is not naive to want it, and it is not immature to expect it. What *is* immature is to sell out and settle for less than what you really want.

It is not wrong to want, expect, demand, and aspire to a relationship in which you are treated with honor, dignity, and respect. It is not unrealistic to believe that your mate

can and should be your soft place to fall. It is not a pipe dream to believe that God has provided for you another person in this world whom you can trust with your most intimate and vulnerable secrets and needs.

I am not suggesting that blind optimism or denial about the risks is the right approach. I am not telling you to pretend that there are not problems, or that they will go away. I am asking you to exercise the belief within yourself that you can do this, and that your relationship can be much better. I have often said, "Sometimes we make the right decision, and sometimes we have to make the decision right." If you want the information, tools, and specific plan of action you need to make that decision right - to genuinely create change in your own life, rescue your relationship, and turn it around - then keep reading. You will find in these pages the no-nonsense but powerful strategy that can get you and your partner reconnected.

You might not like hearing about all of it. You might not like having to blow up a bunch of deceptive but highly destructive myths about what makes a relationship work, and you might not like having to confront the truth about yourself - but I predict that you will love the outcome. You will love that you will be able to reprogram yourself for success rather than failure, that you will be able to go from an individual hoping for a future to an individual making your future happen. And then both you and your partner can begin working to get what you want, to stop the pain that both of you are feeling, and to create more peace, love, and the deepest of joy in your relationship.