

COURAGEOUS LOVING

Creating an Extraordinary Relationship

Three Strategies for Greater Connection
in Relationships that Matter!



Couples & Business

Creating Extraordinary
Relationships and Businesses

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Welcome! I'm glad you're here.

I'm Valerie Lipstein, co-founder of the **Courageous Loving** program. The purpose of this e-Book is to invoke in you a desire to re-think how you currently view your most intimate relationships, perhaps even challenging you to take them to the next level...**extraordinary!**

THE PROBLEM

Are you currently experiencing any of these things?

- Difficulty balancing time and energy between business and your personal life
- Frustrations in how you communicate
- Feeling misunderstood by your partner
- Wanting a closer connection yet not knowing how to get there
- You are at an impasse in at least one or two areas that keep surfacing without resolution
- Something is missing and you feel sad and upset
- Your relationship is good yet not exciting anymore and you know it could be better
- You are growing apart living parallel lives
- Your partner is more like a roommate
- You are inspired in your work yet not in your relationship

THE SOLUTION

If you are not fulfilled in your relationship and feel frustrated, heading for an impasse and possibly a break-up if the problem isn't solved, you are not alone. Almost everyone at some point in their relationship gets to this difficult juncture point. If you are there currently you know how difficult things can be. Yet no one needs to stay in a less than vital relationship and calling it "good enough".

Once you make the decision to explore your relationship, starting first with yourself things will change and you might find yourself "in love" again...with yourself, your partner and your life.

I am not a stranger to challenges and problems in my relationship. Most people unwittingly co-create ordinary marriages.

My husband and I had an ordinary marriage for almost a decade yet accepted it until things began to unravel. We didn't know it was ordinary because of course it mirrored so many of our friends, our parents and family relationships....You don't know what you don't know, right? Yet we often felt that something was "missing."

It was only through self-exploration first, and then working on our marriage together, that things began to shift and improve. It wasn't always easy or fun yet we made a decision to figure it out leaving no stone unturned; whether that meant we stayed together or not. We realized there was true gold under all the mud. We now feel so grateful to be experiencing real joy and fulfillment in our relationship. We are not the same people that got married in the early 80's.—Thank God!

In this e-Book you will learn about 3 foundational steps we took in our own journey and exploration which improved and ultimately strengthened our bond. We have used these principles in our work with individuals and with couples with fabulous results; helping people who felt all was lost and had almost given up, re-create their lives.

My sincere desire for you as you read this is that you apply what you learn. Your life and especially your awareness around creating an extraordinary relationship can change at any time. Even a slight shift in awareness can change the whole trajectory of your relationship to your partner and yourself.

To Your Growing, Amazing Relationship,

Valerie

“Awareness without action will not create the change you are seeking.”

Awareness is an essential key, yet you must act on what you know. As you go through this e- book, it will serve you best if you do the exercises and really contemplate the questions poised. It is best if you can share this with your partner and they get involved too.

STRATEGY ONE: DESIRE - The Starting Point for Courageous Loving

What is your desire when it comes to your closest relationship? Everything in life really starts with a strong desire for more life and more expression.

Some of you may be familiar with Napoleon Hill's classic book, ***Think and Grow Rich***. Desire is the starting point he claims for all success. Hill speaks of a **burning desire** and only with a sufficiently established and strong desire for something does a person achieve. Otherwise when the challenges along the way present themselves many will “give up.”



Without desire the relationship has little chance of changing. Sometimes one partner seems more committed and sometimes one partner must proceed in the direction of their desire without the other. What often happens is one is committed to changing and begins alone because the other is not willing. Often we have seen that the low desire partner will come along at a slower pace perhaps when their desire is ignited.

Another way of asking this is what are you longing for that you are not currently experiencing in the relationship?

There may be conflict and frustration or perhaps your relationship is good yet what if it could even be better? The **Relationship Visions exercise** is intended to give you the opportunity to delve deeper into it and write down your vision.

"Life Shrinks or Expands in Proportion to One's Courage" ~Anais Nin

Your Relationship Vision

Write down your vision for your **ideal relationship**. Write it in the present tense as if it already exists because it does **when you imagine it**. Describe what you do together for fun using words that create pictures and a feeling tone of great connection between you and your loving partner. You are using your powerful imagination and declaring what you'd love. **Do not think about the "how" at this point**. Your only task is to **picture it so clearly that it seems real** when you read it. **Using all the senses, 5 sensorize it** if you like because this will form cells of recognition in your body as you visualize it, making it more real.

Do this at least two times - meaning you write it out and then leave it for a few days and come back to it fresh. Re-read and edit so it really excites and energizes you until you **LOVE it**.



"To thine own self be true" ~Shakespeare

STRATEGY TWO: Light Your Own Fire First

In order to experience an **extraordinary love** you must be the producer of it by loving yourself first and being true to yourself. Shakespeare had it right!

Simpler said than done, however. We live in a world that is often tugging at us to conform and be anything but ourselves. Just look at the beauty industry and advertizing that assumes we want what others want and you begin to understand the complexity of being true to yourself.

As babies and very young children we felt joy and love much of the time. They we began to experience others and their disapproval of us and we shifted from love to fear. The programming begins early and is played out in all our relationships until we begin to wake up and remember who we truly are.

Each of us know that we must love ourselves well to love another, at least on some level; yet when we get into meaningful and intimate relationships we often forget, giving up our power, opinions and voice to be loved, or seizing power and control attempting to change the other person.

According to Don Miguel Ruiz, in **The Mastery of Love**, we create a big denial system that blinds us from seeing the truth of who we are. We wear a social mask because it's too painful to see ourselves or let others see us. We put up barriers for protection but those barriers actually restrict our own freedom. They create emotional wounds and poisons we project onto others.

Learning to light your own fire first is **essentially learning to love yourself again**. To fully and completely embrace the "all" of whom you are; the shadow side included is an empowering journey indeed.

Some of this work can be tough and it is not for people who choose to stay in their denial system. It can also require professional help from mentors, coaches and therapists.

In the exercise that follows the purpose is simply to see where you do shine as the **unique expression you truly are**. You can begin to build upon those things again as you grow in greater self-love and begin to appreciate yourself once more.

Often we fail to acknowledge all our gifts and talents. This is a time for you to **reflect and glow!**



Giving yourself wins each day is essential to this process. When you forget, you can recall times you were standing tall remembering your successes and use them to bolster any needed confidence. It is an **essential practice to courageous loving** because at the end of the day, if you can't be there for yourself, it will be difficult to receive your partner's love.

Lastly, what are your **core values**? Those would be your non-negotiables - the things you stand for. As you clearly articulate them first on paper and then in your chosen activities you are making a stand for creating an environment that supports you. Being in integrity with your values is an act of self-love.

Know Your Strengths, Remember Your Wins & Know Your Core Values

What are the strengths? What makes you unique?

Your **special talents** (examples: singing, green thumb, mechanical, cooking, artistic, strong wit, organized...)

Your **physical strengths** (examples: athletic, high energy, strong constitution, healthy...)

Your **character** (examples: sense of humor, generous, kind, courageous, considerate, persistent, honest, strong willed...)

Remember Your Successes

List 3 times in your life when you **“hit the ball out of the park”**! (Examples: college graduation, winning an award, starting your business or career, raising amazing children, organized an event, did something you were proud of...)

1.

2.

3.

Know Your Core Values

List **3-5 core values**; things you stand for and that are non-negotiable to you regardless of your partner's opinion (Examples: If you have children and your partner does not a core value often is quality time with your children without your partner, being in nature regularly, spiritual practice, making a difference by doing xyz....)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

STRATEGY THREE: The Hidden Gems

How well do you think you know your partner? Have you ever said, "That's just the way she or he is, or they would not go for that?" When you are basing this on the way your partner used to be, you are not giving them the gift of growth. Relationships can die on the vine when we see our partner as the same person we first fell in love with because they could not possibly be. There are life events that occur, and those events alone, create shifts and changes whether they are recognized or not.

An example in our own marriage; when we first got together we swore that when we had children, they would not come between us. They would be a part of the family of course, yet it would be centered on the adults-not the children. We had no idea how having children would impact our marriage, especially when they were babies and much later teenagers. We were changed in the process. I immersed myself into motherhood-that sexy wife did not exist for many years...sleepless nights and babies took over.



The sense of familiarity can give people both security and/or it can breed boredom. It can also give couples a false sense of security that their partner will always be the same. How many people are devastated when their partner has an affair or asks for a divorce? Some swear they never even saw it coming. In talking with people about these situations they often had blinders on; seeing their partner the same way even though their partner's behavior had changed.

The message here is simple in theory; if you truly desire an **extraordinary relationship** you cannot assume that your partner stays the same. This concept can create some mystique in your bond, allowing for more freedom and curiosity.

The following exercise will support you in creating some curiosity about yourself and your partner. You will most likely learn something new about each other. Enjoy as you discover the **hidden gems in yourself and in your partner!**

The Johari Window Exercise

A model for **self-awareness** and **personal development**, the Johari window was created by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham in 1955 and has been used in corporations, small companies and by individuals to help people better understand their relationship with self and others.



Partner exercise-each make your own window:

The top left hand corner of your square is **“Open”**

This is the part of you that you’re willing to let others see. The size of that open window varies for everyone. Some have a very tiny open window...not because they don’t know more about themselves but because they aren’t willing to let others see more. Some people are blocked for fear of disapproval. Their safety, security or fear of being unloved is threatened when significant others disapprove and so they share less.

In this model, the windows are equal in size yet know these windows will change in size depending on who we are with and how we have grown and developed in our awareness.

Sometimes intimate partners are the opposite in personality....one being very open and outgoing and identifying with being an extravert while the other is more introverted and tends to share less.

In the second window pane below the Open window is the **“Hidden”** pane.

This is the private part of you that you don't let others see; it might be a place where you hide your secret fears, fantasies and true dreams.

There are certain things that are meant to be private in your world or course; between you and spirit or you and your partner or just for YOU. Also called **boundaries**, we do not need to share everything...here is the challenge (or opportunity) for us in our intimate relationships. When we look at the two left window or everything on the left side of the square these are things you know about yourself. You get to decide how much disclosure you are willing to bring to any given relationship to let others really know you. The opportunity/challenge here is to ask **"how open am I?"** It is not ideal to be 100% open. A healthy person has a reserve of certain things that are just for them and their loved ones; however, if your hidden window is over 40% you've got a whole lot going on that people don't know about.

If this is true for you, ask yourself if being private has created satisfying relationships? Has being hidden created an experience of loving yourself and others in a way that is deep and profound and makes you feel alive? Or do you often feel something is missing in your intimate relationship?

If you find yourself fearful of being more open in certain relationships only, it can be a sign that you are in an unhealthy situation. It may be advisable to seek professional help to help sort this out.

In healthy relationships, however, where we are blocked by fear of other's disapproval, so we stay closed, we block ourselves from living in love. To live in love we don't have to create more love...it already exists in the world. It is our natural state as babies and very young children.

We just need to learn to open up to the love that is already present...to experience a flow of **LOVE** requires a certain amount of **openness**.

On top right hand corner of this window is the **"Blind"** area. This is what others see about you and you don't see it. All of us have blind spots and that's why we need each other...this is not a negative...it's just the nature of needing one another for reflective support systems and helping each other "wake up." When we receive information about ourselves from others we are talking about giving constructive feedback that helps each partner evolve. You know when we say, "Oh well, you know how mom is" but mom doesn't really see it about herself unless she is willing to listen; it's the same for all of us.

On the bottom right pane is our **"Unknown Potential" (real self yet to be discovered)** This is the reserve of your true essence-all that is already you but is yet to be discovered...you don't know exactly what it is nor does anybody else. It's potential and power and is as unique as your thumbprint and DNA.



The right side of this window begs the question-**How do I open up to my blind areas?**

- **Ask for loving feedback about your blind spots** from those you really trust and who will be honest with you while still being loving....
- **Share with your partner something hidden** you have not shared before...
- You and I are not going to be perfect in our loving, yet there is a perfect love that is within each of us....
- Asking someone to help us see our blind areas, and sharing something hidden opens us to a greater flow of love....and it does take courage. We have to be willing to let it in and not react. This can be difficult when you are hearing something for the first time or you want to disown it. It requires you to be vulnerable and trust that your partner or loved one cares and is **committed to your personal growth as well as their own.**

Now let's play with this a bit....put a horizontal dotted line where you think your open window actually extends and draw this all the way across the box. In general do you feel fairly open, transparent and undefended or do you feel pretty much protected...to yourself...keeping shut off?

Put a vertical dotted line in the blind box and extending to the bottom showing how much you would be willing to see about yourself (starting from the middle and extending towards the right side)

The horizontal dotted line and the vertical dotted line automatically intersect. Do your lines

intersect within the box of your **unknown potential?**

The more open you are and the more willing you are to see your blinds spots the more you will be able to **tap into and open your unknown potential.**

So, without judgment, take a look at where your line is and notice that even if you moved the intersecting lines just a tiny bit, the amount of unknown potential that is released in your life can change the whole trajectory of your life.

Wrap-Up

- What did you learn about yourself doing this exercise?
- What did you learn about your partner?
- Where can you be more open with yourself?
- Where can you be more open with your partner?

Congratulations on your sincere interest in creating an extraordinary relationship! If you have completed the exercises you have made great progress in examining your beliefs and creating a larger awareness of areas requiring improvement and needing attention. Awareness and examining outdated beliefs are game changers when you also take action.

For additional information on programs supporting you to transform your relationship, contact Valerie at **(509) 869-0255** or visit [www.couplesandbusiness.com/Roadmap to Extraordinary Relationships](http://www.couplesandbusiness.com/Roadmap%20to%20Extraordinary%20Relationships).

These innovative and unique programs will have you moving forward for greater joy and freedom. **You** deserve it!

About Couples & Business, LLC

Couples & Business, LLC offers programs for couples who work together and couples who don't because we understand how powerful your environment is to your success. Relationship and business challenges, if not addressed effectively can sabotage success in both areas. With proper support and a strong desire to succeed, you can overcome challenges. It does not need to be an either or choice...you can create both business and personal success.

We support couples to define their individual goals and common vision so they build a stronger foundation. In re-aligning differences and understanding that conflict can be the catalyst for growth, both personally and professionally, you can create a more empowered relationship.



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About Valerie

VALERIE is a certified coach/business consultant, published author and speaker. Previously she was the CEO of Inspired Living Now, formed in 2007, a company that offered programs for small business owners and women solopreneurs ready to up level their results.

Since forming Couples and Business, with her husband, Michael her focus has shifted to working with spouse/couple run businesses supporting them to thrive personally and professionally. There are

unique challenges that these companies face and both of them grew up with family who worked together and saw some of the challenges and benefits firsthand.

Their company provides business and relationship coaching, assessments, workshops, signature presentations, couples retreats and programs.

Valerie became passionate about coaching/consulting shortly after the death of her close friend, a defining moment for her. She made the choice to leave a lucrative state job she had outgrown to pursue her dream; and knows firsthand the importance of breaking through outdated beliefs that limit one's potential. She has been in the coaching field since 2007.

Additionally, Valerie's background includes 30 years of combined experience in social work, law/mediation, counseling and advocacy. She holds a Juris Doctor degree and BA in Social Work.

Valerie is an avid reader, world traveler and lifelong learner who lives in the Tampa Bay area with her husband, their dog, Leilani and cat, Isis (named by her children after the Egyptian Goddess). Their children are launched and successful!

Click here to learn more about this program:

[www.couplesandbusiness.com/Roadmap to Extraordinary Relationships](http://www.couplesandbusiness.com/Roadmap%20to%20Extraordinary%20Relationships)

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