



An Exercise in Relationship

By

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. My marriage has been the biggest laboratory where many of these tools have been discovered, tested and refined. My husband of 36 years, has been a willing participant and great contributor in this process of learning.

Over the years, we have gotten a little sloppy around the edges. Maybe complacent in a pretty easy-going, peaceful marriage might be a better description. Reading **John Gray's book on relationships**, was inspiring and shone a spotlight on some of our minor everyday issues; not very serious ones but ones that kept cropping up in our relationship. Ones we may have dealt with in the past and forgotten or dealt with on a lower level of the spiral.

I decided that it was too good to keep to myself and so I invited my husband to share in the reading of these chapters. In the evenings, we would go over a chapter,

discuss it and move on to the next until we had enough for the night. This paper is a compilation of some of the discussions arising out of this exciting exercise.

Kathy Wants to Share, Tom Wants His “Space.” Pg. 7.

Russell: “Yes I can relate! Every time we go in the garage to get in the car and you make a comment about how messy it is, my wall goes up.”

Diane: “Why? I am just noticing and thinking out loud, I am not criticizing you. Why do you take it personally?”

Russell: “Because I feel like you are nagging me and its already on my very long, long list of things I need to do. I am so stressed out about my agenda, I don’t need more pressure.”

Diane: “Hmm I am so sorry you heard it that way and I am worried about your stress level myself. What would work better for you aside from me keeping quiet?”

Russell: “I just need to be understood. I think that is what men need a lot. Just some real understanding. What do women need? because I know it is different.”

Diane: Women, or at least / need for you to ask me how I am doing and maybe reach out and touch me somehow.”

Russell: “That’s how we are so different. When I am stressed out questions just make it worse because I feel like I am being made to account for myself.”

Alise Tries to Please, Henry Needs Appreciation Pg. 9

Diane: “Yes I can relate. I get so frustrated and hurt when I either make the house pretty, or I get dressed up and you don’t seem to even notice.”

Russell: “I know I am guilty of that. What happens is I get tunnel vision. Especially if there is something on my mind. You are right, I can walk in and not notice anything but it is not that I am not appreciative. I am when I finally notice. It’s just that I am distracted and probably trying to solve some problem in my head.”

Diane: “I can empathize with that, can you empathize with how I feel?”

Russell: “Yes but I also want to remind you that when I do compliment you, you often don’t hear it or don’t let it in.”

Diane: “That’s true. I long for recognition from you but when you give it, I often don’t get it. I smell an old issue from childhood here don’t you?”

Russell: “Yup!” (grin)

Diane: “Tell you what. Let’s make a deal. When I need some recognition and you’re not picking up on it, I will nudge you ok? And when you are giving me some and I am not getting it, you nudge me ok?”

Russell: “It’s a deal!”

Patrick Invalidates Jennifer’s Feelings pg. 11

Diane: “It’s is so obvious that our needs are very different. I don’t think I really understood the depth of that until this book in some ways. I know that when you correct me or tell me how to do something when I am doing it, I go haywire. I feel insulted, put down, criticized. Meanwhile, you say all you are trying to do is help.”

Russell: “Yes, it mystifies me when you react that way because you right, I am just trying to help. I agree though that I should wait till you ask for help. We need to understand how we are different. It is so easy to project, and not notice the obvious like your signals that I am stepping on your toes rather than acknowledge and validate your feelings.”

Diane: “Yes I think we make assumptions about each other based on our internal landscape. I think it might be more helpful if I could acknowledge your desire to help rather than get all bent out of shape... I think we have a plan.”



These are just a few samples of the kind of conversation this book has inspired. We are still going through the book, a second time for me, and having amazing flashes of insight as we go along. I would recommend this exercise for all couples as a refresher. The biggest realization I have come to in this course, is the multitude of levels of communication. I have always had some insight into this but this course has allowed me to dive deeper in my marriage relationship and the relationship with myself.

A year and a half ago, I discovered after a huge collapse on the floor, that I had peripheral arterial disease. I was rushed to the hospital and a stent was placed in the artery to my heart. After seeing many doctors, consulting with many specialists, and taking a ton of medication, I realize that nothing has supported and guided me like my own inner advisor. As with everything, what you need shows up when you need it... if

you are receptive. It is no surprise that your book, *Free Yourself From Pain*, showed up when it did; after the shock and when I was ready to move up to the next level. In your book you say, “*And if you approach each new treatment with the belief that it could help you, it may become a positive, self-fulfilling prophecy.*” This book strengthens that belief and the faith that I can find the answers I need both from inside and out. I can live with that conviction.