

My Map of Relationships

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Somewhere around 1982 there was a wonderful Outcome Study about relationships. Such studies look at desired outcomes and then go back in history to see how things got that way. (An example of such a study would be to research the great physicists of the world and then go back and study their teachers in high-school in order to discover good physics teaching skills.)

Well this Outcome Study was about couple's relationships. First the researchers built a picture of a "perfect marriage." They did this by interviewing a large number of college age kids (anyone in college seems a kid to me now) and asked them what makes a great marriage. Putting all the results together the researchers determined the attributes of the perfect marriage." This was called the desired outcome – the one everyone wants.

Next they interviewed a great many couples aged 60 or so to determine which ones had achieved that desired outcome. The good news was that some couples had. The bad news was that it was only about one couple in twenty. A highly desired goal, an ideal relationship, was rarely achieved. At least the researchers could ask the successful couples how they had gotten there. From this study came a picture of the four stages of relationships.

I'm going to start drawing my map for you. And I'm going to start with what society thinks of as the starting area (Romantic Love) and compare it to the final area, the outcome (Vintage Love). For most people these are the most interesting areas. And I am not going into much detail. Maps don't. I just want to give you the flavor of each piece of this puzzle map.

Romantic Love and Vintage Love

In most western cultures, potential partners pick each other by a most fascinating ritual. They go out in public and wait until they see someone with whom they fall in love. The process seems democratic in that people pick their own partner. (By the way, this is quite different from the majority of the world where parents, or other social agencies, pick partnerships.) Only in the past 15 years have researchers really investigated and written about the details of this falling-in-love ritual. While I go on I will hopefully unravel for you some additional mysteries that have not been discussed in public yet. But give me time.

First, let me describe four of the many differences between a Romantic Couple and a Vintage Love Couple.

FEELING GOOD

Both Romantic Love and Vintage Love feel really good. These days are wonderful.

Our culture tends to speak a lot about the romantic highs. Feelings are chemical in nature and researchers have discovered that to a great extent Romantic feelings are brought on with the aid of a particular neurochemistry called PEA or phenylethylamine. Now, PEA gives you tons of energy, calms the nervous, raises the mood of the depressed, and radically raises the libido or sex drive of those less sexy among us. [See Hot Monogamy, Pat Love] The romantically invoked person can work all day and play all night.

Of particular interest is the rapid action of PEA. The brain secretions increase rapidly when the loved-one appears or is imagined. Those secretions drop rapidly when the loved-one leaves or seems ready to go. This roller-coaster effect is normal for people in the Romantic Period and easily gives them the impression that their partner is "turning me on." Of course PEA is an effect of our biological system, and is related to the desire to mate. PEA seems a powerful invitation to get into bed and quickly get pregnant. Sadly, as it is part of the mating impulse, the PEA effect will stop at some time. It never lasts. Hear that word "never" and breathe.

In contrast, the delight of Vintage Lovers comes from a different drug effect – endorphins. These result in the high one gets from many activities, including exercise. Endorphins are common in babies in the womb. This drug has a long lasting effect and does not roller coaster as do the good feelings of Romantic Love. Endorphins allow couples to feel good when they separate and come together. And Endorphins have no time limit. They continue reliably for years.

Summary: Romantic delightful feelings are wild, spiky, and unreliable. Vintage good feelings are warm, level and durable.

DATA

Another difference between Romantics and Vintagers is how much data they have about each other.

Romance is a time when you fall-in-love with an image, a fantasy that is evoked by the person you see. "I love the person I dream of, when I look into your eyes." A person can fall in love with someone across the street, walking the other way, and fall out of love when they turn around. The essence seems to have more to do with something in the "faller-in-lover" than the partner. However, because of the rush of PEA at the sight of the other, the easy impression is that "you make me feel this way."

If you ask a Romancer about their partner, for example "Why do they do such and such?" you tend to get very poor answers. The answer will often be an inaccurate guess spoken with conviction. (All you have to do is check out the answer with the partner to find out how far off the guesses are.) The more frequent answer will be, "I don't know." It seems that knowing your partner is not necessary to falling-in-love, or to go further, knowing your partner may interfere with falling-in-love.

Vintage Lovers, who started as Romancers, know almost everything about each other. I want you to think about how much work that is – to go from knowing almost nothing ("dumb-as-a-post" I call it) to knowing everything. When people speak of marriage being a lot of work, here is some of it.

Two things have happened. Vintage Lovers have become very good at explaining themselves to their partner. They have become very good and smooth at communication.

Vintage Lovers have discovered and understood a lot about themselves. I have often noticed that I have done something which puzzled me. I wondered, "Why did I do that?" Jungians call this part of ourselves our Shadow. Others call it the Unconscious. Whatever name it has, it is the collection of active material about us, that at this time we don't know about. Vintage Lovers seem to have greatly reduced the size of their shadow. They have gotten used to themselves. They seem to have little to hide and are often proud of their past mistakes, where most people tend to hide or disguise their errors.

Summary: Romantic Couples know little about each other, while Vintage Couples are often radically intimate.

AGREEMENT

Romantic Couples tend to put a very high premium on seeing things the same way, agreeing - wearing his and her shirts, shared past lives, etc. It is almost as if agreement and bonding become the same thing. They announce proudly that they agree on almost everything, as if the few places where they disagree are just minor inconveniences. It seems as if they fear disagreement.

Vintage Lovers avoid agreement. Yes, you read me rightly! I first heard this plainly in a vintage love couple I interviewed in West Yellowstone, Montana many years ago. I was in a store/café and saw a little old man come around the end of an aisle in the grocery section. His eyes lit up. His face glowed. He was looking at his wife who was down the aisle behind me and who he probably had not seen for 5 minutes. That glowing face gave him, and them, away. "Ah hah, vintage lovers," I thought. I asked them to lunch. During our talk, I happened to ask them how, over their 52 years together, they had learned to deal with "disagreement." The woman started into a long laugh. Then man said, quite seriously, "Mr. Turtle, we believe that two people cannot possibly agree on anything." At that point the woman came out of her giggle and added, "Yes. If two people are agreeing, you know one thing for sure. At least one of them is lying!"

As we spoke it became clear to me that the issue of lying was the critical one. These people valued truth and data, and had learned that in order to agree one must suppress sharing information about differences. They would rather have that truth about all the differences. It was safer.

I recall the first time I told Sandra that I agreed with her on something and she responded, "I don't think so." That is such a clear memory that I can still hear her tone of caution.

Summary: People in Romantic Love value agreement to the point of lying. Vintage lovers value truth to the point of finding the disagreement in everything.

WORTH

Romantic couples tend to be consumers, while Vintage Lovers tend to be productive.

Our culture is a consumer culture. People work to earn money to buy products, which of course fall apart so that people can buy more products. Young people are more interested the next party weekend. Young lovers seem to fit into this pattern, wandering the malls of life, arms around each other, gazing alternately into each other's eyes and into store window displays.

Vintage lovers are much more often seen as people on a mission. Partly this is because they are older. But I think there is a lot more to it. Most people their age are still consuming or being passive. I met a pair of vintage lovers recently. They announced themselves as professional volunteers. "We do what we like. We work harder than we ever did before. We earn no money; in fact this costs us, and we go to bed much happier than we ever have in our lives." Vintage lovers seem often to be in the business of tending their children and grandchildren, giving of their lives to others, or creating products of enduring value.

Summary: People in Romantic Love tend to be needy while Vintage lovers tend to be givers.

RELIABILITY

The last point about these two stages has to do with how long they last. The first is really short, the last quite durable.

Romantic Love never lasts very long – a couple of years at the most. Many forces make this happen. The chemical PEA that makes couples feel so good does not last. It seems to be a throwback to the mating drive and after a while, if you are not pregnant, it stops. For many, this is the first catastrophic event in their togetherness. "She doesn't love me any more!" is really "Her body is no longer secreting PEA. Right on schedule! Time to move to the next reason for being together, beyond lust."

But the Romantic Love has a bigger reason for ending. Mostly it is based on dreams and delusions and lack of data. You can't live with someone and remain blind forever. Data will start to appear. Differences will surface. And the lack of skills for handling these differences will surface. The dream is over. Knowledge is terminal. "You can't go back to being stupid!"

Vintage Love is based on tons of data. There is very little about your partner that you don't know. And at this time you have learned all the skills for dealing with all the critical differences. The drug of love, endorphins, is a very normal, reliable drug. Vintage Love lasts "till death do you part."

Summary: Romantic Love never lasts. Vintage Love endures.

The Power Struggle

For many reasons the Romantic Period collapses in 100% of relationships. It must, partially because it is based on lack of knowledge of your partner and you cannot stay in ignorance forever. (People in Internet, or long range

relationships, can often stretch this period of innocence out.) Thus couples find themselves in the period commonly called the Power Struggle. This is an increasingly uncomfortable to downright painful time.

One quirk is this phenomenon that couples actively (or passively) hurt each other. And if you look closely at their motivations, the intent of their painful behavior is to recapture love. The pattern seems like the normal infant behavior, i.e. “if I scream loud enough you will feed me.” In the adult form of the power struggle, it is “If I cause you pain enough you will love me.”

Abusive relationships are frightening examples of this. Violent periods frighten the couple back into temporary “dumb as a post” romantic behaviors behind which lurks dissatisfaction and more violence.

I am not so interested in what happens in this phase. Many have written about it in detail. I just note that problems arise higher and higher and people are pushed to the inevitable choice of what to do next.

This is what I call Door #1, Door #2 and Door #3. For there are three ways out of the painful power struggle.

DIVORCE – DOOR #3

I first want to focus on divorce, the solution that is so popular. At the present time about 50% of first married couples, and a very large number of live-in couples, choose this door. I did. If you can't recapture romantic love, at least you can get away from the pain. And what happens to these people. Well, after a while (a long time or a short time or whatever time it takes) of wandering and wondering most remarry or re-live-in. We are a remarrying culture.

People start a second relationship via the familiar ritual of putting themselves in public, meeting someone and falling-in-love. Whatever got them to their first bonding, is still present plus some experience of being married. With their experiences from the first relationship they are much more cautious and slide through the romantic period quicker, discovering the unknown about their partner faster, leaving the PEA behind and plunging into the pain of the Power Struggle.

This is familiar territory to them. And so they arrive again at Door #1, Door #2 and Door #3. The latter is very familiar. They may even have the card of a good divorce lawyer in their wallet or purse. And so it is not surprising that the divorce rate for second marriages is quite high – over 80%.

And around they go again, wandering and wondering till they arrive at the dance of partnering once more. Along the way some few drop out and live alone. Some others decide to switch genders and try partners of the same gender, which makes no difference to this map.

Whenever they start again, fall-in-love, slide through the romantic period find themselves in the power struggle one more time, something very interesting happens. Door #3 becomes less interesting. The divorce rate goes way down. When researchers factor out the issue of age, it would seem that people who have divorced twice would divorce even faster the third time. But the divorce rate is now in order of 25%. . Why?

To make a long story short, these couples have grown up a little. Here is the pattern. “In marriage #1 I married a turkey. Took me sometime to recognize it, but he was a turkey. So I divorced him. It was hard, but I did it. In marriage #2 I amazingly married another turkey. Damn! Recognized it quicker and divorced him much easier and faster. But here I am in the middle of marriage #3 and I've married another turkey. Sure I can divorce him, but I'll probably just go find another. Why the heck am I picking turkeys?”

I call this “turning the marriage”, that point when the individual begins looking at themselves as the source of their own troubles rather than blaming it on others. It is a movement toward adult responsibility and away from childlike innocence and passivity. Growing up.

IF NOT DIVORCE, WHAT?

I just want to stop for a minute and remind you that 50% of first marriages do not divorce. 20% of second marriages do not divorce. Almost 80% of 3rd marriages do not divorce.

Many people tend to celebrate a low divorce rate, but is that really wise? Of the non-divorcers we learned that about 5% make it to Vintage Love and remember that is where most everyone who marries wants to be. That means about 95% choose door #2.

The Bigger Picture

Before I go there I want to add some very useful material to this map. I want to add two features that are present before any and all attempts at marriage or bonding.

THE BIOLOGICAL DREAM

Before we are born our DNA contains specific instructions about how our bodies and brains are formed. In particular our Brain structure is very interesting. Our brain structure is designed to develop in and live in a particular environment. It is as though we are all born with an appointment for a particular kind of community. I call this the Biological Dream. I will cover this material in detail in other chapters, but I'll summarize it here.

- 1) **Safety.** At the base of our brains is a structure called the reptilian brain. It is designed for survival, is prepared for emergencies, and desires safety. Safety is best defined as an abundance of Playing, Mating, Nurturing and Creative Work behaviors and an absence of Fleeing, Freezing, Submitting, and Fighting behaviors. The human brain is designed for safety. Not optional. Thus we expect and seek safe communities. This is hardwired.
- 2) **Reliable Membership.** In the middle of our brain, and evolutionarily the second major structure, is the mammalian brain. While it has many functions, one is very critical here. Mammals are herd animals, live in packs, need communities of their kind to survive. Separation from the home community will trigger fear of death and thus trigger the lower Reptilian Brain's survival drive. The impulse for staying together, coming together, for attaching and forming secure attachment bonds comes from this part of the brain. This impulse is hardwired. Not optional. No wonder humans join up so much. Our brains are not designed to live alone. Thus we seek reliable communities. This is hardwired.
- 3) **Diversity.** The upper part of our brains, the cortical structures, is so complex and so variable that the differences between ways of seeing the world become a major issue with a small child. They sense that everyone sees everything differently. This awareness can be a source of fear. Thus children need and seek comfort for their sense of being different from all others. This situation leads to seeking safe, reliable relationships, where my differences are acceptable. This is hardwired.
- 4) **Autonomy.** Again, the upper part of our brains mediates between the world of experiences and the world of actions. Humans do not react. Humans observe, process those observations, and then choose actions. Human actions are determined within the individual and are not externally determined. (See Glasser's wonderful book on Choice Theory). We never do what we are told, we do what we choose when we are told. We are not designed for obedience. We are naturally self-determining. This leads us to seek a community that encourages our self-choosing. This is hardwired.
- 5) **Purpose.** This is a bit more difficult explain, partly because it leads into the spiritual. I'll say it in two ways. Every human has potential. Maslow spoke of Self-Actualization. Frankl spoke of Meaning. The way I see it, all humans are born geniuses – at something. No two are identical nor carry identical genius. When we act out our genius, two things happen: we feel an abiding sense of purpose or meaning, and we are very productive toward our community. This potential, this purpose is “our reason for being alive.” It takes a supportive community to help us grow the seed of genius to maturity. The drive toward this genius leads us to seek a community that cares about nurturing our wholeness and which needs our gifts. This situation is hardwired.

Summary: Deeply buried in our structures, before we learn anything, are needs for safety, reliable community, diversity, autonomy, and purpose. We do not have to be taught to have these needs anymore than we need to be taught to eat. When we fall-in-love these needs are fully active.

THE HOMESTYLE RELATIONSHIP

Children grow up experiencing many relationships in all their details. I call these the home style relationships. This learning and experience is all about how their parents relate to them, how they relate to their parents and each other, how parents relate to each other, how parents relate to others outside of their home. Some kids come out of childhood wanting a marriage just like mom's and dad's. Some don't. But all are familiar with the ins and outs of those relationships.

The scale of the desire to be out of their parent's home can be seen by comparing the Biological Dream, the needs and expectations of the brains the children carry, with the experiences of the home style relationship.

Most parents are interested in controlling their children and each other. Thus they do not create a safe (reptilian brain safe) home, rather they use threat of unsafety and fear as a way of achieving that control. Children "obey" because it is not safe to appear to do otherwise. BD #1 is broken almost constantly as children learn to submit and hide and flee and fight as a way of surviving at home.

BD #2 is again sacrificed into the parent's need for control. Children are sent their room if they don't obey. "My or the highway" does not sound like reliable membership. Fear of being abandoned is common.

BD #3 is directly challenged as parents tell their children what to think as part of their instruction. Parents define children, correct their differences and punish disagreement.

BD #4 is also directly avoided as parents prime need for control leads to need for obedience from beings that are only capable of choosing to "appear" obedient.

BD#5 is almost completely ignored as parents try to "guide" their children into career choices that tend to fit the needs of the parents.

Thus the homestyle relationship does not match the biological dream. Parents, and I believe most parents are doing their very best, do an incredibly poor job. No one helps or teaches or guides them. And children are not taught to understand their own needs. The BD a deep physical reality with almost no awareness.

Falling – in – love

As people approach that romantic process (become available, wait for romance, bond) they bring both their Biological Dreams and their experiences of the HomeStyle relationship with them. Since Romantic Love is such a dream process, look at how active the BD is. I dream we will be safe and relaxed together. We will leave the madding crowd and make a safe haven. (BD#1). I dream we will always be one till death do us part. (BD#2). I dream that you will really understand me. Our's will be a relationship of intimacy and buddies. (BD#3) I dream that we will never order each other around. We will just want the same things. (BD#4) I dream that you will care about who I really am and I will care about who you really are. We will help each other reach the stars. (BD#5). These experiences are pretty universal because we all have hardwired the same impulses.

Of course the effect of the PEA driven mating arousal is a significant factor, but so is the Biological Dream.

Skills

The big difference between these two pre-romantic impulses is that the Homestyle Relationship is full of skills, while the BD has none. A skill is a behavior that when you do it first is hard, when you do it for the 50th time it is easier, when you do it for the 500th time it is automatic. The training of the homestyle relationship is full of these skills.

For example, the habit to get angry when you don't get your way is learned at home. The tendency when ordered to cower, submit and resent comes from there. Hundreds of skills are taught during those childhood years. When you join in a relationship you bring these now-automatic skills.

However, unless you were raised by people to whom the Biological Dream is a reality, you probably have no skills of how to deal with safety, reliable membership, autonomy, diversity or purpose. Yet that is a powerful dream.

This imbalance in training is a great source of trouble. The main source of trouble during the power struggle is that when things aren't going right members of a couple use the Home Style skills to try to obtain the Biological Dream. But the home style skills earn you distance, dismay, hatred and solitude. Still they are all you know.

Clearly the solution to this problem is to go to school.

Door #1 The University of Life

So now you can understand one of the major features behind Door #1 – a school. In this school people learn the skills that go along with the Biological Dream. And they unlearn the skills that run counter to that impulse. This is a lengthy and difficult process. Couples working hard will take years to develop the repertoire of healthy skills. There are many many tools and courses available for such learning. But you must start Freshman year with some awareness that what you are doing isn't working and that something new must be learned.

To me, the two attributes necessary to the passage through Door #1 are panic (that the BD is not reached) and commitment to reach the BD.

The rest of my book is on courses within this University of Life. I speak casually of Boundaries 110, Safety 120, Reliable Membership 140, Communication 101, Emotions 180, Anger 125, Grief 135, Frustrations 210.

Not only does a good relationship not come automatically, it comes only after a lot of learning.

Behind the Cruel Door #2 – Giving Up

Now I am ready to tell you what is behind the middle door where most couples end up. This to me is very sad. Door #2 is the choice of couples who give up the Dream. That wonderful impulse to achieve a whole life slips away from them and they accept a relationship as colorless or lifeless as their parents. They accept the homestyle relationship. And they live forever with Fleeing, Fighting, Freezing and Submitting.

But they limit their fighting to just below the legal limit. In my state causing bruises on each other is illegal. So behind door #2 are all kinds of fighting up and close to bruises.

They limit their fleeing to just below the divorce level. They get away from each other in thousands of ways in order to make the loneliness and fear endurable.

The increase their use of Freezing (pretending that nothing is going on) and Submitting. And of course their resentment builds.

Finally, they silently grieve the loss of their dreams, and counsel others that Romance is a fake.

I find this extremely sad.

Return to Vintage Love

And so you can understand now what goes on in that last stage of relationships and why that stage is so reliable. People are actualizing the Biological dream not only for themselves but for anyone they come in contact with. Vintage lovers are ambassadors and examples of the Biological Dream. They teach the skills by modeling. Safety, Reliable Membership, Autonomy, Diversity and Purpose are central to their lives. No wonder they are happy and no wonder they are productive.

The Odd Conversation

I am often amused by the conversations between people in Vintage Love and People who Give up. It sounds strange. People who Give Up have a vested interest in asserting that the Vintage Lovers don't exist. The Vintage Lovers recall in detail what it was like to be a Giver-upper. They have lots of understanding and empathy. The Giver-uppers are often angry and unforgiving.

THE IMAGO

There is one last part of the chart to fill in. That blank box that sits down there under the Romantic and Power Struggle stages. I left it to last as it is the key to the unique troubles that couples have. Up until now I have been

writing in generalities about issues and concepts that effect all humans in their search for an enduring partnership. I have also not quite told the whole story of “why we choose the partner’s we choose.”

True in our Western Cultures most people enter the relationship dance (presenting themselves, waiting to fall-in-love, and then bonding). But what makes us fall-in-love with this particular person? Here is the answer. (So far as I know, Imago Relationship Therapy is the only course in the college of life that uses this material as a fundamental.)

The very useful concept is that during the process of maturation, a child will during the ages of 3-7 develop an internally help picture of their caretakers. Apparently this is done as the child experiences more and more separation from them. In terms of the brain, I guess this is a cortical function to deal with the distress that the Mammalian Brain feels whenever separated. “If I carry a picture in my cortex of my caretakers then I never leave them,” seems to be what is going on. This picture is called the IMAGO and contains many details of a person’s caretakers: looks, gestures, behaviors, attitudes, etc. - both enjoyable and distressing. This Imago endures throughout life. You can find your own and it is unique to you. Now lets look at what happens when you go out on the town, looking.

Partner Selection

The reptilian brain and the mammalian brains are in charge of all emotions. Falling-in-love is primarily a chemical/emotional situation. The process works this way.

The Reptilian brain is intensely Neo-phobic. That is, it fears the “new”. Out on the town, you run into many people whom you have never seen before. Your reptilian brain is tense. Your mammalian brain is looking for connection. When you run into someone who seems familiar (yup, that’s the word) your reptilian brain relaxes and your mammalian brain starts to “join up”. As this unconscious familiarity increases, the powerful PEA chemistry and the Biological Dream begin to operate and (bingo!) you’re in love. Should the other person show similar signs (and remember those signs are the result of their reptilian and mammalian brains discovering the familiar in you), they will display signals that appear “receptive” to your mammalian brain and the process accelerates. More chemistry is secreted, more Biological Dreams are generated. You really become enthralled in the processes in you triggered by the presence of this person.

A powerfully added kick is that you seem to be in the presence of your caretakers while at the same time in the presence of people who use the Biological Dream skills, which your parents didn’t. This is a person who is **familiar** and also is **safe, reliable, freeing, understanding and caring of the real you**. This seems the goal in life. This is, temporarily, and experience of Vintage Love. No wonder this brilliant phenomenon is so sought after.

And the partners move off into the sunset. Both carry, as yet to be revealed, frightening set of skills. I carry the HomeStyle skills I learned from my parents. And those very skills are familiar to my partner – and they were and still are distressing to my partner.

The Genius in the Negative Skills

A child has two great impulses throughout childhood: survive and become whole. Survive wins out if there is a debate. Childhood is about children, not about parents. Looking from the point of view of the child, negative attributes of caretakers are those that do not match the Biological Dream needs and/or that interfere with the process of growing up, of becoming whole. Thus buried in every negative attribute of the Imago is either an unfulfilled condition for aliveness or unmet need for maturation. The unmet need for maturation points at an undeveloped adult skill, and more or less specific immaturity. And our partner carries many of these negative attributes.

What a magnificent situation. Because of the Imago selection process, each of us is matched with a perfect lab partner for the University of Life. Their behaviors will uniquely and accurately stir up our frustrations from childhood (which lead to our immaturities). It’s kind of like partnering you with a gay person because you are homophobic. (Nature is full of these magnificent clevernesses.) After all the goal is maturity and self-actualization, vintage love and raising healthy whole children by doing less “damage” to them.

Partner Dispair

But all partner selection and all that about the value of negative skills are unknown to the romantic couple. All they know is they feel really good. Little do they know!

The Power Struggle starts when data begins to flow – particularly data that shows the hitherto hidden negative attributes of their partner. The reaction often quick and profound, as this is not the first time a person has seen those negative attributes – one grew up with them. This is just the first time they are seen in this person. And data is terminal. Once you have it, you can't get rid of it.

Once your partner blows up at you when you disagree, you'll never forget it. Once they walk out of the house, not telling you they are coming back, during a disagreement, you'll never forget it.

And as your partner reminds you more and more you're your past frustrations, you will rely more and more on the homestyle skills to recover that blush of falling-in-love. The process is like the barb on a hook. The more you struggle, the more you slide down from the high of Romantic Love and the closer you get to Door #1, Door #2 or Door #3.

The Whole Map

That's it. From Childhood through Giving Up. From Falling-In-Love through the Doors. From Divorce through Starting Again. From the Biological Dream & Homestyle Relationship through Vintage Love. From where all start to where we all want and deserve to get.

My goal in creating the map was to create in one picture enough information so that you could know where you are, see the outcome of your choices, and move intentionally in the direction of your desires.

Area Recap

Vintage Love

For those who make it here this is mature living. People here, and this is more a community than a simple two person partnership, know the skills of the Biological Dream and have them as habits. People here are encouraging each other to fulfill their life purpose. People here are nurturing others as a matter of course. Good parenting and grand-parenting are natural. Safety, reliable membership, autonomy, diversity and purpose are norms.

University of Life

This is a training period. It is as long as you need. In the studies of 1982 one couple reported spending 28 years in this school.

Some of its courses I mentioned above. You can learn and study the Biological Dream lessons at any time and anywhere. While you need a partner for many of these courses, you don't need an Imago partner for many. The more you can learn before you fall-in-love the better. This even seems to effect the kind of person you fall for.

The second more unique part of the curriculum involves completing your own childhood. This involves re-starting growth tasks that you had to put down as a kid – put them down because survival was more critical at the time. E.g. self-esteem. To complete this remedial growing up, I think you need an Imago partner.

Giving Up

This is being normal in our culture. Remember that over 90% of all couples end up here. If life in your family is "good enough" then stay here. If, however, you are feeling a sense of despair, discouragement, and sadness that there isn't anything more to life – take heart. There is a path way out.

There are two ways – the short and the long. The short way involves getting back to that choice point and pushing into the University of Life. The challenge is that you gotta take your partner with you.

The long way is to head to Door #3, swing around to Starting Again, go through Romantic Love (enjoy it while it lasts) and bring your new partner to Door #1.

It sounds weird to say this, but an Affair is a way individuals use to end the Giving Up stage. When discovered it bounces them back to the Doors. There is a pretty high chance that having an Affair will not let you stay in the Giving Up period – at least with this partner. I never recommend an Affair, particularly if you have children. Still people in the Giving Up stage can get pretty panicky.

Power Struggle – the Doors

A very painful period. Still humans learn best from pain. (Oedipus) So learn as much as you can. Note how often you or your partner are just copying things that your parents taught you – that didn't work for them. This is a time where you build up the motive to go to the University of Life.

The more you can learn about the Biological Dream the better, however you will still get to the super frustration point of seriously going to school or giving up or quitting. Those personal childhood immaturities are just unavoidable.

Make your choice.

Romantic Love

When people see me who are in this stage, I usually send them away. I tell them to have a nice day. Feeling this good is not conducive to learning. Someone once told me that “pain helps you grow, feeling good helps you mold.”

I think it important to really feel the love. Society is gonna tell you that it is unimportant. They will try to shame you. Don't listen. What you are experiencing is a wonder! Hold it in your heart, like the gentle breezes of summer. You are experiencing a fore-taste of Vintage Love. Remember it and treasure it and use it to help you make your choice in the coldness of the winter of the Power Struggle.

Divorce and Wander

Divorce during the process can be very painful. But then a great sense of relief will come. The wonder of Autonomy and freedom from the pain of that Power Struggle (supercharged by how similar it was to childhood) is a great balm of healing. Alas, it won't last. But take a breather as long as it is there. The appearance of the emotion, loneliness, will be your cue that the Biological Dream is still working. We are not designed to live alone. Hermits are not born. Hermits are people who need togetherness but whose history is full of painful memories of togetherness. The memories win out for a while.

When you can, study and practice relating. Study the Basic Curriculum of the University of Life.

Childhood

I like to think of this as each person's second start in life. Before birth the Biological Dream is set. Before birth, I believe, a person's purpose in life is set. Childhood is a time to grow, to develop, to become whole. After all, each person's cortex is continuing to mature throughout childhood. I'll talk more about this later, but here I just want to mention that the Biological Dream driven need for safety and reliable membership are fully functional in the infant. Autonomy and Diversity needs start coming online around age 1 ½.

This would be a great time to learn about Biological Dream Skills. In fact, this is the easiest time to learn them. But one learns them by example and you need caretakers who already know these skills. Perhaps you can look for those that do and notice.

Mostly my advice is to survive.

WHERE ARE YOU?

You are on the map. Right now. Put a mark on the spot where you think you are. I suggest you date this mark. When you pick this up again you may be quite a bit further along.

Draw the line of your travels through life. You started both in the HomeStyle Relationship and in the Biological Dream. Since then you've wandered along to where you are now.

Where do you want to be? Where is your goal? What does that map suggest you have to do to get there?