



Love, Intimacy and Opening Your Heart

Vulnerability Is Your
Greatest Strength

By Samantha Keen

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“And the day came when the risk to remain closed in a bud became more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”

Elizabeth Appell, Director of PR for John F. Kennedy in Orinda USA. 1979.



Introduction

This is a story of my own journey of exploration of matters of the Heart, Sexuality, Intimacy, Love and Spiritual Growth. I wrote about it in a series of blogs online, gave a series of free seminars in New York City, USA and Toronto, Canada, and researched it in my life, my reading and my enjoyment of artistic expressions of all kinds.

I hope that my explorations, which have been extensive both for myself, and with clients all over the world, can open up your own discoveries, and also give you permission to see yourself and your desires for love differently. We all share this desire for love, and the need for human warmth. Many of us care deeply about the close relationships in our lives, and hold dear the longing for one person to fill our hearts. I want to share my own explorations of this human condition with you, in the hope that it might allow more people to see matters of the heart for what they are instead of feeling badly that they may not have lived up to the cultural "norm" or the fairy tales of the cinema.

My life is not by any means normal, I was born in Malawi Africa as a third generation Anglo Saxon African, immigrated with my family to Australia at the age of 4, grew up in Perth Western Australia, moved to Sydney to become a financial journalist, while also supporting environmental activists. Got sick with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, moved to London, UK to work as a journalist, married my boyfriend so he could come with me and work there too. Travelled the world by myself. The first 3 years of that devastating illness (including symptoms too numerous and too painful to list here) were difficult, to say the least. Like many in the same position, I put myself on the most punishing diet, including no alcohol, no smoking, no

recreational drugs, no sugar, no gluten, no avocado, no tomato, no dairy, really nothing that was in any way enjoyable. In a last ditch attempt to really change my life, I travelled through Africa on local buses to the places most tourists do not go, revisiting my birth country Malawi.

Everything changed in Africa, when I realized a burning need to meditate, to shift something of myself from the inside out. My life completely transformed and I became spiritually inclined. Where this longing came from, I do not know as no one that I grew up with was in any way spiritual. At the age of



10 years old I rebelled by going to Sunday School. My family were tolerant of that rebellion, as they have been of everything, but it was not in line with their way of thinking. My father claimed to be an atheist and my mother agnostic. It is even funnier that I knew what that meant at the age of 10 while I enjoyed singing "Morning Has Broken" in my offkey voice at the service, and knew all the bible stories by heart. This short religious rebellion did not last long. I really did not have another phase of contemplating anything non physical until I went to Africa at the age of 28 years.

There is so much more to say about all of this, yet the key is that it took me a long time, and a lot of traveling to realize that I am not like everyone else. Love is important to me, and my friends and family are completely dear to me, but I do not necessarily want to be in a traditional marriage with a traditional family. My path has been about finding that love inside of myself, and exploring it in a few very special longterm relationships. I have had an incredible relationship with a boyfriend that was my perfect sexual partner, who gave me orgasms that lasted for days on end. We shared so much joy and so much pleasure for a while, in a way that made nothing else in the world seem important or even relevant. That ended in the kind of heartbreak that makes you want to die, and also kill your lover. Not pretty! Yet after so much passion, though, I realized it was almost inevitable. I shared such intimate love and friendship in several relationships that lasted over 4 years each. And of course, again the heartbreak was crushing at the end. At the last one, I gave myself to my best friend, deciding that for this man I would not hold one skerrick (Australian word for small piece of quantity; a bit) of my heart back from this man. And again, more than ever before my heart was smashed into pieces.

At this point I felt like a complete failure in love, that I would never have love again, that my whole purpose for living was over, and I wanted to die. All the grief that I did not let myself feel in my childhood when my Mum and Dad split up and my Dad left, came back with avengance. I could do nothing but cry. This is when my reflection on love began. When I really started to write about what it means to be a woman, in today's world, where families are no longer close together, where friends are a Grace to be cherished, where relationships that last 5 years are a lifetime long, and lives change so dramatically from one year to the next that accepting loss is part of opening to new possibilities.

When I wrote these series of articles on the topic of love, I lived in New York City where more than 50 percent of people live alone. There are more than 300,000 dogs and a lot of people in therapy. This taught me that intimacy is not guaranteed anymore. It is something to be cultivated and appreciated. My burning desire to understand this beautiful thing that we share, called love, and all the side effects including heartbreak and personal growth, led me to write this material. It was a journey inside of myself, but not one that I took alone. I am happy to share it with you, and I hope that you can enjoy this journey as much as I did, and also learn a lot along the way.

1. Losing Love is Like a Window in Your Heart



*And she said losing love
Is like a window in your heart Everybody sees
you're blown apart Everybody sees the
wind blow*

Graceland, Paul Simon, 1986 (vocals by The Everly Brothers).

The feeling of a broken heart is like being torn apart. The chest feels ripped open, as if anyone could see right through you.

I am now quite familiar with the feeling of a broken heart. I have been truly in love several times during my life. The experience was both a merging of my heart with the heart of my lover and an eventual, transformation of that merging into a painful separation.

What I came to see was that the pain presented an opportunity to change something inside.

Every time I fell in love, my energy would merge with the energy of my lover. The fullness of our connection would put us in touch with the depths of our being and even allow something divine or spiritual to run through the connection. During these experiences, I would feel that my lover was a god, so intense was the feeling of connection between us.

I would sometimes say the words, "I love him so deeply", but what did it mean? It meant that I let my lover see behind the masks that I would present to the world. I invited him into the deepest, most vulnerable parts of myself.

There are few experiences more powerful than that of letting another person in so deeply that it seems they can peer into the depths of your soul. But why does it hurt so much when they are no longer with you? Why does it seem to be physically painful when you lose that person who has seen through your soul, and blown open your heart? The experience is central to being human.

The universality of the experience is why there are so many songs, poems, and books about falling in love.

Tristan and Iseult, the Original Romance

The first real love tale that I read, The Romance of Tristan & Iseult, passes both the the heart ache and the potential transcendence that can arise from love.

The first line in this book says it all:

"My lords, if you would hear a high tale of love and of death, here is that of Tristan and Queen Iseult; how to their full joy, but to their sorrow also, they loved each other, and how at last they died of that love together upon one day; she by him and he by her."

(The Romance of Tristan & Iseult, drawn from the best French sources and retold by J.

Bédier. Rendered into English by H. Belloc.) The lovers' death is a symbol of transcendence. Tristan and Iseult depart from the mortal world to attain their highest love in the afterlife. Their connection is, in the end, otherworldly.

To my childhood eyes, The Romance of Tristan and Iseult summed up the intensity and fascination of romantic love. It spoke to something far wiser and older than my years could explain:

"But Iseult loved him, though she would have hated. She could not hate, for a tenderness more sharp than hatred tore her."

Even as a young girl, I had some innocent knowing of the intensity that can tear at the heart. I yearned for love and I had an intuitive knowing of its potential to be sharp and piercing.

Despite the intensity of feeling conveyed in tales of romantic love and the longing that many of us have to experience it, we often look to other qualities when choosing our partners. In fact there are many countries and cultures that still require arranged marriages.

Romantic love only entered popular western culture with knights and courtly etiquette. So although many of our values and much of our artistic expression now revolves around the notion of romantic love, it was not a part of the cultural landscape of the Western world until as recent as the 12th Century.

Depictions of romantic love have also changed significantly over time. As we have seen, the tale of Tristan and Iseult is fraught with difficulties. The lovers are only united in death. Only with the advent of modern Hollywood cinema did tales of romantic love begin to receive happy endings.

The old tales tell us that love can be a great challenge because it strikes at the deepest parts of ourselves. We love to love because we want to feel these hidden parts of ourselves, for better or for worse.

The problem with falling in love is that we see all the attributes of our higher selves, or our own divinity in our partner. This means that when they start behaving like a human being, we are bound to feel a certain kind of disappointment and hurt. It is as if we lost our connection to the divine all over again. Think Adam and Eve.

For a fun rendition of this tale, listen to Nina Simone's ***Forbidden Fruit***.

Now I want to explore some important questions about the experience of losing love:

How Do I Cure a Broken Heart?

While there is no cure for a broken heart, the pain of heartbreak offers a depth of connection to a place within us that can often remain remote. The part of us that is pure and vulnerable enough to open to love love is also the part of us that can experience and know the divine. In the pain of a broken heart, there is longing. The longing carries a knowing that each of us ultimately yearns for the connection to ourselves. When we fall in love with another person, the longing literally comes to life, as a celebration of love. While the experience of connection and celebration unfolds within us, we attribute it to our lover.

The pain of heartbreak is not only expressing the loss of our lover, but the loss of our own love. If we can recognize that the longing for a connection to ourselves is there, even when our lover has gone away, we can love and celebrate as we let go. While our hurt may remain, even as we embrace our longing for connection, the fact of opening brings greater depth and meaning to the experience.

Back to Iseult for a moment. I must admit that as an adult woman who loves to love, I do feel her tenderness. Iseult's tenderness, which tears in a way even hatred could not, is something many of us have experienced. I have felt the tear each time I have fallen in love, only to experience heartbreak.

The broken heart is devastation of the highest order. It is also the most beautiful form of pain. To give your heart so fully to another that you feel you could die when they are lost is something extraordinary and terrible at the same time. Perhaps exquisite is the right word, acknowledging that people have been trying to find the right word for centuries. The experiences we are exploring here are still not entirely touchable by language.

Why does the loss of love hurt so much?

There is a reason why people hurt so much when they lose someone they have really loved. Separation creates a wounding of sorts on the level of the *qi* or *prana*, otherwise known as the life force. The life force of the couple, particularly their hearts, merges and becomes a kind of become an energetic support. When the couple parts, there is a loss on that same energetic level in the heart. Loss really is a tearing of the *qi* or *prana* of the heart.

The energetic wounding I'm describing is the reason it is of paramount importance to care for your energy after suffering heartbreak.. Eat well, sleep well, get exercise, listen to music, dance and move your *qi* or *prana*. I have also experienced the healing value of tears. When we cry in the aftermath of painful separation, our tears move the energy of the heart and create a space for healing.

Most of the time, the true broken heart takes about six months to heal, in my estimation. During those six months, the heart can burn, ache or feel incredibly sore. You are tender

and raw, and it is as if people were able to see right through you.

How can you move through it in a way that is positive for the heart?

When the heart breaks, we can find ways to access old wounds. The heart seems to be cracked open, creating a kind of window into the soul. There, we can uncover old aches and pains that were never really healed. All of the wounds from the past seem to be struck anew during periods of heartbreak.

My experience of having these old wounds healed in the time of a broken heart has been incredibly difficult and rewarding. For me, there has been a great pain in my heart all my life. I was very ill as a baby and had lots of time without my mother. As a result of being hospitalized in my infancy, I did not receive the nurturing that is forged between mother and child through physical touch. The lack of touch at such an early age wounded my heart.

As I have opened up that wound as an adult through loving relationships, it has become available for healing. I used what are called the Inner Space Techniques to see the inner depths of the wound and begin the process of healing the energy of my heart. There are other techniques that facilitate deep healing. Two that speak to me personally are meditation and journaling.

Over time, I learned to be with the feeling of pain in my heart. The simple gesture of being present with my heart began to change my experience of it. I came to see that when the hurt from my early life was touched by a relationship, I would often resort to yelling, fighting, or busying myself with work. Eventually, I let myself feel the hurt in my chest instead of returning to my familiar reactions. My willingness to simply feel was

not only transformative but deeply healing. If I had to cry, I cried, without getting too heavy about it. I just let the loss flow out.

What happens when it is hard to let go of your old partner or repeat the same relationship pattern over and over again?

What I found most challenging about opening to the wounds in my heart is that they had the potential to pull me back into the old patterns that created the wound in the first place.

At times, these patterns look like pulls to call a former lover late at night or drive by their house compulsively. At other times, the patterns can lead us into a new relationship that has the same impact as the older, unhealthy relationships.

I eventually came to the point where I felt I had to stop falling into the same wounded patterns. The only way I was able to pull myself out of them was by feeling the source of the pull. Only after seeing the source of the impulse to reproduce the hurt did I begin to feel a kind of freedom inside. In many ways the process was one of overcoming an addiction.

How can we support ourselves in that work?

Most people cannot do the work of feeling into the depths of a longstanding emotional pattern alone. Even though we can often see the patterns of others, seeing them in ourselves can prove incredibly difficult.

What most helped me was the support of friends who practiced the healing techniques of Inner Space Therapy. The technique assisted me in finding the real cause of the continued momentum behind my hurtful patterns of behavior. I also found the courage to do something different as a result of having support and a way to engage with my emotional impasses at a

deep level. I became capable of caring for my heart in a way that I had never been able to access/manage in the past.

You may have other techniques that speak to you and that help you to reach experiences of the source of your inner pulls. No matter what technique you choose to engage, the key is to see the pull for what it is - a pull - and explore the deeper cause behind it. Let's be very clear, the boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife who broke your heart is not the cause of these hurtful emotional patterns

Most people find that the pull to return to the same hurtful patterns in a relationship really began long ago. Seeing the true source of the emotions that pull you to unhealthy patterns not only changes those patterns, but connects you to yourself in a completely different way. I will talk about this further in blogs to come. It is a big and enriching topic.

Will you ever love like that again?

The best thing about taking care of your heart when you are in the state of the wound is that the window is open and the light of your higher self or divine presence can shine through. Next time you are sitting with someone who is crying from a space of opening, see how they shine. Beyond the pain and suffering that might be present, the person allowing may be allowing the light of something more divine to shine through their inner wound. The wound is not only a present hurt. If it is pursued deep enough, the wound becomes an archetypal experience that we all share. At its core, it is the loss of the Divine as well as the source of our aspiration to reunite with the Divine at the highest level. After you have experienced this light shining through your heart, love becomes a different experience; something unconditional that moves us beyond the need to possess those we love.

How do you really let go of past loves, and losses so as to be able to open fully to a new love?

When we fall in love, we come to see the highest parts of ourselves in those we love. When I look back at my partners, I realize that I often love wounded warriors who are very solid, passionate, and intense. I have come to realize that these qualities reflect a deeper part of myself. The reflective relationship I'm describing is very much akin to Carl Jung's description of the Anima and Animus.

The anima (animus) can be identified as the totality of the unconscious feminine psychological qualities that a male possesses or the masculine ones possessed by the female. (Wikipedia)

In essence, Jung says that we must consciously reclaim all that we unconsciously project onto our lovers in order to arrive at experiences of transcendence. My work of reclamation has consisted in finding the part inside that is solid enough to hold me through the vulnerability of a broken heart. I learned how to rest on my own core, in order to become more open to the sweeter, softer parts of myself.

The amazing thing is that the vulnerability that most of us protect and guard is in fact our greatest strength.

To understand something of the power of vulnerability, I want to point to the power of the vulnerability of the heart which people have known over ages. Susan Griffin, in *The Book of Courtesans: A Catalogue of Their Virtues*, illustrates very well how the highest of prostitutes, who knew the art of love more than most, were in touch with this deep vulnerability of the heart. Griffin describes the particular qualities of a courtesan captured in a French painting from the twelfth century:

"A certain honesty. You can see it in the complexity of the presence the painter has captured. It is authenticity that makes her expression so compelling. Though reticent, she does not hide the reticence she feels. She lets herself be seen as she is. In this sense, her undress is symbolic. Unlike those with lesser talents who would conceal or pretend, she is accustomed to using her real feelings in her profession. This is how she achieves the intimate moments for which she is so esteemed. And yet even this presence, like Titian's painting, is not without artifice. Intimacy is her art. And like the painter, she knows well how to create a moving composition from elements of truth."

The vulnerability reflected in Griffin's rendition of the courtesan is the beautiful core of loving. If we can come to terms with the part of ourselves that is open enough to fall in love, and break in the loss, then we can truly know and love ourselves. Embracing the vulnerability of our hearts is the path toward more fulfilling future relationships.

I experienced a profound change inside myself after I fell in love and experienced a broken heart.

I was more honest with myself and with others because I did not have to hide or protect my vulnerability.

Healing my broken heart has been a sweet and painful pathway back to myself. I have come to see the learning of intimacy as a journey of coming to love my tender heart. I can now carry with myself the knowing that when the heart breaks, it becomes a window to the soul. As Paul Simon sings "everybody knows you are blown apart". And that, my friends, is not a bad thing, even if it hurts a lot.

2. Opening The Heart: Learning To Receive Love



Since becoming a practitioner of the Inner Space Techniques - a meditation-based therapeutic modality of the Clairvision® School of meditation - I have worked with people from around the world on love, relationship, sexuality and the resolution of deeply held traumas. I have practised this style of work for nearly 20 years and feel blessed to have witnessed my clients make transformative decisions that have altered the course of their lives.

I have given thousands of sessions in this time. The more that I do this work, the more I admire the indomitable spirit within every person. There, at the deepest of ourselves, is a flame of strength and vulnerability that has its own knowing and wisdom. I want to share what I have come to know about this part of us through my own spiritual work and practice.

My path has been one of love and devotion. I did not know the presence and unconditional compassion within myself when I began my spiritual journey nearly fifteen years ago. Yet what I discovered in meditation and puja or prayer was a deeply visceral experience of devotion. Now I am able to embrace that same force of devotion in my life and my relationships. I hope that what I share with you can bring to life a similar journey of exploration for you.

"Maturity comes only when you are ready to face the pain of your being; maturity comes only when you are ready to take the challenge. And there is no greater challenge than love." says Osho in Chapter 8 of 'Another Sunday' from the book of commentaries Dang Dan Doko Dang.

I want to create a dialogue with you about love; what love is and what it means to say "yes" to love and open your heart.

What is Love?

Firstly, love is not what most people think it is.

"In English, the word "love" can be used in quite different contexts. For instance, when the cat comes and shows affection just before you feed it, you easily say that the cat loves you. [...] The same word "love" is also used to describe what emanates from Christ, or from enlightened masters or guides, when they give all of themselves to a disciple. Some of these masters have an incredible capacity for love. [...] However, the love of Christ and the love of the cat are of a very different order. For instance, kick the cat out of the house instead of feeding it dinner. Instantly, the cat no longer loves you. [...] Now, if you kick Christ out of your house, that is not going to change His love at all. The love of Christ does not depend on your feedback. It is unconditional. [...] Yet we use the same word, love, for both cat and Christ," says Samuel Sagan (*Regression PastLife Therapy for Here and Now Freedom*, p. 31).

I am going to take some time to define love, and the term heart that we often associate with love as an active force. If we realize that the word "love" can cover a vast spectrum of emotions and feelings, what is love, really?

Before answering this lofty question I am going to flesh out the term "opening the heart".

The etymology, or the origin of the word heart, comes from Old English heorte defined on etymology.com as "heart; breast, soul, spirit, will, desire; courage; mind, intellect."

Spelling with -ea- can be sourced back to 1500. This spelling reflects what then was a long vowel, and remained when pronunciation shifted. Most of the figurative senses were present in Old English, including "intellect, memory, to know only in by heart".

I find it quite interesting that the word heart is associated with wisdom. In my experience when people really open their hearts, they find within it a certain knowing or wisdom. Samuel Sagan M.D. calls it the "vision of the heart" in his book *Awakening the Third Eye*.

Sagan also wrote about heart in *Planetary Forces Alchemy and Healing*, a book that explores psychology, physiology and pathology through astrological symbolism. He talks about the symbol of Sun, which, in this metaphorical language, represents the principle of Heart.

Sagan says:

"The sun stands for the central, essential - the heart of things, both metaphorical and physically."

"Giver of Life, giver of Light."

"The Sun stands for the center around which the whole creation revolves, but also the point from which the creation has emerged. The Sun is the giver of Life. It is the principle without which nothing could exist, and without which nothing could survive. The creation came out of it and is permanently organized by its Spirit." (Samuel Sagan, Planetary Forces Section 3:3)

Dante in *The Divine Comedy* speaks of the Sun: *"That bright mirror, which reflects the light of God."*

According to Sagan, psychological features associated with this planetary force include:
*"Dignity, noble nature, sense of honor
Self respect, self esteem, self confidence,
self trust*

*Sense of purpose, ambition, determination
Authority, leadership skills, organization skills.
Direct, sincere, truthful.
Magnanimous.*

Hope. Aspiration.

Joy – especially the causeless joy that comes from the Spirit or Higher Self Unconditional love." (Samuel Sagan, Planetary Forces. Section 3:4)

The features emphasized by Sagan also reflect the qualities of a person with heart. I make mention of it here because the word love is sometimes taken to indicate something that comes from the heart. The features of a person with a sunny nature could also be those of a person with a loving nature.

To gain further clarity, I am going to talk about the heart as a function of consciousness that carries qualities of warmth, passion, and courage.

Did you know the etymology of the word courage comes from the Latin *cor* which means heart, and remains a common metaphor for inner strength?

To be a person of heart, might then also mean to be a person of inner strength or courage. A vision of the heart as the seat of strength and courage carries very different connotations than contemporary uses of the word heart, which often describe so-called "nice" behavior. A person of courage and inner strength may not come across as "nice" in a social situation, even though they have qualities that run quite deep and are capable of holding others through great difficulty.

Would you rather have friends who are "nice" to you or friends who are reliable and don't balk when the road becomes difficult?

How do we know if the heart is open or closed?

My experiential touchstone for heart opening has always been a feeling of having my chest ripped open. It seems strange from the perspective of the ordinary mind that love or a heart opening might hurt. Yet it does hurt. While opening the heart can feel quite pleasant, still, it is important that we be very clear. If your heart has been closed for some time and is beginning to open, the experience is much like that of unclenching a fist that has been tightly clenched for a long time. After years of unconscious closing, opening can be a mighty pain, not entirely unlike being ripped apart. Therefore, it takes courage to open.

We can see closings in our hearts by way of reflection and direct experience. The most obvious way to see that our hearts have closed is in the when we struggle to receive from others. When we receive, we allow ourselves to be embraced spiritually, energetically, emotionally, and physically. I have worked with many clients on the topic of receiving. Many of us are stuck fighting for what we want, blaming others for what we do not have, or stubbornly protecting our habitual patterns and grooves. Both I

and many of my clients have changed significantly through the work of undoing patterns that interfered with our willingness to receive.

Another way that we might register a closing in our hearts is through a certain background heaviness of feeling in our experience. If we wake every day to a persistent heaviness of heart, then there might be good reason to explore that emotional weight and its source, with the aim of bringing change at the level of the source.

My experience of an open heart is one of lightness, vitality, and causeless joy. I feel a flow of spontaneous love and creative wisdom that has its source deep within myself.

My first experience of being unable to receive as a result of a closing was at the age of twenty seven. I was dancing out of my apartment to the front porch with bare feet and two beers in my hand. I dragged my right foot along a broken mirror, propped up against the wall by my room mate. I cut three toes, requiring a total of 15 stitches.

At the time, I was working as an online financial journalist in Sydney, having invested five years in my career. When I cut my toes, I was unable to walk for weeks. I forced myself to go into work for overnight shifts when I should have been in bed. Then, of course, my foot became infected. Doctors did not know how long it would take to get better, and at the time I was still unable to walk on it.

Here I was, a young woman who did everything for herself, unable to make my own cup of tea and carry it to the kitchen table. I cannot begin to describe the level of frustration that brought up for me.

During this time, my sister visited my apartment to cook for me. Even though I couldn't walk, I insisted on telling her how to do everything. "Cut the onions this way! Put the garlic in the oil now. Wash the tomatoes..." Even though she knew how to make the dish and did not need my direction, I could not help myself. She turned around, halfway through the preparation. Without a word, she took two raw eggs in her hands, turned them upside down, and dropped them onto the hard kitchen floor. We both looked at the mess and burst into uncontrollable laughter.

My sister was able to show me how unable I was to simply let her help me. I could not receive. She did ultimately help me, more through the act of chaos and laughter than anything else she could have done.

I was again face to face with my inability to receive when I created my own businesses, first as a freelance journalist and later as a practitioner of the Inner Space Techniques and a workshop facilitator. I experienced very directly that I do not get paid when I close to receiving. Quite literally, friends helped me to see that when my financial situation became difficult, it was often a reflection of my inability to receive in general. As I learned how to receive gifts from friends, I was able to soften the barriers that had been keeping me closed for so long. I allowed myself to say "yes" to help, even when it left me feeling incredibly vulnerable.

One of my greatest challenges has been to receive warmth, caring and appreciation from others. Though I yearned so deeply for these energies, I would cringe in the face of them. The kind words, and positive reflection made me uncomfortable and vulnerable. I struggled with the feeling of being out of control. Eventually, I was able to welcome the warmth, caring, and appreciation, allowing myself them to be

touched by them. Touch me. Through my receptivity, I learned the power of gratitude.

Now, when I take in the positive feeling of being respected and adored, I give my heart permission to open from a space of gratitude.

Why can the experience from others be so vulnerable?

My experience is that acknowledging that I cannot do everything by myself, that I need help from my friends and loved ones, means I am showing others my fallibility. The kind of vulnerability I'm describing here is not always easy for those of us who believe we need to be strong and independent. Still, the fact is that we all need other people in our lives. Even if we don't connect with other human beings, our food, our water, our government, and many things we need every day are created and provided for by other people. While there can be much vulnerability in admitting that we rest on each other, there is also tremendous power in it.

Opening The Heart, Case Studies

I was on a plane when I met a young man from the US, who told me he had difficulties receiving love. He wanted a relationship with a woman. While he had no problem finding women to sleep with him, he struggled to find love in these experiences. As he told me his story, the obstacles facing him became clear to me.

This young man had a brother who was shot when he was seventeen. He was angry about the loss of his brother, and disappointed that his girlfriends could not understand the importance of his anger. Indeed, he was also out of touch with the extent of his anger.

As I talked with him, I could sense the heaviness in his heart. It was so tangible that his heart had closed when he lost his brother. It was almost physical, to see the dark heavy energy in his chest.

When he did some sessions with me, using the Inner Space Techniques, this young man found a blockage in the area of his chest. While the blockage was not physical, it made his chest feel heavy and dark. He said that whenever he was with a woman, he reached a point where he was too depressed to enjoy her company. When we worked through the old emotions from the loss of his brother, there was movement in his chest, releasing and clearing stuck energy or life force. The life force energy I am describing is known by several names in different traditions. Chinese medicine will describe this energy as *qi*, while the Indian Tradition calls it *prana*. The experience of life force is often felt as a vibration, tingling, or buzzing. I feel it most when I am at the beach, or in nature.

When opening their hearts, clients will often have the experience that their body of energy becomes more vibrant, alive, and tangible. The reason being that when the heart is heavy, its life force or *qi* is also weighed down.

A young woman who came to me for sessions was diagnosed with anxiety and using medication to work with the issue. She was a bubbly, warm, and enthusiastic person with pretty features and long, dark hair. Though she was clearly bright and quite beautiful, she did not feel happy in her relationships. The source of her anxiety was also totally unclear to her.

Our sessions together brought to light the fact that her mother was behaving like an undiagnosed borderline psychotic. Ever since this young woman was a child, she had to be the adult in the family. Her father

left when she was very little and her mother was unable to make the home work. Therefore, the responsibility fell on my client. Underneath all of her beliefs and stories about her childhood, my client was angry and hurt by the way she was abandoned as a child. Instead of allowing her abandonment to be held, she spent time and energy blaming herself because things did not work out as she had hoped they would.

The result was that she unconsciously took on the fears and instability of her mother, identifying with her mother's state of mind as if it were her own. When we separated that out from her true sense of self, it was clear that my client was a very grounded and capable person with a lot of talents. She was loving, warm, and extremely capable in her corporate position.

By the time we finished our sessions together, my client was married to a man she really loved and preparing to have her first baby. She was deliriously happy and capable of embracing her future without any anxiety. She had finally learned to trust herself.

What is Receptivity?

If love rests on the ability to receive, then what is receptivity? Receptivity is not an action, yet it requires something of us. It is a non-doing, yet it is not enough to do nothing.

To understand the nature of receptivity as a state of consciousness, I want to refer to the *I Ching or book of changes*, (The Richard Wilhelm translation). Hexagram II, The Receptive, is made up of broken lines, representing the dark, yielding, and primal power of yin. The primary quality of the hexagram is devotion. It forms an image of the Earth as an element or force that perfectly complements The Creative, Hexagram I. While the Receptive

complements the Creative, they do not oppose each other. Instead, each completes the other. Symbolically the pairing of receptivity and creativity describes nature in contrast to spirit, earth in contrast to heaven, space as against time, female-maternal against male-paternal. This duality operates not just between man and woman, but prince and minister or father and son. The *I Ching* says that Receptive must be activated and led by the Creative. (*I Ching or book of changes*, The Richard Wilhelm translation, pp3-12)

Meditation is about cultivating a more internalized state and is a more yin activity, compared to working, or the typical driven states of mind that most of us entertain throughout our daily lives. Often we look outside of ourselves for the thing that we want to receive. Much of the modern dilemma arises from the fact that people do not know how to find the love they are seeking within themselves.

I spent much of my life searching for home outside of myself. I could blame the place I lived, my job, or others for my unhappiness. Even so, it would never disappear. My unhappiness was inside of me. I shifted from one place to another, unable to find home within myself. When I finally started to meditate fifteen years ago, it was a homecoming for me. Every year I find a different experience of what it is to be at home in myself. With each experience, I move closer to the core of my own Being. I cannot force the process to happen, or make it all come to me immediately. I must sit in my meditation position, work with my colleagues, develop the states, and recognize the insights and experiences when they arrive. It is not an effort in the normal sense of the word, yet it takes real dedication, and I do need to show up.

How Does the Principle of Receptivity and Dedication Relate to Relationships?

This quote from Osho (from Chapter 8 'Another Sunday' in the book of commentaries, *Dang Dan Doko Dang*) sums it up:

"The Fear of Commitment

"Only through decisions do you become more and more conscious, only through decisions do you become more and more crystallized, only through decisions do you become sharp. Otherwise one becomes dull.

"People go on from one guru to another, from one master to another, from one temple to another — not because they are great seekers but because they are incapable of decision. So they go from one to another. This is their way to avoid commitment.

"The same happens in other human relationships: a man goes from one woman to another, goes on changing. People think he is a great lover; he is not a lover at all. He is avoiding, he is trying to avoid any deep involvement because with deep

involvement problems have to be faced, and much pain has to be gone through. So one simply plays safe; one makes it a point never to go too deeply into somebody. If you go too deep you may not be able to come back easily. And if you go deeply into somebody, somebody else will go deeply into you also; it is always proportionate. If I go very deep in you the only way is to allow you also to go that deep in me. It is a give and take, it is a sharing. Then one may get entangled too much, and it will be difficult to escape and the pain may be much. So people learn how to play safe: just let surfaces meet — hit-and-run love affairs. Before you are caught, run.

"This is what is happening in the modern world. People have become so juvenile, so childish; they are losing all maturity."

In my experience, love with other people is a pathway to the love of the Divine. What is Divine love, really? Until we can experience and receive the care of our partner, our close friends, or our family, we can only guess at the more intangible experience of the Divine.

3. Clouds Were Designed To Be Looked At From Above



After an experience of heart break of the highest order, two of my dearest girlfriend flew me to California to have some loving tender care and some healing time. I cried, and I was held, and I was blown away with gratitude that these amazing women would hold me with so much love. Flying home to New York, from Berkeley, California, I saw an extraordinary view from the window of the plane that reminded me of the experiences I had in my inner exploration of my heart.

I could not help but think of one of my favorite poems illustrating the high states of consciousness available in meditation. It was written by Samuel Sagan for the epic saga *Atlantean Secrets*.

Hymn of the White Eagle to his Children

*Some love to shine,
I shine through love.
Some are great by their might,
I am mighty by love.
Some love life and its delights,
Love is my Life,
And my delight comes from the love that
lives in you. Some angels demand that men
serve them
And they feed on their rituals
And their lawful sacrifices.
He who loves my children*

*Performs my great ritual.
I ask for your love and curse you not
When caught by forgetfulness,
You ignore my Voice
And the seeds for eternal Light
Which I have sewn into your hearts.
My dear children in eternity,
I have waited for you since earlier than time.
Hasten along the path,*

That you may join me in Highness and realize Clouds were designed to be looked at from above. (Samuel Sagan Atlantean Secrets Volume 2. Section 9.22)

This is a very short but inspired chapter to pass that during this phase of exploration of the heart, I went on a mini vacation in Berkeley, California. While I was there, being cared for by these beautiful women who are my friends, I learned that love is at the core of my Being. Caring about the people that I love is a way of Being. It is not dependent on how they respond. Though the realization was simple, it brought me tremendous relief.

I came to it after two of my closest friends paid for me to fly out and receive several days of meditationbased healing practices along with lots of fun and laughter.

I was surprised when the view from the plane looked like the view from deep inside my heart, after the tears had washed my pain and ushered in the Sun of my self-awareness.

In my experience, when the clutter of the mind is cleared, and the pain of the past let go, life seems incredibly simple. The simplicity does not mean becoming naive or embracing stupidity. Rather, it means opening to the essential and letting the rest drop away. Exploration of the self is much like climbing to the height of a mountain, or scaling a cliff. The climb can be arduous, even torturous, yet the experience when you get to the top is often euphoric and clear.

Relationships are wonderful, and love is great, but the real work for me is to love fully, in a way that brings me back to my own centre. I rest on love itself, which is a force inside me. I've come to feel it like a river or an ocean, like iews of a mountain top.

Wishing you all fresh, blue, new beginnings!

4. It's a New Dawn, it's a New Day, it's a New Life For Me



Birds flyin' high you know how I feel

Sun in the sky you know how I feel

Breeze driftin' on by you know how I feel

*It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life
for me yeah, it's a new dawn it's a new day it's
a new life for me ooooooooooh AND I'M
FEELING GOOD*

(Nina Simone, Feeling Good.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfJRX-8SXOs>)¹

Having been through the heartbreak

phase, I decided to try out internet dating,
and write about it as I went.

I started internet dating, after much pressure
from my girlfriends and months of resistance.
I put my profile up on two websites and
contacted about ten men in whom I was
interested as well as two men who had
expressed interest in me.

I was scared and excited.

At that time, I was still very much in the
heartbreak phase of recovering from a
relationship breakup. I needed to go out,
meet people, and think about something

other than the enormous pain that I was going through on a daily basis.

In short my girlfriends, who are all very wise, were convinced they would not have to listen to me moaning and crying on the phone, if I would just go out and meet another guy.

I did not really want to have a new boyfriend. I wanted to heal my heart and change the patterns that had me consistently back in that heartbreak place.

So I approached the dating with a lightness of mind. It was something that I just had to do. I have worked with many clients who have been internet dating, but until 2012 I hadn't done it myself. At worst, meeting new people was going to be something of a social experiment. Maybe, just maybe, it would also turn out to be something fun.

Why was I was scared? Internet dating was totally new for me. I was overwhelmed by the prospect of going out into New York City and meeting men from all walks of life. It is a jungle out there, don't get me wrong. And I had no idea what that jungle was going to be like.

In response to the gentle challenge from my girlfriends, and my own curiosity, I decided to find out.

To help me navigate this totally new world of American dating I rested on a couple of resources.

Firstly I revisited a number of Alison Armstrong's lectures about men and women in recent years. About two years ago I devoured Armstrong's lectures *Understanding Women: Unlock the Mystery, In Sync with the Opposite Sex, The Amazing Development of Men, and the novel Keys to the Kingdom*.

Then, in order to gain more of a sense of the male perspective, I looked into David Deida's book *The Way of the Superior Man*, which focuses heavily on the experience of polarity between men and women.

Several key things that I learned from those resources were vital in the dating game.

1. Men and women are different. This is one of the main messages in Armstrong's work, and while it sounds simple and possibly even a little dumb, it is in its essence true when it comes to the sexual dynamic. Understanding that the masculine polarity is direct, meaning that many men are pretty much as they present when it comes to sexual dynamics, helped me to receive the men who were so kind as to take me out.
2. Deida's work highlights the concept of polarity: the deeper, less conscious, 'energetic' dynamics underpinning attraction between the sexes. Polarity is such a beautiful concept, perhaps illustrated best in the discipline of dance. Watch a man and a woman dance together, and see the way the energy moves between them. The polarity is the way the feminine and masculine essences or 'poles' respond to each other. Polarity is an essential element in the making of 'chemistry' between a man and woman. There are certain conditions needed to create an healthy or exciting polarity between a man and a woman. Participating in the dance of these polarities is the most enjoyable part of dating.
3. Taking this knowledge into the dating world helped me to approach the experiences in a much lighter way. Being connected to and observing the 'dance' of polarities allowed me to let go of the need to set a fixed outcome for the dates. I was also able to let myself receive

the experience, even if it was destined to be just a one off, because I'd developed a greater awareness of the needs of men.

The word 'receiving' is actually a way to explore the feminine essence or polarity at a deeper level. As I deepened and broadened my experience of 'receiving', I arrived at something like surrender. Surrender is a word that can provoke reactions in people, seeing as it sounds like the kind of resignation or giving up that happens when we lose. Isn't everything about winning?

We live in a competitive culture that celebrates the act of striving and working hard. Our achievements appear to have more merit if they are done without help. However, this mindset, while good for professional development, can make relationships much harder. The energy of a relationship is ideally like a dance, and that doesn't work when both people want to take the lead in a masculine way.

An observation that might help people, particularly women, to embrace the concept of polarity is that feminine and masculine polarities exist within each and every person. Dialectical juxtapositions of qualities like as thinking versus feeling illustrate the masculine/feminine polarities within us all. The language of planetary forces – not to be confused with the shallowness of newspaper astrology – is a useful way to further unpack the difference. Mars = masculine, Venus = feminine.

Now, back to sexuality. A person has a dominant pole – either masculine or feminine. This explains how polarity can exist in a same sex relationship. And, indeed, in some relationships the woman may possess more of a masculine core and the man a feminine core.

Theory says you can't mentally decide to have a stronger feminine or masculine core. I feel you can get in touch with the energy of both poles, whatever your gender. Therefore, even if you have a stronger feminine core, it doesn't mean that you don't have access to the masculine polarity. Both poles are available to us. Our masculine and feminine polarities come into play most when we have sexual relationships.

I hope that you are all still following me now, as the attitude I am outlining here is quite different from the way that many modern women approach life and the world. Modern women are often expected to be quite masculine. We are in control of our lives, we have businesses, we choose our own paths, and we are empowered. This is all great, and I want to say it is a perfect scenario for us to be able to surrender into the feminine role with ease and joy.

Let me be clear here, as many women react to the word surrender, that this is about the energy between the man and the woman. If there is a good vibe, a warm and joyful energy between the two people, then the dance begins. If it is not there, it is not there. Honestly the polarity is not something to be forced, it is to be engaged as a flow; this is what I mean by surrender. If there is good feminine masculine energy between your date and yourself, then surrendering is a way to allow that energy to further blossom. However, the energy is either there, or it's not there.

The way I approached it, dating was about the energy that I would give and receive on each date, rather than the outcome of the date in a material sense. Practically speaking, this meant that I approached the date with feminine charm and playfulness, which resulted in more dates, whether with the man of that night, or another man in another scenario.

Many women that I see as clients do not know how to surrender to the polarity with real feminine grace. This is a major obstacle in many women's lives, and I must admit, it has been an obstacle in my own.

To use my own experience of dating as an example is probably most alive.

My first date was with a singer who had responded to my feminine charms at a party in New York City. He had come up to me at the party a few weeks previously, and given me his number. I called him to let him know I would love to see if we might have some fun together. I was so nervous. But it helped me to let go a little when I could sense that he was also very nervous.

On that first date the man took me to Barnes & Noble (guys if you want to have some good energy with a woman do not take her to Starbucks or Barnes & Noble, go to a more personal coffee place if you have to do coffee). The man gave me a lot of insight to New York. He told me that I was stepping toward New York City. He said, "You have one foot in the door, and you are thinking about walking through that door. You just gotta step through." He did try kiss me about two minutes later, so I think he thought that kissing him was the way through the door. I agreed that I needed to step through, but kissing him was not the way I was going to take.

I felt very womanly, and sexy when he told me in numerous ways that I looked awesome. As a woman, I can only appreciate how beautiful it is to be admired in such an open way by a man. This man gave me something when he made a move on me, and allowed me to say no with charm and grace. To receive a man's complements fully, and to receive his desire as a beautiful gift, without feeling obliged to follow through, is incredibly powerful.

For me this was a huge turn around because as an Australian woman, I had not grown up putting a lot of emphasis on being sexy or valuing my femininity. I was smart, I was ambitious, I was able to go out with the guys and make them laugh or laugh at their jokes. But I did not really practice being feminine just for the sake of enjoying myself. In fact, I had tried to hide it unconsciously so as not to make myself and other people uncomfortable. It makes no sense, when female sexuality is so fun, and so beautiful. So this first date was simply about enjoying being totally appreciated as a woman, and also respected in my ability to say no.

After leaving that date to come home, on the very same day, I received an email from someone who I now have as a good friend four months later. That email answering a message I had sent said: "Come out tonight to see a band. We have a private party afterwards, you can be my guest."

Contrary to my common sense, and my usual habits, I immediately changed my outfit, and got ready to go out again. Talk about breaking out of the box, two dates in one day was certainly unheard of for me. Let alone what turned out to be six dates in five days..

Needless, to say that in all those dates, there was not even one kiss. I simply enjoyed the experience of the polarity, and certainly after five days, I needed time out from dating anyone at all.

Wow, there is so much more to say about dating. I am aware that the words are becoming many, and the pages long. So let's leave this one here and I will return in the next blog to the topic of internet dating and playing with the polarity in a way that is fun and empowering to both men and women.

5. It's A Jungle Out There: The Contrast Between Online Dating and Intimacy



It's a jungle out there!

So let's make it very clear. As far as I am concerned, online dating is for the most part quite different than experiences of intimacy. I am making this statement because many people find themselves disappointed when they seek intimacy through online dating, to no avail. But if we are clear at the outset that these are two separate experiences, then online dating can become easier and potentially quite successful.

The idea that intimacy and online dating

were not the same was one of my first major realizations when I began dating as a month-long social experiment.

Sitting at the restaurant table with a guy who looked totally different, and yet somehow the same as his picture on the website, listening to his tale about adult onset dwarfism, I realized it was not the moment to expect something warm and intimate. When he stared at me with such grasping intensity and said, "Do you like

me? Am I going to pass the test?" I could only think of how to politely exit the situation. After a couple of so called bad dates, I realized that while I had previously thought of dating as an intimate activity, I might be better served setting aside any lingering expectations about special warmth and cozy feelings. In fact, I decided that it would be wiser to be on protection mode, as you just never know what you might encounter. On another first date, I was told by my date that having been dumped by my previous boyfriend was "good for me." After the experience, I understood that first dates are not the place to open ourselves as we would with an intimate friend or partner. I realized that intimacy as I had understood experienced it, is very different than the reality of internet dating..

This observation about intimacy versus online dating brought up a few really important questions.

What is online dating?

Online dating is a fast growing activity, amongst millions of singles in the USA, and around the world. Some use it to seek out a long term partner, or marriage. Others use it to find opportunities for one-night stands.

In the year to May 2017, 17 percent of marriages in the USA involved couples that met online, according to data published in May 2017 in the article "Online Dating Statistics – Statistics Brain" *Statistic Brain Research Institute, publishing as Statistic Brain*.

Of the 54 million singles in the US, 49.7 million had tried online dating. Amongst the women users (48 percent of the group), 33 percent of them have sex on first date encounters, said *Statistics Brain*.

Online dating is big business, with the annual revenue in the US coming in at \$1.94 billion for the year to May 2017 up from \$1.049

Billion for the year to June 2012, according to *Statistic Brain*.

My experience was that most men expected sex on the first date, and the fact that I filled in my survey to say that I would wait the highest number of dates possible before sex (seven), was big talking point. This really threw me because I have not really thought about the number of dates I would wait until sleeping with someone. Most of my relationships came out of good friendships with a wonderful man. By the time we slept together, I often knew the man in question really well. I couldn't count the number of dates I had before having sex with a friend. To me one night stands are totally different from the nature of a long term relationship.

Yet one night stands are increasingly the way that people go about looking for a long term relationship. Or is that the case?

Vanessa Grigoriadis wrote in the New York Magazine in 2003:

"For women, Internet dating is providing the 2003 version of the zipless fuck, unapologetically no-strings-attached, purely sexual experience. Women, in other words, get to act like men."

I am glad that women have had the opportunity to act like men and get what they want. It has given us a lot of empowerment. Yet I question whether this approach would give us the long term intimacy that we want?

And I do want to meet people and love going out on dates. It makes me feel alive, and happy and beautiful to flirt and learn about different people in the city where I live. Who knows, I might meet someone with whom I can be physical. Even knowing that there is little room for intimacy when dating online, statistics tell us that it is still worth the risk.

As the band Ok Go say in the song "End Love":

"'Cause no one's gonna catch you if you can't just let go.

No one's gonna love you if you can't let love show.

No one's gonna find you when you're hiding in the dark. No one's gonna find you."
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2fpgpanZAw>

Online dating allows us to be predators in love. We get to go out into the jungle and meet the other cats, and choose our partners in a way that can be extremely empowering.

Grigoriadis says, in the New York Magazine article:

"There is a new, higher metabolism social animal emerging in the tide pools of online dating communities, no doubt about it, particularly among those under 26," agrees Rufus Griscom, co-founder of Nerve and chairman of Spring Street Networks, a feeder for personals on many sites, from Salon's and The Onion's to this magazine's. "Online socializing is a vehicle for turbocharging the social experience rather than some kind of crutch."

What is intimacy?

In contrast let's examine the term intimacy. For me all types of intimacy comes from the ability to open my heart with another person.

Wikipedia says that psychologists break intimacy into several different categories including, but not only, emotional and physical. I will stick with emotional and physical intimacy for the purposes of this article.

"Intimacy generally refers to the strong, deep and close feeling of being in a close personal association and belonging together. It is a familiar and very deep and close effective connection with another as a result of a bond that is formed through knowledge and experience of the other. Genuine intimacy in human relationships requires dialogue, transparency, vulnerability, and reciprocity . The verb "intimate" means "to state or make known". The activity of intimating (making known) underpins the meanings of "intimate" when used as a noun and adjective. The noun "intimate" means a person with whom one has a particularly close relationship." from Wikipedia.

Searching the source of the word intimacy, or the etymology, I was surprised to see at <http://www.etymonline.com>:

The word intimacy (n) originated in 1640s, from the word intimate. It was used as an euphemism for "sexual intercourse", in the 1670.

While in the past, the word intimacy was directly related to sexual intercourse, I am proposing that they are not always the same thing. There is no room for vulnerability, transparency and reciprocity in most online dating contexts, or in most one night stands and affairs for that matter. I am proposing that sex does not always involve intimacy in the current age. In my experience, the unspoken belief that you might find intimacy through online dating creates a certain tension for many people in the dating scene. Most of the people I met through dating, as well as many of my clients, seek or have sought intimacy through dating. Yet they were often unsatisfied by their experiences online.

If we separate out intimacy and online dating, then maybe the online experience can be a little less stressful. If we view the first date as an opportunity to meet new people, a potential thrill of becoming a predator in that jungle, and acknowledge that it does not have to turn into a long term relationship, then it takes the pressure off.

The irony is that in my experience, many people go into the business of online dating, to look for; the closeness of two people caring about each other over a long time, through thick and thin.

Nick Paumgarten summed up this dilemma in a New Yorker magazine article, "Looking For Someone: Sex, love and loneliness on the internet" published July 4, 2011:

"For some, of course, there is no end game; Internet dating can be sport, an end in itself. One guy told me he regarded it as "target practice"—a way to sharpen his skills. If you're looking only to get laid, the industry's algorithmic-matching pretense is of little account; you merely want to be cut loose in the corral. The Internet can arrange this for you."

"But if you really are eager, to say nothing of desperate, for a longterm partner you may have to contend with something else—the tyranny of unwitting compromise."

Why take on the challenge of online dating?

1. To meet new people. I have met some great people when internet dating, although the limitation of this is that once you figure out there is no sexual chemistry, then any friendship usually disappears quite quickly.
2. To experience yourself as a woman or man in the world of dating, and have a self esteem rush of meeting someone and

finding some kind of compatibility. Even if that is just a one night stand.

3. For the purpose of continuing to put your energy into the hope that the right guy or girl will come along. Making yourself available for love.
4. Explore new pathways of relationship with different types of people. Find out what is out there, and challenge your old patterns of being with a partner.

To conclude I do think that online dating is largely the junk food version of intimacy. It filled my inbox with messages. It took up a lot of time, and it got me out into the city to meet new people with different interests. I broke my old way of relating to the place where I live and made some really good friends in the process.

However, the main positive thing that online dating did for me was that it made me consider what I want in a relationship. When I went out to meet new people, I experimented with different approaches to life and dating. As I experimented, in the process, I was brought to see my own unconscious patterns in regard to relationships. I found that this helped me to more deeply access my desires and wantings.

For example, I met some great men who I found interesting, and whose lives I admired. But in meeting those men, I realized that they weren't a "match". The experience brought me to ask myself: "what is a match?"

Well I have to be honest and say first up that I do not know what relationship would really "match" me right now. How can you know, if you haven't found that person? I want to be open to receive the person who offers me the love I'm seeking. They might come in a different package than I could ever anticipate from my current standpoint.

I do know though, that I want sincerity, and depth of caring, and someone who loves to touch and be touched. I know that I want to share my heart with someone who wants the same. And I know that I want the lightness, the joy, and the encompassing love that is felt when people have cultivated intimacy through a wide variety of shared experiences.

Grigoriadis in her article uses a quote from the poem by W. H. Auden:

"The More Loving One"

*Looking up at the stars, I know quite well
That, for all they care, I can go to hell. But on
earth indifference is the least
We have to dread from man or beast.*

*How should we like it were stars to burn With
a passion for us we could not return? If equal
affection cannot be,
Let the more loving one be me.*

Illustrating, I think the importance of being cared for, and being able to really care for another. For me this is about being able to give love simply for the joy of sharing my heart.

If intimacy is a depth of caring that is often but not always expressed in a physical way, then we don't always need sex to create intimacy.

As a single woman of forty living in New York City, I think of intimacy when I think of children crawling on my lap, the hugs that I share with my close friends, and the feeling of someone putting their arms around me, to hold me and tell me I am loved. Intimacy is the laughter with my family, the messy bits when people see me at my worst and love me anyway.

I believe that intimacy is built over time. Each time we see each other through

difficulties, face hardships, hold each other in our most vulnerable and embarrassing moments, intimacy emerges.

Intimacy in this definition, is potentially compromised, as the time of courtship has been shortened considerably by online dating. The average length of courtship for marriages that began online was 18.5 months, compared to 42 months for marriages that met offline, according to Statistics Brain.

Intimacy Grows Over Time

Intimacy is a precious bond built with patience, woven into the rhythms of our lives.

We create relationships with a lover, with family, or close friends over time and with the awareness of the importance of the little things. The cup of tea in the morning, the walk in the park, or beach holiday; the times when you have to be patient with one another person's little foibles, the importance of the laughter when things get rough, and the empathy that comes forward in moments of pain that we all know and share in different ways. When we are brave enough to know and be known deeply, then we have grown this precious intimacy in our lives.

In the past people would have created these energetic bonds over time unconsciously as they lived in one community for most of their lives, and may have even known their partner since childhood.

I have lived in seven different cities, in around forty different apartments or houses during my forty years of life. I have lived on four different continents, and traveled the whole world. I do not take my people for granted. I choose to surround myself with people who share the depth of love I seek to cultivate in my own life. I take care to

build relationships that have continuity over time by valuing those who are close to me.

We now live in a time when love is increasingly becoming a conscious choice. It is not necessarily easy, as the online dating scene would suggest. But in those difficulties that we share, there is such beauty.

"Skeleton Woman" an old Inuit story retold by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, in her book *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, spoke to me of teachings that shed light on intimacy and relationship. A hunter unwittingly scoops up the Skeleton Woman from the bottom of the sea with his fishing net. He could not rid himself of the coral white corpse of the Skeleton Woman, no matter how he tried. After he found refuge in a snow house, and she lay on the floor tangled in his net, he took pity on her.

"He could not say later what it was, perhaps the firelight softened her features, or the fact that he was a lonely man. But a feeling of some kindness came into his breathing, and slowly he reached out his grimy hands and, using words softly like a mother to a child, began to untangle her from the fishing line."

"When he fell asleep, she saw a tear slide from his eye. She drank his tear and many years of thirst were quenched. Then she took his heart and played it until she had the flesh of the woman."

"And when she was done, she also sang the sleeping man's clothes off and crept into his bed with him, skin against skin. She returned the great drum, his heart, to his body, and that is how the awakened, wrapped one around the other, tangled from their night

together, in another way now, a good and lasting way."

Estés explores the passage from life to death and once again to life. Far from seeing life and death as forces always and everywhere opposed, she views them as aspects of a single thought, a single reality.

"Yet, somehow and somewhere in the delicate layers of the being that is created when two people love one another, there is both a heart and a breath. While one side of the heart empties, the other fills. When one breath runs out, another begins....."

Much of our knowledge of the Life/Death/Life nature is contaminated by our fear of death. Therefore our abilities to move with the cycles of this nature are quite frail."

To me this is pointing to the fact that embarking upon relationship either with a lover, or a close friend or family member, entails both joy and pain. We embrace in ourselves and our loved ones the darkness and the light. If a relationship is to have depth, it needs to make room for each person to experience the pain of love as well as the light and joy it can bring. Over time, we will inevitably have passed through all of these facets of experience. It is the sacred sharing of these experiences which makes relationships real, and lasting.

Again, I finish this chapter, aware that there is so much more that I want to say. So let's finish with the old phrase, To Be Continued.....

6. Dancing with Desire



Have you ever been in love and found yourself driving across town at all hours, with little sleep, just to see your loved one?

It is amazing how people can go with very little sleep, and still be very joyful when they are in love.

I have notoriously been a fool for love. For the sake of love, I once packed up my whole life into one big suitcase and moved around the world to a country where English wasn't spoken, a country I didn't particularly

like. Everyone told me it was not a good idea to follow the man I loved. But I did it anyway, and although two years later it ended in pain, I do not regret one moment of the experience.

Eros, the Greek god of love, "was never considered a sufficiently responsible god to figure in the ruling Olympian family of Twelve" according to Robert Graves.

"Eros ('sexual passion') was a mere abstraction to Hesiod. The early Greeks

pictured him as a Ker, or winged 'Spite', like Old Age, or Plague, in the sense that uncontrolled sexual passion would be disturbing to ordered society. Later poets, however, took a perverse pleasure in his antics and, by the time of Praxiteles, he had become sentimentalized as a beautiful youth. (Graves. Pp 58. The Greek Myths 1)

I guess I wasn't the only one who lost their mind for love. And as the myths tell us, it can be potentially dangerous when it does happen. Still I certainly do not regret having had the experience.

Being a fool for love gave me some incredible experiences. I allowed my heart to break open to deep levels of intimacy and friendship. I came to know myself at a profound level, awakened my sexual energy, and even faced some of my greatest fears while climbing in the European Alps.

I have certainly given myself to adventure by following the raw depths of my desire in the face of all rational or common sense. Stepping into the fire with my whole being allowed me to know the full intensity of desire, a force that runs deep inside me like a river.

Awakening The Beast Within

I now know that desire is a force that is neither good nor bad. It has a mind of its own, so to speak. And it loves to love. The force of desire can rest dormant inside, like a sleeping dragon. Love can awaken it like little else. When desire is stirred, you'd better watch out. The results are not always what you would expect.

The first time that I fell in love, I was seventeen years old. I was in love for many years, and in a relationship for four years. Wow, what a beautiful person. He was a great lover and a wonderful friend. My heart broke when I realized I could not

remain with him for the rest of my life. I knew I wanted to live more and couldn't yet bring myself to settle down.

I was with a man who was gentle and strong, capable of sharing a soft, deep love that could last through changes wrought by time. Despite his love, I was unable to really receive it. At the time, I was driven by the yearning for raw, passionate desire and the danger that it can invite.

The second man that I fell in love with was a lot more dangerous. He was six foot and six inches tall, with a tattoo of a werewolf on his back. He was a quintessential bad boy and the sex was wild. My experience with him was probably the first time that I really lost my mind for love. After eighteen months together and a lot of heartbreak, I was done. It seemed bad at the time, but looking back there was an element of awakening that happened in the relationship that feels quite important to me in retrospect.

Prior to the passion of this relationship, I did not really want anything in my life. When I was with the bad boy, the wanting was so intense, it burned me up inside.

The passionate affair ignited the fire inside of me to such a degree that I was under the (mistaken) impression that I could do anything. In the immediate aftermath of that relationship, I lost a lot of weight exercising like a triathlete, caught a bus across Australia to move to Sydney where I knew no one, and spent months searching for a job as a journalist despite warnings from friends and other loved ones. I proved them all wrong with my newfound stubborn, fiery will power. Looking back, I can see clearly that the relationship, as disastrous as it seemed at the time, woke up my ambition.

Now after having been deeply in love a number of times, and followed a number of foolish passions, my approach to the whole business of relationship is very different. I want the steady reliable, profound, supportive warmth of love and friendship that fosters my growth I know now that this kind of love is run through with passion, even as it is developed by trust, care, and time.

Self Love as a Pathway to Relationship

Now I know that trust with another comes through a willingness to trust myself. My relationship with myself determines my ability to receive and open to another.

In order to be present to the kind of soft and deep love for which I yearn, I need to have a relationship with the part of myself possessed of these qualities. As I explored my own heart through the Inner Space Techniques, I found that there was an extraordinary depth of softness inside of me. It was at least as intense as the passion, and yet as gentle as a vast cloud.

The more I explored loud desires within myself, I found that the softness is closer to who I am at the core. This illustrated to me that there was a wisdom in dancing with desire, even if I did get burnt along the way. Confronting the nature of the beast made me feel alive, in the same way that I felt alive when I looked into the face of an angry bull, and when I saw my own fear on the top of a mountain, and when my little sailboat was careering towards a jetty wall at high wind.

Desire and fear dance side by side. My relationship to these forces of fear and desire is the thing that has driven me through this life so far. Whether I have been riding the beast of desire or gripped in the jaws of fear, I have been owned by a pull that was more about nature than my own true Being.

Most of you out there know already that the fight or flight response is definitely part of our everyday reality in a town like New York City. We are sophisticated in many ways, yet unconscious forces still rule most of our lives. As we face the beast within, we can become more present to our own real yearnings, separate from the pulls of nature.

When I faced the forces that make up the animal kingdom, I have become more connected to myself beyond them. I believe the work of exploring desire and coming out the other side has made me more available for real love, whatever form it might take.

When I took the dive into the pull of fears and passions, I was able to break through and find the real thing that I was looking for all along—myself. The vast, soft essence of my own gentle Being.

Confronting desires and fears has also given me the strength to remain grounded in myself. When I looked death in the face, or saw the heights of passion that could be reached when I had sex for days, it seemed like I could lose myself at any time. Yet, each time I faced these things, and found my way back to my essence, I discovered a real strength inside.

One of the things I have always wanted was to be grounded in myself. I wanted to be able to remain connected to that place of clarity, even while I stared into the face of that wild beast inside of me. Letting the desire dance, and using Inner Space Techniques to come back to a sense of my own center, has been the real reward of all this exploration and passion.

The lesson of love for me, is about learning to give and receive with abandon. Yet the outcome of that has been to find my own core sense of self, even in the midst of those stormy waves of emotion.

7. What Is Fatal Attraction?



I Could Drink A Case Of You

"Oh, but you are in my blood You're my holy wine You're so bitter bitter and so sweet."

Oh, I could drink a case of you darling still I'd be on my feet I would still be on my feet."

Joni Mitchell, "I Could Drink a Case of You" from the album, *Blue*.

Writing about love must be the easiest and the most difficult thing to do. Easy because it is so close to the core of life, and difficult

because so many people have done it before, and some of them so well. How can we live up to that? My hope is that my tales here speak to your heart taking you back to what is true for you, because I am sharing the tenderness of my own experiences from my life and also thousands of one-on-one sessions with clients.

Falling in love is meant to be something that happens to us like a clap of thunder from heavens above. And we want so much to dive into it, yet it often brings pain. As Joni

Mitchell says in her song "I Could Drink A Case of You", it is bitter sweet and we want to drink the whole case in one sitting. Yet we also want something that can last, and make us strong, and even help us to get home.

There is something about the yearning for love that is similar to the longing for home. Each time I watch *Battlestar Galactica* and they talk about their longing to go home, I am close to tears. The television series is a great illustration of the archetypal pull for home that we all experience. Each episode is centered around the theme of fighting to get home.

Even today people fight to connect to 'home'. Think how much energy people give to arrange their external circumstances in an attempt to reach a feeling of home. But the sense of home that we long for is truly located inside of us.

Funny then that, not unlike the warriors in *Battlestar Galactica*, we search outside of ourselves for this home, and even try to find it in another person. It is an high expectation to put on our dear ones.

Why do many of us end up with the wrong partner?

How is it then, that with such a strong yearning for this union, we end up with the "wrong person"? And in those circumstances why do so many people keep pushing for more even when the relationship is clearly not working?

I have had a lot of experience in this area, with relationships that made me weep, made me ache, and made me crazy out of my mind. Is that love? Is it love when you are crazy about someone and they do not return your adoration with warmth? When you are addicted to the feeling of the boot in the gut when they tell you again, with or without words, why you have not been good enough for their heart to open?

I am going to suggest that this is not love, that love is something that takes you back to your center. An emotional pull that takes you away from your center is a samskara.

Samskara

"Samskara is one of the most important Sanskrit terms in Hindu philosophy. Yoga, the union with the Higher Self, is said to be achieved as soon as the last samskara has been worked out. Therefore the primary objective of all yogas, or paths of self transformation, is to eradicate the samskaras of the mind. This is why it is so important for those who want to know themselves, or rather their Self, to have a clear vision of all the mechanisms of their samskaras."

(p. 6 Sagan, Samuel. 1996. Regression: Past Life Therapy for Here and Now Freedom.)

Loosely translated, samskara is an emotional imprint or scar from the past that has etched its way into the unconscious so that while we forget the original wound or trauma, it still creates a momentum towards recreating that same wound over and over again. That old saying, 'like attracts like' is very well applied to the mechanisms of samskaras.

Falling in love for me has been something of a lifetime occupation, and often a painful business. When I first started meditation and self transformation work twelve years ago, I was pretty much done with the whole thing. I came to my meditation class intent on clearing myself of darkness and never opening to a man again. I used to see couples walking down the street holding hands. I would say to myself, "what are they doing, indulging in that illusion of love, don't they know that they are only going to end up in pain?" It is almost laughable now to remember that old brokenhearted self, after all the healing work that I have done.. But what

was it that made me cynical about love? I had been in love, devastatingly, deeply and madly in love, and I never really felt that it was returned. I ended up having awful fights with men I loved so many times that I became convinced that I could only ever cause them pain. I grew up witnessing my parents' bitter battles against each other and their struggle as new immigrants to give their kids everything they wanted. I was unable to replicate anything else but that war in my own relationships.

Anaïs Nin describes so well the mechanisms of samskaras and how they affect love in our lives:

"Love never dies a natural death. It dies because we don't know how to replenish its source. It dies of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of witherings, of tarnishings"

Revealing the Blockages

I was blown open when I started to work on myself, using meditation-based Inner Space Techniques to see the samskara behind my relationship difficulties. I found that the wound inside of me about relationships came from a deep inability to trust. The inability to trust was a kind of emotionally charged pull out of myself toward the wrong situations. It blinded me from being able to choose freely.

Free choice is only available when we can see beyond our samskaras. Choosing to receive a partner who can love and support me has only been possible since I was able to recognize what that might feel like, beyond the pull of the samskara that made me want to close.

Let me explain it another way. When I went to primary school (grade school) in Cottesloe, Perth Western Australia in 1978, there was a lot of bullying. My experience at that school was rough. I arrived innocent,

and unique, with my Southern African/British accent, my strange taste in clothes, and my wild, free way of being. I believed in fairies, I loved nature, I could make up stories for hours, and I spoke to anyone on the street who would allow me to befriend them, even bringing strangers home for tea to my mother's surprise.

The other children were not really welcoming to my weird and wonderful self. I was teased, beaten up and ostracized for the first year of school. And I dearly wanted friends. After some deliberation, I decided to try to become more like the other children, basically cutting off from parts of myself that I perceived were not going to be tolerated. I became the tough girl. At the same time, my parents split up and my dear dad, upon whom I had rested my heart, was not around so much. The result being that I closed up shop at the age of ten years old.

When I was about sixteen years old I began to yearn intensely for a relationship with a boy, probably mixed up with an unconscious longing for the return of my dad. Yet the irony was that I could not receive that love when I was in a relationship, nor could I receive it from my dad when he came back. The part of me that closed when I was ten years old could not open up again, with the exception of some very rare moments.

I could fall in love in the initial hormonal flush of desire, but I could not create a longterm relationship that was healthy for me. I could have that initial blast of connected opening when the whole body of energy and the heart flares in a special way, but once that "in love" effect wore off, the tough girl was back, and I would somehow either become bored, or create a lot of unpleasant tension with my partner.

The Child Inside

Part of my own journey to fullness came through exploring and valuing the innocence and the sweetness of that little girl who saw fairies, and who spoke to trees, and who felt no fear even when approached by the most intimidating of adults. That little girl was smart, and she was gentle and she was wise and she was not like the other children. I needed to love her first, before I could let anyone else love her. Loving the child inside me through knowing her real qualities has been a beautiful process. It remains an ongoing part of my life, creativity and even the writing that I am doing now. She is part of all that I do, and all that I am. She is me.

Now I am not depending on another person to be connected to that sweet soft childlike part of my heart, and the deep sensual longing in my belly. I am content to share that with another person, and I do want to keep exploring what that means in a longterm relationship where there are shared values in regard to love. But my experience of love is not dependent on having that relationship.

Layers of the Heart are Revealed

Learning to open my heart, has meant exploring the layers of closing inside of myself using the Inner Space Techniques and working with some expert practitioners. The sessions took me deep into the unconscious parts of my heart. Much of the experience of purging old trauma happened through symbolic images.

There was an image of a youthful woman with curly blond hair, a full soft body, and bright eyes. As I sat with the image I sensed that she was a courtesan. It was not imagination, it was something of an Archetypal experience. To my surprise she seemed to derive great joy from her life,

including her occupation. She seemed totally in her element. As the scene unfolded, however, she became entangled with a man. She fell in love for the first time with a tall dark stranger who was cruel and treated women poorly. It got to the point where his violence brought about her death.

Such scenes often emerge in these practices. While some might be tempted to treat them as images of past lives, I have gained a lot from viewing them as representations of internal patterns that play themselves out again and again our lives.

There is a principle in the Inner Space work that emotions are not the problem. The reaction to the original emotion ends up causing anguish and grief. Often when we see the cause of the original emotion, it allows us to let go of the string of subsequent reactions that lie on top of the original hurt or trauma. People have a pattern, and the seed of that pattern creates events. They blame the events outside of themselves for that pattern, but it doesn't help. What matters is contacting the original depth out of which the pattern emerged.

In my own healing, I saw that there was a soft, vast and deep love that this woman of the past held. I recognized that her love was also inside me. She had a devotional way of knowing another person tenderly, deeply, that I had felt for my own lovers. This was an empathy for humanity that was unconditional, kind and gentle, with a sweet yin power that could dissolve the pain of the wound.

After that practice my life changed. I let myself be vulnerable in intimate relationships. I learned to cry when I felt wounded instead of always fighting. I learned to be vulnerable, and speak up

when that wound was triggered so that a partner could hold me and tell me it was okay. I learned to ask for help to see beyond my wound to the reality before me.

Stripping Back Unconsciousness

The key here is that when the wound inside of each of us is unconscious, it has a magnetic pull towards similar situations, causing us to repeat that trauma over and over again. With our minds, we might say that we want healthy relationships but the samskara will take us to that same old pattern repeatedly until we face the source of the pain.

I learned to use IST to navigate the maze of my psyche, and that of my clients, towards finding the source of any emotional or physical pain, to see how it really began. When we see the true cause of a samskara,

something inside shifts. Seeing the reality behind mechanisms allows us to experience our Self as it is, really. When we experience the Self beyond the samskara, there is truth and there is choice.

What does choice mean? In this instance it means discerning who can be a good partner for each of us, beyond the initial flush of sexual desire, into a lifetime of love. I will finish this piece with a quote by Anais Nin, a brilliant writer on topics of love, sexuality, and life:

"I, with a deeper instinct, choose a man who compels my strength, who makes enormous demands on me, who does not doubt my courage or my toughness, who does not believe me naïve or innocent, who has the courage to treat me like a woman."

8. How Do You Fall In Love?



Presenting a talk about love last night in New York City I was faced with one curly question from a participant that touched me deeply. He asked:

"I have never been in love, I have never felt that feeling, how can I get it?"

What a great question, asked with such sincerity and yearning that it called for a real answer. Essentially the short answer was that this young man needed to reconnect to his ability to feel. He, like many others today, had most likely become blocked

from connecting to emotion in an embodied and present way.

Being in love is like a dance. You cannot learn to dance if you cannot feel your body first. The first step is feeling the body, then learning how to move the body and with practice, learning how to move in unison with another until finally you become able to dance.

The First Step

In matters of the heart, the first step is to be more conscious of our inner feeling

response to things we experience in our day-to-day lives. We can do it by connecting the emotional feeling to a corresponding sensation in the body. It's not mental, it's visceral. A visceral emotion is one we feel in the body, like a gut instinct, as opposed to a more mind-based feeling like 'feeling inferior', or guilt.

If we see someone we find attractive, we may think to ourselves "They are incredible!" However, we might also notice bodily effects that correspond to the emotional wave. Perhaps a bubblyness in the belly, or a lightness and uplifted feeling in the chest. By tuning into these sensations, we are beginning to feel the raw material or energy, behind the emotion. There is a lot of force, momentum and volition in this raw material, and connecting to it is the starting point for realizing the goal of opening to ourselves and receiving love from another.

Chances are that if you cannot feel "in love" you cannot feel much else either.

Cutting Off Doesn't Help

Many people cut themselves off from "bad" emotions in order to be successful and productive in life. There is an idea that cutting ourselves off from emotions like anger, jealousy and greed will allow us to act more rationally. To a degree it is true because if we just gave way to these basic instinctual emotions then we would probably behave like animals.

But the trouble with shutting down our emotions is that they are, at a very basic level, just expressions of life force moving through our bodies. When we cut ourselves off from emotions, we also potentially block or cut off the life force, and on top of that the good feelings it can foster.

Emotions and Feelings

In the talk last night, we discussed at length the concept of emotions and feelings

as two separate categories of experience. The English language says that the words emotions and feelings are synonyms. Here though I am referring to them as different categories of experience for the purpose of mapping consciousness.

The main reference for peeling out the experience of emotions from a feeling can be found in Samuel Sagan's book, *Regression Past-Life Theory for Here and Now Freedom*. Sagan says that emotions take us out of ourselves, they are loud and they create a lot of projection onto our environment or the people around us. One of the best examples of an emotion that works to pull a person outside of themselves is road rage. Of course, there are also the fights with a lover or a family member that we later regret."

Feelings, in Sagan's model, take us inside of ourselves. They connect us to our core or the essence of our Being. Feelings are also infinitely varied, with all of us able to have unique responses to similar things. If we all look at a night sky filled with stars, we might use the words wonder and awe to describe what might be quite different responses. Feelings are connected to states of Being or Oneness. When we look at the stars in the night sky, we may feel more connected to ourselves at a deep level of Being, and therefore our response to the experience reflects something about our own true nature inside of us, as well as the incredible beauty of the stars.

Emotions, on the other hand, are typically basic, instinctual and even animalistic. They do not tend to vary much from one person to another, and there is not a great range to choose from.

Case Study

For example, I worked with a person who suffered from fits of rage, including but not only road rage. At first he would become

overwhelmed with the rage and could not control his temper. Through his initial session he learned to change his response to the rage without blocking it. When he was caught in his car on the freeway in a traffic jam and inevitably started to feel rage,, he sat with the experience of the emotion in his body instead of being drawn into his typical reactions.

In his next session, using the Inner Space Techniques, I helped this person to feel his rage from a much deeper level of self awareness than he had ever felt it before. These techniques use a meditation space to help people to see or feel their emotions from a different place inside where there is a potential for a lot more connection or presence. As he moved his awareness into the rage, he began to appreciate its qualities: the heat, the energy, as well as the somatic need to express sounds. These qualities led him closer to the true source of the emotion.

The true source of an emotion is most often not the situation in front of you. Emotions have their source in what Indian texts refer to in Sanskrit as Samskaras. As discussed earlier in this book, Samskara is an emotional imprint or scar from the past that conditions the mind. It is like the colored glasses that taint our vision of the current reality.

The man standing on the highway in a traffic jam, full of rage, found that he had some major trauma with his father early in life that left him feeling abandoned, impotent, scared, and vulnerable. The rage built up inside over time as a reaction to having been left without a father, and the feelings of powerlessness he had about that experience.

Using the Inner Space Techniques, we spent a few sessions reviewing what happened with his father, and allowing the real feelings about those events to be released and

unraveled. Most of the time people carry emotions in their body of energy like weights that do not allow them to receive the experience of their life right now as it really is. The baggage of the past colors every moment.

This man was able to use the sessions to express his grief, hurt, anger, and even his love for his dad.

As a result of his work, his relationship with his dad improved along with his own experience of life, as he was able to let go of the unconscious grudge he had been carrying inside from a very early age.

Feeling Makes Life Richer

We all think that by protecting our hearts, and holding in our emotions, we are making our lives better. The opposite is true.

When we are willing to let ourselves feel the bad stuff with the aim of letting it be unraveled and released from inside of us, then life becomes richer.

Life is far more vibrant, beautiful, multicolored and dimensional than many of us ever allow ourselves to recognize.

Listen to a symphony orchestra, created by the convergence of many instruments played at once. The sound is both rich and simple, it has depth and it can be heavy or light, textured and subtle. The symphony is a helpful analogy for life. We cannot control how life comes to us. It can also be heavy or light, textured or subtle. We have to be willing to feel it all in order to truly appreciate its richness.

To the sincere young man who asked me how he could fall in love without ever having experienced it before, I would say: start by making efforts to connect with the feelings and emotions in your body. Expand your capacity to feel anything, by placing

awareness on what is happening in your current response to your world. When you are passionate about something, anything, feel it in your body. And if you feel an emotion that you might previously have judged to be negative, this time let yourself feel it. As an adult, you can take an emotion and feel it without having to react. Your behavior does not have to be driven by the fact that you feel an emotion like anger or sadness. In fact you can choose to behave in ways that help the energy of that emotion to move through.

Tips To Help You Connect To Feeling

1. Making sounds, like shouting or moaning can release emotions if you connect that sound with the feeling in your body. Some clients practice car shouting, where you roll up the windows in the car and shout as loud as you can. The truth is when you are in traffic, people cannot hear you in your car when the windows are sealed. It becomes like a soundproof booth where you can be free to express. Another option could be to shout or scream into pillows at home.
2. Vigorous exercise can help to release emotions if you connect the emotion in your body to the physical expression in the exercise. For example many clients do something like running, boxing, or gym work that really makes them sweat, and they allow the activity to be an expression of something like anger or sadness. It is always easier if you do not have on ear phones, as they tend to disconnect people from feeling what is happening in the body.
3. Writing journal entries where you express the emotions that are in your body, allowing the writing to flow freely can really help to move things. I often ask clients to write for 10 or 15 minutes at a time without holding back, and just put whatever comes to them onto the page.

The key with these expressions is that you be consciously connected to the feeling in your body while you are making them. Generally speaking when people express emotions they are not doing so in a connected way. Instead, they are spilling their energy in a way that causes them to lose touch with their center.

Opening to love means being willing to open to yourself, whatever that means for you right now. Though it may or may not be pleasant, it is totally worthwhile as a pathway to connecting deeply, both with yourself and others in your life. Intimacy is not a oneway activity. It is about giving and receiving. In order to receive and to give, we need to be able to feel ourselves present in the moment, whatever that means for us right now.

Afterword



Since these articles were written, many things have changed in my life. Including that I have moved the West Coast of the USA, to live in Berkeley, California. I also had a 3 year relationship and lived with my partner, and another breakup. We both learned so much in that time, and I changed a lot. Yet I still feel these articles are relevant to those of you going through a similar stage of evolution in your journey to love.

Five years after I started writing these articles about love and opening the heart, feels like a lifetime. Yet publishing these writings in this form is still a breakthrough for me right now.

I was hanging onto this material, not knowing what to do with it. Either share it, or just throw it out.

I am so happy to be able to share it now. If you get something out of it, and you resonate with the concepts that I have passed, and perhaps you even want to know more:

Please visit my website, and book a complementary private session with me on the phone or skype.

<http://www.samanthakeen.com/gift/>
Thank you!

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