



CORE WELLNESS

ACROSS THE BRIDGE: THE POWER OF ENCOUNTER- CENTERED TRANSFORMATION: 2 CE

Presented by:
Hedy Schleifer

corewellceu.com/HEDY

This course is designed for therapists and lay people alike and will greatly enhance your own relationship. It's an opportunity to engage with a world-famous master to learn skills that will take your relationship to the next level and that will help clients and those whom you interact with.

- Participants will learn the foundations of Encounter-centered Transformation
- Participants will learn a guiding principle for engaging couples and individuals to facilitate healthy attachment formation and emotional work.
- Participants will learn the four pillars of Encounter-centered Transformation.
- Participants will learn a map with five steps to engage couples on a journey of connection.



Hedy Schleifer is an internationally renowned relationship builder and motivational speaker who guides, counsels and teaches couples, partners, business associates, therapists and families to develop relational maturity. Referred to by colleagues as a “therapist’s therapist,” Hedy has a unique, warm and dedicated approach on relationship building. Her impressive resume, including over 40 years in private practice (since 1976) and past clinical faculty trainer of the Institute for Imago Relationship Therapy (1993-2003), is outshined only by her wisdom, humility and compassion.

Core Wellness LLC is authorized by the Board of Social Work Examiners in Maryland to sponsor social work CE programs and maintains full responsibility for all content. The trainings qualify for 2 CEU Category 1 continuing education units. Core Wellness, LLC is recognized by the NEW YORK State Education Department's State Board for Social Workers #SW-0569 and the NEW YORK State Board for Mental Health Practitioners, #MHC-0167. This course provides 2 contact hours live online credits.



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About Core Wellness

Core Wellness LLC is authorized by the Board of Social Work Examiners in **MARYLAND** to sponsor social work CE programs (for LMSW, LCSW, LCSW-Cs) and maintains full responsibility for all content. The trainings qualify for Category 1 continuing education units (whether taken in person or via live interactive webinar). Our credits are also accepted by the Board of Professional Counselors of Maryland (LGPC, LCPC and MFTs) and Board of Psychologists of Maryland. Additionally, Core Wellness, LLC is recognized by the **NEW YORK** State Education Department's State Board for Social Workers #SW-0569 and the **NEW YORK** State Board for Mental Health Practitioners, #MHC-0167. For **other states**, contact your board & email us for help.

About the Presenter

Hedy Schleifer is an internationally renowned relationship builder and motivational speaker who guides, counsels and teaches couples, partners, business associates, therapists and families to develop relational maturity. Referred to by colleagues as a “therapist’s therapist,” Hedy has a unique, warm and dedicated approach on relationship building. Her impressive resume, including over 40 years in private practice (since 1976) and past clinical faculty trainer of the Institute for Imago Relationship Therapy (1993-2003), is outshined only by her wisdom, humility and compassion. Hedy was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, raised in Antwerp, Belgium, married and lived in Israel and now resides in Washington DC, with her husband of over 50 years. They have two sons and 13 grandchildren.





UNRAVELING THE SURVIVAL KNOT: an EcCT Couples Journey

Today I am very excited to be sharing with you something new. It is an insight which revealed itself last week after my journey with one of the most challenging couples I have ever worked with. And I find it really quite amazing that with all these years of experience, couples show up and they really are a challenge. And out of that challenge, a deeply new insight has come, which I'd like to share with you today.

Over the last few weeks, the Kosher Choreographer has filled my couples laboratory with the greatest variety of couples. And it is that variety actually that allowed me then in meeting this couple to arrive at something new that revealed itself to me. It has to do with a process of unraveling the survival knot. And today I would like to share all of this with all of you in depth.

Here is how I would like to organize my talk. First of all, I will tell you about my own voyage of discovery. I see the work that I'm doing with couples as part of a living laboratory. Each new couple that I met with adds an element of new knowingness, a new insight, an exploration. And then suddenly there is a Eureka moment and a quantum leap.

What I discover has been hiding in plain view. It's never something that hasn't been there already for quite a while. But I'm always surprised that it took until that moment for me to see it. Then I realize again that this new knowing is an integral part of a voyage of discovery with milestones on the way. And today as the first part of my lecture, I want to start by describing to you the evolution of my thinking over the last few years, and each one of the milestones that have led me to today. So that will be the first part of my lecture.

Then I will outline for you in detail each of the structured steps that I take with couples when I introduce them to the process of the "unraveling of the survival knot." I will describe to you the map that I give them. As well as the rationale for each of the stages that we will be visiting on the road. That will be the second part of my lecture.

I will then describe to you my new revelation, the insights I got, and I will illustrate it with live details of the session with the challenging couple that I worked with, when it all came together for me and crystalized into a new idea.

MY MILESTONES AS A THERAPIST:

1. A guiding principle

Let me start with the milestones of my journey as a psychotherapist. The first watershed moment of my journey as a couples therapist occurred when my entire life's journey both professional and personal crystallized into one single overarching and fundamental guiding principle. What showed itself to me as a guiding principle is the following:

“What disconnects us is our reactive survival dance. What connects us is the mutual embrace of three invisible connectors: the space between, the bridge between the worlds, and the encounter of the souls.

2. The role of the therapist

Once this one guiding principle was in place, something emerged as a natural outcome for me. What I saw in a way for the first time with clarity was the definition of my role with couples. I understood that there was a powerful, clear transition for me from the traditional therapist I have been to something very new in which I have two-part role.

Number one, I'm a teacher and I'm a teacher of two things. I'm a teacher of the Art of Hosting, and I'm a teacher of the Art of Visiting. Suddenly my role as a teacher became very clear. There are only two things I am teaching couples: I am introducing them to the Art of Hosting and the Art of Visiting, and I am accompanying them as they internalize these skills.

The other part of my role is to be a guide into the various “neighborhoods” of the couple's worlds. At that time the concepts of the various “neighborhoods” of the expanding world that we are became clear to me. All of us are this ever expanding world, with a multiple variety of rich neighborhoods; some of which we know, some of which we don't know, some of which we like, some of which we don't like. The whole concept of the “neighborhoods” became really clear to me. From then on all I did was to be the teacher of the Art of Hosting, and the Art of Visiting into the various “neighborhoods,” and guide the couples into the core of those “neighborhoods.”

3. The Art of Hosting and the Art of Visiting

Once my role was defined clearly, I began to increasingly understand the complex nature of the Art of Hosting and the Art of Visiting. And I began to see these two roles in a whole

new way. I'm going to describe some of what I began to see about the Art of Hosting, and the Art of Visiting.

- a. I saw that the Art of Visiting requires a profound commitment to the challenges of giving one's full presence in the "now," one's full engagement in the "now," one's unconditional, positive regard in the "now," one's whole essence in the "now." This challenge is a challenge of living. And I saw that the Art of Visiting is the commitment to be fully alive in the present moment.

I knew that teaching this art meant that I too as a teacher and guide needed to be committed to full 100% engagement, to my own aliveness, because there would be no way I could assist the Visitor to be completely present if I was not committed myself to my full presence, in the present moment. So that whole concept of teaching the Art of Visiting as giving one's full presence in the "now" became a challenge for my own life.

- b. What I also saw that the Art of Hosting requires telling one's deepest truths in one essential sentence at a time, and in one single "neighborhood" at a time. And this was very new for me. I had not understood Hosting as that kind of responsibility—the responsibility to see and express one's truth in a clear, concise essential way.

I know from my own life that the truth is short. I like to say if there's a lot of words, there's bullshit there. If it's the truth, it's short. And I began to understand that as a teacher of Hosting, I myself needed to make a commitment to be able to tell my own truth in a short, concise, essential way, so that I could "walk my talk," and teach the Host to tell their truth in one essential sentence at a time. This teaching of the Art of Hosting through one essential sentence has brought a lot of new understandings of what it is to tell one's truth to another.

- c. I also learned that being a Visitor is about "generative listening." Generative listening is a kind of listening that allows us to land deeply into the world of the other, to surf the waves of their emotion, to see the landscape of their face with "new eyes," essentially learning the "geography of their soul."

I realized that Visiting and listening generatively is the deepest kind of listening. It comes from the core of our being. It is not just empathic listening with an open heart. It is the kind of listening that opens up our whole being. I saw that unless I developed it in myself continuously, this level of "generative listening," in which my listening generates both my own transformation and the transformation of the other, I wouldn't be able to teach this kind of "generative listening." So the commitment to keep developing this level of listening in myself has been part of understanding the Art of Visiting better.

- d. I also understood that being a Host is about taking the responsibility to tell one's deepest truth, a truth that maybe our own ears may be hearing for the first time with the courage to allow every wave of emotion to surge, discovering the richness of our own emotional landscape, and discovering how our many varied emotions are navigational instruments for the journey of our life.

Again, just understanding this part about Hosting I realized that it is my commitment to myself to keep listening to my own deepest truth, and to be committed to follow that deepest voice in myself in the journey of my own life, so that I can then teach the Host about speaking from that deepest place in themselves. This kind of Hosting reminds me of Otto Scharmer's U Theory.

The U Theory of Otto Scharmer says that if we allow ourselves to go to the deepest truth of ourselves, it's like coming down the left side of a U. At the bottom of that U are our core truths, some of them riddled with pain, some of them riddled with confusion, some of them riddled with frustration. It is the truths we've not been able to speak. And when we can speak them, we start moving on the other side of the U, on the right side of that U. And that Otto Scharmer says is "the future calling us."

I began to see that true Hosting is the willingness to enter the U, and go to the very bottom of that U, to sense what is at our deepest core, so that we can come out on the other side, and have the future "the real future" calling us.

- e. As I kept teaching the Art of Hosting and the Art of Visiting in this way I myself understood it more and more. Something new emerged. And what was new was the wording of the Visit. It became clear to me that the wording needed to be aligned with the task. If the visitor's task is full presence, then the only words the visitor needs to use is, when they land for example: "*I am now with you, ready to hear you.*" And the question they ask when they've heard deeply and generatively what their partner is saying, the question then becomes: "*Am I with you?*" Since realizing that, I have shifted from "*Do I get you?*" and "*Am I getting you?*" to "*Am I with you?*"

"*Am I with you?*" requires the commitment of full presence, full engagement, and full aliveness. And when the question is asked "*Am I with you?*" if we're not, it becomes very clear, and then we make the adjustment of actually landing with aliveness, vitality, and engagement. "*Am I with you?*"

Now for the Host the challenge becomes to really allow the Visitor to come in, to "land" in them, to really penetrate. It is the task of allowing somebody to really be with me, so that the Host can say: "*Yes, you are with me today.*"

What I discovered in beginning to use this new language, that it actually encourages the Visitor to be "with" their partner, and the Host to let their partner in. I can see more and more that unless that dynamic of "*I am with you*" and "*Am I with you?*" and "*Yes, you are with me,*" unless that dynamic is deepened and strengthened, the visit does not have the transformative power that it can have.

4. The contradiction and memory re-consolidation

With this new wording, I noticed that a radical “contradiction” occurs in the moment. The Host now has someone there with them, present and nurturing, in a place where they have been alone their whole entire life, up to this moment. This powerful new reality is what allows for what is now called **memory re-consolidation**. It’s an actual change in the synaptic processing. And this process of memory re-consolidation is becoming more and more deeply understood with neurobiological studies into the nature of memory. It is based primarily on the creation of deep contradictions to the implicit messages. The implicit messages which is for us *“I am alone here.” “I’m experiencing this completely alone, and I will always been alone here.”* The major contradiction of the Visit, is *“I am with you today”* and *“Am I with you?”* and *“Yes, you are with me.”*

5. Unraveling the “survival knot”: The Main Square

In shifting the language, a new revolutionary realization came to me. As I guided couples through the process of “unraveling the survival knot,” I noticed that there comes a point where the Host begins to repeat themselves. Nothing new emerges. It seems like they’re turning in circles about the same scene.

It was towards the end of the first Master Class, and I had just watched the Bob Newhart “Stop It” You-Tube. I felt embolden to guide the Host to “stop it,” and to dare to speak a deeper truth. As soon as I saw them circling, I would repeat the statement that actually would lead them into a deeper truth. And that’s when the concept of the **Main Square** was born.

The Main Square is arriving at a coherent truth, which lies at the core of our being. When we are in the Main Square we feel that something deep has aligned itself. There is relief. There is a new kind of ease. I have a sense that the main square is a truth we’ve been longing to speak, which has been just underneath the surface, but we’ve not been able to capture it by ourselves. Arriving at the Main Square with our partner aligns us with our essence.

6. The Core implicit message

This has brought me to the new discovery in my exploration that I want to share with you today. It is about the preparation of the couple to enter into their “toughest neighborhood” as a Host and a Visitor. It is about the connection between the Main Square and the core, implicit message we carry into our relationships.

THE NEW REALIZATIONS

I'd like to start by describing the new realizations, then I will go back to describe the steps of the work, and then I will give you a live example, of this couple I worked with.

1. First of all, I want to let you know that the insights that I'm sharing with you today came to me because the Kasher Choreographer sent me a great variety of couples in the last few months and among them two couples at the very extremity, on both sides of the bell curve. Let me describe both couples so that you get a sense of the facts of how they fall on both sides of this bell curve.

One couple who arrived is a young couple in their early 30s, pregnant with their first baby, and deeply in love. They received the Intensive session as a gift from their parents. He had never been in therapy, never thought of therapy, never wanted therapy, and he was even ambivalent about the whole thing.

The other couple is a middle-aged couple. He, married twice before, two children, and two traumatic divorces before this marriage. She, married once before with four children. After a soaring romantic phase, the relationship between them became embittered, until they actually divorced each other, then came back to each other, left each other again with her taking the four children and leaving for another country, and him following her there. When they are coming to me, they are still legally divorced. They have had eight therapists, and they have been fired by two of them.

So you can see that on one side of the bell curve is a young couple who normally would not land in a two-day Intensive session to do deep work on their relationship. They're so in love. They're so new at this marriage thing. They're pregnant. They're just looking forward to a gorgeous future.

On the other side of the bell curve, a couple who has come and gone, has had traumas of loss, has had divorces, are divorced from each other, don't know what to look forward to in the future, and yet, because of their Buddhist teacher who told them "stop it! and turn towards each other," and they listened to him, they arrived at my doorstep.

What was so amazing for me is that in working with both these couples I realized that number one, every single thing that I do with a couple, from the moment they come in and I meet them, from that first moment on, is to prepare them for the process of "unraveling the survival knot." I have not really known that that is what I do. I saw it because I did it with a young couple in love who unraveled the most complex "survival knot." And I did it with a challenging couple, divorced so many times, legally divorced, eight therapists, who also just like the young couple in love, unraveled the most complex "survival knot."

But I cannot say that the "survival knot" of the young couple in love was less complex than the "survival knot" of the couple challenged by life. Both "survival knots," the knot of the loving couple, and the knot of the couple so wanting a normal life, both "survival knots" were complex in their own way. What I saw is that I in my work with couples all I do is to prepare them for the "unravelling of the survival knot." I had not been aware of this before,

even though it was hiding in plain sight, because I've done it for a long time. I didn't see that the incremental tasks that I'm giving a couple are a preparation to "unravel the survival knot," in order to liberate the hidden energy, and to free them to design and create a conscious relationship.

I had understood that the Visit to the "toughest neighborhoods" does free up energy. What I didn't understand is that everything I do is on the way to free that energy, so that the couple can design a conscious relationship.

2. The second thing I realized with working with these couples was that when a person arrives at their Main Square, the statement that they make there is the implicit message that has lived inside of them from childhood, the implicit message that has actually brought them to this particular relationship, so that it can be combined with another implicit message, and ultimately be dissolved. It is as if the child has been waiting all this time for someone to show up, just exactly there where they have been alone, sad, frightened, hopeless, helpless, and someone finally shows up there to be with this child.
3. I also understood clearly that in picking the five random images from childhood, that we "grab" in order to tell the story of the Main Square actually goes to the core and ties everything together in one integrated story with a coherent red thread. I realized that these five random pictures are attached to the Main Square, and have been attached to the Main Square forever. But when that Main Square statement cannot be spoken, we cannot understand our history.

More and more couples are saying: "I've known this story, I've known that story, but I've never seen how it all ties together, how it becomes the "red thread" of your life."

What I've come to see is that once these five images come up, the implicit memory become explicit memory. And once it becomes explicit memory, it is integrated into our narrative. Then the past cannot anymore be the "silent voter," as in the wonderful, wise sentence, "The past is a silent voter in our apparent present," a sentence by Irv Milowe from the first Master Class. That sentence really is an accurate description of what happens when the implicit isn't yet explicit. But once the implicit memory goes into explicit, the new narrative gives us a chance to be the "author" of our current life and of our relationship.

4. What I also understood is that the "new neighborhood under construction" that the couple names after they have been visiting into their implicit memory, represents the beginning stretching steps of taking responsibility for our lives. And as we take responsibility for those steps, we then can really become the authors of the book of our lives.

STEP-BY-STEP STRUCTURE

What I'd like to do now is review the steps that I take with a couple. I will take them one step at a time. And then I will illustrate the structure with the live example of the couples that I saw.

Here are the steps I take with a couple to “unravel the survival knot”:

A. THE MAP:

I start the journey by giving them a map. I take my book and I show them the whole map of the journey we're going to take. I'll say to them, “We are now going to “unravel the survival knot” that keeps the energy of your relationship stuck. And it's going to be a Visit to the “toughest neighborhoods.” And here is the map of how we're going to be doing this.”

And I create a big rectangle and I say, “The person who's the Host is going to enter their “toughest neighborhood.” I take my pen, and I actually draw a line into the neighborhood. Then I say, “At first you'll be traveling in streets that you know, the tough streets, the things that have been really painful, frustrating, confusing, dark for you. You'll travel the streets that you know.”

Then I draw a few streets. Then I show them a turning point. I say, “From the side of your eye you might suddenly see something that is there, that has been there, but you've not named it before, you've not seen it before, you've not spoken it before, you've not been fully aware of it before. It's been there. Today take that street. That will be a turning point. And from that new street, another new street will come, and another new street, until you will arrive at what I call the Main Square. And the Main Square is where a truth is being spoken that has lived inside of you for a long, long time, but you've not been consciously aware of it.”

“When you are in the Main Square, you will sit on a bench there with your partner for a little while, because it's important that you sit there a bit together and linger. And when you both feel like *‘OK, yes, that is so true about me, and I've wanted to tell you this forever. And here it is today. I'm finally telling you...’* when that is all nice and settled, then we're going to go into the next rectangle.” And I draw the next rectangle.

“That one is about the ‘core reason’ that you need to be saying this today. The core is at the deepest level of your life's purpose, and the true purpose of this relationship. “Why do you need to say all this today?” And these days I stay very focused on it being truly a ‘core reason.’ ‘Core reasons’ have to do with the highest purpose of our lives, the greatest purpose of the love in relationship, the strongest purpose of the family, the purpose of aliveness, the purpose of generosity of spirit. Whatever the deepest purpose of life can be, I stay with the ‘core reason’ until something at that deep level of meaning shows up. My deep belief that all of us are born knowing that there is a deep purpose to our lives.

“Once you will have that”—I'm continuing to show the couple the map. “Once you will have spoken that ‘core reason’ you will enter a very, very special place.” And that's when I make a very big rectangle and I say to them: “It's the place Implicit Memory.” And I explain to the couple that the distinction between explicit and implicit memory.

“So there’s many things you know about your childhood, and you know the sequence, and you know the people, and you know how it happened. But what you don’t know, which is implicit, is a certain climate, a ‘red thread’ that weaves through your childhood, that you don’t know consciously about, and that gives you messages about how life can be led, must be led. It gives you messages about others, and about yourself that actually are there inside of you, and you have not explored them. Yet they may have an incredible impact on you and your life and your relationship. And we are going to go in there in a very special way.”

So I explain that part, and I say, “When we’re done with that part, when that which is implicit, the ‘red thread’ of your life as a child, when that now shows itself, and becomes explicit, we will enter a whole new place.” And I make another rectangle, a smaller one. I say, “That’s the rectangle of the new context that you want to build in your life. Now that that which has been implicit is explicit, what is a ‘new neighborhood under construction’ that you want to build that makes your life the life you actually want to live, as the ‘author’ of the book of your life?”

I tell the couple: “We will do this on both sides.” And I tell the couple that each visit will take about two to two-and-a-half hours on one side, so that they know that we are just going to take the time it takes to go layer by layer into all of these rectangles that I’ve just shown them on the map.

My first step is actually showing them the map. I realized that now that I know that I’m a guide, it’s very important for me to actually show them the map of where we’re going, because I know that we’re going to go to very dark places. And it’s good for them to have the structure, the map, that I’m going to be following, so that we can then even review together afterwards and say, “Remember this where you turned a corner? That was your Main Square. That was the ‘core reason.’ That was the implicit that became explicit. This is your new neighborhood.”

Having that map also allows me then later to review with the couple the journey, the territory that we traveled with this map. That’s number one.

B. NAME THE “TOUGHEST NEIGHBORHOOD”:

When I finish describing the map, I ask the couple to write in their journals the name of the toughest neighborhood for them in the relationship. It should be one word, two words maximum. I then check in with them. “What are your ‘toughest neighborhoods’?” Let’s say that in this case, it is the “neighborhood of Total Despair,” and the “neighborhood of Lack of Communication.”

Then I will say to the couple, “We’ve got a choice here. We can go first to ‘Total Despair’ or we can go first to ‘Lack of Communication.’ Which one do you think we ought to visit first? Should we visit first ‘Total Despair’ or ‘Lack of Communication’?”

I purposely say the names many times, in a neutral tone, because these neighborhoods are fraught with pain. When I simply, in a kind of neutral, and sometimes even an excited tone, I bring the couple bring them back to the principle that says: “A relationship is not a problem to be solved. A relationship is an adventure to be lived.”

That’s truly what I do when I say to them, “Where do we go first? Do we go first to

‘Total Despair’ or to ‘Lack of Communication’?” Because what I’m really saying is, “This is an adventure to be lived, and I’m guiding you into this adventure, and I’m just excited to go there with you, because I know that out of this journey comes liberation, energy, vitality, choices.” When I’m repeating this again and again, my purpose really is to invite them into that adventure.

When the choice is made, I let the couple know that this might be a good time for a pee break. And the reason is that I tell them this could be a long journey, and I want all of us to not be focused on our bladders. So I do take a pee break at the time. I even recommend a prophylactic pee break if they don’t need to pee. But this is the time actually to prepare ourselves. And it’s interesting. For me it’s also part of the idea of “We’re going on a big adventure. Let’s get ready.”

Then the choice has been made, and we know who the Host is. What I then do, when we come back from the break, is I review with the host what they’re going to do. I show them the map again because now I’m talking to them as a Host in particular. I say: “When you enter the neighborhood of ‘Total Despair’ you are going to go through streets you know.

But what I’m encouraging you to do is to discover streets you don’t know, and to actually open up to those streets, and tell them to your partner, and really verbalize, externalize something that’s lived in you, but you’ve not said it.” So I show it to them on the map and I say: “Because the purpose this time is not so much to speak, as it is to arrive at the Main Square, and sit there with your partner for a while and for the first time.”

So I’m reviewing with the Host that first part, all the way to the Main Square, so that they know that as a guide, that is what I am going to do. My contract with them is that I’m guiding them to the Main Square. It then gives me the permission to step in when I see that it’s getting there, I can say, “You’re getting close to the Main Square,” or I can say: “That sentence gets you away from the Main Square. Go back to where you were. Enter it again.” So basically I take the Host again through the map, creating a contract, in which I am the guide leading them to the Main Square.

C. THE JOURNEY:

- 1) PRESENCING: Then the visit starts. As in all Visits, there is the beginning of “presencing,” which is just sitting, and gazing, and being grateful for this moment, and feeling the touch of the hands, and the language of the hands, and grounding the feet, and breathing. There is that “meditation in connection” that is the beginning of every visit. More and more, I realize the depth of that moment, of really giving couples a chance to see that when they sit together and they begin gazing, and they feel their hands, and they breathe, and they ground, and they close their eyes, and they feel their hands touching, and then they open their eyes, and discover each other again and again, that in a way in that moment there is “eternity.”

I take time now more and more to teach this “presencing” as a unique event in itself. It’s the beginning of every visit. But I’m understanding that if we never did another thing but sat across from each other, held each other’s hands, felt the power of the language of the skin, grounded ourselves, breathed together, and were grateful for this very moment, we would learn everything there is to learn about life. So that first “presencing” that they do it in the

service of this visit, they realize is part of every visit. It is in a way the most important first structural event.

D. A WALK TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE BODY SCAN:

When that's done, I then ask the host to close their eyes, and to do a body scan, to really go from head to toe, from toe to head. "Where does this neighborhood sit in your world? You have many, many, many, many neighborhoods. There's only one called Total Despair. Go there."

Now the sentence—there are many, many, many neighborhoods in your world. There's only one called "Total Despair." It's a very important sentence because that "toughest neighborhood" has a way of drawing us in. It really is like Velcro. It really wants our attention. But it is important to know that "There are so many neighborhoods. This is just one of them. But now go into it and feel in your body what it's like."

Now that body scan time, just feeling the sensations connected to be being in that neighborhood, is a very important piece of the journey because our experiences sit in our body. And the more aware we are of where they sit in our body, the more we then can verbalize, and arrive at the main square. This idea of knowing the body allows that which isn't externalized to begin to show itself.

So I say to that person, "Check from head to toe. Keep your eyes closed and just go inside of your body. Where does this neighborhood sit in your body? Where are the sensations? And when you're done, shake your head *yes*. And when you have shaken your head *yes* I'll give you another instruction."

And the instruction I give is to imagine the neighborhood as a gated community, a community with a very big gate. The gate is closed. "And today you're opening the gate. You are going to welcome your partner into that neighborhood. You're going to welcome them everywhere into that neighborhood." And you can see that this is really an induction to say: "Open it all up. Let your partner in everywhere."

I give that some time. "Really visualize yourself opening the gate, taking your partner in everywhere in this neighborhood. And open your eyes when you are ready to really welcome your partner." At that point comes the invitation, the acceptance of the invitation, and the journey to the Main Square.

E. ARRIVING AT MAIN SQUARE:

Once the couple has arrived at the main square, I announce it. "This is the Main Square. Say it again. Hear it again. Say it again. Hear it again." And I allow the couple to linger on a bench together in the Main Square.

What is interesting is that sometimes out of that lingering comes a deeper statement, one that is actually even more true for that person. But I linger there long enough for the statements to be

said again, heard again, said again, heard again, and for them to imagine themselves sitting together there, on that bench, in the Main Square. The sun is shining. There's beautiful nature around them. And there they are. And that truth that has needed to be said for so long is finally spoken.

F. CORE REASON:

Then I speak the sentence, "It is essential that I say all this to you today, and the date of today, February 6, 2015, because..." And then we go to a core reason. And it's never about because "I don't want this anymore." But it's always about because "I want you there" or because "I love you" or because "you're the person of my life and I want to build a family." It is always something inspiring, and I don't stop until it inspires all of us.

Once that reason is spoken, I write it down so that the couple can look at each other, and I can read that reason to them again and again. Then the Visitor can repeat it, and the Host can hear it. And the Host can say it again to the Visitor. I linger there again because those are new statements spoken to each other that need to be integrated.

G. FIVE RANDOM IMAGES AND THE "RED THREAD"

At that point I will take again a pee break because about an hour and 15 minutes to an hour-and-a-half have passed. And therefore it's a good idea to take a quick pee break and a stretch. When we come back we go into the five random images. "It's essential I say this to you today because when I was a child..." and the five random images that then turn into an archetypical story—"Once upon a time, there was a little girl... Once upon a time there a little boy... And that archetypical story shows the "red thread" of childhood.

H. THE "TIME MACHINE"

After that comes the famous "time machine" that allows the partner/Visitor to go back into the childhood of their partner, and that allows so many of the implicit messages to be made explicit—implicit messages of the family, implicit messages inside of the child. All these messages now are made explicit, and are made explicit by a "champion." And that is a complete contradiction to what has happened in the past. Therefore there is enormous liberation with that "time machine" process. It then ends with mutual "thank-you's," and "what touched me the most in the visit."

I. NAMING A "NEW NEIGHBORHOOD UNDER CONSTRUCTION":

And then the very important piece of naming the "new neighborhood under construction."

J. MUTUAL APPRECIATION AND QUALITIES OF THE SPACE:

I always end with the couple appreciating each other for the journey and naming the qualities of the relational space.

A LIVE EXAMPLE:

What I'd like to do now is to illustrate the point of the Main Square and the implicit messages that connect to childhood with the live example of the couple I described to you earlier.

Here is a couple divorced from each other, having seen eight therapists, and finally the Buddhist teacher who says to them: "You're going to do this work!" And here they are now visiting each other in the "toughest neighborhood." Hers was called "My Style of Being." His was called "Marginalization."

When we visited hers, what she spoke of in the new street was: "I carry secrets, and I have not said them to you." The secret that came out is really interesting. It had to do with a feeling she has that she walks in the light, and that he drags her into the darkness. And whenever she is with him, she feels dragged into the darkness. But she actually does her life by following the light. There's a light inside of her that guides her. And she's never really spoken to him about that guidance, about the light, about how she lives on the inside. Ultimately when she got to the Main Square, what she said was, "I'd like to figure out how you and I together can walk in the path of light." And when she said this it was like something just aligned itself fully for her.

The story that came out from childhood is a story of a little girl who felt truly that she was a "being of light," and that she arrived in a family where there was a lot of darkness. No one understood what she was about. She would find herself going into the bathroom a lot, closing the door so that she could stay with the light, because she felt that being surrounded by everything that was going on in the family was just dimming that light.

When she was 14 here is the image she describes: "The light is diminished because my mother has been able to get in front of my light and make it a very dark place." What she is talking about is that her mother is sharing a secret with her: she has a plan to leave her dad, but she must keep the secret and cannot tell dad. So this young girl is carrying the secret that mother is leaving her dad for two years.

When she's 16 she does tell her dad that the mother wants a divorce. She is the one who brings this news to the father. This of course should have never been on her shoulders. And from then on everything shifts. The family breaks down, there is havoc and pain. The last picture she describes is one in which she has a boyfriend and steps into the family of this boyfriend, and there she can actually begin to see again what it's like to bring light into a family.

What she realized and he realized as the story was told was that she has recreated in her life with him this incapacity to walk in the light. Everything about how their relationship evolved actually created the darkness that she felt she lived in as a child, with the inability to continue this path of light that she feels so deeply drawn to express.

What was very beautiful was the way the man then came into her childhood with the Time Machine. The messages he brought to the mother, to the father, to the brother, to the sister, all had to do with allowing this girl to lead the family into the light, which of course was something he was not aware of in his relationship with her, and which he could never let her do with him. And he began to see how he had been such an agent of darkness in her life.

On his side he began to describe to her when he arrived at the Main Square that he has felt marginalized with her four children. She seems to have an amazing relationship with the children as a mom, but she wasn't able to be both mom and wife. And then slowly but surely in his relationship with her, he felt like he did step into a dark room. The window got smeared, and ultimately barricaded, and he found himself alone in the darkness. What he said to her is: "I live behind a window that is boarded up. I'm afraid it can't be changed. I feel pain, helplessness, and hopelessness about it." Ultimately the Main Square statement was: "I feel hopeless and helpless."

She could sit with him there. She could actually bring the light that she is into that place that she had never been able to visit, because of the fear that it would take the light away from her. In this case, she just simply brought her light into that place of a sense of hopeless, helpless darkness.

When he went into his childhood he found himself, in each of the five random pictures that came up, feeling completely helpless and hopeless. Whether it was being bullied by kids, whether it was his parents' deteriorating marriage, whether it was not being able to help his father when his mother left, it just was one thing after another. Each picture putting him into a place of hopeless and helpless, including the one where he as a young freshman he gets drunk, and he is taken to the home of a friend, and the mother arranges a bed for him in the basement, that he wakes up just covered with his own vomit, alone and embarrassed. And even though the mother says: "It's OK, don't worry about it," he is profoundly embarrassed about himself, and just feels in the darkness of that basement covered with vomit, hopeless and helpless.

The "red thread" for him really was being alone inside of that hopelessness and helplessness. And as she accompanied him there, she saw for the first time how she had really not known how to just be with there with him, and bring her light into that place. For the first time he realized that he had chosen as a profession to become a surgeon, an orthopedic surgeon. And that as a surgeon, he for the first time felt: "I can fix anything." He was an outstanding surgeon.

What's so interesting is that because of a bad back and a surgery, and then losing a part of his eye, and not being able to see through one eye, he lost his capacity to be that surgeon. He lost that one place in his life where he felt that that core of helplessness and hopelessness was not there. He only realized when she visited, and she came to be with him there, that he when losing his work as a surgeon, he actually had a chance as he did today, to visit something that had been with him forever, and that he had been all alone in it, and couldn't transcend because of the loneliness in it.

So here are the new neighborhoods that they decided to build: she decided to build a neighborhood called "H and A: a Path Together in the Light" and that in that new neighborhood under construction, her job will be transcend that old message that says "others will pull me into darkness," and to be willing to bring the light into their path together.

He decided to call his new neighborhood “13th Street” based on my explanation that 13 in Hebrew means “love” and “oneness.” He called the new neighborhood “13th Street” because he realized the importance for him to allow himself to surrender to that place of hopeless and helpless, and then step into the next place of how to be in connection from there, not beyond there but from there.

They ended with some brainstorming on how they would do it. They realized the connection between the work they had done on the first day on their Languages of Love and their “mother tongue,” and the task at hand. They saw that items that they had given to each other would be their very best way to daily build the two neighborhood of “H and A: a Path Together in the Light” and “13th Street.” In committing to the lists that they had actually formulated on the first day, they would be able to stretch into giving to each other what they so longed for.

A REVIEW:

Having said that, I am now at the juncture in which I told you all that I really wanted to tell you. I just want to do a review of the milestones because they’re the ones that led me to what I spoke today.

The first one was the realization that there’s one guiding principle: “What disconnects us is our reactive survival dance. What connects us is the mutual embrace of three invisible connectors: the space, the bridge, and the encounter.”

I then realized that I’m a teacher of the Art of Hosting and the Art of Visiting. And I’m a guide into the various “neighborhoods” of a couple’s each world.

Visiting is bringing one’s full presence in the “now,” and Hosting is telling one’s truth one true, essential sentence at a time.

I saw that there is a level of listening called “generative listening” that allows us to truly see with “new eyes,” and hear with “new ears,” and I saw increasingly the responsibility we have to speak our deepest truth.

I then saw that the language needed to change. The language needs to continuously reemphasizes *“I am with you!”* and *“Yes, you are with me,”* because that is the purpose of the whole journey: *“I am with you!”* and *“Yes, you are with me.”*

I also noticed that everything I now do, and every step I take with the couple is in the service of the “unraveling of the survival knot,” because in that unraveling there is the implicit becoming explicit, and the possibility then of memory re-consolidation, where the “Past does not have to be a “silent voter” anymore, and our Present can be created anew by our liberated selves in connection.



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