

The Journey from "I-TO-WE"

Overview

*The greatest gift we can receive in our life
is to find someone who is our
Best Friend during the Day,
Lover at Night, and
Partner for Life.*

~ Glenn Cohen

What are you looking for in your relationship? Do you seek to feel safety, trust, respect, friendship, passion, and love?

If you are reading this book, I imagine you would like to improve some aspect of your relationship. If you are in deep conflict, would you like to find a way to end the war? While trying to communicate with your partner, do you feel like you are going to explode? Are you resentful because your most important needs are not being fulfilled? Do you feel you are not on the same page? Are you drifting apart, living separate lives? Have you lost the feelings of safety and trust in your relationship? Are you feeling the pain of loneliness because you have lost connection with your best friend? Do you long for the old spark of passion that has somehow been extinguished? Have you lost hope that anything will ever change?

The Journey from "I-TO-WE" is about helping you find the path to create dramatic change. Along the way, you will gain the awareness, skills, and techniques in order to move forward and create a life you will love to live. Through this journey, anything is possible if you really want it.

A 2006 study reported that nearly 23 million divorced and five million separated individuals reside in the U.S. According to recent statistics, the chance of a first marriage ending in divorce within 40 years is 67 percent. Moreover, half of all divorces occur in the first seven years, and some studies find the divorce rate for second marriages is as much as 10 percent higher than for first-timers.

If these statistics aren't bad enough, a finding from a University of Michigan study determined that an unhappy marriage could increase your chances of illness by roughly 35 percent, and even shorten your life by an average of four years.

With those numbers so high, imagine how many couples must be on the verge of ending their relationships. Also, think of how many are living in unhealthy, unfulfilling and unloving relationships. Are you among them?

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I ask myself: Why do so many people go through years of pain and turmoil before they figure out they need help?

Most of the couples who come to my office are filled with resentment, contempt and anger. Referred by friends and other professionals in their lives, they come to me desperate. Over and over, they share similar stories in familiar ways. They deny, accuse and blame while lobbing verbal bombs back and forth.

After I listen to their stories, I ask them two questions:

1. Are you 100 percent committed to do whatever it takes to create a relationship that is positive 80 percent of the time? (Hey, nothing is perfect!)
2. Where did you take your relationship training course—in high school or in college? (Their expressions always appear puzzled.)

Some have enrolled in premarital programs. Others have attended marital counseling. None have ever taken a complete course that teaches how to build and nurture a successful relationship. Therefore, that is exactly what I do and the reason I have written this book and the companion workbook.

When you want a career, you go to school to gain the proper knowledge. Later, when you are hired for a job, you receive manuals and more specific training to learn required skills. Over time, you continue to train to gain proficiency in various techniques to be successful. You would not be expected to achieve career success without the proper education followed by ongoing training and fine-tuning.

No wonder relationships are in trouble! Human relationships demand tougher work and more refined skills than some of the most challenging jobs. Without taking a comprehensive relationship course, how do we learn the awareness, skills, and techniques necessary to have a successful relationship? Usually, we learn from observing our parents. However, judging from what my clients say, parents are not always the best leaders by example. Well, if Mom and Dad didn't seem so happy together; why not learn from the movies, TV, and romance novels? **Emotionally Intelligent Relationships** exist in reality—not fantasy land.

So where do you start?

Begin by understanding that this is a “**Journey**”. Change does not happen overnight. Reaching your current place in your relationship may have taken many years. In turn, accept that it will likely take

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time before you change direction and find yourself on the life course you deeply long to follow.

This is not a battle, so leave your shields of defensiveness and words of war at the gate. Gather patience and tolerance, and give each other the benefit of the doubt. If you begin in this way, you'll minimize the stress and increase your chances of success.

Next, on a core level you need to understand that the journey begins with the "I". It begins with YOU! Recognize what you bring to the relationship. Take ownership of how you promote conflict as well as contribute positive elements. It's not easy, but exposing the root of your negative energy is an essential step. Are you prepared to break your denials, see the truth, take responsibility for your behaviors, and make dramatic changes?

Additionally, you have "TO" work as a team. Together, you will develop and adopt skills for successful discussions. In no other way can you legitimately address reoccurring issues that cause pain and turmoil in your relationship. From here, you will establish a deep connection, and learn conflict management and compromise techniques.

Finally, to come together as a "WE", you will learn **Relationship Languages**. Man or woman, each of us have our own unique definitions of the words we need to hear, the actions we want to see, and the behaviors we desire to experience in our relationship. When you can pinpoint and communicate such elements to your partner while also committing to learn and express what your partner requires and desires, your mutually fulfilling union will be complete.

So, what can you expect when you read this book and complete the exercises in the workbook? To explain why my process is different from other relationship guides on the market, I offer a description of each section that will lead you on your Journey from "I-TO-WE" as follows:

Section 1 – Lay the Foundation for Relationship Success

Begin with an assessment of your relationship. Move to making four commitments. Master the Conscious Discussion Technique to communicate your issues, problems, thoughts and feelings. Read about the twelve Relationship Languages. Gain fluency by learning how to speak each other's languages to feel safe, loved and cared for.

Section 2 – Look Within: The Journey Begins with “I”

Understand and own what you bring to the relationship. Discover the existence of emotional wounds, fears and reactivity—and their consequences. Gain awareness of your Relationship Killer words, actions and behaviors. Learn about the Cycle of Conflict in terms of how it begins, how you contribute to it, how you can stop it, and how you can successfully conduct the business of arguing.

Section 3 – Stop Fighting and Begin Crossing the Bridge

Discover how to initiate positive dramatic change within yourself to achieve a peaceful soul. Create a plan to stop avoiding each other and the relationship. Know how to ask for and accept behavior change requests.

Section 4 – Cross Over the Bridge Together

Identify your various levels of needs. Uncover the root causes for recurring problems. Learn the Conscious Compromise Technique to manage and live peacefully with your unsolvable problems.

Section 5 – Put the Roof on Your Relationship Home

Learn how to develop and nurture the bonds of friendship and connection. Define values and vision for yourself, and create a shared list for the relationship.

Section 6 – Stoke the Fires: Solve the Passion Equation

Define passion through discovering each other’s important words, actions, and behaviors. Speak each other’s languages of romance, intimacy, and sexuality.

Section 7 – Now and Forever: Love Your Life Together

Learn to coach children in becoming emotionally healthy and successful. Create rituals, symbols, and structures for the family and your relationship to bind and implement all of the awareness, skills and techniques you have learned.

The Journey from “I-TO-WE” encompasses the 23-step, comprehensive “Create an Emotionally Intelligent Relationship” program. I developed the guide to help individuals and couples achieve relationship success at home, at work and within themselves. The companion workbook provides interactive exercises, activities, and additional explanations to put this program into practice. Using the workbook reinforces the skills and techniques learned in the book.

You can certainly utilize the book as a stand alone guide. However, if you are embarking on the Journey from “I-TO-WE” with your

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partner, I recommend that each of you have a personal copy of the workbook for the exercises.

Married couples, committed life partners, separated couples looking for a way to reunite, and pre-committed couples considering final vows of marriage will all benefit from following this program. An individual who has endured relationship difficulties in the past can also gain insight from this book to facilitate success in his or her next relationship opportunity.

Additionally, healthcare professionals and coaches seeking an intensive couples program will find that the book and workbook provide a unique, action-oriented tool for use with their clients.

Also, we recommend this resource to religious organizations looking for a comprehensive premarital program. Such professionals will find the book and workbook to be a start-to-finish process in preparing couples to achieve a successful marriage.

Interwoven through each chapter is a case vignette based on a fictional couple, Steve and Amy. Their created roles reflect the stories, issues, challenges, and struggles of couples I have coached in my practice through the years. I added the case study to help couples understand how they can apply the awareness, skills and techniques contained in this book to their own situations. The Introduction serves as an overview of this couple's relationship and sets the stage for the vignettes that follow.

Are you ready to begin? Are you committed to gain the awareness, learn the skills, and practice the techniques to obtain a relationship filled with peace, respect, fulfillment, happiness, and love?

If so, work with focus and purpose from the start. Read each chapter in the book twice, do your homework in the workbook, and give it everything you have.

For this program to work, a couple must work *together*. Realize that actions speak louder than words. Be truthful to yourself and your partner. The more you give, the more you will gain. Aim to give 110% of yourself. Remember, it takes two to **“Create an Emotionally Intelligent Relationship.”**

Your first assignment—on the next page— is to begin living each day by *The 12 Principles of Emotionally Intelligent Relationships*.

My hope is that this book guides you on a wonderful journey together as you begin to cross the bridge into your field of sunflowers.

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The 12 Principles of Emotionally Intelligent Relationships

Always treat your partner so he or she
feels safe, loved, and cared for.

Honor your partner, relationship, and yourself
by building trust, respect, and admiration.

Listen, understand, validate, and empathize
with each other's thoughts and feelings.

Understand your emotional wounds, fears, and reactivity,
and the affect they have on your relationships and yourself.

Commit to make all of your discussions
safe, honest, peaceful, respectful, and loving.

Learn, stretch, grow, mature, and change
by being mindful and seeing new perspectives.

Live in the moment, be grateful, practice giving
and forgiveness, and have a positive belief.

Give unselfishly and unconditionally to
satisfy your partner's relationship needs.

Appreciate your best friend and live by
your shared values, vision, and meanings.

Learn, memorize, and speak your partner's
Passion Languages fluently every day.

Accept absolute personal responsibility
for all of your words, actions, and behaviors.

Honor and follow through consistently with
all of your promises and commitments – always.

From now until eternity,
may you always remain each other's...

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Lover at Night, and
Partner for Life***