



LEARN TO
Love

Guide to Healing Your Disappointing Love Life

THOMAS JORDAN, Ph.D.

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This book is dedicated to all the people
I have loved in my life thus far, regardless
of whether or not, they were able or willing
to love me back.

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I am very thankful to all the people who have helped me develop my personal and professional understanding of the love relationship. My wife Victoria Jordan and son Bradley are at the top of my list. I am so grateful for the learning about love relationships that has taken place in my marriage and family. I am also grateful for Bradley's invaluable technical assistance with this book, the Love Life Seminar, and Love Life Webinar.

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I want to thank my dear mother and father for their support and interest in my psychological ideas and research over the years. My late mother, Hilda Jordan, was always interested in the psychology of her own life, and was ready to remind me that she herself was responsible for my passionate interest in psychology and psychoanalysis. She willingly and enthusiastically shared her emotional experience with me, and I am quite sure she would have been honored by the opportunity to be a part of my research on transforming the adult love life. Something she needed but never had the chance to do in her lifetime.

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was insufficiently understood, had to be taught, and a book was one the best ways to start spreading the word.

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PREFACE

This is not a book about love. This is a book about love relationships. About the relationships we form, healthy or unhealthy, when we fall in love. A healthy relationship nurtures love, an unhealthy one stifles it. Furthermore, the type of relationship you tend to form in love is not something you are born with. It is learned, consciously or not, and it's usually unconsciously learned. That means most of us don't know consciously what we've learned about love relationships.

Here's where it gets really interesting. Consider the divorce rate, around 50% according to the latest statistics. You have a 50/50 chance of getting divorced when you marry, that's considered no better than chance. If the relationship you form when you marry is determined by what you've learned in the course of your life, then, if you found out what you've learned about love relationships, could you then change it and learn something else? Improve your chances of finding and sustaining love beyond just chance?

This question has been on my mind for quite a long time. A long time because I did not have a ready-made answer for it. It took years of clinical research to come up with a tentative understanding and years more to find some of the indisputable facts provided in the pages of this book. The answer to the question, by the way, is a resounding yes. If you know what you've learned about love relationships, you can change it and improve your chances of finding and sustaining a healthy love relationship. Otherwise, what you've learned stays in charge of your love life, unbeknownst to you. The trouble is, a healthy love relationship may not be the objective of what you've learned.

Most of the time we talk about love as a coveted state of mind and heart without an understanding or even an awareness of what it takes to have and hold onto a healthy love relationship. We've relegated love relating to something innately given and taken for granted. We don't bother to think that our love lives like any other important area of our lives has dynamics that are understandable and can be improved upon if necessary. I've learned that a big part of the problem is what we learn about love relationships in the bosom of our family of origin. If you haven't already noticed, it has only been in recent times that our society has had the nerve to question what happens in family life and its connection to how well or unwell we feel. We used to just leave that alone.

Now that the "family of origin" is understood to be a primary source of what we've learned about love relationships and other important topics of interest, we can now take a closer look at this earliest of emotional classrooms and begin to understand what was learned there. Believe me, our purpose is not to aimlessly disrupt this sacred place. But to find the information we'll need to understand and own our own love lives.

Dr. Thomas Jordan
New York City
2019

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A LOVE LIFE?

What are the two most intense but normal human emotions? Let's get hate and rage off the table right from the start because neither of them is normal. Given the title of this book as a clue, if you say love you'd have one. The other is grief, which happens to be the true opposite of love. If you love someone you will inevitably grieve. Essentially, grief is the loss of the person you love. If grief is what happens when love leaves, love is a pretty important and far reaching emotion for human beings.

I asked you this question to make a point. Neither of these intense but normal human emotions are the subject of any systematic effort to teach, instruct, train or otherwise inform our young. Yet they remain the focal point of so much distortion, misunderstanding, and illness over the course of a lifetime. Why the oversight? The reasons for this oversight will become clearer to you as you read on.

This book is an effort to fill in this glaring gap concerning the emotion of love. The information in these pages was collected from years of clinical research, the type of research that occurs as a consequence of helping people develop themselves in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis over time (Jordan, 1999). Many of my patients started treatment with love life problems either as the source of their difficulty or as a byproduct.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. A definition of the phrase "love life" is in order. I'll ask you the question again, "What is a love life?" My definition is: *any and all interpersonal relationships involving the emotion of love, past and present*. There is one important advantage in this particular definition. It defines a love life as including "all" the relationships in your life that involved

the emotion of love. Implication being, your love life starts the moment you are born and ends the moment you die. This is precisely why “past and present” are emphasized.

I suggest you keep this definition in mind because the importance of the connection between past and present love relationships is essential to the ideas and method presented in this book.

In the early 1970s, Leo Buscaglia, Ph.D. a professor of education at the University of California at Berkeley, became aware of the suicide death of one of his female students presumably over a love life problem. Moved by this tragic loss, made worse by his recognition of the potential of this particular student, he made a proposal to the administration to teach a “Love Class” at the university. Their initial reaction was to poke fun, criticizing the topic as “unscientific,” and suggesting that Dr. Buscaglia had better things to do with his time. His motivation to teach a class on love came from a desire to understand and educate young people on how to better cope with life believing that the experience of love was at the core of this concern.

Dr. Buscaglia persisted in his efforts to teach the class. The university administration finally conceded with the condition that he could use a classroom but the class would be taught without credit. He taught his Love Class for four years with a maximum enrollment of one hundred students each year, standing room only. Dr. Buscaglia was so moved by the students’ interest that he tearfully admitted in the first class that he had doubts about having sufficient knowledge to teach about love and would rely upon the possibility of learning together. He subsequently published a number of books presenting what he had learned about love as a consequence of teaching his Love Class (Buscaglia, 1972, 1982, 1984, 1992).

Leo Buscaglia’s effort to research and teach about love life considerations in a class was unusual and to my knowledge never replicated. The primary source of his research were the young adult students he encountered at the university and in his Love Class. The love life research I did was conducted over the course of thirty years with a more varied population of people in my

private practice in New York City. Many of my patients presented with love life difficulties they struggled to change individually or in a couple therapy with their partners.

Just like Leo Buscaglia learned from his students, I have learned quite a bit from the people I've treated over the years. One important thing I've learned is that love in the form of a love relationship is learned. This book is an effort to present to my readers, in an easily readable form, what can be learned about love relationships, and when necessary what can be done about it when the learning is unhealthy. A circumstance that is too often the case for many of us.

Why is love so difficult?

Finding and sustaining a healthy love relationship is difficult, challenging, sometimes confusing, and too often painful. A 50% divorce rate and the myriad of hurtful relationships and painful breakups that often litter our personal experiences and media make the case. This love life reality and the number of patients showing up at my office suffering from chronic love life problems encouraged me to conduct a bit of clinical research over the course of my 30-year practice to get at the underlying reasons for this difficulty.

In this book I will tell you about my research, what I learned, and what anyone with the motivation to improve their love lives can do about it. By the way, the stakes are pretty high. Imagine living your whole life making the same love life mistakes, without knowing it, over and over again until the prospect of finding a healthy love relationship feels out of reach. Regrettably, this continues to happen to too many people.

The most important message you'll get out of this book is, *love is difficult because the health and success of your love life is determined by what you've learned about love relationships in your life.* The question to ask yourself is, what have I learned about love relationships?

Problem is most people will scratch their heads and say, what? Most people have never considered such a question, let alone answer it.

Without an answer to this question, what you've learned about love relationships will most likely unconsciously repeat itself over and over again, good or bad. In essence, you won't be in control of your love life.

If you've been unfortunate enough to learn something unhealthy about love relationships in your life, chances are pretty good that what you'll be repeating will be love life problems. If you don't know what you've learned, what you'll be repeating will no doubt raise havoc in your love life. This book is a consequence of years of interest in what I like to call "love life psychology." Love life psychology is the study of love lives from the inside out. What I mean is, trying to understand the what, how, and why of a person's love life by studying his or her psychology in the form of beliefs, behavior, and feelings as they play out in love relationships.

I believe, and the clinical evidence substantiates the claim, that most if not all of what happens in an individual's love life can be understood in this way. Recognizing this fact of our psychological existence was exciting to say the least. For years, as a practicing clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in New York City, I witnessed the pain and suffering caused by an unhealthy love life (Jordan, 2014). For years I applied and experienced the limitations of what I had been trained to believe about love relationships, always wondering if there was more that I could understand and do to help alleviate the pain of an endless number of patients seeking treatment as a result of chronic love life problems. Glad to say, there was and is. It's in the pages of this book.

What will this book teach you?

This book is going to teach you something about your love life that will increase your chances of finding and sustaining a healthy love relationship. There are three parts to this book. Part I is entitled the "Unhealthy Love Life." This is the problem, our nemesis. Understanding how what you've learned about love relationships can result in an out of control unhealthy love life is the place where we'll begin. In this first part of the book, I will tell you everything you'll need to know about how the unhealthy love life, as a noxious

force operating beyond your awareness, can limit and disrupt your chances of finding and sustaining a healthy love relationship.

There are two chapters in Part I. Chapter 1, entitled, “My Love Life Research” will discuss four basic characteristics of the unhealthy love life. Understanding these four basic characteristics will strengthen your consciousness, if and when your love life becomes unhealthy. In Chapter 2, entitled, “Learning About Love Relationships” I will discuss the ways we all learn about love relationships, what we learn, and how what we learn can become problematic.

Part II of this book is about the “Psychological Love Life.” Chances are you probably didn’t think you had one. Surprise, surprise, it turns out that our love life experiences are being shaped, again out of our awareness, from the psychological “backroom,” if you will. Your psychological love life is the true “cause” of your love life experiences, healthy or unhealthy. And yes, we all have one.

In Part II of this book I will show you how what you’ve learned about love relationships is being psychologically used to recreate your “unhealthy relationship experiences.” The relationship experiences that originally taught you what you’ve learned about love relationships in the first place. Becoming aware of your psychological love life will empower you to be able to change what is unhealthy, the focus of the next part of this book. Part II includes Chapter 3, entitled “Your Psychological Love Life.” In this chapter we will study the psychological love life as the mental storehouse of what you’ve learned about love relationships and become familiar with its contents. Becoming aware of what is in your psychological love life gives you access to a part of your emotional life that is usually kept out of awareness as it operates in shaping your love life experiences. Access will permit you to identify what needs to change.

In Part III, I will introduce you to what I call my “Unlearning Method.” This is the “solution” to our problem, the unhealthy love life. In this part of the book I’ll show you how what you’ve learned about love relationships can be

identified, challenged, and changed. This conscious application of how what was learned, can be unlearned, and something better learned or relearned was taken directly from the successes in my clinical work with patients struggling with love life problems. There are two chapters in Part III of this book.

In Chapter 4, entitled “Changing Your Psychological Love Life” we’ll go through each of the 3-steps involved in effectively changing what was learned from unhealthy relationship experiences. In Chapter 5, entitled, “My Psychological Love Life,” I apply the Unlearning Method to my own love life experience. What better way to illustrate the effectiveness of this method than to describe how I used it to change my own love life difficulties?

In Chapter 6, I’ll review the various ways it is possible to teach about love relationships, both educational and therapeutic. A useful discussion of the various educational and therapeutic formats that are possible to consciously and deliberately teach about love relationships for the purpose of improving your psychological ability to find and sustain a healthy love relationship.

In the “Conclusion” of this book, I will make the case that our objective is to take back, maybe for the very first time, control of our love lives. Your love life is not only what is visible in terms of the people you have loved and love. Your love life is also what is inside of you that shapes and determines the kind of relationships you’ll form, and the experiences you will or won’t have in love. If and when you become aware of your inside love life, you can switch it from automatic to manual. An old friend used to say, you can’t drive your life from the backseat. I think this most certainly applies to your love life.

In its essence this book represents a 21st Century “Love Class.” A tribute to Leo Buscaglia’s remarkable vision, updated and taken a few steps further. Instead of “Love Class” we’ll call it a “Love Relationship Class,” since love relationships rather than simply the emotion of love, will remain our primary focus. Consider this book a mini education, derived from years of clinical research, on how we relate in love both healthy and unhealthy, and what we can do about it when it’s unhealthy.

PART I
THE UNHEALTHY
LOVE LIFE

CHAPTER 1

My Love Life Research



Types of Unhealthy Love Life

Human beings possess the need to receive and give love. We spend much of our waking hours, consciously or unconsciously, trying to make this happen. At earlier times in our lives, the need to receive love is easier to see, then it tends to go underground. In middle-age its harder to need love without feeling uncomfortable about it. The need to give love often shows up later in life, even though there are clues to its existence earlier in life. Small children can show extraordinary acts of kindness and love toward others.

We all come into the world with the hope that we'll get and give the love we need. In fact, the relationship between "hope" and love was the first thing I noticed when I began conducting my love life research. My first observation of the unhealthy love life was how the appearance of hope determined the two primary forms of the unhealthy love life. When there is hope, the unhealthy love life will typically take the form of *multiple disappointments*. When a person is struggling with this type of unhealthy love life he or she is trying to find and sustain a healthy love relationship despite multiple disappointments.

People who are experiencing multiple disappointments in love tend to be on the younger end of the age spectrum. The hope of finding and keeping the healthy love relationship they seek is propelling them to keep looking regardless of the hurt their disappointments have caused. At some point or another, this type of unhealthy love life morphs into the second form of unhealthy love life we call *resignation*. When resigned, multiple disappointments have convinced a person that a healthy love relationship is not going to be found. Hope has been lost. The objective now is to live a life without love. Easier said than done.

Some people enter the unhealthy love life state of resignation after only a very few disappointments. In some instances, it only takes one substantial disappointment to swear off love. They decide to stop looking for and getting involved in something that only ends up hurting them. Others are more resilient and continue looking for the love they desire to get and give as many times as possible resisting resignation. Nevertheless, resignation after a period of multiple disappointments with love is for certain. It's only a matter of time. If you are making the same love life mistakes over and over again without awareness, self-preservation in the form of resignation is inevitable.

Repeating Love Life Problems

The second observation we've made about the unhealthy love life is that it is *repetitive*. Whatever love life problem you are experiencing is probably happening over and over again. How many repetitions depends upon your age. There are several forms this repetition can take. Repeating love life problems can occur in a single relationship. For example, a person who cheats in a love relationship several times over the course of the relationship. Repeating love life problems can also occur over the course of several love relationships. Taking the cheating example again, repetition could occur in several different relationships. Then there is the repetition of a past love life problem again in a person's current love relationship. For example, imagine you grew up in a home where your father cheated on your mother, you cheat on your wife, and your son cheats on his wife.

This temporal perspective on repetition in the unhealthy love life was particularly interesting to us. Because we saw it a lot in the relationship experience reported by our patients. Whenever my patients had an unhealthy love life, some form of repetition was usually happening. Furthermore, most people were not aware of it. The frequency of this problem was undeniable. Repeating love life problems you don't know you are repeating. Who or what is in control of our love lives?

Replicating Unhealthy Relationship Experience

Our third observation was that the unhealthy love life *replicates* unhealthy relationship experiences. Upon deeper analysis, repeating love life problems turned out to be replications of a person's previous relationship experiences. It appears that past love life experience is in control of what a person experiences in the present. Little by little, a list of replicating unhealthy relationship experiences started to take shape. The same relationship experiences showed up in different people's love lives, so we began to formulate the idea that certain experiences are naturally "toxic" and commonly repeated and replicated in the adult love life.

To illustrate this idea of "replication" consider the common physical replication that takes place when someone marries someone who looks like his or her mother or father, or some other family member. As if the physical "template," if you will, is unconsciously being used to select someone with "familiar" physical characteristics. Of course, physical replication is only the superficial form of this phenomena, but I think it makes the point. We also took a closer look at the replication of other features in a love relationship like how a love partner behaves, what is believed about love relationships, and how a love partner feels, and found that replications are unconsciously taking place on those levels all the time. Replication is surely taking place in our love lives.

Let's consider a few psychological examples from my clinical work over the years. A woman is abandoned by her father at a young age, survives a

controlling mother, and marries a man who abandons her after she gives birth to their children. Her marriage replicates the abandonment she experienced in her family of origin.

A woman grew up in an abusive home where she witnesses her violent alcoholic father abuse her mother. She leaves home and marries a verbally and emotionally abusive man. She replicates the domestic abuse she witnessed growing up now in an emotional and verbal form in her marriage.

A woman grows up in a home where her mother is compulsive and controlling. Her mother controls her father and the children, with her demands for order and organization. She herself gets married and replicates the same learned control over her husband's activities in the home.

A man witnesses the emotional dependency of his father on a controlling mother. He grows up and leaves home, and has two children with a dependent possessive woman who helps him replicate his parents' marriage.

A woman witnesses her mother's emotional pain when her mother discovers that her father is cheating on her. Her mother divorces her father as a consequence of the dishonesty. As an adult she is attracted to men who cannot make a commitment and is chronically suspicious of cheating.

A woman grows up in a family where she feels taken advantage of by her siblings and narcissistic dependent mother. In her adult love life, she struggles in several love relationships with the feeling of being used. She now avoids love life situations to deter an expected exploitation.

A woman grows up in a home with a controlling mother who mistrusts her ability to make her own decisions. She marries the man her mother prefers, takes the job her mother expects her to have, and moves into a home her mother finds for her family. She now struggles with chronic feelings that her life does not belong to her.

A man grew up in a family where his mother neglects him in favor of her husband compelled by the husband's sickness. Her son is left to fend for himself emotionally in the family. He leaves home and finds a neglectful

woman with children who focuses predominately on her children replicating the same experience of neglect he endured living with his parents.

A man grows up with a rejecting critical mother and narcissistic distant father. He marries a critical woman and copes with the feeling of hurt by defensively distancing himself in his marriage.

A man grew up with a self-centered mother and self-sacrificing care-taking father. He marries a narcissistic woman and takes care of her in a self-sacrificing manner. He replicates the marital relationship of his parents, taking the role of the depleted care-taker of a self-centered person.

On and on, one example after another, of the “replicated” unhealthy love life. I collected these painful love life stories and many others over the course of many years of practice. Repetition and replication of unhealthy relationship experiences can be found in each instance without any initial awareness of its reoccurrence by the people involved. What remained unclear is why and how this is happening. It was only when I realized that “learning” was the key to understanding the repetition and replication of unhealthy relationship experience, was I then able to go even deeper in my analysis of the unhealthy love life.

CHAPTER 2

Learning About Love Relationships



Recreating Unhealthy Relationship Experiences

We humans are exceptionally creative. Look around, much of the environments we live in have been created by people. The outside world is not the only place we create. We all do quite a bit of creative work on the inside of ourselves as well. The fourth observation we've made of the unhealthy love life is that it *recreates* in the present, past unhealthy relationship experiences with what we've learned previously about love relationships.

Our current relationship experiences are often the recreated experience of whatever happened in the most important interpersonal relationships in our lives. In this case, we are focusing on how we recreate the unhealthy ones. Again, this bit of creative mental work is done without the least bit of consciousness. The most important thing to remember is, *we are using what we've learned about love relationships to do this mental creation*. It basically boils down to recreating what is familiar in our experience of the interpersonal relationships in our lives.

Imagine a painter who paints different subjects in the same motif (e.g. Marco Grassi, Italian painter). Each woman depicted in Grassi's paintings, and there are quite a few, is portrayed in the same colorful surrealist way. The uniqueness of each woman's face and gesture is preserved, yet the same recreated color theme is replicated in each portrait. To illustrate our concept of recreated love life experience, let's imagine that Grassi is a person who has learned to recreate the same relationship experience in his love life (depicted by the surrealist color theme) regardless of the woman he falls in love with. What he has learned about relationships is in control of his love life. More specifically, what he has learned about love relationships determines how he relates to each woman he falls in love with.

Love Life Formula

Finding out just how we do this recreation was very compelling to us. What are the learning principles involved? Let's start off with what I like to call the Love Life Formula: *Love Life = Relationships + Love*.

Remember our definition of Love Life as any and all relationships involving the emotion of love, past and present. "Relationships" in this formula is a learned and fairly predictable phenomenon. We essentially learn how to relate from the people who relate to us, or we witness relating to each other, mostly earlier in life.

Love Life = Relationships + Love

"Love," on the other hand, is not learned and is essentially an unpredictable psychological, biological, interpersonal, and spiritual phenomenon. Since love is beyond learning, it's really not my concern in this research. Love can occur, even multiple times, in the average lifetime. Whether or not the relationships we form are healthy enough to nurture and sustain the love we feel when we fall in love is the primary focus of my work.

How Were You Taught About Love?

There are three ways that you can learn about love relationships. The first is by being in a *relationship* with someone. For example, how you are treated in a love relationship will inevitably teach you valuable lessons about love relationships. Quite simply, if you were related to in a healthy way in your love relationships, chances are you'll learn healthy things about love relationships. And vice versa, if you were related to in an unhealthy way, you'll learn unhealthy things about love relationships. This would be true from the very beginning of your life.

The second way you might learn about love relationships is through *observation*. Imagine you are a child growing up in a family where one parent mistreats the other. What you witness between them will teach you things about love in a relationship. In fact, much of what we learn occurs in this way. Again, without the slightest bit of awareness that we are learning by observation.

The last way in which you could learn about love relationships is through *instruction*. This method might be a little harder to imagine since it tends to occur less often than relationship and observation. It's not instruction in the traditional sense of a teacher giving a lecture while students take notes and learn. This instruction would be a bit more insidious. Instructions on love relationships conveyed through the sharing of beliefs or giving guidance about love relationships. As children we are occasionally taught about love relationships by the people we love when telling stories. Love relationship stories are a common way of teaching the young about love.

The best example I have of love relationship instruction occurred in 1961 when I was 8 years old. The family scene is "Waffle Sunday" and my father has the waffle iron on the dining room table making waffles with my mother. My two older brothers and I are sitting around the table while my father makes and my mother serves the waffles. While doing so, my father takes the opportunity to deliver a few love life lessons to his young audience avidly listening in anticipation of the next batch of waffles. My father says,

pleased with my mother's help serving the delicious waffles, "when you guys grow up and get married make sure you find a *virgin* like your mother." Upon hearing this pronouncement stated for the benefit of educating the kids, my mother simply smiled without saying a word. Looking back, there is quite an assumption being served as well, that a *good wife is a virgin*. Age and experience have luckily challenged our father's limited anachronistic view of women, permitting his sons to avoid the unhealthy implications of this instruction. The point is, this was a very powerful learning moment at a time in my life when there was little experience to truly understand the particulars of what we were being taught.

Unconscious Learning About Love Relationships

Our ability to learn is our greatest asset, although much if not most of the learning that takes place in our lives occurs when we are unconscious. Unconscious learning is *not knowing what you are learning* as well as *not knowing that you are in fact learning*. Learning begins at the onset of life and continues throughout life. Traditionally, learning is thought of as a conscious event with a source of information imparting knowledge that a person takes in. This form of learning is implied in the word, instruction.

Learning from experience is another form of learning that can take place in a less deliberate or conscious manner. Unconscious learning is the primary way we learn from experience in our love lives. In fact, unconscious learning is the very reason why most of us are not aware of what we've learned about love relationships. Since little if any instruction is given to us about love relationships, most of the learning we receive in this area occurs in this way. Furthermore, the absence of conscious intention and deliberation makes certain that what we learn unconsciously is subject to repetition and replication. You basically have no control over what you've learned if you've learned it unconsciously. Putting it all together, if you learn something unconsciously, healthy or unhealthy, and you have no control over it, you are bound to repeat what you've learned by recreating it over and over again.

As I indicated in the introduction of this book, what you've unconsciously learned is now in control.

Becoming conscious of what we've learned unconsciously is a necessary step in getting control over our love lives. The fact that a person could be recreating experiences in a relationship at odds with what he or she consciously wants is mind boggling to say the least. Just how unconscious learning takes control of your love life is still a bit mysterious. Are there parts of ourselves operating apart from and without the support of who we are and what we want? If true, this would guarantee a lot of internal conflict. For example, suppose I truly want to have a healthy love relationship, but I've unconsciously learned unhealthy lessons that result in the unconscious recreation of a lot of repetitive disappointment in my love life. *What I want would be at odds with what I've learned beyond my awareness.*

Learning How to Relate in Love

Now that we know, what we learn about love relationships is being used to determine the experience we have in our love lives, what do we learn about love relationships? The simple answer is *we learn how to relate in love.* Whether healthy or unhealthy, what we learn about love relationships determines how we relate when “in love.” In love, of course, being a particular state of mind and body with its own unique characteristics. I'm sure you've encountered the idea of a difference between *loving someone* and *being in love with someone.* The former appears to be a more general description of affection, deep caring, love in the sense of having love for someone. Understandably, “love” as a general description of emotion or feeling has never been exclusively reserved for people. You can love a lot of things that aren't necessarily human (e.g. dog, cat, horse, job, vacation, money).

To be “in love with someone” is reserved exclusively for the experience of true love for a unique individual human being. In the state of “in love” there is an all-consuming quality to the emotion. It is special and deep, a unique state of emotion that is focused exclusively on one other human being. Perhaps

that is the distinguishing element, the fact that unlike a more general sense of loving people, to be “in love” with someone is not substitutable.

There is also an implied longing to be with the person you are in love with. Love the emotion is known to be a uniting force, and in this case, it is most intensely a force to unite with this one particular individual. Our inherent need to love and be loved is most directly experienced in this particular state of mind and body.

Another interesting characteristic of this “in love” emotional state is that there appears to be an associated time warp. Past and present, in particular, are often merged in this state. Earlier I talked about how love life problems often involve the repetition and replication of past relationship experience. It appears that this exclusivity of focus on a particular individual and intensive emotional need in the “in love” state is its greatest strength and its greatest weakness.

Simply put, if your past love life experience, going all the way back to the beginning of your life, was positive and fulfilling, those relationship experiences will inevitably influence your current love life experiences in a positive way. However, if your earlier love life experiences were negative and toxic, the past influence on your current love life may be negative. A negative past experience of this kind influencing your current love life appears to be as tenacious in its repetition and replication as any positive experience would be. Negative influence from past experience being the single most deleterious influence on the health of our love lives.

What do we know so far? We now know that what we’ve learned about love relationships translates into an unconscious “blueprint” for how to relate in love. Whenever the “in love” emotional state occurs, without consciousness, we enter a state of mind and body that repeats and replicates a particular way of relating to the person we are now in love with. Furthermore, the success of this particular experience of being in love will depend upon how healthy the relationship is we have formed with the person we are in love

with. If we form a healthy relationship, the love we feel is nurtured and grows. If we form an unhealthy relationship, the love we feel is deadened and dies.

Now it's time to get personal. To further dissect what you've learned about love relationships and how what you've learned determines the health of your specific love life, we'll have to go from the general "how to relate in love" to the specific "how do you relate in love?" What kind of love life experience are you, as an individual person, recreating in your particular love life? To go this deep, we are going to need to delve into the "psychology" of your unique love life and formulate a psychological concept to help us do so. In PART II of this book, I will introduce you to your *psychological love life*, the place in your mind that stores what you've learned about love relationships and determines what you'll recreate in your love life. Whether you know it or not.