

You Can Live Happily Ever After in Love

Timeless wisdom for modern relationships

Andrew Quinn



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Disclaimer:

The material contained in this book is not intended to be diagnostic or replace professional help or advice. The content is aimed to be informative and general in nature. If you have a relationship or mental health issue, please consult a qualified mental health professional or your doctor.

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DEDICATIONS

Shimon Halevi showed me that Kabbalah's Tree of Life is a truly dynamic structure that maps the journey of life through all ages. Without this knowledge my psychological models would not exist.

Carl Jung was a visionary man decades ahead of his time. He gave us an inspiring image of an evolving psyche striving for balance through integrating our inner masculine and feminine. Without his genius and concepts of the persona/shadow and anima/animus, Self-transformation Therapy would not have developed.

Eric Berne's representation of the human psyche through Transactional Analysis was beautifully simple yet powerful. His concept of inner child, parent and adult is readily accessible to the layman and of great benefit to therapists.

Robert A. Johnson is a Jungian analyst whose wisdom revealed how mythology reflects the deepest journeys that our psyche must travel. His mythological wisdom has inspired this book.

I am grateful to these psychological and spiritual scholars who have been my mentors in the development of Self-transformation Therapy.

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INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon for an individual to seek counselling when their relationship is no longer acceptable to them, yet they are not ready to end it. Some may be tempted to have an affair, while others may present with distress or confusion while being in the midst of one. Other people struggle to be alone, while finding it difficult to establish a meaningful and loving relationship. These struggles represent the most basic needs of the human being to be loved and cherished by another.

This book is a guide from romantic love to a lasting and fulfilling love. We will begin in the throes of romantic passion generated by the desire for perfect parents to perfectly love us. We will then meet the imperfect parent as the intensity of romantic love normalises and daily stress and routines impose themselves.

A relationship has an evolving nature, challenging a couple to evolve through the deepening process of love and sharing their life together. This journey requires each person to self-reflect to overcome challenges that require working through to avoid distance, resentment or bitterness.

These challenges are an opportunity to further open your heart and increase your capacity for love. As you will see, if you make this an outer journey through wanting the other to meet your needs, it will result in stress and turmoil in your relationship. Alternatively, taking this inner journey is a transformational process with the reward of your own increasing capacity for love, joy and intimacy.

1

WHAT IS ROMANTIC LOVE?



I have a painting in my counselling rooms which beautifully captures the energy of romantic love. There is a knight standing beside the horse of his lady. His armour is certainly shining and his head is craned back to look up to his love. She is beautifully robed in a flowing gown and leans down towards her lover's face, her elongated swan-neck reaching towards him. This painting freezes them in the moment before they kiss, which promises that all their desires will be fulfilled as they stare into each other's eyes. As I look at this painting I see the intense magnetic attraction between the two faces whose lips have not yet met. In this space between their lips lies the promise of perfect bliss – a bliss encapsulated by the perfection seen in the other.¹

What I find wonderful about this painting is that it perpetually holds all the promise of romantic love in limbo, as once the lovers kiss, a train of events will be set in motion with challenges that cannot be completely avoided. We all need to work through the predictable challenges of this journey if we

¹ To view this painting see Appendix One

are to achieve love and intimacy. The perfect bliss that is promised in romantic love represents an activation or awakening of all our unmet needs, hopes and desires that were not met during our childhood. This is why romantic love is more intense in teenage years and in the early twenties, as the dependence of our inner child to be unconditionally loved and accepted is a more recent hope.

There is often a contrast between the intense feelings of romantic love and the knowledge that the fairytale does not continue 'happily ever after' forever – but you can live happily with lasting love. This book will guide you through a transformational journey. It is a journey you have already begun and are still undertaking. It is one of the most important and longest journeys of your life and is a major determinant of what joy, intimacy and fulfilment you experience. It is a journey only you can travel - it is the journey through romantic love.

The journey of romantic love begins after puberty, when those of the opposite sex are no longer deemed to have boy germs or girl germs! In teenage years romantic love holds immense promise, nervousness and even embarrassment. Intense passion and anxious feelings can be created as this powerful force of the psyche is unleashed. In reality, it is an experience a teenager is usually ill-prepared for.

The intensity and character of romantic love changes over each decade. In the 20s, romantic love often leads to the ideal of the fairytale white wedding, with intense preparations providing a clue as to how much is at stake. Planning a wedding can create angst and anxiety for everything to be perfect on the day, which is an attempt to have the perfect experience, with all hopes and dreams fulfilled. In later decades romantic love can

still be passionate, but is increasingly shaped by previous relationship experiences. As each decade goes by, new relationships are shaped by mature expectation, and in more senior years, new relationships may be a desire for companionship. Yet no matter how many relationships a person may have had, or how long they have been with each partner, the journey of romantic love needs to be travelled in order to be mastered.

Mastering romantic love refers to an ongoing process of self-growth over years – personal transformation within your relationship. If romantic love is not worked through to its endpoint then the outcome is somewhat predictable. Romantic love is a powerful force that propels our psyche through life, releasing long-held yearnings to be loved, valued and cherished. If active attention is not given to this energy in a relationship, it is likely to implode with a predictable outcome – conflict, stagnation or the end of the relationship.

There is no rule to say that you should stay with one partner and work through this journey with this person your entire life. On the other hand, it appears to me that too many couples are not prepared to work on their relationship. There is a risk in waiting too long to take action, as for some couples too much damage has been done, while trust or commitment has been eroded. It is not for me to judge what is appropriate for your situation.

What I do recommend is that you make any decisions about your relationships a conscious choice, especially if you are starting to look elsewhere, are withdrawing your commitment or resigning yourself to what you have. You also have the choice to work through your relationship that may hold the potential for your own joy, fulfilment and freedom.

The Myths and Realities of Romantic Love

In romantic love it is perceived that the other is responsible for our feelings of bliss through perfectly accepting us and perfectly loving us – they are the perfect parent that our inner child has been yearning for. The yearning of our inner child for the perfect parent to cherish and love us unconditionally accounts for the saying ‘love is blind’, and the notion that during romantic love, the other is seen through ‘rose-coloured glasses’. However this illusion cannot last as lurking in the shadows are the limitations of our past. Any unfulfilled hopes for blissful love and acceptance may lie underneath the often painful truth of the absence of love and acceptance in earlier years.

Romantic love connects us to these unmet hopes and desires. Yet to bring them into a sustainable reality we need to work through any past issues in order to release the joy of love underneath. In other words, our upbringing forms the basis of how we relate, and any shortcomings will eventually assert themselves, limiting our capacity for love and joy.

In reality, we have a relationship with the flesh-and-blood person that we have met, while also having a relationship with an image of the perfect parent superimposed behind the one we love. It is our inner child which hopes for all its needs and desires to be blissfully fulfilled by perfect parents. Later-on, it is also our inner child that perceives our imperfect parents developing in the other, which is responsible for most of the conflicted difficulties and challenges in a relationship. Therefore, in the initial stages of a romantic relationship, there is a risk that we are having a relationship more with the image of the perfect parent, who will eventually turn into the imperfect parent when the gloss of romantic love fades. This

indicates that there are parental influences within us that will inevitably reproduce our childhood dynamic and potentially create havoc if the influence of our past is not handled appropriately. It is also important to note that new love is also the means for potential healing with a different emotional outcome from that of our childhood experience. One where our needs can be met without sacrificing who we are, without having to compromise our values or opinions, while experiencing acceptance and freedom within the relationship. This is part of the reward of working through challenges in your relationship.

The central element which characterises or defines romantic love is the magnetic attraction of opposites that arouses sexual desire. Intimacy is not the central defining element per se, as we can be emotionally intimate with those who are close to us such as parents, siblings, our children or even close friends. Emotional intimacy is a central part of the romantic relationship, but with the addition of sexual attraction.

Sexual desire usually relates to the coupling of male and female, however it is more accurate to say that it is the coupling of those of the opposite psychological sex, driven by magnetic attraction. Sexual desire is not determined by the physical sex of the partners as desire is as intense in same-sex relationships. The intensity represents the desire to feel whole, joining with the other who completes you and gives you a beautiful experience of acceptance and being loved – it has the potential to heal your childhood pain. This defines the essence of the challenge to transcend romantic love to a mature, fulfilling and sustaining love. In romantic love we borrow the other's love and acceptance, but the journey to mature love requires us to be capable of doing this for ourselves, allowing us to share who we are rather than needing to be with them.



In romantic love we borrow the other's love and acceptance.

The journey to mature love requires us to be capable of loving and accepting ourselves.

Romantic love can be intense and obsessive. The frantic intensity of early romantic love is urgent as the individuals' inner child has been yearning for this experience for years, and like a child they desire immediate reward, creating the need to always be with or think of the other. Romantic love is also fragile as the reality of the other's imperfections will intrude in time as the stress of day-to-day routines and pressures exert themselves. This blissfully ignorant state cannot continue. Battles of control emerge as each person requires the other to provide certain needs for them, at the time they need them. Romantic love naturally fades, but if it is perceived the other is changing or failing them, the disillusion of romantic love can be a challenging time.

I must be clear that these experiences of romantic love are extremely valuable. In many ways they build the foundation of the relationship to weather future storms. The romantic love period can build deep-reaching trust and commitment through the experience of unconditional love and acceptance that we perceive the other has offered to us. I suggest this energy is not something that you can completely control, yet it is important to exert common sense and still attend to daily requirements to go to work, do the chores and keep up social contacts. However, aside from a requirement to continue the normal routines, there is no need to limit or influence the experience of romantic love – take it for all it's worth, drink it all in and experience the magic. Enjoy the bliss of romantic love as it takes you to dizzying heights. It is the glue from the magnetic

attraction of opposites that forms the basis of any romantic relationship. It is the foundation on which you will build a more stable and secure emotional structure. Romantic love is a true experience that takes on mythological proportions. It is important to allow this energy to express itself without judging the path it takes or how long it lasts. It will do what it needs to do, but it is also wise to ensure it is a conscious process.

It is important to understand the image of the perfect parent lying behind the flesh-and-blood person, and keep in mind the reality that perfection doesn't exist in a person or in their body. Romantic love only represents the desire to feel perfectly accepted and perfectly loved by another, which is part of the fairytale. You will see throughout this book that successful relationships occur when the two individuals involved can cope with failures in caring and acceptance, while not taking this as a personal judgement, but simply part of the journey in learning to love each other.

In reality romantic love is a true experience. The reality is also that it will follow a natural transition towards a more mature relationship. The myth is that the other is experienced as perfect and provides us with the perfect experience of being loved and accepted simply for who we are. In reality, in these early stages we do not truly know who they are, as we all keep parts of ourselves hidden that we feel ashamed of or judge as unacceptable, which can be referred to as our shadow side. It is this shadow side which was formed in childhood by previous hurts and rejection – painful experiences we do not wish to have again. Throughout this book we shall see this tension played out as a central determinant of the challenges in relationships – to be known by another without being hurt or rejected by them.



A central challenge in relationships is to be loved and known by another, while fearing being hurt or rejected by them.

Before we move onto the reality of relationships, let us continue with the fantasy and explore the mythological tale of the shining knight who rescues the damsel in distress. This motif of romantic love is highly prevalent in our society and a powerful force in our lives.

A Tale of Love – The journey begins

The beginnings of a new relationship are encapsulated by the notion of the shining knight and a damsel in distress. I will be using this myth to explore the many facets of the journey of romantic love told with a medieval setting. The themes of this story are well-known as seen in movies, songs and romance novels. Throughout the book I will continue the tale to explore what happens after the shining knight and the distressed damsel make their way to the castle to create their life together.

The knight in shining armour loves quest, is proud of his skills in battle and is keen to rescue maidens, kill dragons or outlaws and do his King's bidding.

The damsel in distress is kept prisoner by the ugly noble, locked-in the tower. She is prized for her beauty and talents at the harp and needlework.

The knight is off searching for conquest. When he finds the damsel in distress she shouts to be rescued. The knight risks his life and fights the tyrant for her freedom. The shining knight battles to free the lady and defeats the ugly noble.

The two meet and she is his true love, and he her perfect love. They experience intense magnetic attraction as they stare deeply into each other's eyes yearning to be kissed.

This brief summary of the essential elements of this tale reveals many interesting truths hidden beneath the facade of perfection. The knight is a fine figure in shining armour on his warhorse with weapons at the ready. He is the image of power and protection. Yet in reality, it is his father's wealth that paid for the armour and the horse. He has a servant to shine his armour and saddle – a servant who is exhausted and works hard for little pay. Also, the knight was out looking for a battle as behind the powerful image is aggression. He is not that perfect after all and depends on others who support him.

The lady is trapped in a cold and spartan chamber at the top of the tower. She is scared, overwhelmed and crying. She does not know what is going to happen to her and is scared how her life will unfold. Yet when the knight appears she is perfectly made-up and beautiful even though she did not know her rescuer was arriving. This suggests that beauty and appearance is of vital importance to the lady who would be expected to look dishevelled. Her presentation hints at the obsession of our society with women always needing to be perfectly beautiful, yet underneath a lady may feel imperfect.

When the damsel falls into the arms of her rescuer and seeks protection she pays a price of surrendering a part of her will. The knight has won her freedom and in time we shall see that he has taken possession of his lady in terms of authority over her independence. What the lady does not see is that this image of power and strength has a shadow side of anger. His solid

dependability also has a shadow side of being solid as a rock and unresponsive to her feelings. His need for quest and battle is a need to create pride from success and having it acknowledged by others. What the knight does not see is that his lady's desire for protection has a shadow side of wanting her knight's company which will restrict his freedom. Her vulnerability that he wants to protect has a shadow side of becoming overwhelmed, anxious or procrastinating. Her gentle and caring ways can turn to feeling guilty and being exhausted by the requirement to look after the needs of others.

What they saw in each other was perfection. He was the perfect figure able to protect her from the dangers in the world while worshipping her beauty. She was the perfect lady whose gentleness and tenderness warmed his heart and had need of his prowess in fighting battles. When they finally embraced there is hope for perfect bliss and a Hollywood style kiss. However if they do not kiss, all the promise of romantic love maintains its intensity, as once they do they will set in motion a train of events that will see the magic rise and fall with the potential for disillusionment. To avoid this outcome requires an active energy of change to transform romantic love to a truly loving and caring relationship.

Romantic Love in Western Culture

I have often wondered why there is the story of the ugly tyrant locking the damsel in the tower. To me it speaks of arranged marriages, marriages of convenience or for political reasons throughout history. The notion of romantic love is not one that has been present through all time or the reality for the majority of people in the world. It is a motif of Western culture attached to the medieval period of chivalrous or courtly love. Arranged

marriages are particularly drawn to our attention when a young and inexperienced woman is given to an older man, or a beautiful woman to an ugly or rough man. This need to rescue the damsel from the ugly noble suggests a shift from other arrangements of marriage, to one which serves the expression of love and individual choice.

Romantic love has been turned into a commodity worth billions of dollars. This is evident through the numerous movies, songs and books based upon romantic love. Many movies made in Hollywood are either based upon a romantic love theme or have a love interest embedded within the storyline. There is hardly a popular song on the radio that is not based around the theme of love. Romance novels continue to do a roaring trade, and like movies, many fiction books have a love interest included.

Advertising also takes these themes of perfect beauty and perfect strength and success. Many ads feature the perfect couple with a new car or home in the perfect setting. Advertisers are trying to arouse desire with sexual or attractive images while associating it with the product on sale. It is a blatant manipulation of our deep-seated desire for perfect bliss and contentment. Advertising will affect us more if we continue to want these feelings of love, fulfilment and success to be delivered from outside of ourselves, rather than looking inwards and being capable of generating these feelings from who we are and how we construct our lives. Consequently, advertising preys on how we externalise our desires and longings.

Many Hollywood movies have traditionally ended in a kiss, but we never see what happens 'ever after' in the routine of everyday life. However, there is now a trend in movies for

what I call the 'going wrong' phase of the relationship in the storyline. Of course things are righted in the end as we want a happy ending. To me, this going wrong phase appears an attempt to impose a more realistic approach to relationships. However they still tend to end at the same point – with a kiss.

The shining knight and damsel in distress motif is accurately portrayed in the movie *Pretty Woman*. This movie is faithful to the fairytale which probably accounts for its success. We see Richard Gere in his dark-coloured power suit – his shining armour. Julia Roberts is a beautiful lady with long flowing hair. We see the shining knight literally going out for battle and quest by taking over companies and pulling them apart to sell them. We see the lady using her beauty and flowing hair to generate income as a prostitute, but it is not in the most accepted of ways. This construction of a successful and powerful man with a beautiful prostitute reflects society's value of power and success over the feminine characteristics of caring and tenderness, leaving the lady to use her outer beauty for trading.

There comes a time when the lady becomes distressed at having the secret of her occupation found out. This results in her dashing and powerful knight coming to her rescue in a chivalrous fashion by punching-out his previously trusted companion in order to defend his lady's honour. This is all part of the 'going wrong' phase where there is a rift in the relationship that requires working through. This is an attempt to show that it is not all rosy and requires conscious effort. We see a vulnerable side of the shining knight in that he is scared of heights. We see a vulnerable side in the lady when feeling hurt at being judged for who she is and what she does. We then see the transformation of each other. The gentle and caring lady transforms her knight to care about those whose companies he

has dissolved, and instead to build something creative, such as ships. We see the lady transformed in confidence, independence and equality. She has embodied the strength and courage of her knight to transform herself. She is not prepared to be owned and possessed and communicates this by flinging back the money on his bed. The man now faces the challenge of honouring his feelings and honouring his lady as an equal. This is the true meaning of honouring oneself and honouring the other, not some blind worship of a perfected image.

In the end of the movie the shining knight comes dashing towards the damsel in the tower who is distressed at losing his love. The shining knight arrives in his white limousine (white stallion), standing up through the sunroof portraying the image of being mounted on his white horse. He is wearing his designer-label power suit (armour) with flowers held aloft in his hand (his sword held high). He is shouting to his lady in a high-rise apartment (the tower). She has been distressed from having made herself vulnerable to his rejection. To make amends and rescue her, he has to face his fear of heights in order to reach his lady. In other words, he has to acknowledge his feelings and acknowledge vulnerability. Yet he is prepared to take this step as he stumbles his way up the fire escape. She is looking down with her head out the window, her hair flowing in the wind laughing with joy. They finally meet on the balcony with the inevitable kiss.

What happens after the kiss? We all know in reality that the fairytale does not continue, yet we are absolute suckers for having our heartstrings pulled by the hope that maybe it can. I believe that the obsession through movies, songs and books on this theme of romantic love does a disservice to people. These images describe the early phases of a relationship, but what comes next? What I believe has created confusion is that

people are unsure how much of that magic can be maintained through a relationship. Can it be maintained at all? And in what form can it be experienced?

The intensity of romantic love can live on as intimacy and passion, while acknowledging that the intensity ebbs and flows around the routine of daily life. A couple need to be capable of creating these feelings through active attention to each other in the relationship. Hollywood continues the myth that the intensity of the final kiss of bliss can be held in that moment forever. However, the divorce rate and occurrence of affairs testify that this is not a reality. In movies the kiss has not been tested against life. In truth, magnetic attraction and magic can continue, but you need to be capable of creating and maintaining it through active attention to each other and working issues through.

The Journey of Romantic Love

You may feel that you are not subject to the influences of romantic love, but I caution you about this. Most people reading this book would have come to a point of understanding that the intensity and blissful magic of romantic love are not a long-term reality. However, because you understand this does not automatically mean that you have mastered romantic love.

Romantic love is a journey to yourself – to your inner realms. It requires the healing of childhood wounds. It requires an understanding of your shadow side and an acceptance and valuing of who you are. It requires a risk, taking a chance to reveal your deeper self to the other, without the original rejection experienced in childhood. Instead, to experience a healing love that is most valuable. Essentially, it is the journey

of knowing who you are, loving who you are, and being capable of intimate and honest expression of feelings with the freedom to pursue your heart's desires. If you achieve this state of being then you have successfully transformed the energy of romantic love into its purpose of self-transformation - of knowing who you are. This level of self-awareness is a true awareness of your individuality. No longer being one of the crowd, but knowing what you stand for, what is important to you and being prepared to act accordingly.

So far we have explored the fairytale and come to the moment of that first kiss. However, this first kiss is only a starting point to a vaster journey. It is the equivalent of planning an exciting trip and getting everything ready to the point where you are now ready to actually embark on the journey, full of promise and blissfully ignorant of the challenges one may encounter. While the myriad of experiences of love are as varied as individuals are, the phases that we need to travel through are predictable. Essentially, the journey of romantic love is an opportunity to continue your journey towards self-acceptance and self-love. It is a journey to heal your childhood and create a more joyful outcome.

Most people tend to have an imperfect upbringing which leaves them with unmet hopes and desires and the repression of emotional pain. In the next chapter we will explore how gentle the heart of a child is, and it is this gentle heart which requires healing through tender love as an adult. Later-on, you will see how new love activates any suppressed needs and desires with the hope that they can be fulfilled – that there is a chance to be unconditionally loved after all.