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Stop...

In The Name of Love

A Compassionate Communication Guide for Couples



You may have noticed that
when your communication falls
apart, so does your relationship...

Discover what the 5 destructive
communication habits are and how to STOP
them from destroying your loving relationship.

And... How to communicate in a way that leaves
both people feeling HEARD, UNDERSTOOD, and VALUED...

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Introduction

By picking up this book, you've decided that you want more from your relationships. Specifically, you know that there are better ways to have intimate and honest communication. You're in luck! You are well on your way to having more of what you want. This book will guide you through some common communication mistakes, and show you how to build constructive habits in their places.

The quality of your relationship is based on the quality of your communication. Change the way you communicate and change your relationship.

At beginning of a relationship everything is blissful. You talk for hours getting to know the most intimate details about the other person. You can discuss anything, and your partner is receptive and understandings. This is the person you want to spend your lifetime with, share yourself with, and love. Can you remember how utterly amazing this feels?

But then something happens, and little things start to go wrong.

The next thing you know, small upsets become big issues and misunderstandings blow up into arguments. Even basic daily communication becomes more and more difficult. It feels impossible to choose a brand of toilet paper or a place to eat on a Friday night without a massive fight erupting.

You start to feel defeated.

Without the right communication tools and skills even your best efforts seem to make things worse. Pretty soon you and your partner are walking around on eggshells, and you both start to avoid communicating.

Communicating feels fruitless and frustrating, so why even try? You start to feel hopeless.

The closeness you once had erodes away every time you avoid a conversation with your partner. Soon the chasm is so vast you don't even know who are in a relationship with anymore.

When communication fails, so does your relationship.

I know how it feels when this happens, when you want so badly to make it work, and you just can't seem to find the right words.

There is a better way to relate. This e-book can help. The MRM provides strategies that can make love, intimacy, and compassion easier.

How to use this eBook

1. **Print.** This book is full of interactive exercises. I know everything (even this book) is electronic these days, but printing this out will allow you to fully interact with the text. So dig some blank paper out of the bottom of your closet, refill that ink cartridge, and hit the print button.
2. **Read this book with your partner.** Read it out loud to each other and do the exercises together. Use the time to connect and relate. Put your computing devices away, and be together. It might sound scary, just you, your partner, and a stack of paper. But trust me, it'll be worth it.
3. **Laugh.** This is so important! Often, when communication breaks down, and we start to feel the other person slip away, everything seems like life or death. It all feels *very* serious. Take a step back and look at how we all make mistakes. And sometimes, they are funny. Did you really think that the way your partner squirts the toothpaste from the container was an indication that she didn't love you? Did your partner's face turn bright red over you forgetting to hang up a wet towel?
Not taking yourself or your habits too seriously is the first step towards change.
4. **Work as team.** Remember that you are doing this work with your partner who wants to be closer to you. Together, you are both discovering more effective ways to communicate so you can feel how much you love each other. It is so easy (and it is remarkable how quickly we can slip into this) to view your partner as an enemy. Your lover is your teammate!
5. **Take Deep Breathes.** They give you a moment to think and deliver more oxygen to your brain. Sometimes, if you take a moment to breath deeply you'll decide that the spatula in your hand is better for flipping eggs than throwing at your partner's head. Breathing is especially helpful when dealing with confronting material, like this eBook. So, try it now. See how good it feels to have an oxygenated brain!

Why am I so passionate about compassionate communication?

There are times when you try and communicate with your partner about something emotional like being jealous, but end up yelling about your partner's inability to empty the dishwasher instead. Talking about the real important and emotional issues like money, trust, respect, and sex intimately, openly and honestly is hard. And it is a critical relationship skill that is built with practice.

But how can we practice doing something that we were never taught to do?

Have you ever felt like trying to communicate with your partner is like trying to build Ikea furniture without the instruction manual? You know somehow, these pieces are

supposed to come together and create something, but you have no idea how, or in what order, and maybe if you just shove this one piece hard enough it'll fit.

I definitely needed an instruction manual.

Like most people, I learned how to communicate from my parents. They did the best they could with the tools they had but were unable to make their marriage work. Their weak communication tools cracked under pressure.

I communicated with my ex-wife the best way I knew how. I struggled with creating softness and closeness between us. I mostly told her what to do, when to do it and then asking her to report back to me when she was done. As you can imagine, this did not inspire intimacy.

One divorce and two broken engagements later, I started wondering if I would ever get it right. Or maybe I was destined to screw-up every important relationship in my life? I had no idea what was going on. I had met some incredible women, and I just wasn't sure why every relationship kept dissolving.

So I was intrigued when my best friend, who was having major challenges in his marriage, said he was learning a new way to communicate from Dr. Marshall Rosenberg. I thought my friend's relationship was dead in the water, but Dr. Rosenberg's communication tools brought it back to life from the edge of divorce.

I had to know more. Learning these communication secrets became my quest, Dr. Marshall Rosenberg became my mentor, and finally helping other couples became my life's work.

Marshall's system is called **Nonviolent Communication (NVC)**. (You can find out more about his work at www.cnvc.org) I studied and taught this method of relationship communication for eleven years. I blended my understanding of Dr. Rosenberg's nonviolent communication principles with, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), neuro-associative conditioning, and systems theory to create an incredibly effective way to compassionately connect with others.

I threw out the old tools like shame, blame, guilt and anger. I found a whole new set of tools such as compassion, empathy, and intimacy. Now I have created an instruction manual to go with tools.

There is a better way.

When relating (or fighting tooth and nail) with my partners, at some point I noticed a pattern:

When the intensity of my emotions increased, my intelligence decreased.

Think about what happens when you fight: things are thrown and kicked. You scream things that you would never in your right mind say to your partner under normal circumstances. The more emotional you get, the less logical you become.

All of the sudden you have lost control, and it doesn't matter what the other person says. You become that kid in the grocery store, splayed out and pounding fists on the tile floor, demanding the sugary cereal, completely unwilling to listen to logic or to be consoled.

In moments when emotions rise and rationality is thrown out the window, you need a communication toolbox.

Magic Relationship Method (MRM)

The Magic Relationship Method is that better way, the manual you've been looking for.

This method will help you transform misunderstandings, arguments and breakdowns in your relationship, into compassion, understanding, honesty, and open communication. It gives you a simple and effective ways to discuss the most difficult issues with your lover and your friends.

Take a deep breath. You don't have to struggle in the dark anymore.

The Magic relationship method is a distillation of my life experiences, and many years of learning from my mentors, coaches, teachers, and advisers.

I've spent the last twenty years studying with some of the best communicators: Tony Robbins, Richard Bandler, Robert Kiyosaki, Bob Proctor, Marshall Thurber, and Marshall Rosenberg. I combined, condensed, and simplified the methods and tools I've learned from these communication masters into The Magic Relationship Method.

I've taught and tested this method with thousands of people in some of the toughest places. I brought it to maximum-security prison inmates, at-risk teenage students, and high school teachers. I taught university professors, therapists, and couples' counselors to use this method with their clients and in their own relationships.

And of course I have taught lots and lots of couples.

MRM has worked in all of these situations with a wide variety of people, and it can work for you. It consists of three phases:

Phase 1: Stop Doing Damage

Stop the 5 destructive habits and replace them with the 5 healthy habits.

The first phase (covered by this eBook) will teach you how to recognize and overcome the five relationship wrecking communication habits. Eliminating these nasty habits will make an instant, noticeable improvement in the quality of your relationship.

Phase 2: Bridge the Gap between You

The 4-Step Intimacy Formula

In this phase (covered in the next eBook) you will discover how to rebuild intimacy, trust and understanding. **You will experience a sense of confidence and compassion** as you increase your ability to have open, honest, and loving communication with your partner.

Phase 3: Create a bright future

The 7 Relationship Rules

These simple relationship rules, covered in the third eBook, will help you clarify and understand what it takes to keep love alive. You will learn to make agreements that build trust, honesty, and intimacy in order to create the future you want with your partner.

The Five Destructive Habits

You're about to discover the destructive communication habits that can wreck your loving relationship. I teach this first so you can stop these habits before they do any more damage.

You will also learn some positive helpful habits to replace them with. Start today, and make a difference in the *quality of your relationships* **right now**.

When you become aware of the habits, you will be able to talk about important, emotional topics without taking things personally or making them personal. You will actually be able to communicate about almost anything without throwing insults, coercion, or causing wreckage.

You will learn how to feel less shame, blame, guilt, duty and obligation, all of which can have detrimental effects on your loving relationship. **You will have the tools to stop avoiding** communication with your partner and start looking forward to talking about important issues.

Overcoming the five destructive habits and replacing them with five effective habits gives a strong foundation for a thriving relationship filled with happiness, harmony, compassion and understanding.

You will discover how to talk and have your partner actually *want* to listen. You will discover how to listen so others really want to speak freely and honestly to you.

It works in all types of situations – in the boardroom, in the kitchen, at work, at school, in the bedroom. It even works in jail. You name it, and it's been tested there.

The MRM has helped parents reconcile with grown children who they did not speak to for years. It has helped open up communication between siblings who decided to stop talking to each other because of past misunderstanding.

And, of course, these tools have saved many couples from going through the painful heartbreak of divorce or separation.

All of these people suffered because they didn't have the communication skills and tools they needed.

*Most relationships are destroyed because of a lack of skills,
not because of a lack of love.*

This book is your precious guide to more intimacy, heart-felt connection, and understanding in all of your relationships. Read it again and again. Highlight it, underline key points, make footnotes, and most importantly, do the exercises and **practice, practice, practice.**

Let this book launch you on a journey to a heart opening flow of great communication, intimacy, and love.

Creating the Right Mindset for Relationship Success

To create the relationship of your dreams you don't need a different partner. You just have to learn how to communicate with your partner in a different way.

Some of what I'm about to share with you will seem counter-intuitive, unusual, and uncomfortable. I invite you to see communication in a totally new light. Your willingness to get out of your comfort zone is going to be key to your success.

There are so many times that we think we need to work harder, but in fact, all we need is a shift in perspective.

For example, one day on the ski slopes I was making my way down an expert run when I saw a man walking up the hill with only one ski. I asked if I could help him find the other one, but he politely declined any assistance.

He was sure that he didn't need any help. He was sure that he was headed in the right direction. And he was sure that if he worked a little harder and trudged a little further, he would achieve his goal.

Because I absolutely cannot resist being helpful, I yelled up to the people on the chair lift that were right above us, asking if they saw his ski. And sure enough, from their improved vantage point they could see the missing ski, and pointed to it, about thirty feet *downhill* from where we stood. He was working really hard but headed in the wrong direction.

This happens with couples all of the time.

They work really hard, certain they are headed in the right direction. They refuse to get help because they get embarrassed, proud, and are so sure that if they work a little harder,

they really won't need the help after all. I know, I've been there, struggling up the hill earnestly looking for that darn ski.

But, sometimes, all it takes is talking to someone who has some perspective, who can turn us around instantly and head us in a more helpful and effective direction.

The purpose of this e-book is to give you that improved perspective, like the people had from the chair lift. When you gain enough perspective, you can move your relationship in a helpful, productive, and positive direction. You can reduce the amount of stress, conflict, upsets, drama, and misunderstandings.

Change

“Change isn't always better... but better is always change!”
Marshall Thurber

Recognizing your habits is the first step towards changing them. If you don't notice the fact that you are biting your nails, how can you stop doing it? Often, my friend will get nervous at a horror movie or a meeting and look at her hands and realize she has bitten off all her nails. She won't even remember doing it.

First, she has to be aware every time she raises her finger to her teeth. Once she is aware, she can see a moment when she has a choice. If she notices that her nails are two inches from her teeth, in that moment she can choose chomp down on her nails or back away from her fingers and put her hand down.

The way we communicate is based on a series of similar choices. Sometimes your first choice happens so fast that you may not even be aware that you made a decision. If you make a choice often enough it can become unconscious, and it becomes a habit.

If you slow things down, and then back up far enough, you can start to recognize habits as choices again. Then, if you want to, you can begin to change them.

It's important to realize when you're making changes in your relationship, even positive ones, that you will run into some resistance. When you change you build new emotional muscles, and at first this is challenging.

It is like when you start to go to the gym after not working out for a long time. Your whole body aches after only 10 minutes on the exercise bike. But then, in a couple of weeks, you can climb that stair master like it's nothing for an hour straight, because you have built up muscle and endurance. At first, things will probably be uncomfortable. That just means you're getting a good work out.

Habit 1:

CASE BUILDING

I'm Right. You're Wrong. Anything you say can and will be used against you.

"You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war"
- Albert Einstein

Case Building

When you are communicating with someone over an emotional issue, the first choice you make is:

Do you want to build a connection with them?

This creates compassion, trust, and intimacy.
It leaves both parties feeling loved, appreciated and understood.

OR

Do you want to build a case against them?

This creates defensiveness, resistance and resentment,
and leaves them feeling bad, stupid, and wrong (BSW).

This decision can happen so fast that you may not even be aware that you made a choice, but you did. **The choice you make is going to decide what type of relationship you create.**

Building a case is when someone gathers evidence and uses it to prove a point. Usually, the point the case builder is trying to make is that he or she is right and that you're wrong. You should then be very sorry and do whatever your partner tells you to do. Most people end up retreating from case builders into the safety of silence. The case builder normally wants to be understood without understanding the other side.

But, some of things your lover does really makes you mad. And if we talk about it, and you communicate how much better off *we would both be* if your partner changed, then it should be no problem right?

It would be better for her health if she stopped drinking so much. If he came home for dinner when he said he would, he would get to eat a hot meal and I'd be happier. A win-win situation, right?

It's a common trap to think that if you show your lover **how right you are** and **how wrong s/he is** that your partner will be overwhelmed with your logical evidence. Then, your partner will surely see your wisdom, have a change of heart, and say thank you for being set straight.

Building a case drives your lover farther away, and decreases intimacy.

Of course, you want to build intimacy. Of course, you don't want to make your partner feel like a failure. But case building does that, and can show up in tiny little ways. And it will bleed your relationship dry like one million paper cuts.

Slow down and listen to yourself. The following words are warning indicators that you might be building a case:

- Should/shouldn't
- Have to/must/can't
- Right/wrong
- Good/bad/evil
- Always/every/never

What your partner hears is that s/he, and is bad, stupid, or wrong and needs to change.

You can be building your case with the best of intentions and from love. You might even be *right*. **But it doesn't matter if you're right. Case building comes from the assumption that if we build a strong enough case our partner's behavior will change. But it's not going to happen.**

Have you ever tried to convince:

- A smoker to quit
- An alcoholic to stop drinking
- An out of shape person to work out
- Your kids to stop fighting
- A jealous lover to not be jealous
- An overweight person to eat less
- An addict to give up drugs

Case building doesn't help your case. Our judgments prevent us from getting the message across. We can try and manipulate someone into doing what we want, and sometimes we might even get our partner to capitulate in the short term. But, a person has to want to change in order to *really* change.

And when we case build, we don't respect the other person's autonomy and intelligence. We are saying that we know how *they should* live their lives better than they do.

So, when you feel yourself getting riled up, and you start flipping through that mental Rolodex of everything your partner has done wrong, pause, and recognize that this habit is rearing its head. Then you can decide if you want to create more intimacy or push your partner a little further away.

You are a building a case if . . .

- You use listening to gather evidence to prove you're right and they're wrong.
- You try to express your point louder or more forcefully than your partner.
- You are trying to convince the other person that you have been wronged
- You're using your lover's history to try to make them feel bad, stupid and wrong
- You think you are right, and aren't interested in understanding them

Building a Connection

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Stephen R Covey

Instead of building a case, learn to speak and listen courageously and compassionately. Build a connection of intimacy, honesty, openness, and trust with your lover.

Discover how to relate to other people. Step into their shoes, and into their world. Next try really hearing them. Understanding what they are feeling, needing, and why. It's a real gift when you do that for your partner, your kids, your parents, or anyone you care for.

When emotions are high and issues are important, it will be tempting to case build. Your partner will do that thing, that one thing that makes your whole body cringe tightly. But take a deep breath and remember that breaking a bad habit takes will power and strength. Exercising your connection building muscle means working it out on a regular basis, even when you don't want to.

You are building a connection if . . .

- You say "Tell me more..." And you mean it!
- You ask for clarification or feedback.
- You listen twice as much as you talk.
- Your lover opens up, is vulnerable with you, and trusts you enough to talk about his or her feelings, needs, dreams, desires, fears and frustrations.
- You want to understand them before being understood.

Examples

Here are some examples of **case building** versus **connection building**:

You haven't made love in over a month. You think something is wrong and you are afraid of asking for what you want because you don't want to be rejected again.

The Case Building Approach:

We haven't had sex in months! If you were eating right and exercising your sex drive would be higher, and you would want me. You should join the gym and stop eating junk food. Aren't you committed to our relationship? Your sister started working out and doing yoga and she said her sex life with her husband has never been better. I was really patient a couple of weeks ago, but I've waited months and you still don't have any interest. How do you think this makes me feel?

When you say these things, your lover typically feels attacked and responds with defensiveness. There isn't much room for discussion around the actual issue. If this conversation results in love making at all, it will be out of a sense of duty and obligation not love and connection. And usually, that type of lovemaking is *not* very fun.

But luckily there's another option!

Choosing to create a connection, and to be open and vulnerable about your need for physical intimacy is much more enticing to your partner. It will bring them closer instead

of pushing them away.

The Connection Building Approach:

I've noticed that we haven't had sex in over a month. I really miss that level of physical intimacy with you. I have a story going on in my head that it is because you don't find me attractive any more. Is that true, or is there something else? What desires do you have? Would you be willing to tell me what comes up for you when you think about making love again?

After asking these questions, really listen to the answer and try to enter your partner's world. Repeat back what you think you heard so it's understood that you are both on the same page.

When you build a connection you take an emotional risk and you're vulnerable. You talk about the real issue at hand. When you case-build you can just talk about why your partner is bad, stupid, and wrong for not giving you what you want.

I don't recommend starting with your most difficult, emotionally charged issues. When you're learning how to ski, you start on the bunny slope, and once you've learned the basics, like how to turn and how to stop, then you can you move to the more difficult terrain. It's the same thing here.

If you start with easier issues, like taking out the garbage or making the bed, instead of more difficult issues, like why your husband hates your mother or how you feel about your partner's spending habits, you give yourself a higher chance of success.

Here's another example

Your teenage daughter comes home from school and tells you that she wants to go to a party Friday. She says that there won't be any parents there, but not worry, because, this boy is like, totally a cool guy and *über* responsible. She was thinking maybe she could spend the night too? A bunch of her friends will be staying, and she just wants to save you from the hassle of picking her up really late. She reminds you that she'll have her cell phone, so it's really no big deal.

You might feel your fists clench and heat rise into your face. You are about to launch into a rendition of, "*When I was your age I would never,*" or maybe the similarly effective, "*How dare you even ask,*" or possibly the even better, "*What is wrong with you that you would even consider . . .*"

In this moment, before you say anything, you have a choice. You can build a case against her, (based on logic and maybe even experience) or you can with connect with her.

Case building: *There's no way in hell you are going to that party. I know kids today, with your drugs and alcohol. I've seen the ten o'clock news. And I don't care how "über responsible" this boy is. I know what teenage boys want. No way you're going! You will be staying home. End of story.*

The Case Building approach may make you feel strong, and in control for a short while, and therefore is very tempting. But consider the long-term impact on your relationship with your daughter?

Not good.

So how can you build a connection instead?

If you want to be understood by others start by understanding them. Then ask them to understand you.

If you don't understand, care about, or respect your daughter's feelings and needs, then how can you expect her to understand, care about, or respect yours? For this to really work, she has to understand that you understand her. She has to feel that you entered her world. Lip service is not enough.

Building Connection: *When you think of spending time at the party with your friends on Friday night, do you feel excited because your needs for fun and acceptance will be met?*

Then, listen to what she says. Keep repeating what she says back to her until she feels heard, understood, and valued. It may seem like a slower way to communicate. But, because you are taking the time to deal with the underlying issues, they get resolved rather than recycled again, and again, and again.

Your daughter will be amazed that somebody could possibly understand her feelings and needs. Especially you!

Once she feels heard and understood there is a much better chance that she can hear your concerns and needs: that you are frightened, that you have a need for her safety and well-being, and that her going to the party will not meet your needs.

Once you've established the feelings and needs on both sides of the conversation, then the two of you can discuss ways in which everyone can get their needs met.

In the end, you might say "no". But saying no after you took the time to understand and show respect to your daughter will build a connection with her. If you can get the point across that you don't know how to get your needs met and her needs met at the same time, she is more likely to respect your decision.

Summary

Old Destructive Habit: BUILDING A CASE

Gathering evidence to use against your partner. One obvious clue you are **building a case** is when you are trying to prove you are good, smart, and right by making the other person bad, stupid or wrong. Also, if you are using guilt, blame, and shame to manipulate your lover. You want to be understood and don't care about understanding. With this habit,

you think you know what your partner should or shouldn't be doing. Once you realize you're building a case you can re-choose to build a connection instead.

New Productive Habit: BUILDING A CONNECTION

You choose very quickly to either **build a case against**, or **build a connection with** your partner. If you start building a case, remember to stop, take a deep breath, slow down, and **build a connection** instead. Focus on listening with empathy and compassion first. Make sure you understand, and then try to be understood by vulnerably sharing your feelings and needs.

Practice

Exercise #1

The next time you're watching TV or a movie, watch for examples of case building. Jot them down on the following page and afterwards share notes and talk to your partner.

Watch, laugh and learn! It's always easier when you're watching someone else do the case building. Make it a contest to see who can identify the most case building in a single TV show or movie.

Great case building shows: Desperate Housewives, Cops, Law and Order, Intervention

Program: _____

Character: _____

Words used: _____

Evidence gathered: _____

How they made someone BSW: _____

Exercise #2

Next, turn up the emotional thermostat! Examine some of your conversations, and look for **case building** at work, with relatives, or neighbors. Share your discoveries with your lover.

Person: _____

Situation: _____

Words used: _____

Evidence gathered: _____

How they (or you) made someone BSW: _____

Exercise #3

Keep the mercury rising! Remember a time when you built a case against your partner. Write down and share the information.

Situation: _____

Words used: _____

Evidence gathered: _____

How you are making them BSW: _____

Habit 2:

STORY TELLING

That's my story and I'm sticking to it

"I have been through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened."

- Mark Twain

Creating Stories

Everyday we have countless experiences. We see people on the street, we talk to coworkers, we interact with family, we chat with friends, and we connect with our partner. Your mind works hard to make sense of all of this input. To do that, you create stories.

Because the mind was designed to keep us safe it tends to be protective and it often over reacts. It can confuse simple, harmless events with attacks. When it does, it tells us a scary story and we react defensively, or even attack back. **When we believe these stories, we get stuck in them.**

Example: *She's looking at me in that way again. What did I do wrong now?*

She can tell him that there's nothing wrong, and that she was just looking at him. But if he tells himself the story with enough emotion, conviction and, repetition he will start to believe that the story is true. And there will be nothing she can say or do to convince him otherwise.

Example: *I can't believe he didn't hug me when I came in the door today? What is wrong with him? The love in our relationship must be dwindling.*

Maybe he's tired from work, or maybe he's hungry and focused on thinking about what he'll have for dinner. But if she believes that he didn't hug her because he is mad, or because the relationship is falling apart, it will be very difficult for him to convince her that anything else is true. If he tries to talk to her about it she might even say that he can't *really* just be tired, that there *must* be something else wrong.

When your mind tells you a story about *why* somebody did something, recognize what is going on, that it is just a story, and make sure to check it out before believing it.

You are stuck in your-story if . . .

- You're unwilling to hear your partner's side of things.
- You're sure that you're right, and they're wrong, and that's that.
- You're embarrassed and afraid to tell your partner what going on in your head.
- Your reaction is totally out of proportion with what actually happened.
- You try to get all your friends to agree that you are right.
- You believe that there is only one way to see things and it's your way.

Here's a story a past lover made up about me:

Each night, when Paul was done reading, he turned off the bedroom overhead light, leaving me reading by my bedside lamp alone. After a while it really hurt my feelings and ended up pissing me off!

Why should he have a great light for reading while I had to make do with a little lamp?

The story I told myself was that he didn't care about me. My needs weren't important to him.

Finally, one night I decided I couldn't take this anymore and had to say something about this to Paul. I told him my story and what it meant to me when he turned off the overhead light while I was still reading.

To my surprise, he listened, didn't try to defend himself, and repeated back what I told him, so I knew he got it. He totally understood how I could feel the way I did because of the story I was telling myself. Once I was done he asked if I was willing to hear his story.

Here is Paul's version: Since the light switch was on his side of the bed, he thought he was helping me by turning out the light. He was saving me the trouble of having to get out of bed!

The next night when Paul went to turn out the light, he stopped, he remembered our conversation, and asked me if I wanted him to leave the light on?

My response, because of my new story was, "No way! I don't want to have to get up and turn it off! But thanks for asking!"

What a difference understanding each other's stories made!

Story Busting

The first step is realizing that you told yourself a story. Then next is sharing your stories openly and honestly. This technique will help you keep your relationship open, honest, and intimate. It's also a great way to clear up misunderstandings.

Share your story before you start believing it. If you wait, and let it fester and grow inside your head, you will start **building a case** based on that story. These destructive communication habits build on each other.

Example of story telling AND case building:

*He's so quiet and withdrawn today, he must not care about me. Now that I think about it, he's been withdrawn for weeks. He **never** pays any attention to me anymore.
If he were good husband he would give me more affection and love.*

Checking out your story is simple, but not always easy. It can be uncomfortable, embarrassing, and vulnerable. Your stories expose your fears, doubts, and weaknesses.

In the example above, her story shows that she secretly wasn't feeling loved, and it wasn't okay for her to ask for her needs to be met. That is a tough truth.

Example of checking out a story: *I'm telling myself that that you're withdrawn because you are mad at me, or don't care about me. What's going on for you? Is that true?*

When checking out a story, include the words *'I'm telling myself a story'* in your question and end with, *'is this true?'* This may seem weirdly artificial, but it helps the other person receive what you are saying.

Without it, the question sounds more like an accusation: *You came home late three nights in a row and you just don't care about me any more! Do you?*

With it, the question creates an opening: *"You came home late from work three nights in a row. I'm telling myself a story that you don't care about me any more. What's going on? Is this true?"*

(The last example was based on a story about my friends. Turns out when he confronted his wife about the whole situation, she was working overtime so she could buy him a computer as a present for his birthday!)

Using the word 'story' also helps create an opening in both people's mind that another valid point of view exists.

Facing that truth together creates intimacy. Letting your partner see and feel your insecurity is what being in an intimate, vulnerable, and honest relationship is all about. It **can bring your relationship to a whole new level.**

You are checking out stories if . . .

- There is an upset with your partner and you say, 'I wonder what stories we are telling ourselves?'
- You tell your story and then you ask 'Is it true?' After discovering that a painful story you believed wasn't true, you hug your partner, say thank you, and both have a good laugh.
- You listen and understand your partner's responses.
- You stop yourself when using words like 'you always, you never or you're wrong.'
- You see that your partner has a story, and instead of getting defensive, you ask about it.

Story Telling in Action

Example: One day a man walked into a law office and said he wanted the lawyer to handle his divorce.

The lawyer asked *why do you want to get divorced?*

Here's his story, the other night he'd gone to pick up his wife after her shift at work and when he got there, she was sitting in another man's car, talking.

Well it was clear to the husband that something was going on, and that meant the marriage was over. There was nothing to talk about, no opening for her point of view. He was **stuck in his story** and that was that.

The attorney continued to ask questions, partly out of legal necessity and partly out of curiosity.

On the night in question there was a snowstorm, and it was late and cold. She was waiting in a dark deserted parking lot. And the other man happened to be the wife's boss.

So, what story did the husband make up from his wife's actions?

In his mind, she no longer loved him. She had betrayed him and his trust.

When you don't check your stories with your partner, you experience your story as reality. It becomes the truth.

Example: Your partner and you normally make love once or twice a week. Several weeks go by with no sex, and your partner is still not interested.

Stuck in Your Story:

You never want to make love anymore. You're becoming cold, frigid, and distant. Don't you find me attractive? Are you sleeping with someone else?

When you communicate from the place of being stuck in your story your lover feels attacked, gets defensive, and then often attacks back.

Checking out Your Story:

It's been several weeks since we made love. I'm telling myself the story that you don't find me attractive anymore. What's going on for you? Is that true?

Notice how this is really addressing the issue, not dodging or avoiding it. You're dealing with it head-on, but in a healthy way.

You've just created the possibility for open, honest, vulnerable and compassionate communication. **Talking this way will feel a little awkward, uncomfortable and unfamiliar at first. You're building the muscle. Stay with it, communicating this way gets easier.**

Summary

Old Destructive Habit: STUCK IN YOUR STORY

Your mind makes up stories about your situation in an attempt to protect you and keep you safe. You get stuck in the story when you believe it is true, even though you have not checked it out with your partner. **When you are stuck in your story you will say things like, you always, you never, or you're wrong.** You have a strong feeling you are absolutely right and there is only one way to see things.

New Productive Habit: CHECKING OUT YOUR STORY

You realize that your mind is doing its job by making up stories to try and keep you safe; so you examine those stories. You say to your partner, “I am telling myself a story that ...” and when you are done ask them, “Is it true?” If things feel off between you and your partner look at what stories you are telling yourself and then you can ask your partner to do the same. Check out your stories first and then support your partner to check out theirs.

EXERCISES

Exercise #1

First think of some stories you were told when you were younger that you totally believed at the time, only to find out later that they weren't true. What about Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, and babies come from storks?

Write down one of these stories from your past and then share it with your partner. Be sure to include any behaviors that demonstrated the conviction of your belief.

Exercise #2

Turn the volume up! Write out one example from *your relationship* where you or your lover believed a story, acted on it, but it wasn't true. What was the story and how did you feel about it? This can be a story you told about your partner or one he or she told about you. **Then share it with your partner!**

Example: When my husband showed up late from work three days in a row, I made him sleep on the couch, because I was convinced he was cheating on me. In fact, he just had to communicate with some clients in Asia.

Exercise #3

Now really crank it! Write a story that you are currently telling yourself about your relationship.

Example: I'm telling myself the story that if I tell you I'm scared about applying for a new job that you'll lose respect for me. Is that true?

I'm *telling myself the story that* _____

_____. *Is that true?*

Habit 3:

Message Assuming

When Mind Reading Goes Bad

"The normal outcome of most communication is misunderstanding."

- Marshall Rosenberg

Message Said versus Message Heard

It is often assumed that when you communicate, you simply say what you mean and the other person hears that message and gets that message exactly as you intended. But, communication is rarely that simple.

In fact, we are very complicated people. We all have experienced a wide variety of things in our lives. Every time someone talks to us we listen to the words and filter those words through our own experiences. For example, when I hear the word home, I think of the house I grew up in. I picture the high ceilings, cool tile floors, and a spiral staircase. A house is a place flooded with sunlight and full of the wild animals we adopted as pets.

We say words with a certain intention and intonation. **The words and tone then mingle with the experiences of the person we are talking to, and together they create the meaning.**

For example: The question, “Honey, can you take out the trash?” can mean a variety of things.

If you love me, you'll take out the trash.

OR

My father always took out the trash, which means it is the man's job. So get to it buster!

OR

You sat home all day watching TV and you didn't smell that? Can you get your lazy ass off the couch for five seconds and take care of this?

OR

If you loved me you would have already taken out the trash. You're lack of motivation is proof of our relationship's decline.

OR

I am an awful person because I am asking you to take out the trash instead of doing it myself. Will you still love me anyway?

OR

I'm running late, or I'd do it myself. Please be a dear and take out the trash. I appreciate and love you!

When we are listening how do we know what our lover is *actually* saying? When we are speaking how do we know that what our lover is actually hearing?

Often, we assume that our partner got the right message, the message we intended. We think that what we said was so clear, and so undisputable that there is no way it could be misunderstood. I really appreciate that he's taking out the trash, but why is he scowling at me? I didn't think it was that big of a deal.

Or we assume we understood what was said. We think the exact message we heard was the message our partner intended. Why is she getting on my case for being lazy again? I didn't even know the trash needed to be taken out!

People have a tendency to hear the message filtered through the story going on in inside their heads, instead of listening to the actual words being spoken. Usually, we don't take the time to clarify. **We assume our interpretation matches the speaker's intentions.**

Leaping to Conclusions

The next form of message assuming shows up when you leap to a conclusion and *turn off your listening*. This normally happens because you think you know what is going to be said.

Here is an example from my life when I was message assuming.

One day my friend Dave called and asked if I'd like to go white water kayaking with him. I love kayaking. It's one of my obsessions. So I said yes without any hesitation.

Dave told me to meet him at the bridge, and then continued to share more details. We normally meet at the Dairy Queen Bridge, so I assumed that's what Dave meant and I stopped listening.

Not only did I stop listening, but my mind also drifted. And while Dave kept talking, I went over the details of what needed to be done before I could leave. I started to think about what gear I would use and if it was dry. I thought about which emails I could reply to and still meet him on time. Great. I told Dave I would see him later and hung up the phone.

I showed up at the Dairy Queen Bridge and Dave wasn't there. A half hour later, Dave still wasn't there. What was going on?

How could he do this? What kind of a friend has me rush to meet him and then just doesn't show? I cursed loudly, and thought about what a jerk, and a bad friend he was. I started blaming, even vilifying him.

The problem wasn't Dave. He *actually* said that he was going to Mary's Lake Bridge that day, not the Dairy Queen Bridge. So while I was waiting for him, he was actually waiting for me at Mary's Lake Bridge. He was equally annoyed, seething at a different bridge.

This whole fiasco is a classic case of the destructive habit, *message assuming*.

As soon as I thought I knew what Dave was going to say, I stopped listening and stopped paying attention. I was excited to go kayaking. **Adrenaline and emotions can interfere with our ability to stay present and hear what is actually being said.**

You know you are message assuming if . . .

- You interrupt someone because you think you know what is going to be said next.
- You end up at a different restaurant than your partner, and you blame him/her.

- You stop listening before your lover is done talking and start preparing what you want to say.
- You respond to only the first part of your partner's message.
- You share something that is very important and do not ask what was heard.

Message Clarifying

What could I have done differently to avoid the misunderstanding with Dave?

It's so simple: as simple as ordering pizza.

Think about the last time that you called in and ordered a pizza. The person who took your order knew that it's easy to misunderstand what somebody's saying.

So what do they do to overcome this obstacle, and solve this problem? **They repeat what they think they heard.**

It goes like this: *Thank you Mr. Jones for your order. Let me repeat it back to you to make sure I got it right. That was a 16-inch pepperoni pizza, to be delivered to 2123 Smith Ave. Your phone number is (415) 555-1212, and your credit card number was 1234-5678-91011. Is that right?"*

All I needed to do with Dave was repeat back the gist of what I thought I heard. *Dave you want to meet at the Dairy Queen Bridge at 1:45? Did I get it right?*

Dave would have caught the misunderstanding before it became a problem. This is a simple, powerful, and effective tool. But it also isn't normal communication.

Ordering pizza isn't a very emotional event. It becomes even more important to take steps to avoid **message assuming** when emotions are running high like they do in many of your intimate relationship communications. **Remember, when emotions increase intelligence decreases.**

**The more important and emotional the message,
the more important it is to make sure
the message sent is actually the message received.**

If you are doing the talking and want to make sure that you are heard and understood, you can make the clarifying request: *Would you mind telling me what you heard me say?*

On the other side, if you are listening and want to make sure that you received the intended message you can ask: *Can I tell you what I heard you say? Or, you can say, I heard you say _____. Is this right?*

This simple method is effective and profound. The person speaking feels heard, understood, and valued.

Message Clarifying Guidelines

1. **40 Word Maximum:** If what you're talking about is really important or emotional, go slowly and take it in small chunks. If your partner gets confused or lost you'll know exactly when you lost them in the conversation and be able to get things right back on track. **Never go more than 40 words without checking in with the other person to make sure that the message you're sending is the message being received.** Ask, *"Would you tell me what you heard me say?"*

Or... if they are talking, you stop them at about 40 words and say *"Can I stop you for a second and catch up. I want to make sure I'm following you. Let me tell you what I think I heard you say?"*

In normal a conversation you may go a lot longer than 40 words. But when you are talking about your relationship and other emotional stuff, it's good to have conversations go slowly, and in small chunks.

Checking in often makes sure the conversation stays on track.

2. **When you are going to talk about something emotional or important, tell your partner.** Don't ambush them! Start by saying, *"This is important and I want to make sure that I explain it clearly and that I'm understood."*

Also tell them *"I know there are times when I think I'm being clear, and I'm really not, so from time to time I may ask you to repeat back what you think you heard me say. OK?"* It's good to practice on small issues, when there's not too much at stake and when the emotions aren't running high.

If your partner is resistant to this practice it's likely that s/he is thinking, "you think I don't know how to listen, and I'm stupid." Explain that you are trying to be responsible for your communication and that sometimes what you wanted to say and what someone else hears is different. Also, let your partner know that you're committed to understanding what s/he has to say. To do that, you would like to practice telling your partner what you think you heard, especially when the communication is important or emotional.

3. **When people tell you what they thought they heard, no matter how different from what you thought you said, Always THANK and never CORRECT.** Take responsibility for sharing your message in a way your partner can hear it. Keep communicating until both the message said and the message received are the same. **Don't blame your partner for not hearing the thing you are saying.**

People mistakenly believe that the more they talk the better chance they have of being understood. NOT SO! In fact, it's the opposite.

The truth is the more words they use, and the more talking they do, the greater the chance of confusion and misunderstandings, unless they keep things on track by using the **message clarifying habit**.

You are message clarifying if . . .

- Your lover is done talking and you say, “*Let me tell you what I think I heard you say.*”
- At the end of your statement you ask the listener, “*Could you tell me what you heard me say?*”
- When you don’t understand, you say “*Tell me more*” or “*I don’t understand, can you tell me in different way.*”
- You use short sentences, give feedback, and make message-clarifying requests when what you're talking about is important and emotionally charged.

Example

I was working with a couple at one of my **Magic Relationship Method** seminars, where I teach **Compassionate Communication to Couples**. This couple told me about a misunderstanding they were having.

The woman, Donna, was very upset with her partner, Joe. He kept moving her personal things including her make up to different places around the bathroom. Each morning when she was getting ready for work, she had to hunt down what she needed. One time, he put her hair dryer in a drawer and rearranged the medicine cabinet. He shoved her eye shadow to the back of the shelf, and moved her lipstick and eyeliner into a different drawer in order to make room for his shampoo and deodorant.

Using the skills she learned from the MRM, Donna told her lover: “*I have a need to have integrity at work, which means showing up right at nine. When you move my things I have to spend time looking for them in the morning, which interferes with this need. I feel frustrated and hurt, and I would like some support here. Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me say?*”

“*Yeah,*” Joe responded, “*you said I’m an asshole for touching your things.*”

As you can see here, the message he heard was very different than the message she sent. He didn’t hear her message. He only heard what was going on inside his own head.

Donna responded calmly, by saying “*Thank you.*” **And she didn't to correct him.** This is an important factor. After all, Joe had done what she had asked. He told her **what he heard**.

Donna stayed **committed to her communication and responsible for the outcome.** Rather than blaming him for not hearing her correctly, she just asked if it would be okay if she tried again.

He nodded yes.

So Donna continued in a compassionate tone (don't underestimate the power of your tone!), "*I feel frustrated and hurt because I have a need for simplicity and ease when getting ready for work. Would you tell me what you heard me say?*"

"Yeah," he threw back at her, "you want me to stop touching your things." Once again he may have been caught in his own fears and was unable to hear her message.

"Thank you," replied Donna. And then she tried again. And again.

And again.

AND AGAIN!

How many times do you do it? Until it is done!

It took **eight rounds** of Donna expressing her feelings and needs before Joe could reflect back accurately the message she was sharing with him.

We all cheered when he said, "*You're frustrated and hurt because you have a need for simplicity, ease and support in your life.*"

If right now you're saying "**Damn, that's a lot of work!**" The truth is, yes it can take some time and focus, but it's not nearly as much work, or as painful, as the destruction of a relationship because of misunderstandings.

In normal communication between couples they have no way of noticing exactly when the conversation went off-track and message assuming took over.

Summary

Old Destructive Habit: MESSAGE ASSUMING

When speaking, you share a message and jump to the conclusion that the person listening to you heard the message you intended. When listening, you assume that you understand what the speaker is saying without telling the speaker what you think you heard. Sometimes, you even think you know what the speaker is going to say stop listening before he or she is done talking.

New Productive Habit: MESSAGE CLARIFYING

You recognize that **the message sent is rarely the message received**. You use clarifying sentences such as, "*can you tell me what you heard me say?*" when you are the speaker and, "*can I tell you what I heard you say?*" when you are listening.

Practice

Exercise #1

First, practice noticing the habit of message assuming. A simple and less confrontational way to do this is by watching sitcoms. These shows are full of message assuming, and you can laugh with your lover as you both learn. Make some notes as you watch and compare after the show.

Words used: _____

Message assumed by listener: _____

Message intended by speaker: _____

Exercise #2

Next, practice using message clarifying sentences. Follow these steps:

1. When you're talking and want to make sure that you're understood, end with the sentence "Can you tell me what you heard me say?"
2. Thank the listener no matter how different their answer is from what you intended to say.
3. When you're listening and want to make sure you understand, use the sentence. "Can I tell you what I heard?"
4. Use the 40 words maximum rule: make sure to stop before hitting 40 words and check if the message being sent is the message being received. Practice this at least once a day.

Exercise #3

Listen to your partner and notice when there's an implied or incomplete message that ends without a clear request. Practice asking message clarifying questions on interactions that are not emotionally charged so you can get the hang of it.

Example: Your partner asks 'are you going to the kitchen?'
Instead of guessing what they might want, you reply, "Is there something in the kitchen that you would like me to get you?"
"Oh no", your partner replies. "I just want to see if the dishwasher is done yet, could you check?"

By asking the message-clarifying question, you are able to **uncover the underlying and unspoken message or request.**

When you are communicating this way, remember it's not about getting it right. It's about engaging in a process and a type of communication that leads towards clarity and understanding.

Exercise #4

Watch for Message Assuming and use the space below to write down your discoveries.

What they/you said and the message assumed:

What they/you meant, the clarified message:

Exercise #5

When you give instructions, make plans, or express something personal about yourself, try asking others *“Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me say?”*

Notice when people get what you intended to say and notice when they don't. Again, don't attempt to make people feel bad for any misunderstanding. Just say thank you and clarify. The more you do this exercise, the more you realize just how common the Message Assuming habit is.

Note discrepancies here: Message Sent vs. Message Received

When somebody is making plans with you, giving you instructions, or revealing deep, personal information, ask them, *“Can I tell you what I heard you say?”*

First, you'll be amazed at how many misunderstandings and upsets this will stop. Secondly, you'll be amazed at how much compassion and understanding just checking in like this builds when you're talking about emotional issues.

Their Message Sent vs. Message You Received.

Habit 4:

CUP STUFFING

The Straw that Broke
the Relationship's Back

*"When you listen with empathy to
another person, you give that person
psychological air."*

- Stephen R. Covey

Cup Stuffing

Mary sits in the car for about thirty seconds after pulling into the garage. As she walks into the house, she starts to think about the interesting day she had at work. She can't wait to tell her husband Rick, all about it.

But as she walks in the door of her home, the incessant beeping of the smoke alarm instantly jars her.

When she gets to the kitchen, she sees Rick is on a chair in the middle of the smoke filled kitchen trying to dismantle the alarm. The veggies on the stove are burning, and their youngest daughter is crying. As she takes her daughter into her arms, she starts to tell her partner about her workday. Mary begins to, in detail, talk to him about her exciting presentation and how well she did. She thinks she might get a bonus, isn't that exciting!

He stares down at her from his perch, his face tight and red. And the fighting begins.

Does this sound familiar?

When you try and get someone to listen to you or do something for you when the person is already emotionally or physically overwhelmed, you are *cup stuffing*. The person's emotional cup is already full and you trying to fit more in.

It can happen at anytime. Yet, it happens most when you and your partner come back together after being apart. Typically, when returning home from the workday. With all the challenges and stresses of the day it can be hard to hear anything partner your partner has to say, even if it's good news!

When you have a full cup from your busy stressful day and you come home and your partner or kids try to share anything with you it may feel like they are **trying to stuff something into your already full cup causing you to overflow, erupt, or have a total meltdown.**

It's even worse when two full cups collide.

This is not limited to you and your partner; it is the same with anyone you talk to. **If someone's cup is full of upsets, emotions, and problems, the person can't hear you. Or if your cup is full you can't hear what other people have to say.**

It's not a matter of choice. It's a matter of physics. It's not personal, it's not that your lover doesn't want to listen to you, it's that they are full. It's like when you can no longer store any data on your hard drive because it has no memory left. Something has to be deleted before something new can be saved.

Your cup is already stuffed if . . .

- Your kids ask if they can watch TV and you start screaming at them and threaten a severe punishment.
- You tell your partner you just can't handle one more thing, run into your bedroom and slam the door when you were asked for a glass of water.
- You try listening to your partner and can't hear a single word he or she says because you are too overwhelmed.
- You say, "I can't take this any more!"

Your cup stuffing if . . .

- Your partner is already stressed out and you try to have an important conversation without checking in
- You see your partner after a day apart and you automatically start sharing your upsets and frustrations without checking in.
- You try to talk to your partner when they are very focused on something else (for example: watching television, having a phone conversation, working on the computer, or driving in snowstorm).
- Your partner asks for a break and you don't stop talking.

Cup Emptying

Recognizing and undoing cup stuffing can bring great relief to both of you. The first step to stop this habit is for you to become aware that you are doing it. Then, you can shift gears and help your partner empty his or her cup.

When **people's cups are too full**, they normally need a **healthy dose of empathy** to unwind, decompress, and let go of tension. Your willingness to tune into your partner's experience and give him or her a hand at key moments goes a long way toward creating connection.

For example, years ago, I was living with someone who taught *at risk* high school students. She was stuck between her students, resistant angry teens, and the over-controlling administration.

By the end of the day she would come home with a very full cup.

My days are full of coaching couples from around the world. I help them resolve their relationship problems by transforming the way they communicate. I also write e-books and articles, arrange workshops, and update my web site.

A lot of the time, both of our emotional cups were very full by the time we came back together at the end of the day. To avoid big fights with hurt feelings we used the *Cup Full Rule*: we told each other when our cups were full, and then agreed to come back later and connect.

Instead of insisting that your needs get met right away, give your partner space to breath, and maybe even step in to help. After a short break many times the process of connecting and giving empathy can go much smoother.

Just by listening and empathizing, your partner can move from being overwhelmed with challenging emotions, to being present and available to hear you.

If **both partners have full cups** then take turns sharing a little at a time giving and receiving support and empathy along the way. Maybe take a short break first. Use the 40 word max rule. At moments when both of you are on tilt, short exchanges can help you be with the other person and listen without feeling overwhelmed by the exchange.

Here are some tips to help you go from **cup stuffing** to **cup emptying**.

TIP 1: Set up a ‘Caution: Cup Full’ Agreement.

Discuss cup stuffing with your partner. Come to an agreement that when either of you has a full cup, or can’t listen that you’ll let the other know by saying, *Cup full* or *I’m over whelmed, let’s come back and talk in a half an hour*.

TIP TWO: If you are the speaker ask, *is now is a good time before diving into challenging topics*. If you are the listener, let the speaker know what you need.

Example: *I am thinking about our conversation from last night and wonder if you have a few minutes so I can share my thoughts and feelings?* The listener agrees and speaker shares. If not, an agreement is made about a different time that they can discuss the issue.

TIP THREE: If you go to talk to your lover, and they say, “Cup Full” you can ask them “Do you want empathy or do you want space?”

If your lover chooses empathy you can engage in emptying your partner’s cup by listening, empathizing, and then feeding back a condensed version of what you heard. If your lover chooses space you can wait, come together later and talk about whatever needs to be discussed.

TIP FOUR: Empty your own cup

After a long day of teaching communication skills to prison inmates my cup would be really full! So I would do something before going home just for me. This would empty my cup. In the summertime, my favorite thing to do is spend an about an hour white water kayaking. Afterwards, I feel energized and able to give attention to my partner.

What works for you? It could be exercising, walking, reading, writing, talking to a good friend, having a cup of tea, rubbing your partners’ feet, or having them rub yours. Try and find a variety of ways to decompress.

Remember, ‘**Cup Full**’ or ‘**I Am Overwhelmed**’ isn’t personal it only means that your partner can’t hear you right now, not that you’ve been cut off. This is much better for the relationship than having your lover pretend to be listening when not actually capable.

If you’ve told somebody your cup is full, **be responsible**. You made an agreement so make sure you follow-up with you lover later and listen. If you don’t, he or she may assume that ‘cup full’ it is the same as being blown off. **It will erode the trust and limit your ability to use this communication tool.**

One of the most common questions I get when coaching a couple is *how do I provide empathy?* This subject is covered in more detail in phase two of the MRM, but here are some quick guidelines:

- When giving empathy you are not trying to fix your partner or provide solutions. Just listen with the intent to understand and enter the other person’s world.
- If you’re receiving empathy and you’re talking about your relationship, remember to focus on the facts of what happened and how you feel about it. It’s best not to make judgments about your partner or slip into blaming.
- Stay in physical contact with your partner during the process if possible.

Let’s go back to Mary and Rick at the beginning of the chapter. What would that kitchen scene look like if both parties were practicing **cup emptying**?

Instead of heading straight home, Mary stops at her favorite bookstore and browses the shelves for about half an hour. She picks out a novel, and then heads back. She gets out of the car. She’s eager to share her workday with Rick, but feels calm and light.

Mary: *Hi Rick. It looks like you might be overwhelmed right now. I had a crazy day at work, and would love to tell you about it, but can I help you out a little bit first? What can I do?*

Rick: *That would be great! Thanks! I totally ruined the broccoli. Could you sauté some more, so we can get dinner done. I’ve had an insane day too, and I’m looking forward to getting the cooking out of the way so we can connect. I definitely want to hear about your work when we get settled and start eating.*

Mary: *That sounds great.*

You’re cup emptying if . . .

- Your partner comes home stressed out and you greet them with the question, *do you want empathy for your hard day or space to decompress?*
- You offer to listen without giving ideas or advice.
- After empathizing with your partner you ask *is there anything else* before you start sharing your own stuff.

- You say, *cup full* to your partner, take a break, and then connect later when you can listen.

Summary

Old Destructive Habit: CUP STUFFING

When we share with people even when they are unable to hear us. They are full of thoughts and emotions. Their emotional cup is full, and we don't take the time to see that they are overwhelmed. Or when your emotional cup is full and someone tries to tell you something, and you explode, melt down, or tune the other person out.

New Productive Habit: CUP EMPTYING

You notice if your **cup is full** or if your partner's **cup is full**. You give your lover empathy by listening compassionately, and by giving him or her a chance to express problems, burdens, and overwhelms. When needed you give some space to the other person or take some space for yourself before connecting. You have certain things you do to help you decompress, like go for a run, hike in the mountains, read a good book, or jump in a lake. When you come back together you focus on listening and giving compassionate support or receiving compassion from your partner.

Practice

Exercise 1

1. When was the last time that somebody tried talking to you when your cup was full? How did it feel? How much do you remember? What did you do? What did you say?

2. What would you do differently now that you know about this destructive habit?

Exercise 2

Practice asking this key questions:

- Do you want empathy or do you want space?
- I'd like to talk to you about _____. Is now a good time?
- My cup is full right now. Can I get back to you in _____ minutes?

How did these questions change your interactions with your partner?

Habit 5:

The Fatal Fs

Let me Tell You What to Do and
How To Do it

*"When dealing with people, remember you
are not dealing with creatures of logic,
but creatures of emotion."*

- Dale Carnegie

Fixing, Fighting, and Fleeing

Your partner comes to you after work. He sighs heavily. You can tell he's upset. He takes a deep breath and says, "*Hey, I'm having some trouble at work, do you have time to talk? I could really use some support.*" (It's off to a good start. He's making sure that your cup isn't too full.)

You say, "*Thanks for checking in hon. I have time, let's talk. What's up?*"

He says, "*I just can't take it anymore. I am totally stressed out and overworked. My stupid boss, once again, changed my job description to include more duties, without additional pay. I already have to bring work home just to keep up as it is.*"

What do you do? The person you love is hurting. He's trapped in a painful situation, and doesn't seem to know how to get out of it.

You see exactly what your partner **should do** to fix the problem and as soon as he stops talking you swoop in to the rescue, offering your brilliant advice, hoping for respect, appreciation, and maybe even some affection.

First, you try and *FIX* things!

In a calm voice, you say, "***Honey, here's what you're going to do: just say no. Tell your boss politely, but firmly, you are not going to do it. She should hire some extra help and at least give you a raise. You're totally capable of standing up to her, I know you are!***"

To your surprise, rather than being appreciative, thankful or even mildly interested in receiving your wisdom and advice, your partner becomes even more upset, turning the full force of his anger, pain, and frustration on you.

It's our natural inclination to try and fix the ones we love, to make it better for them. **At work we are rewarded for fixing things.** We are valued and paid for the problems we can solve and the good advice we give.

At home, giving that advice (especially when it's unrequested advice) or trying to problem solve can have the opposite effect. Rather than helping, **this behavior can destroy trust, intimacy, and understanding.** It also inhibits open and honest communication. Go figure.

You persist because, after all, your partner has to do something. When you continue, his response is to lash out at you and say, "*You have no idea what is really going on at work! Do you think I'm stupid? Do you think I haven't thought of that? It's not that simple.*"

When you try to fix someone, the message you are sending is that you know better than the other person. Most of the time when people are venting frustrations, they simply want to know that someone is listening and cares. They want to know that they are heard, understood, and valued.

When your partner blows up at you for giving him advice, it's confusing. And now you're mad at him for being temperamental and defensive. **You were just trying to help.** You were being supportive, listening, and offering a perfectly good solution. Weren't you doing the right thing?

You add, *"I didn't say anything about you being stupid. I just don't want your boss taking advantage of you. I want to help you stand up for yourself."* **Instead of having the calming effect you were hoping for, your partner is now totally pissed off.**

Now, you're FIGHTING.

Out of desperation, you try and stop the discussion from falling apart completely with a comment like, *"Honey let's calm down and get some dinner and we can talk about what you can say to your boss tomorrow."*

He says, *"You don't get it! I'm going to go have dinner with my buddy who knows what problems like this are like."*

Next thing you know, your partner is headed out the door to go hang out at the bar with his ex-college roommate while you sit at home, eating warmed up leftovers, and wondering what the hell went wrong.

Finally, someone FLEES.

Why stick around once you've fought over the same issue for the hundredth time? You already know the outcome. When it gets to this point, a common reaction is for one or both of you to **flee**.

Fleeing can happen in several different ways

Physically: by leaving the scene.

Emotionally: by attacking back, or shutting down and disconnecting from your partner.

Verbally: by retreating into silence, or avoiding the topic altogether.

This destructive habit is very common. Be compassionate with yourself and your partner as you become aware of these habits and start to replace them. **When you see yourself trying to fix your partner, or your partner is trying to fix you and you're getting frustrated, stop and take a breath.** Take a moment to remember your commitment to creating intimacy and great communication with your lover.

You are fixing, fighting or fleeing if . . .

- You jump in with advice, suggestions, and solutions to your partner's problem before s/he is even done talking.
- You feel like you need to rescue your partner so that s/he can do things correctly.
- You leave the room in the middle of a conversation because you get too emotional or frustrated.
- You say “I don’t want to talk about it anymore!”
- Your partner’s eyes roll, sighs loudly, or otherwise communicates disinterest in *another one of your good ideas*.
- You tell your partner, “I don’t know the hell why I bother telling you anything because you never do what I say.”

The good news is that there is a simple and effective solution. With only one key question and a few sentences you can prevent the Fatal Fs from escalating, or even appearing. With practice, **you can stop this habit in its tracks**, long before it gets out of hand.

Empathetic Listening

Always Offer EMPATHY FIRST!

Once you make the decision to stop fixing people and to start listening to them with compassion, acceptance and understanding **they will love you for it**.

The next time someone comes to you hurt, angry, upset, scared or overwhelmed by something. **Stop and ask this simple, relationship saving, question:**

“Do you want empathy or advice?”

It will take the conversation in a totally new and different direction. When you offer the option, your lover will opt for empathy first most of the time. **People crave the opportunity to be heard and understood without any advice, criticism, or judgment.**

Empathetic listening is so rare that it’s a true gift. It is a simple, powerful and loving habit to develop.

Once you make the decision to **stop fixing people** and to **start listening to them with empathy, compassion and understanding** you will radically increase the trust, honesty, and open communication.

It will take practice. Fixing is a hard habit to overcome, and you may have to bite your tongue more than once.

Let's look at the same scenario from earlier in the chapter, but this time using **empathetic listening** instead of jumping in and trying to fix the situation.

Your partner tells you about his problem at work. Instead of fixing you say, “*Honey that sounds like a tough situation, and you sound pretty stressed out about it. I’m wondering if you want empathy or advice?*”

He relaxes his jaw, unclenches, his fists and exhales deeply. “*Thanks so much for just listening, empathy is just what I need. You have no idea how much stress I’m under at work.*”

You say, “*No problem babe. It sounds like you’d appreciate having the space to talk about it. Why don’t you tell me more?*”

You go from there. You listen while he talks, and he relaxes. He feels heard, understood, and valued.

Just feeling without offering any advice might look like a stretch. It might seem very different from the way you currently talk to each other. Good. You’re reading this so you have an alternative from the way you normally communicate. This way works. It will help bring you closer to the people you love.

You are listening empathetically if . . .

- Your partner comes to you with a painful problem and you ask, “Do you want empathy or do you want advice?”
- You’re first reaction is listening instead of offering your partner a solution.
- Instead of running away, you say to your partner, “I have some strong feelings about this, could you just listen and give me empathy.”
- You think the other person is wrong, but you say, “I’m confused. Can you clarify for me?” Then you repeat back what you think you heard them say and ask for more information.
- You are willing to wait until your partner’s cup is really empty before asking if he or she would like to hear any ideas or advice.

Summary

Old Destructive Habit: FIXING, FIGHTING AND FLEEING

You jump in and offer your advice and solutions at the first sign of an upset or problem without being asked. **You try and FIX them.** You are communicating that the other person isn’t competent, and he or she often feels misunderstood.

You start to argue, and make the other person wrong. You’re mad and want them to do things differently. **Fighting.**

Of course fighting can be very uncomfortable and you or your partner may try the third F as a solution, **Fleeing.** It can be done by leaving the scene or by staying physically yet checking out emotionally and mentally.

New Productive Habit: EMPATHETIC LISTENING

Listen with compassion, acceptance, and understanding. Try to understand their story and enter their world. Sometimes it's also helpful to say what you think you heard, so the person will know if he or she is understood.

When you accept what is happening and take time to connect and understand the other people it is a natural result for them to be more open.

EXERCISES

- 1) **Watch some dramas, sitcoms, and talk shows with your partner Notice the FATAL Fs that arise.** How do the characters handle uncomfortable and emotional situations? Do they fix, fight, and/or flee? Does it include more than one F? **Also consider couples that both of you know**, how do they handle these situations? Which F's do they use? How does it progress?

Situation: _____
Primary F: _____
Progression: _____
Result: _____
How would they change their patterns? _____

- 2) **Examine the FATAL Fs your parents' used?** Did they always follow the same progression? If so what was it? Do responses similarly? Share your discoveries with you partner.

Situation: _____
Primary F: _____
Progression: _____
Results: _____
How do their responses relate to yours: _____

- 3) **Remember a time when you were fixing, fighting and/or fleeing in a situation with your partner.** Which F did you use? Did it progress to include more than one F. How did it turn out? Knowing what you know now, how would you handle it differently? Write down and share the information?

Situation: _____
Primary F: _____
Was there a progression: _____
Result: _____
How would you do it differently now: _____

QUIZ: Are You a Fixer? (Have fun and see how honest you can be!)

1. When I ask my partner to do something, I feel like I have to check to make sure it's done right.
 - A. Mostly False
 - B. Sometimes True
 - C. Mostly True

2. My partner needs my advice to be able to make sound financial and career decisions.
 - A. Mostly False
 - B. Sometimes True
 - C. Mostly True

3. If my partner changed the way s/he thought, s/he could be much happier.
 - A. Mostly False
 - B. Sometimes True
 - C. Mostly True

4. If my spouse did things my way and listened to my advice, life would be much better.
 - A. Mostly False
 - B. Sometimes True
 - C. Mostly True

5. I am hurting the relationship if I allow my partner to remain ignorant about something. I shouldn't worry about offending them offering the truth.
 - A. Mostly False
 - B. Sometimes True
 - C. Mostly True

6. When my partner complains to me about something, I like to offer advice to help solve the problem.
 - A. Mostly False
 - B. Sometimes True
 - C. Mostly True

7. If I leave my partner alone to figure something out instead of rushing to help, I will generally regret that choice later.
 - A. Mostly False
 - B. Sometimes True
 - C. Mostly True

8. When my partner makes a big mistake I feel frustrated, disappointed, and embarrassed. At times I even feel like it was my fault for not preventing it from happening.

- A. Mostly False
- B. Sometimes True
- C. Mostly True

9. It is more important to me to get things done right than to worry about hurting my lover's feelings.

- A. Mostly False
- B. Sometimes True
- C. Mostly True

10. If my partner doesn't do what I say, it means I am not appreciated or respected.

- A. Mostly False
- B. Sometimes True
- C. Mostly True

Scoring:

0 points for every A

1 point for every B

2 points for every C

Your Total Score _____

If you scored between 0 and 6: You aren't a fixer at all. In fact, you're a great listener and probably have an intimate, compassionate connection with your partner.

If you scored between 7 and 13: You're a moderate fixer. You may know when to help your partner and when to hold your tongue. But sometimes you give advice when your partner is looking for empathy.

If you scored between 14 and 20: Look Out! You're a major Fixer! You may be causing yourself and your partner some distress with your constant for fixing.

Make Extra-ordinary Communication a Reality

The 4 steps for creating change

*"What seems to us bitter trials are often
blessings in disguise."
- Oscar Wilde*

The Four Steps for Creating Change

Now you know what *to do* and what *not to do* when communicating. How do you make lasting changes?

These four steps help you to change old habits that don't serve you into new habits that do. They are simple and effective. The four steps will guide you to freedom from case building, story telling, message assuming, cup stuffing, and the fatal Fs.

1) AWARENESS

The first step is to become aware of what the five destructive communication habits are and how they can be running and wrecking your relationship.

Once recognize what these habits are, you will start to see them everywhere! Be gentle on yourself and your partner during this phase. It's easy to get down on yourself. It's not that you are behaving more destructively than before, but that you are now able to recognize the behavior as destructive.

2) UNDERSTANDING

Next, you actively start to understand the impact these habits have on your life. You start seeing the detrimental affects and costs to your relationships with the people you love and care about most. The clearer and more real this picture is, the easier change becomes.

One way you can do this is by explaining the five destructive habits to your family and then asking them for some open and honest feedback about what it's like to communicate with you. It's a bold move, but very powerful, effective, and motivating.

3) AGREEMENT

Once you are **aware and understand** the price you pay for keeping the old habits, it's time for you to decide if you're ready to change.

Understanding the situation doesn't mean you'll necessarily **agree** with changing your habits. You may understand that smoking is not healthy. You may even know that it's killing you. People can tell you to about all of the reasons why you shouldn't smoke, the price of cigarettes can increase, and you still will not quit **until you agree and commit to do whatever it takes to stop**.

If you are **aware** of these destructive habits, if you **understand** how they're screwing up your relationships, and if you **agree** that you want to change them, then you are ready for the next step.

4) ACTION

In this phase you want to **set yourself up to succeed**. Slow down communications, empathize, listen, check out messages, and don't take things personally.

Many times we take communication with our partners very seriously, because we aren't sure if we are loved or valued. Start with the assumption that you are. Trust that your partner loves and values you, and that is why you are in an intimate relationship together.

Then, when it's not so serious, it can be a game!

Make a game out of acknowledging your progress and laughing at your mistakes. Start small. Celebrate any successes with your partner, even the little ones.

You can even have an awards ceremony at a nice restaurant, or at home with candles and music! The more fun you have, the easier, quicker, and more enjoyable the change will be. This will support you in building a relationship based on open and honest communication that is full of trust, compassion, and intimacy.

Reread and Review

You're building communication and relationship muscles. Be compassionate with yourself, you're learning to use language in a whole new way. With that in mind, I recommend you reread, review, and digest this book at least five times over the next couple of months.

Why? Because what you repeat becomes a pattern and patterns become habits. By reviewing this material, you are making sure that the habits you create are helping you build more loving, open, and intimate relationships.

Take it to bed with you. Read it out loud to each other before going to sleep. Each time you reread it, you will pick up new nuances about the habits.

Also, the repetition will help anchor these habits into your memory so you fully understand and are aware of them.

Commitment

Once you **agree** that you want to change things then, take **action! Remember to work with small doable steps.** Things you can do daily. This book is full of small exercises that you can implement once you commit to change. Here are some more examples:

- Get yourself a rubber band and put it on your left wrist. Every time you become aware that you're falling into one of the old habits pull the rubber band and let it snap. It's a little reminder that increases your awareness and motivation to change the behavior.
- Every time you fall into an old destructive habit, write it down. Sometimes you will realize it right after it happens. Other times, it will take hours, days, or weeks, for you to see that your behavior is falling into an old pattern. Record it whenever you become aware. And then, be vulnerable and share the list with your partner.

I want to tell you right now, upfront, that any time you make a commitment to changing your life, **you will be tested.**

For example, many years ago I decided to quit smoking. I told one of my closest buddies that I was trying to break this tough and nasty habit, hoping for some words of encouragement and support. Instead he offered to give me a free carton of cigarettes.

I was pretty angry with him at the time. But as I look back on it now, I can see that my intentions for leading a healthier life and changing my habit were being tested.

You will be tested and tempted to go back to the old communication habits. You may find yourself building cases, getting stuck in damaging stories, messages assuming without taking the time to clarify, trying to stuff already full cups, and of course, fixing, fighting and fleeing

As you practice what you have discovered, and stay committed to changing your communication habits, things will start to change!

Commit to:

- Yourself
- Your lover
- Your future
- Being open, honest and compassionate
- Developing your relationship skills
- Creating a great, satisfying and fun relationship

Once you commit and start practicing your new skills, you may be pleasantly surprised with your results. For example, you might experience the following:

- You spend less time in reaction and more time in communication with your lover.
- You bring trust, honesty, and open communication to your relationship.
- You and your partner are more appreciative, affectionate and respectful.
- You and your partner look forward to sitting down and talking together openly and honestly.
- You and your partner really want to listen to and understand each other.
- Your communications are less aggressive and less defensive.
- You're able to stop taking things personally or making things personal.
- You're able to have productive disagreements and conversations without spiraling downward into painful arguments, blaming, and name-calling.
- You spend less time dealing with drama, trauma and stress. You have more time for passion, romance and intimacy!

SUMMARY

The 5 destructive habits that destroy a loving relationship

"With the gift of listening comes the gift of healing."

- Catherine de Hueck Doherty

Here is a quick review of the 5 Habits. **PRINT THESE PAGES OUT. Make sure to put it where you will see it daily.** Tape them to your fridge, hang 'em on your bulletin board, and post in your bedroom.

Destructive Habit 1: CASE BUILDING

You gather evidence to use against your partner and use guilt, blame, and shame, to argue your case. You want to be understood and but you don't care about understanding your partner. Building a case leaves your partner alienated and feeling **bad, stupid and wrong.**

New Habit 1: CONNECTION BUILDING

You choose to build a connection from understanding, compassion, acceptance and support. When you do this you fill your relationship with trust, intimacy, openness and honest communication.

TIP: Before talking, ask yourself, "Do I want to build a case against, or a connection with my lover?"

RULE: Avoid judgmental words like **should/shouldn't, right/wrong, or good/bad.**

ACTION: Ask questions to understand your lover's point of view rather than gathering evidence to prove you're right. Listen and empathize. When in doubt, say "***Please tell me more . . .***"

Destructive Habit 2: Story Telling

Getting stuck in destructive and defensive stories. *The unexamined story is experienced as reality.* You become convinced that your story is true without discussing it with your partner

New Habit 2: STORY BUSTING

The mind is a meaning-making machine. Check to see if the meanings are accurate. Story busting helps you break free from old stories that don't help you or your relationship. Meet your partner with openness and curiosity.

TIP: Remember just because you feel certain, doesn't mean you are right.

RULE: Check out your story before acting on it. Go for the truth beyond your stories.

ACTION: **If there is an upset or misunderstanding** start by saying "***I'm telling myself the story that . . .***" end with, "***is that true?***"

Destructive Habit 3: MESSAGE ASSUMING

The **message sent is rarely the message received**. Assuming you know what your partner meant to say leads to confusion, misunderstandings, and upsets. Assuming that you were heard and understood is also dangerous.

New Habit 3: MESSAGE CLARIFYING

Check in on a regular basis during important conversations. Make sure that what the other person understands is what you are trying to communicate. If you are listening, make sure to ~~say~~ feedback what you think you heard your partner say.

TIP: If the conversation is important and emotional *go slow* and repeat back what you think you heard your partner say often.

RULE: Whether you're talking or listening, don't let more than forty words be said without checking in.

ACTION: When you are speaking ask, "*Can you tell me what you heard me say?*"
When you are listening ask, "*Can I tell you what I think I heard you say?*"

Destructive Habit 4: CUP STUFFING

When people are full of emotions and problems they can't hear you. If you demand their attention when their cup is already full you rarely get what you want. Instead you get explosions, meltdowns, and withdrawal.

New Habit 4: CUP EMPTYING

Listen first and then offer empathy, it will help empty your partner's cup. Also, take the time to empty your own cup.

TIP: Agree that if someone says 'Cup Full' you either help empty their full cup or give them space. Remember it's not personal.

RULE: If you say 'Cup Full,' be responsible for reconnecting with your partner later.

ACTION: When your lover says 'Cup Full' ask them, "*Do you need empathy or do you need space?*"

Destructive Habit 5: The FATAL F'S FIXING, FIGHTING and FLEEING: offering solutions to your partner's problems is **fixing**. People often become defensive when receiving unasked for advice. This can lead to **fighting**. When that doesn't work, one or both of you checks out emotionally, physically, or verbally. **Fleeing**.

New Habit LISTENING EMPATHETICALLY ALWAYS offer empathy first! It's the best place to start and will help you understand what your lover is feelings before offering any advice.

TIP: Only give advice when it is asked for.

RULE: If you're upset, be sure to ask for empathy, space, and whatever else you need.

ACTION: Ask, "*Do you want empathy or advice?*"

NEXT STEPS

Where to Grow From Here

*"It's not our abilities that
show who we really are, it's our choices."*

- Harry Potter

This book can be used by itself, and you can stop right here.

But, I hope you decide to use it as a stepping-stone that will lead you to learning more advanced communication skills. Continue to master the skills of empathetic listening, compassionate communication, and the art of loving in order to create incredible relationships, full of love, intimacy and understanding.

The Magic Relationship Method (MRM) has three phases:

Phase 1: Stop Doing Damage

Stop the 5 destructive habits and replace them with the 5 healthy habits.

In this first phase, you learned what causes most of your upsets, arguments, and misunderstandings. You found out how to avoid these destructive habits and ways to nurture new healthy ones that lead to open, honest, and compassionate communication. You discovered how to avoid communicating in a way that creates drama and stress in your relationship.

Phase 2: Bridge the Gap between You

The 4-Step Intimacy Formula

In this next phase, you'll discover how to deepen your intimate communication, master empathetic listening, and talk about almost anything without taking things personally. No more walking on eggshells or avoiding important topics because they are too emotional and upsetting.

Phase 3: Create a bright future

The 7 Relationship Rules

In this third phase, you'll discover some simple, but powerful and effective guidelines for keeping your love life alive. You'll learn about seven things you and your partner can do on a daily basis to help take your relationship from rocky to rock solid!

In this process, remember **you aren't learning a new language, but you are learning how to use language in a new way:** in a way that garners new results, including more compassion, love, openness, honesty, intimacy and respect in your life.

You've taken the first step towards building the communication tools that will help you get more of what you want from your relationships. But the MRM has more to offer.

What would you do to be able to . . .

- Talk about important, stressful issues without taking things personally or making them personal
- Communicate in a way that has even your kids want to open up and tell you the truth

- Have your partner come to you with honesty instead of hiding secrets
- Talk in a way that has your partner really wants to listen
- Listen so that your partner wants to open up and talk
- Stop the blame, shame, and guilt game so you can start working together, as a team, and achieve your goals
- Create loving intimacy and understanding with the people you care about
- Clear up conflicts and misunderstandings quickly, confidently, and compassionately
- Bring back the trust and honesty
- Encourage your partner to give you appreciation and respect
- Be able you to talk about tough issues without attacking or becoming defensive

A Chance to work with the Author

Take a moment now and imagine how having these skills will improve your confidence, self-esteem, and hope for the future. Not to mention the impact it will have on your love life and relationship.

Are you are ready for more? There are a variety of ways that you can go deeper, and learn the communication skills you want. Take a tele-seminar, go to a workshop, or privately coach with the author over the phone or in person.

Visit www.MagicRelationship.net or email info@magicrelationship.net to learn, in detail, about all of your options.

Keep refining your communication tools. Keep building on the new skills you've learned. And see the relationships in your life deepen and flourish.

About the Author

"Every interaction is a chance to change the world" Kathleen Sacht

After spending nearly 20 years as a commercial fisherman in Alaska, he made a major career change due to some deeply painful and confusing personal events in his life.

On a quest to understand why people do what they do, he traveled around the world, to study communication skills and human behavior with the some of the leaders in the field: Marshall Rosenberg (creator of Nonviolent Communication), Richard Bandler (co-developer of NLP: neuro-linguistic programming), Robert Kiyosaki (author of Rich Dad, Poor Dad), Bob Proctor (contributor to The Secret & motivational speaker), Marshall Thurber (creator of Money & You, Powerful Presentations) and Tony Robbins (author of Unlimited Power).

Based on his training in the dynamics of human behavior and communication skills, Mr. Sterling developed a method of enhancing efficiency and productivity for businesses and organizations. This method uses leadership skills, quality control, systems thinking, and management communication tools.

Eleven years ago, his mission shifted from business consulting to focusing on compassionate communication for improving and empowering personal relationships.

Blending his background in Systems Theory and Neuro-Linguistic Programming with the principles of Nonviolent Communication, Paul created a powerful, simple, and useful system for transforming the way couples communicate in their relationships.



It's called **The Magic Relationship Method**

Paul has been asked to share his **Magic Relationship Method** with a wide variety of organizations, including Naropa University (staff & professors), Estes Park Restorative Justice Organization, and Goodwill Industries of Denver. The Denver School District brought Paul in to work with their at-risk high school students and Jeffco Jail had him teach communication skills to prison inmates for the past 5 years with great success. His greatest passion is teaching compassionate communication skills to couples.

Paul Sterling currently lives in Estes Park, Colorado. He travels around the country and occasionally abroad, teaching transformational communication to individuals, couples, and organizations. When the local rivers are thawed he enjoys kayaking and fly-fishing.

With passion, purpose, and possibility,
Paul Sterling