

From the Chairman's Desk.....

As we begin a brand new year we have much for which to be grateful, in reflecting on the progress made in Imago Africa since our last newsletter. In this report I will be giving some feedback on our participation in the recent Global Summit of Imago, as well as the IRI (Imago Relationships International) Conference held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. Mia will then chat about what is happening in Imago Africa on the local scene.

Global Summit

The global summit comprises representatives of all the International Imago regions, both within North America and around the world. It involves feedback and sharing about what is taking place in each region in terms of the development of Imago, training and links between the regions and the international Imago board.

This was held from Saturday 21st to Monday 23rd October 2006 at El Sueno del Corazon, Harville and Helen's ranch, situated near the rural town of Abiqui, about 2 hours drive north of Albuquerque. The area in which the ranch lies is very similar to that of the Great Karoo in SA, with its own unique and particular beauty. Members from the worldwide Imago community were represented at the global summit. Countries represented included, among others:- Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Southern Africa, Denmark, Sweden, Israel, and Russia.

Kobus tabled an excellent presentation on Imago in Africa, covering the time span from the earliest days through to a number of dynamic and new ventures, including his own presentations on Imago to more than 3000 people in Namibia. Mention was also made of the potential of expanding Imago to parts of North and East Africa through UNISA.

Maryrita Glazer, as Chair of the Global Committee, led the Summit program, which made use extensively of Imago Communologue as the basis for our interactions and discussions. While, for some, this represented a slow and somewhat frustrating process of dialogue, use of this approach ensured that everybody had a chance to be heard and, as far as possible, understood by members of the Summit.



Rio Grande valley Cottonwoods



El Sueno del Corazon Ranch



Group photo of some of the Global Summit 2006 Members



Kobus, Anita and Joy at the Global Summit



Sharing Dinner at El Sueno



Social time together

IRI Annual Conference: “Empathy in action”: Old Town Hotel, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

This conference that is held annually in October, offers an opportunity for members of the International Imago Faculty, Keynote Speakers and other contributors to hold workshops and seminars, focussed on a central theme.

The 2006 IRI conference, held in the Old Town Hotel in Albuquerque, NM, had as its theme: “Empathy in action” and was attended by nearly 400 delegates, the biggest to date.

Imago Africa was represented by Dave and Joy Mills (Johannesburg), Kobus and Anita vd Merwe (Pretoria), Hilze Strauss (Namibia) and Grete Becker (Cape Town).

The opening ceremony of the conference included a procession of flag-bearers, carrying the flags of all the regions in which Imago is active. Joy carried the South African flag, while Dave carried the Namibian flag. The ceremony was concluded by Native American traditional dances introducing the delegates to part of the culture of the area in which the conference was held.

One of the keynote speakers, Dr. Helen Fisher, presented to the conference a fascinating theory whereby personality types could be attributed to the interplay of hormones – see her website at www.chemistry.com Other topics included in the program of the conference addressed issues such as Imago and parenting, conflict resolution in organisations, and Imago and sexuality.

During the closing ceremony of the conference, Kobus vd Merwe, on behalf of Imago Africa, received a special award for significant progress in developing Imago. We are justifiably proud of this recognition given by IRI.



Joy proudly displaying the SA Flag



Display of some of the regions' flags



Mexican Band entertains on the Opening Night



Part of Tim Atkinson's presentation to the Conference



Swedish representatives signing the Imago Local Organisation agreement



Some of the many flags displayed at the IRI Conference

Imago Africa – local scene

'06-'07 Registrations

Registrations have now been finalised and the details of registered therapists are reflected on both the Imago Africa and IRI websites. In terms of the Imago local organisation agreement, all our registered therapists are also members of IRI.

We thank Carmen Sear for all her effort in designing and distributing a certificate to registered members! This will be posted to you shortly.

As with any professional body (for example the HPCSA), registration takes place once a year. A couple of reminders are sent out via e-mail approximately 2 months before the due date and members are informed once their registration has been received. Late registrations will not be accepted. Any money received after the registration due date, will be transferred across to the next year's registration for that member and in case of an increase in fee, the member will owe the balance.

To speed up the process, please follow registration guidelines closely.

'07-'08 registrations will take place and be finalised by end September this year.

Database

Please remember that it is the responsibility of each active Imago therapist (registered as a member of Imago Africa or not) to ensure that his or her details are correct, as reflected on the database. An updated version is sent out annually with registrations and occasionally through the year.

To change or update your details, e-mail membership@imagoafrica.com.

Development of Imago in Southern Africa

We are thrilled that during the above-mentioned IRI conference, Kobus vd Merwe was invited to be interviewed by members of the IRI faculty, following which it was confirmed that they have accepted him as our first trainee I Imago clinical instructor. As a result of this, we anticipate greatly accelerated development of Imago in our region in terms of the possibility of offering accessible training.

The 2007 Imago Africa training program includes the Basic Clinical training and Workshop presenter's training conducted by Jette Simon. For full details, consult the Imago Africa website at www.imagoafrica.com or make contact with Kobus vd Merwe at kobus@ident.co.za

2007 Imago Africa international conference

Notification of the holding of the 2nd Imago Africa International Conference has been sent to more than 10 000 recipients. The conference will run on 29th to 30th September and 1st October 2007 at the Airport Grand Hotel, adjacent to Johannesburg International Airport (O.R. Tambo International).

One of the main objectives in the holding of this Conference is to provide the opportunity for our Imago community to connect, learn from one another and gain from the international perspectives presented. Further to this, we hope to promote Imago to the wider therapeutic and general community while at the same time providing opportunity to forge a closer connection between IRI and our local community.

The AGM (annual general meeting) will also take place during this conference and the Imago community is urged to attend in order to give their input and feedback, be updated on the business of Imago Africa, and participate in standing and voting in terms of the Imago Africa committee.

The theme of the conference is: "Imagine Imago – living in conscious relationship". Keynote speakers include Jette Simon (member of IRI faculty) and Tim Atkinson (executive director of IRI). Invitations to other international keynote speakers are pending and invitations are extended to all members of our Imago community to present papers/conduct seminars as part of the conference program. In this regard, please make direct contact with Carmen Sear at: carmen@ianopperman.com

For full information on the conference, kindly e-mail Carmen Sear.

We take this opportunity to wish you a very happy, exciting and peaceful 2007 and look forward to connecting with you at the conference.

Dave Mills and Mia du Toit.

Useful articles

Back to basics! The following two articles, with which many of you are probably familiar, are very useful to give to new couples who enter therapy. They offer the basic theory of Imago with some case examples.

Nature's plan for emotional healing or *Why we choose our partner* by G. Brainerd (www.relationship-help.com/articlesdetail.asp?id=3&cat=All)

How We Really Choose Our Mates

By: Gary Brainerd Ph.D

When two people fall in love, something profound is happening that goes far beyond physical attraction, desire for companionship and even similarity of values and interests. There is an activation of an unconscious agenda that began years ago, rooted in childhood hurts and unmet needs. That agenda stated simply is this: We are all unconsciously looking for a particular someone who will help us finish childhood, heal childhood wounds and regain wholeness. We believe this is Nature's plan for emotional healing.

There seems to be built into the natural order that nature consistently tries to heal itself. When there is a forest fire, nature immediately begins healing the scar and replenishing the forest. When there is an oil spill, nature begins a process that will eventually clean up the spill, though it may take 50 or more years. And where there are emotional wounds, nature also begins a process of healing. Just as surely as when you scratch your arm and a scab forms, infection is fought and new skin is created, so where there are emotional wounds in childhood (damaged egos, fears of rejection or abandonment, fears of being smothered or controlled, doubts about competency, neglect etc.), there is set in motion an unrelenting drive for healing. But since emotional wounds are invariably relationship wounds, emotional wounds can only be healed in relationship--and in a particular kind of relationship.

We can only be healed by the one who wounds us or a very reasonable facsimile.

We seem to be created so that the human psyche will only accept emotional healing from someone similar to the one who does the wounding. There is in all of us an innate striving for wholeness and completion that requires the selection of a mate that has the greatest potential for the healing of any childhood wounds and the fulfilling of any unmet childhood needs. To accomplish this, each person needs to be connected with someone who activates one's needs at the deepest level and who is similar enough to the wounding parents to make healing possible.

To accomplish this agenda of healing, we have to be connected to someone similar to the wounding parents.

But no one in their right mind would ever choose someone that had similar negative traits of their wounding parents. Who would consciously look for a life partner who is depressed, unavailable, distant and critical? It's as though Nature had to find a way to get us connected and bonded to a person who would eventually be painfully incompatible in very specific areas. As a solution, Nature created romantic love. Romantic love puts us temporarily on drugs, suppresses our awareness of the negative traits of our partner (love really is blind) and creates a great expectation of the fulfilling of unmet needs and the healing of old wounds. We remain in this state until we are bonded and hopefully married or committed.

Romantic Love is the way we get connected with someone who will eventually be incompatible in very specific and significant ways...because that is the kind of person we need for healing.

Then after the wedding (or just being together for a time), the drugs wear off, the bandages are ripped from our eyes and we see our partners as they really are, depressed, critical, not available, unreliable, neglectful--remarkably similar to negative traits in our parents. This is where most people bail out. They mistakenly conclude that they have made a major selection error, failing to see that this is indeed part of a natural plan for emotional healing. Almost half of all married couples get a divorce somewhere in this power struggle phase. And singles decide they have made a bad choice and move on to another relationship where the cycle begins again. These are indeed tragic and for the most part unnecessary choices.

There appears to be another factor in the selection process that makes this plan of nature even more remarkable. Not only are we connected with someone who could be the most powerful healer for us, we are also put with someone who will require us to grow in areas we are deficient in so that we can be a healer for them. What one partner needs the most for healing, the other is least able to give--until a part of the self that was repressed is activated and character defenses are softened.

As one partner stretches to heal the other, he or she becomes more whole in the process.

1. If we learned to protect ourselves as children by suppressing the emotional side of our self-functions, we will be put with someone who will require that we share our feelings at a significant level for their own healing.
2. If we learned to be diffuse and emotional, we will be put with someone who will implore us to become more rational or thoughtful.
3. If we found it was dangerous to reach out for contact or emotional closeness and became quiet and distant, we will be attracted to someone who will need us to reach out for emotional closeness in order for them to be healed, someone who will beg and demand us to initiate contact.
4. If we learned as a child to be overly clinging or needy, we will be attracted to someone who will ask us to give them space, respect their

separateness and enjoy their freedom.

The good news is that when couples recognize what is happening in their selection of a mate, decide to cooperate with the healing agenda, and enter into a process to accomplish this, wonderful things begin happening. Wise therapists are now teaching couples how to become healers of each other, and in so doing are helping them to regain their own wholeness.

What is needed is a major reeducating of the American public so that singles and couples do not circumvent the very plan for healing and wholeness that got them together in the first place.

This web site is to helping couples understand and cooperate with this healing agenda. This site was designed to be a place where couples can go to actually work on their relationship and get very real and practical help on their relationship journey. If this article seems relevant to your experience, be sure to explore the Couple's Fun-Love-Work Station membership.

Recommended reading for couples is Dr. Harville Hendrix's "Getting the Love You Want." This is the first public presentation of Imago Relationship Therapy. Recommended reading for singles is Harville Hendrix's "Keeping the Love You Find." This book represents one of the first in-depth preparation programs for committed relationships available for singles.

Through this lies Happiness by Tali Rosen
(www.hedyyumi.org/articles/isrnews.html)

Through This Lies Happiness. . .

By Tali Rosen

If you've felt like you've hit a dead-end in your marriage. . . If you've asked yourself whether you have really chosen the right partner . . . If you've dreamed about love and happiness in marriage and instead you've succumbed to 'reality' . . . then the next pages present a new angle at looking at your relationship. They are based on a method of treating couples that is proving successful for many.

The theory behind the method says that each of us finds a partner who requires that we reveal and re-claim our whole self. That partner becomes the healer of past pains. Couples in which one partner is a mental health professional have participated in this workshop in Israel and told me about their experiences. *Getting the Love You Want* is not only the name of a book. And in order to find love, it is not only enough to read it, but it is definitely a beginning.

Harville Hendrix, Ph.D., author of *Getting the Love You Want* and *Keeping the Love You Find*, maintains that everyone can create a healing, loving relationship, often without ongoing therapy. The refreshing discovery is that his method is not just an interesting theory. It is a practical system with skills to practice and worksheets to assist you. It is possible to try to do the exercises in the books. But it is easier and more effective to learn the method within the framework of a workshop. The workshop is not lectures, not therapy, not group work, and not a cult! The workshop is a time and place in which you work, with the assumption that through working, you will move forward as an individual and as a couple. Hedy and Yumi Schleifer, she a psychotherapist and he an aerospace engineer and businessman, conduct workshops using Hendrix' method. The Schleifer's arrived in Israel bringing the Hendrix 'toolbox' with the intention of teaching us how to use it.

The Mission of Marriage and Romantic Attraction

The basic assumption of this method says that marriage not only has a goal, but it has a mission. The mission is to help each other to heal the childhood 'wounds' that absolutely everyone carries within. Childhood wounds not only include obvious hurts, but all of our childhood needs that were not filled. Each of us has wounds. You do not have to have been abused or neglected to be wounded. Even a happy childhood carries wounding. "Children," said Freud, "are creatures that are never satiated, and there is no parent in the world who can react perfectly to the changing needs of the children."

Dr. Hendrix maintains not only that the origin of our frustrations as adults is actually tied to unfulfilled needs or other hurts in our childhood, but that choosing our partner is a consequence of our unconscious desire to heal or repair those wounds. "Our unconscious seeks the person who, on the surface, looks the least capable of giving us what we need most, primarily because that person is very much like our parents or other childhood caretakers," explains Hedy Schleifer.

Yumi gives an example: "My father was never home because of his business. My mother was a nervous woman and I had a very intelligent aunt who treated me as if I were her student. When I was looking for a partner, I had, of course, a list of what I wanted. She should be beautiful and smart and many other things, but an important part that actually determined my ultimate choice was my unconscious that was looking for someone who resembled my childhood caretakers. My unconscious looked for someone who would not be at home all the time and who would want to be my teacher. This is what I knew from the past. I knew how to cope with someone like that, and from exactly that kind of person, I wanted what I did not get as a child. I wanted the love from somebody who was away all the time, and that was one thing that was so difficult for me in our relationship. I still wanted from my parents what they (and then my partner) were not able to give me."

The 'Old Brain'

Yumi, of course, was not conscious of this process while he was courting Hedy. Dr. Hendrix says that none of us are aware of that process because it comes out of our 'old brain', our unconscious. To differentiate, what we call the 'new brain' includes the part of our brain that is conscious, that makes decisions, that thinks, that organizes information, and creates ideas. The old brain guards our existence and monitors our environment, inside and out, in order to insure our survival. It recognizes only two conditions, "danger" and "safety." It is like a sensitive radar system that signals the alert. It's goal is survival and it will not take unnecessary chances. Like in war, an airplane that has been identified as a dangerous enemy will be attacked. An airplane that is determined to be safe, and identified as an ally, will be granted permission to enter our air space.

What Is an 'Imago'?

The old brain recognizes the sense of safety and security from those people who took care of us and influenced us from the moment we were born. Every one of us carries within, a picture or image that is actually a combination of the positive and negative characteristics of all these people and their attitudes toward us. (This image is called the "imago") Romantic attraction, falling in love, depends very much on a potential partner's conformity to that image. The moment we meet somebody the old brain has its own list and checks to see if the characteristics of this person matches what we already know. If there is a fairly close match, there is a chance for the relationship. The chance of 'falling in love' grows proportionately as the conformity of the partner to the unconscious image increases.

"And why," says Hedy, "does our unconscious look for and find the person, who to the conscious mind, appears as if he or she least likely fits our parents and yet is likely to least able to give us what we are looking for? It is because the image that we hold inside consists not only of the positive qualities of caretakers, but also of the negative that we have experienced. At first glance, it looks like a trap: Why

should we go again to those places that hurt us? In a logical, conscious choice of a partner, we were supposed to look for those who could compensate for what we didn't receive from our caretakers - certainly not for someone who would act just like them! For example, if a person was wounded through parents who were not reliable and trustworthy, you would think the person would look for someone that they can easily trust. Someone who had a parent that was very overprotective would look for someone who would allow them freedom. But that is not what happens. The process of choosing our partner is governed far more by the unconscious.

Incompatible? -- Celebrate It !

According to Hendrix' theory, what looks like a trap, becomes a saving grace. When you learn new skills, it is precisely with that partner who seems most incompatible and who seems to re-wound you over and over again, that you both can learn to give your partner exactly what he or she has yearned for since childhood. This is part of the power of the method: by learning what our and our partner's childhood wounds are, we can then re-image our partner, learn target-specific things we can do and say, and can become mutual healers.

Hedy, in speaking about some of the healing that has occurred in her own relationship by using Hendrix' tools recalls; "When I began my practice as a psychotherapist, I was very busy. All of a sudden, for Yumi, it was as if I had disappeared. Once, when Yumi was coming in the house, I was on the telephone. He was terribly offended by this. Of course, it wasn't the telephone that caused his anger. My action triggered all the feelings of that lonely child of the past. With the new tools we had learned, he could not only talk with me about this, but also give me a whole new understanding that his anger and frustration was not a personal attack against me. This is a small child who keeps terrible feelings of solitude and loss inside him. So we then agreed that if the marriage is a mission, and my mission is to help heal those childhood wounds, I would gladly give up the phone when he arrived home. If he came home and I was on the phone, I would quickly finish the conversation. Yumi would go outside and come in the door again, and I would give him a genuine, warm welcome that he had never received as a boy. The interesting part is that when you start to receive this kind of attention, the wound gradually heals. At one point, he simply said, "OK, I think that's been enough for me. From now on, if you want to talk with someone, go ahead and continue the conversation."

Reclaiming our 'Lost Self' in Our Road to Wholeness

Moreover, our selection of our partner is not only meant to heal those wounds, but also to help us reclaim parts of ourselves that seem 'lost.' We will also look for someone who completes what seems to be missing in us. "Basically, we are born and live as energy expressing itself," explains Hedy. This energy is expressed in four basic ways; through our thinking, sensing, feeling, and acting. Each one of these channels of expression is equally legitimate and important. However, in the process of socialization, when our parents, teachers, and other adults (or institutions) gave us messages that told us who we were to be and how we were to act, some of this natural expression of our energy was blocked.

"When you tell a child things like, 'Don't touch your body,' 'Don't feel angry', 'Don't be so emotional,' 'You think too much,' or 'It's not lady-like to be athletic,' part of our natural expression goes into hiding. If you tell a quiet girl that she is being a good girl because she's not making noise, the message she gets is good means quiet. If the girl is energetic and spontaneous, this becomes even more of a problem. Such a girl finds herself with a caretaker who does not want to be connected with her, puts her in a corner, and says, "When you calm down, we will talk with you." She learns that being herself, expressing herself, is not OK. Instead of being nurtured, while being guided, in her way of expression, she learns to hide or repress her natural energy and spontaneity.

"During the time I was growing up, I was told, 'Don't be too smart or you will never find a husband.' And so I learned to block my thinking. Of course, who did I look for? Someone who has brains. My unconscious immediately saw this in Yumi and it was as if it said, 'Ah, here is my missing part.' With Yumi, it was an identical process, but in the area of feeling. In his home, they used to say, 'Don't cry, don't be so sensitive.' And what did he see in me? Warmth, sensitivity, and bulging emotions." We are not conscious of the process. We just feel complete, as if two halves make a whole. Hendrix says that we really find the one that will demand the we complete ourselves, that we reclaim our natural wholeness.

The Romantic Phase

In the romantic phase, that time of falling of love and 'courting', each person enjoys what the other person has to offer. I enjoyed the fact that Yumi had a good head on his shoulders, and he enjoyed the

fact that I am sensitive and feel everything. Afterward, during the next phase of the relationship, the power struggle, the difficulties started at exactly this point. Yumi would say to me, "Why do you have to start every sentence with 'I feel. . .'" "At least once in awhile, you could start with 'I think. . .'". I would say things to him like, 'Don't you have any feelings? You are hard and cold.' It's as if the unconscious hires a person who will demand that we use those very aspects of ourselves that we have had to negate and lock away. Falling in love is part of the trick of nature to connect two people who often appear so incompatible."

The Inevitable Power Struggle

The Romantic Phase is meant to fade away because we don't need it any more. It got us together with the perfect person who will bring all our issues right to the surface. Then comes the second stage, the painful one, the power struggle. This is the stage when you feel like your partner does not, and will not, give you what you want and need, or that your partner is hurting your feelings or doesn't care about you. For some couples, the power struggle is very intense, and for others relatively mild. But for everyone, it is an inevitable phase of the relationship.

"One way people react to the power struggle is to divorce," says Hedy. "When it feels impossible to bear it anymore, this seems like the only way to survive. (Another reaction that we see more and more in the United States is murder or suicide of one of the partners.) What many people do, is just 'cope.' Often, these people create what is called a 'parallel marriage': 'You do your thing, I'll do mine. We have to stay together for the children.' Often, these couples will spend more time with friends or the children than with each other. Many people have this kind of relationship that looks good on the outside and is basically dead on the inside. Another way people cope is by creating a 'hot marriage' in which there is a lot of fighting, making up, and great sex afterwards. On the surface, people tell themselves the relationship is OK because the passionate fights and reconciliations stimulate a lot of adrenalin and other chemicals that give the sensation of feeling good.

The Dance of the Hailstorm and the Turtle

"Yumi and I understood intuitively some of these things and we were really a good couple together. What happened with us was what Hendrix calls the power struggle between the 'turtle' and the 'hailstorm.' Every couple has, to some degree, its version of the hailstorm and the turtle. The hailstorm wants to talk about things, needs to relate, and projects things onto their partner. The turtle is the one who withdraws and locks himself or herself in.

Once, Yumi was in his shell for almost two weeks and I went crazy. When I couldn't stand it anymore, I grabbed him and screamed, 'Enough! Come out of there! I need you!' Yumi just stared into my eyes and replied, 'I hate you.' Although that was before we knew Hendrix' tools, I understood that the one who had shouted at me was not Yumi the adult, but Yumi the child. . .the child who had spent long days locked in the basement. It was as if I could actually envision him knocking on the basement door and screaming at the grownups that he hated them. And when I recognized that, I had empathy. I felt for him, as if someone had done this to our small child and I started to cry. Yumi sensed that I wasn't crying because of the words he had said to me, but because I understood him and cried out of compassion. The hatred disappeared and we shared a moment of great intimacy. Over the past three years, because of the Getting the Love You Want workshop and the tools we have practiced, we have learned to create such moments of intimacy consciously."

Creating a Conscious Marriage

In order to arrive at this stage, which Hendrix calls the 'conscious marriage', you need to first acquire knowledge and awareness to become more conscious. Whether we like it or not, we enter the romantic phase and the power struggle on automatic pilot. In order to create the 'conscious marriage', we must learn and understand exactly what triggers us, what pushes our buttons, what those things are that in a moment turn us into small wounded children. Then we must learn how to help each other becoming a healing person for each other.

The Getting the Love You Want Workshop

And this is exactly the purpose of the workshop. With the facilitators explaining the theory and process, demonstrating the skills and with participants using the worksheets in their manual and practicing the skills with each other, the workshop becomes a safe place where you can begin a new level of your journey in discovering yourself and your partner. There is no group interaction in exercises. Although anyone who wants to share an insight or a comment can do so, no one is required to say anything to the

group. The work is done alone and with your partner. At first glance, the exercises in the manual, and even the skills you learn, seem very artificial and awkward. But their structure turns out to be exactly what creates safety. They work.

The work you do in the workshop, together with the written exercises in the manual, is built like a puzzle. At the end, you understand why you chose your partner, why you have the difficulties that you have, what you really want to get from your partner and don't get all without necessarily feeling the pieces of the puzzle come completely together. Each partner starts seeing the other's childhood wounds, and the work is done so that, at the end, each partner sees, in self and other, the needs of the old brain to feel safe and some of the things that can make that happen. As the sense of safety increases, there is less need for one or both partners to seek 'exits' from the relationship.

Exits Escape from Distress

And what is an 'exit' from the relationship? Exits are all those things that we do in order to escape from intimacy. They are not limited to affairs. Exits can also be working excessively, focusing all your attention and time on the children, watching television, spending all your time in community service, using alcohol or other drugs, jogging, hobbies anything that you use to avoid dealing with your partner and the issues in your relationship. When you identify what you do to avoid the relationship, each partner must commit to closing these escape routes, slowly, but definitely.

Working To Become Safe and Conscious

The workshop, says Hendrix, is only the first stage in the process. In the manual you receive, there is a program designed for 27 weeks after the workshop, and the process continues for 3 or more years. Although it seems like a long time, creating the relationship you long for and healing the wounds that fuel conflict take time. It is not magic it is a process and it's worth it. Of course, the healing begins with these first steps and each frustration becomes an opportunity to deepen that healing. While in the beginning it can feel like a rollercoaster of frustration/pain, and safety/love, the process gradually moves more and more into the area of safety. You experience the process of co-creating the relationship of your dreams.

Who Comes to a Workshop?

The workshops are intended for anyone in a committed primary relationship: those who have a good marriage and want to make it even better, those who are having problems in their relationship and want to work toward healing them, and also those who are faced with what seems to be the end of a relationship and want to know if there is any chance of saving it.

Real Love

Through this process, you come to real love, a solid, lasting love," say Hedy and Yumi. "You know who you are, you know who your partner is, and you choose to be together, not because you have to, but because you want to."

Israeli Therapists Attend the Workshop

The first workshops held here in Israel (June 1993) by the Schleifers was aimed at therapists and their partners. They wanted to introduce therapists to an effective model to use with their clients, and to give therapists a personal experience of the model. Therapists are human beings that have their own frustrations and pains in relationships like everyone else. The three couples I interviewed, related to the workshop, not as mental health professionals, but as married couples living their life.

The Yanays: Diving Deeper and Finding Gifts in the Garbage

I can't say that I discovered any thing brand new, but this presented some things from another perspective than what I had known before," said Oraniya Yanay, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist who heads, with her husband, the ADAM Institute for diagnosis and consultation. "It's as if this brought another layer, a different level in the depth of touching the pain I have brought into my relationship. As a small girl, I had the sense of being someone who was invisible in my family, so it is obvious that this was the point at which I would be attracted to my husband, Dov. That is the peak of my pain and the peak of closeness between us. I knew this, but the level of sensing it, feeling it, and diving in to that whole issue was deeper. And it was possible because of the sense of safety. The climate and the techniques of the

workshop are very protecting. They keep boundaries and provide safety. You do the exercise or work with the skill, and then there is someone who stops it so that you don't stay stuck in it. In every skill or exercise, the workshop leaders pay attention and are available to help at all times."

"When people express some of their problems, it is obvious that your problem is another version of ones that most people have," says Dov Yanay. "Oraniya had the feeling of being abandoned, and I am a 'space cadet.' One of the things that drives her crazy is when I forget to arrive on time. It touches those feelings of abandonment." "And the more I have asked him not to disappear, the more he has done it," interjected Oraniya. "In the past I would tell him I need him not to disappear. I asked him to tell me when he is going to be late. But the more I told and asked, the more he seemed to run away."

Both of them agreed that the workshop touched them most strongly in exactly those places, the pain of their childhood wounds. "Although we were accessing those wounds," said Dov, "the workshop was not a crying and pain party. There is a nice blend of both the head and the heart. There is a lot of transfer from the unconscious to the conscious, a lot of thinking, and a sense that you are moving and putting things in order."

One of the most exciting experiences for the Yanays was an exercise that is very positive and joyful. Oraniya described it; "This was an exercise where you 'flood' your partner with your admiration and love. Dov was sitting and I was walking around him, almost like in a Polish wedding, and I told him things that I love about him. I started with 'I love your eyes' and proceeded to tell him what I loved about his body and physical appearance. Then I went on to what I love about his character and about his behavior. I told him only those things I love. Other people in the room were also doing it with their partners at the same time. There were people who cried and people who laughed. I became very emotional, both when I was giving and receiving. It was a very special experience that I had never done before."

Dov and Oraniya left the workshop optimistic because of one of its claims; "the part of your marriage that is most messed up can also become your greatest healing and your greatest gift, on one condition that you learn how to change it from atomic energy that destroys your partner and your relationship into solar energy that provides new light and warmth for you both." Dov said that his sense of optimism came from the fact that "you learn practical tools that help you find love and to transform even the junk into a positive source of change and healing. It's as if I need to say 'thanks that I have an SOB that pushes my buttons, because through that person maybe I will reach something better my healing and my whole self."

Now, a few weeks after the workshop, the Yanays aren't rushing to commit yet to the process. Dov said, "I am not ready yet to make the commitment to the entire process. I've bought into the system at the idea level, because I can see the pluses of doing it. It's as if somebody tells me that if I lose 20 pounds and exercise, I'll feel great. I know that is true, but it doesn't mean that I've started the diet yet, or that I've committed to a program of exercise!"

Oraniya said, "I'm ready to make the commitment, but being 'ready' isn't actually making it. It is difficult. I'm not giving up on it, and I'm also not completely willing to give up on the junk in myself and my relationship. I'm used to it! However, it is not as easy as it was before to come home and start fighting. Now, I really want to sit down and do a dialogue. A good partnership is an investment of time and energy and the way to freedom is often much more difficult than the way to slavery! We are trying to use this method. Many years ago, I committed to work on my marriage and my relationship with my children, and even with my friends. To me, it is very important for me to be more open, more receiving, more caring, and more willing to be cared for, but this is very difficult for me. It is not difficult to find an exit! We both have careers, we both love our work, and it is so easy to plunge right into it instead of doing the work of our relationship."

The Basic Dialogue

The couples interviewed had practiced primarily the 'couple's dialogue', a basic tool that they learned in the workshop to help provide both communication and safety.

In principle, the dialogue is a simple and somewhat artificial technique. You set a time for this dialogue, rather than constantly react and attack your partner every time a frustration occurs. Then you talk about the issue within the safety of a fixed structure. The technique seems basic, but is more difficult to do than it appears. The basic dialogue process is as follows:

- One person talks about his or her frustration.

· The other partner listens and mirrors what he has heard. The mirroring is repeating back the words of your partner without expanding, reducing, or analyzing. You repeat back precisely the words you heard, without paraphrasing. This prevents a distorted understanding of things and makes the person feel truly heard without the listener injecting his own thought and feelings about the issue. You have your partner's full attention.

· If the listener makes mistakes in the mirroring, or leaves something out, the speaker corrects it until it is heard precisely.

· When the speaker finally answers "no" to the question, "Is there more about that?", the couple proceeds to the next step of the process, the validation.

This step lets your partner and you know that you have understood. Understanding and validation does not mean that you necessarily agree with what has been said. It simply makes sense to you from your partner's perspective.

· You, the listener, tell your partner that what he or she is saying makes sense and you tell why.

· You then guess how your partner must have felt or must feel. The focus is on the original speaker, not on your own feelings and thoughts about the issue.

In the beginning, it sounds stupid to have a disagreement "by the book", but you soon internalize the dialogue and other tools and it becomes more natural. Although they appear deceptively simple, the dialogue and the other processes work effectively.

Two weeks after the workshop, Dov and Oraniya said that the technique of the couple's dialogue is simply "overwhelming" in its effectiveness. It is structured, it feels artificial for awhile, and it seems dumb, but it works. "If we say, 'Let's have a couple's dialogue right now while the sparks are flying,' the results have always been satisfying," said Dov. Oraniya added, "When you are very angry and you ask for a dialogue, preferably right away, you can say what you have to say. Your partner, because he has to mirror like a parrot, cannot be occupied with himself and he can't ignore or hurt you at the same time! To ensure success he should mirror me accurately, and then he also has to validate and to move into empathy. Experience shows me that in the end, your issue is diffused, and you feel your partner has understood what you were trying to say. No doubt, this increases the sense of safety."

The Naamans: Expressing Rage and Discovering Wounds Through Rage

Chaya Naaman, a clinical social worker, and her husband, Meir, a medical and clinical psychologist, also came from the workshop with great hope. "It is true that the road is difficult, but as therapists, we know how much every change and improvement involves strenuous work and optimism. In this method too, we talk about hard work that is sometimes painful, but sure enough, we expect positive results fairly quickly. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel - and we know it is not an oncoming train!"

Dr. Naaman said, "In the book, *Getting the Love You Want*, the optimism and hope also emerge. The bad news is that each of us chooses our partner according to an unconscious road map that leads us to reconstruct childhood wounds. On the other hand, the good news is that our partner has the potential to become the best possible person to help heal those same wounds."

As professionals, the Naamans stress that a workshop cannot take the place of therapy in many situations although your partner can contribute to your healing. "You have to remember," said Dr. Naaman, "that your partner can't have the emotional distance, the objectivity, the professional tools and motivation that a therapist has, all of which are important for real treatment. For a partner who is stuck in his or her childhood wounds, the mutual stimulus can be very difficult and express itself by remaining stuck in power struggles." Chaya added, "The workshop doesn't take the place of therapy, because according to the theory, the place of healing in this method is through those friction points between the partners. There are other areas that you need to discover. As a parallel to therapy this workshop can help a lot. Hopefully, people will persevere using the understanding, vision, and tools that they learned in the workshop and will not need therapy!"

The workshop deeply touched the Naamans personally. "I had a great experience in accessing my own wounds in a powerful and intense way and in meeting the child inside Meir," said Chaya. "We are very

close, and we know each other's history inside out, but still, the way things were done and the new perspective was special and renewing. The depth was different than in other times."

The Naamans volunteered to be a 'demonstration couple' during the workshop to enable the leader to teach the group a particular skill. Meir admits that despite the fact that they were doing the exercise in front of the group, they were able to get right into it. The skill that was being demonstrated was resolving rage. Meir was the one working on his rage and was encouraged to do it with full intensity, raising his voice to help him feel it viscerally. Chaya's task was to create a safe 'place' for herself, and receive the anger, understanding that the one who was expressing his rage was the little child in Meir. In the second stage Meir could express the deep pain behind the stored up anger. He spoke of what it reminded him of in his childhood "and this was deep and serious," he reported. "People in the group reacted strongly to seeing and hearing my pain. Even men came up after and hugged me, not only the therapists in the group, but even those who were not professionals."

At the end of the workshop, on the way home, Chaya and Meir stopped in a coffee shop and made a commitment to themselves to continue the process. The support group they organized was an expression of that commitment. They thought that support would be very important in holding onto and continuing what they had obtained in the workshop. In the first two weeks after the workshop, and at the beginning of a new road, they took upon themselves small commitments to "do something different" in their relationship. The workshop stresses beginning with small steps to ensure success.

They have kept those commitments and Meir says, "Although at first glance, these things we agreed to do seem small and simple, they contribute to the climate of our relationship and to the basic awareness that we are working together to improve, to deepen, and to enrich our partnership." Chaya added, "It also gives me a feeling of satisfaction, like I am doing a good deed."

At this stage of our conversation, something interesting happened. Chaya said that Meir's request of her was to ask once a day for two weeks whether she had angered or annoyed him. Meir said that he had requested her to ask, on purpose, whether he had something to tell her or to share with her. Meir then went on to explain why, according to his version, why he had requested only that she ask if he had something to say. "Sometimes," he said, "in the fog of arguments, your partner is not listening. So, when you want to tell them something painful, it is likely that the things will be dissolved if they are listening. So it was important to me that I would have a place and time in which I could express myself fully, and Chaya would be completely attentive."

So what was it that she committed to to ask if he is angry with her, or to ask if he had something to share? One big advantage of this method is that as you make these small commitments to change, you write them in your manual. So when they looked, the disagreement was settled. What was written was, "Chaya commits herself to ask once a day for the next two weeks whether I want to express any anger." "The special request," Meir explained, "was actually about anger, but the goal was for Chaya to request that I share something. Today, the question itself, seems less important. In fact, the very feeling of mutuality contributed to the sense of listening and paying full attention to each other."

Chaya also has the sense of a new level of listening. The very fact of using the partner's dialogue, she says, makes a real difference in the quality of the listening. Now, even if she wants to tell Meir that she is angry with him about being late, or he makes a remark about keeping the house neat, using the dialogue works through the issue much more calmly. Because of the structure of the technique, the one with the frustration has a sense of safety that he or she will not be attacked by the other person. And the partner who is listening does so, not as one being attacked, but as a healing listener. And at the end, even the fuel that continuously feeds the fight becomes less flammable.

"In order to listen to me, he needs to leave his ground and enter mine," explained Chaya, "and then, any arrows I may shoot as I say something, do not reach his ground, but stay in mine. And the moment he repeats back what I have said, my anger diminishes because I know he was listening to me."

The Kanfis: Nurturing Partnership

The third couple interviewed, Lily and Joshua Kanfi, married "happily" for 30 years, never had a problem in the sense of togetherness, sharing, or loving. They were optimistic even before the workshop. Lily manages the judicial chamber of WIZO (a government agency) in Ashdod and does some family counseling. Joshua works as a manager of a fuel company.

The Kanfis read *Getting the Love You Want* before they went to the workshop. Not only did they read it, they also took a day off from work to do all the exercises. Lily signed up for the workshop because she thought it would help her a lot in her work. Joshua said that if it would help her, he would go along, even though he didn't understand why they needed to go.

After the workshop, Joshua said that he felt better because it affirmed that they were on the right track. "This is truly exciting and enjoyable," he reported. In his point of view, the best part of the workshop was that it seemed to tie together in a systematic way, things that had seemed natural for him before.

Joshua commented, "By nature, I am not an aggressive person. If obstacles appear above and beyond the usual, I give up. Throughout my life, I saw my friends succeeding far more than I was. I couldn't understand why I was not more of a go-getter. Only at the workshop did I understand that my father was exactly the same way I am and that Lily is completely the opposite. She is very competitive." "But," interjected Lily, "as much as he is not competitive, he was always the one who told me all along the way, 'Don't give up, continue on!' All the time he encouraged and pushed me."

Both could easily find those points in which they complement each other and ask for those same things from their partner. Lily came from a large, warm, supportive family. Joshua came from a very small family in which it was not acceptable to touch one another. In Lily's family people touched all the time. Joshua is an introvert, Lily the extrovert. And both are calling forth the 'lost' qualities in each other. Joshua is learning to show his feelings, and Lily is learning some restraint.

They had difficulty in one of the exercises exploring childhood wounds. Even though they tried to look for them, they could not find much. Later, when Joshua was doing an exercise in which you ask your partner for specific behaviors, Joshua asked Lily to stay next to him when he watched football on TV in the evenings. At the time of the request, it made no sense to Lily why he asked that. They often sit together to watch TV. It was true, that when football came on, she often found other things to do. But because she wanted to learn new ways to become a healer for Joshua, she agreed to that request. "As I started doing it," Lily related, "I found first that because he loves football, he wants to share it with me. What I also discovered was that when Joshua was little and came home from school wanting to share exciting things with someone else, he had no one because his mother worked. His feeling of being so alone and isolated in front of the TV came from that experience."

After the workshop, Lily and Joshua did not feel that they needed a support group. They continued doing the exercises and using new skills on their own. At the end of the workshop, both had a strong desire to see their parents and say "Thank you." "I always thought I had wonderful parents," said Lily, "but when we left the workshop I told Joshua I had the urge just to go and give my parents a kiss. When we arrived and my mother came out to greet us as usual, I started to cry. She didn't understand, but she hugged me and I felt so grateful for the way she had raised me."

"Love and partnership," said Lily before we parted, "is like the beautiful plants I have in my living room window. You need to water and fertilize them so they can bloom. There are those who know how to do that by themselves. But most of us need to learn how to get the love that we want."

