

MENTAL MECHANICS: A REPAIR MANUAL

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Chapter 6

RELATIONSHIPS

Understanding the processes involved in relationships may be the most important part of this book. We spend a great deal of time with others and there is probably no other aspect of our lives that can bring us either so much joy or so much heartache.

In this book a relationship is defined as the framework within which two or more people or entities agree to reach a goal. That's a different way to look at the subject, but it is in keeping with the proposition that our lives are the expression of our chosen actions, not just our thoughts. We also understand our actions are performed for a reason. Another word for reason could be goal.

Goals for a relationship in which two species, man and woman, are represented, are different for each of the species. Men and women think very differently, as accurately pointed out in a recent book stating we even come from different planets. To avoid the many pitfalls that come about when we forget this fact, we must look at those differences.

Whenever I get confused about a process in relationships, I think about what relationships were when we humans still dwelt in caves. Those were the most simple and easiest to understand. The entire relationship was focused on meeting needs. Wants hadn't been invented yet. Actions again are very instructive and yield more understanding than any text on psychology I have ever read.

Looking at their daily activities can help us understand why we think so differently even today. What follows, as my better half reminds me, is a gross generalization but even she admits it has validity.

Males had the task of going out to find food, stalking it, killing it and bringing it home. We learned to state the problem with action and to solve it with action because hunting is a process that changes minute by minute, often second by second, and rapid adaptations may be required. Watch little boys playing. They usually start without any rules and don't stop unless something is done that interrupts the flow of the activity. When a halt is called, the infraction that caused the interruption is pointed out, punishment, if required is dished out, and the game resumes. Look at sports today and it is fairly easy to see the hunt still being played out.

Females guarded the cave, nurtured the children and processed what the males brought home. Being confined to a smaller area, and not having to be really quiet for extended periods as the males were while hunting, allowed much greater communication skills to develop. Since the cave was such a great part of their world, they also had time to learn to organize things in the cave in a much more defined manner. Caring for children and the possessions necessary to meet needs led to seeing the cave as security. Today, security remains a major filter through which many women see relationships because relationships must offer a safe environment, much like the cave did, in which children can be protected and life organized. For most women who opt not to bear children, their home still represents a place of safety.

When my older daughters were about 6 and 8 they had a bunch of their friends for a sleep over. It was my habit to make breakfast for them and they gathered this particular morning in a circle on the floor on the other side of the breakfast bar where I was cooking pancakes. My attention was drawn to their conversation which was going something like, "Let's do this. OK I'll do this and you do that and we'll do this and you do that." It went on for over an hour. I was dumbfounded as the process unfolded. Here, right in front of me, was the process made plain. These young girls were acting like adult women, communicating and organizing.

Many of the differences between the sexes are based on genetic drives. Cultural differences play an important part, but little boys start chasing things as soon as they can run and most little girls start nurturing, communicating and organizing.

So much for our ancestors. Today we still use the same processes as they did and those processes need to be understood clearly because we have compounded our options, often to the point of confusion. No longer are our relationships a means of survival as they used to be so our dedication to the relationship is not absolutely necessary for survival.

Today, how we relate to our outside world is simply a reflection of how we relate to our self in our inside world. We see the same world when we look outside our self as we see when we look inward. Our same beliefs and thoughts apply, because they, once again, are the only thoughts we have. They are just pointed at everything else in our world.

At this time, we relate to the world around us by projecting our beliefs onto what we see happening and reacting to that projection as though our perception was accurate. In the database, the self sees itself as a product of our relationships when the exact opposite is true. Relationships are the product of our database. We aren't who we are because of the relationship, the relationship becomes the expression of who we are and the decisions we make while we are in it.

On the other hand, when we Love we realize giving and sharing are the only true basis for a relationship, for Love is what we are. Someone once said that when we truly love someone, we do not want anything from him or her. What do we really want from our best friend? Nothing! All we want is to be close to her and share time with him or her. This important point needs to be made clear. When we are sharing, we are content. The inner realization that the sharing itself is all that is needed brings contentment to a relationship. True sharing is Love.

But if two people are to really share something, it must have the same meaning for both. When we bring our database into a relationship, conflict surfaces because our database does not contain the same meanings as our friend's. The meanings for each of us are different. This can cause disappointment in the relationship because we can sense if your friend does not really understand what we are saying. Sometimes we want someone else to be responsible for the results of our thoughts and reactions, or maybe we believe the other person is not meeting our needs.

When we use our database, we get to project our failure to meet our needs onto our partner, thereby shifting the guilt to them. Obviously, this requires thinking a little like a schizophrenic; but thanks to projection we can even believe in our innocence while we do so. Happiness and Contentment cannot be taken from someone else, nor can someone else give them to us.

What draws people together is an unspoken awareness, a gut feeling if you will, that they have something very important in common. Often they do not even understand where the feeling comes from because their individual databases indicate they have nothing in common. This is a good example of Love at work.

Love has no fences and no walls for protection. But, after some time in a relationship, we often build them to project our internal unhappiness onto our friend. Then we react to our friend's imagined inability to make our unhappiness go away. If I believe my friend has lied, for example, I will react to my projected belief, forgetting the original awareness we shared, and I will wonder why my friend has changed. Actually, we project the blame onto our friend because we are afraid. Although we know relationships are supposed to be nurturing, loving encounters, we lack understanding of how they work.

If you believe your life is like a piece of wood, drifting in a river of events, then you will be dragged wherever the current takes you and you will feel and believe you are helpless to change it.

For some, the concept of personal responsibility and being in control of their own lives is terrifying - if it exists as an option in the database at all. Their only option is to have someone else make the decisions. But we cannot avoid responsibility, can we? Each of us is responsible for our life even when we choose to let someone else make the decisions for us. We must still live our own life; no one can do that for us.

Yet there are others, let's call them controllers, who are always ready and willing to give directions in hopes that they can control their own futures. These people usually appear to be strong-willed, take-charge, leader types. But in reality, they are frightened and insecure and cannot allow anyone else to make decisions because they are afraid of losing control. In the active expression of this fear, some controllers can become abusive.

These controllers tend to get involved in relationships with the would-be-controlled. Both are afraid of the future, and both are trying to avoid responsibility by believing someone else is making the decisions. It's not difficult to understand why so many of these relationships fail.

Nothing in the world can be gained by remaining in an abusive relationship, and some relationships should be terminated immediately in the best interest of both parties, especially if there are children involved and violent behavior is beginning. Many people in relationships with abusive individuals are co-dependents or enablers who have chosen the role of passive victim in order to avoid something even more threatening, being alone.

Fear of being alone and the inability to take responsibility is overwhelming to them. This fear comes from believing wholeheartedly in the illusion of separation caused by the database, which makes it appear as though everyone else in the world is a potential enemy. Victims are simply not able to trust themselves to make correct decisions, because it seems that all their decisions thus far have served only to bring them to this point of conflict.

Many of the deepest conflicts in relationships are produced by the wish to go back in time and do something differently so the results will be better. Self-esteem suffers because you cannot forgive yourself for the mistake. Also, you project your guilt onto your partner by believing he or she still condemns you for the mistake. Who do you really want to feel better about the mistake? Yourself!

Because time actually passes, it is mandatory to learn to release mistakes into the past. You must realize that this minute, now, is different than any before, and what you choose to do now is what is most important. Loving is always an option, but it may have to be done from a distance.

Always remember this: You cannot lose Love! You will always have Love to give. If you think you must get something in return, it is not really love you are giving. Love can only be shared, and to be shared it must be given.

Most relationships have the potential to be peaceful. When you practice Loving instead of trying to get what your database says is important, the amount of conflict in relationships is decreased because your level of inner conflict is reduced. As you learn to live without the conflict of self, you learn that if there is a conflict it must be in someone else. It is their conflict, not yours. Realizing this allows you to avoid becoming part of their problem.

To understand the actions and words of a person in conflict requires you to find a similar conflict in your database. This is simply an attempt to find a meaning for their conflict in your own database. This usually creates internal conflict because the problem literally becomes yours. When we focus on problems, we must believe the other party is either the cause of the problem, or has the solution to it. However, if we do not become emotionally involved, we can maintain our perspective and safeguard our peace. When we are not part of their problem, we can be part of their solution.

Sometimes people endure emotional pain because they believe a particular someone else is absolutely necessary for their happiness or security. Many relationships are based on filling a lack in one or the other people involved. Our new loves have everything we do not. Maybe they are outgoing, while we are shy. Maybe they are popular, and we are not. Maybe they are rich, or very smart, or on the football team. They seem to have what we think we need to be happy.

When we believe the other person is responsible for our happiness, we have missed entirely the underlying reason for relationships. All real relationships exist for one reason: emotional nurturing.

Love means accepting others as they are. You must have a firm understanding of who and what you are before you can have a real relationship with anyone else. Your values and actions are your own. To try to be what you think the other person wants you to be, or to ask them to be what you think you want them to be, dooms the relationship. Your life is your life. If you love someone, you also want them to grow in their own interests. The joy in a truly loving relationship comes from sharing Love while working toward a mutual goal.

When a couple falls in love they live in the moment. The studies all agree the passion felt with a new love lasts about two years. The relationship being established between them during this time is separate from the love they are sharing and actually has a life of its own. A relationship must be built between the two that allows them to “relate” to each other when they aren’t overcome by bliss. This new relationship takes care of life’s mundane matters like food and shelter. It also needs to protect and nurture the love they are sharing and allow the “moment” in which love exists to remain alive and grow.

An understanding must be reached about the processes involved in being a couple or the couple will eventually become singles. Two people form a relationship for the purpose of accomplishing a goal. Unless the couple understands the relationship has a goal of its own, they might only be focusing on their personal goals. Many couples actually accomplish their goals early in the relationship, possibly even before marriage.

These goals often are short-termed: lust, getting away from parents or maybe even something like immediate financial security. They may be longer-termed, such as buying a home or building a career. Maybe one has a primary goal of raising children and the other is relegated to being help.

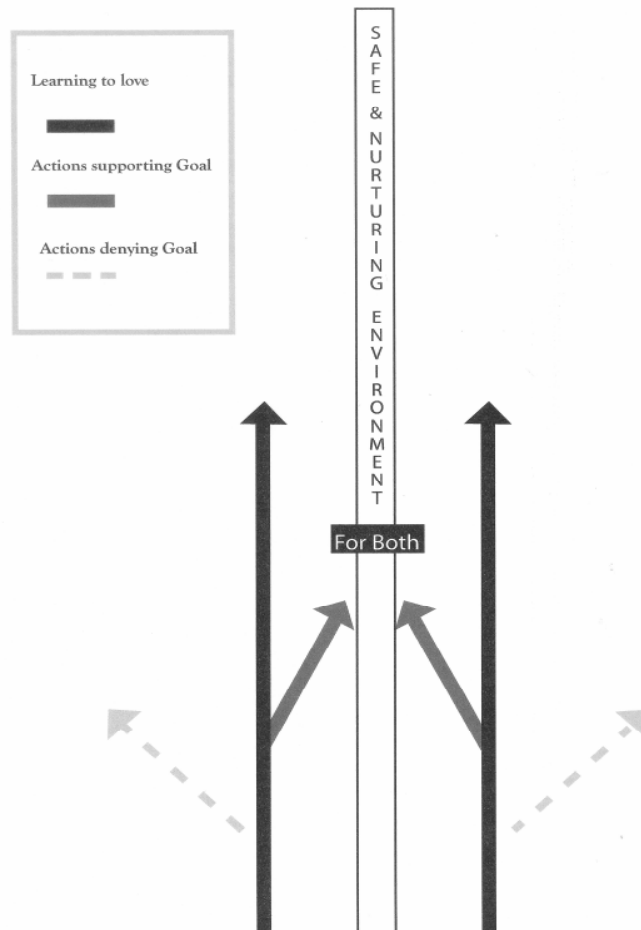
But all of a sudden, when the goals are reached, the glue holding the relationship together disintegrates, and each of the parties goes off on a separate path. The prospects for success in the long haul for such a relationship are dismal, aren't they? When one of the partners severs his or her commitment to the goal shared with the other partner or their children, the relationship starts to die.

Also, without an overall goal to work towards, the concept of commitment becomes meaningless. Exactly to what is the person being asked to commit? The process of commitment can be best understood by seeing it as actions done by either party that support the goal. Lack of commitment would then be expressed by actions that deny the goal. For example, loving and nurturing actions support the goal, and lying or manipulating the other clearly are actions that deny the goal.

As stated in the preceding chapter, "Learning to Love unconditionally is the true goal of every human because Love is the very expression of Life Itself. It is what we are." So what can be the goal for a monogamous relationship such as marriage? What goal will continue to support and nurture two people as they grow, develop, earn a living and raise children? The best concept of a goal that will foster a long term monogamous relationship would be "to create and maintain a safe and nurturing environment in which both parties can learn to love unconditionally."

Accepting responsibility for what you bring to the relationship is vitally important because you can then understand your partner is not responsible for your choices; you are. You decide how to act or react. Accepting responsibility also means you have the authority to make decisions. When you both accept responsibility for your own actions, the relationship takes on a life of its own. The positive energy created by learning to grow in Love, responsibility and authority empowers the relationship. Mutual respect and admiration grow and are automatically shared with our beloved.

GOAL for a Monogamous Relationship



A workable marriage is a legal and emotional commitment between two people which declares the mutual intent of devotion to helping each other meet their needs. A couple's needs include the needs of each individual, plus the needs of any children they may have. Only with an understanding of needs, and actions which can meet them, does a marriage stand a chance of being the expression of Love and Affection we hope it will be.

One of the best indicators of the health of a relationship is the ability of the partners to be truly intimate. Intimacy is not related to being naked unless you are baring your innermost self. Sex, apart from the obvious power of procreativity, is at its best an amazing team effort to maximize each others physical sensory potential, and at its worst, a disastrous and divisive battleground. The same virtues apply here as well as other aspects of our relationships.

True intimacy results in feeling open to share with our partner, not only fears and doubts but hopes and dreams as well. The more secure we feel the more open we become and the more we communicate. If, on the other hand, we feel the relationship is not safe for us, we begin to withdraw from it and communicate less and less, especially about how we are feeling about the relationship and our part in it.

Many relationships are destroyed by fear of separation and loneliness, but this can be overcome by basing our actions on principles that are good for all of us. We then can see that our values are alike. We can recognize our likenesses and similarities, not just focus on our differences. Real relating can then take place.

Most of the people we meet can teach us something about relationships. We can learn we are all more alike than different. We can learn not to react to their fears. We can learn to accept them as they are, and thereby free ourselves from the impossible responsibility for changing them.

All relationships begin by recognizing a bond which exists between people. Love is that bond. When we love, we share the most important message there is between two people. Love exists to be shared, and can only be experienced when it is shared.

What would marriage vows look like if the principles in this chapter are applied? The following example hopefully includes most of the important aspects of forming a lifelong bond for a loving couple.

VOWS

Beloved, my goal in this life is to learn to love unconditionally. I choose you as my partner in this amazing journey of sharing and discovery.

I understand the purpose of this union is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we may both learn to love.

I understand a loving relationship is what the ancients referred to when they said, "The two shall become one, " and that it actually has a life of its own.

It will be built from our hopes, dreams and desires and will become what we empower it with our beliefs.

I understand commitment means my actions will be in accord with our goals and I understand any other actions will hurt all three of us.

Therefore, I vow to do my best to nurture this union.

I vow to accept responsibility for my own emotions and actions.

I vow to be honest with myself and with you.

I vow to be patient with myself and with you.

I vow to share the responsibility and work this union generates.

I vow to unselfishly share the fruits of this union.

These things I vow so we may both learn to love unconditionally for unconditional love is our true nature. It is what we have been since the beginning of time and what we will be for all eternity. I love you.

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