

The Positive Potential of Our Relationships
Dr Davidicus Wong




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Healthy Relationships

1. Relationships Matter
2. The Impact of Loneliness
and the Power of Connection
3. Two ways we see the world . . . and one another
4. Sharing our stories . . . and transforming them
5. Four mindsets to inform how we relate

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WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC



3

**WHAT WE LEARNED
FROM THE PANDEMIC**

WHAT MATTERS MOST

4

**WHAT WE LEARNED
FROM THE PANDEMIC**

WHAT MATTERS MOST

*OUR RELATIONSHIPS with one another
Without HUMAN CONNECTION, we suffer
emotionally and physically*

We are BETTER TOGETHER!

5

**HAVE WE NOW BECOME
COMPLACENT?**

*Why don't we invest more thought, time and
energy into our important relationships?*

6

*What would you say to a friend,
family member, partner,
neighbour, coworker or classmate
IF TODAY WAS THE LAST TIME
YOU WOULD SEE THEM?
AND WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK?*

7

The Four Things That Matter Most
Dr. Ira Byock
"Please forgive me."
"I forgive you."
"Thank you."
"I love you."

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*The Other Sources of
Separation*
21ST CENTURY URBAN SOCIETY
THE VULNERABLE:

- *newcomers to the community,*
- *those without a network of family and friends,*
- *those speaking other languages,*
- *visible minorities,*
- *the elderly who live alone,*
- *those without access to technology,*
- *the homeless*

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The Suffering of
LONELINESS

OUR EVOLUTIONARY HERITAGE
 For early humans, to be separated from your kin and the protection of the tribe was DANGEROUS . . .

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The Suffering of
LONELINESS

OUR EVOLUTIONARY HERITAGE
 So even today, when we suffer from loneliness, our stress levels rise as our physiology senses danger and shifts into *flight or fight* mode

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The Suffering of
LONELINESS

OUR EVOLUTIONARY HERITAGE
 So even today, when we suffer from loneliness, our stress levels rise as our physiology senses danger and shifts into *flight or fight* mode

- We become hypervigilant
- We see potential danger
- We begin to see human contact as a threat
- This compels us to disconnect and even push away from others!

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HUMAN CONNECTION
 A KEY SOCIAL DETERMINANT of HEALTH

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HUMAN CONNECTION
 A KEY SOCIAL DETERMINANT of HEALTH

Long term LONELINESS is as dangerous to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day!

- Increased risk for depression, anxiety, heart disease and premature death

SOCIAL CONNECTION reduces these risks

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Three Types of Loneliness and Connection

1. **INTIMATE** loneliness: longing for someone with whom you share a deep bond, with whom you feel heard and accepted
2. **SOCIAL** loneliness: the need for genuine friendships (not just facebook friends)
3. **COLLECTIVE** loneliness: the need to feel a part of a community

We need all 3 types of connection to thrive!

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The Way Out of Loneliness

- 1. Recognize that you may be hypervigilant: that other people can be a source of needed connection rather than a threat*
- 2. Seek out ways to be of service to others, Such as through local volunteer or church groups*

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The Way Out of Loneliness

We all need to accept our individual and collective responsibility to help the more vulnerable and isolated

- Welcome new neighbours*
- Check in with the elderly*
- Small acts of kindness make a difference: the first steps towards greater connection*

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The Way Out of Loneliness

We all need to accept our individual and collective responsibility to help the more vulnerable and isolated

- Meet others where they are*
- Listen to their stories*
- Understand that they may feel fearful or suspicious*

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The Spectrum of Our Relationships
WEAK and STRONG TIES

STRONG ties
Your core group of friends
Your family

WEAK ties
The many people you encounter throughout each week

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The Spectrum of Our Relationships
WEAK and STRONG TIES

They all matter!

- A casual friendly conversation has been shown to improve the mood of both parties!
- Over time, you may develop a rapport & rhythm and you become familiar with one another
- Weak ties can be a source of new ideas as you learn to see the world from a different pt of view

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The Spectrum of Our Relationships
WEAK and STRONG TIES

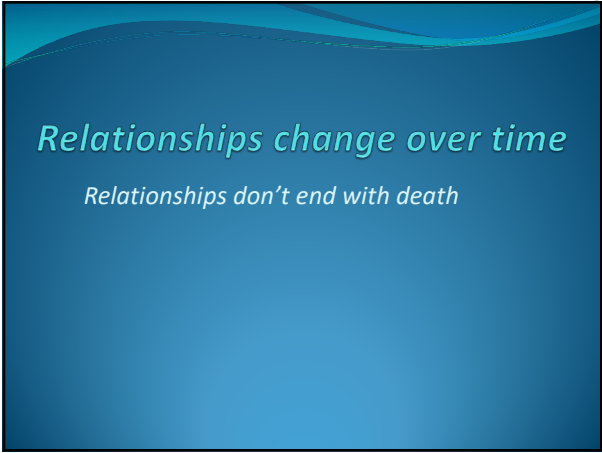
They all matter!

- They can also be a source for new interests, opportunities and even employment!
- Just acknowledging another person in the elevator or walking past you in a hall can make them feel seen and heard!

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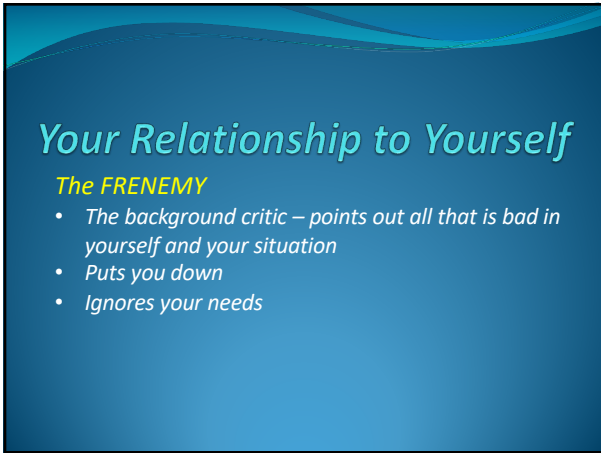
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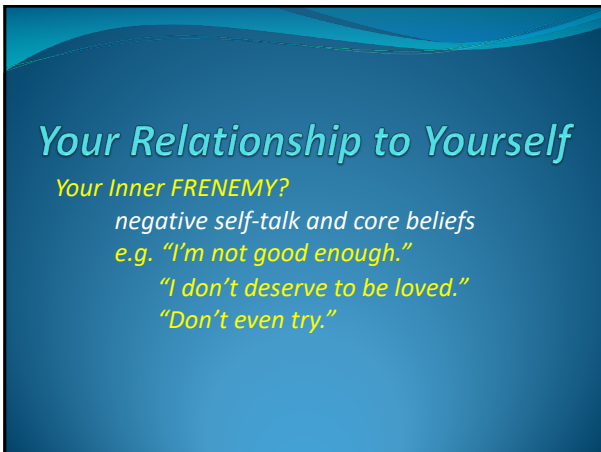
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Your Relationship to Yourself


Silencing your inner FRENEMY?
 Channel your BEST FRIEND
 See the best in yourself
 Accept yourself just as you are
 and know that you are beautiful
 Remember your successes, your strengths
 Connect with your noblest values
 Be your best self

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(FILL IN THE BLANK)!
 You can't live with them!
 You can't live without them.

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HUMANS!



You can't live with them!
 You can't live without them.

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*The Keys to
Healthy Relationships*

Naïve Realism: Humans naively believe that what they believe and see is reality

We forget that what we see is just our mental representation of what we perceive through our senses and construct within our own minds

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Our Personal Mental Models

Each of us carries a unique mental model that helps us make sense of our world

If we are open-minded and continually learning (THE GROWTH MINDSET), we progressively revise and expand our mental models as we walk through life

To do this well , we need greater experiences and diverse ideas and points of view

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Our Personal Mental Models

We create stories mainly through the judging and comparing conceptual mind (the left brain)

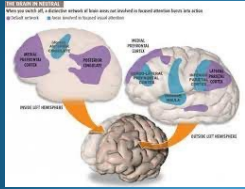
Those stories if unexamined, underdeveloped and unchanging, constrain what we see and who we are

If we accept the restricted stories handed down by people from our past, our take on reality limits our understanding of the greater world and our relationships

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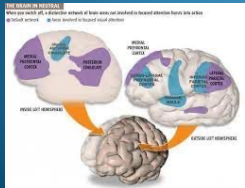
The Default Mode Network

The creative story-making centres of the brain



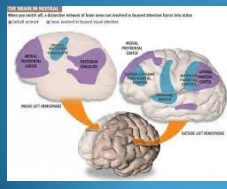
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The DMN and conceptual cognitive system are absorbed with the self-identity and goal-directed behaviour and dissociated from the holistic, intuitive and connected self



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They create a trance – a mental model, mindset and personal narrative that traps us within our own self-created and self-sustaining dream



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The Default Mode Network

You may have accepted incorrect beliefs about the world, other people and your self.

These beliefs have shaped your world view and how you tell your personal story.



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Two Ways of Knowing

What Happens in
Mindfulness

Inner Awakening and Embodied Cognition



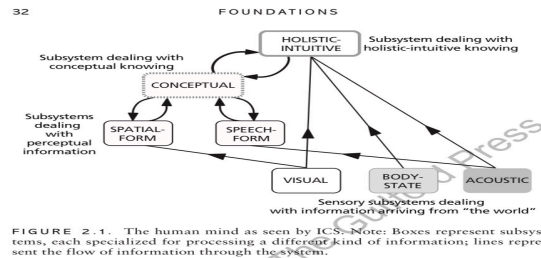
John Teasdale

Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn

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Two Ways of Knowing

Two ways of knowing and understanding the world based on the interacting cognitive subsystems model of Barnard and Teasdale:



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Two Ways of Knowing

Two ways of knowing and understanding the world based on the interacting cognitive subsystems model of Barnard and Teasdale:

- **CONCEPTUAL KNOWING**
(the world of ideas we associate with the left hemisphere)
- **HOLISTIC INTUITIVE KNOWING**
(associated with the right hemisphere)

It is the holistic-intuitive perspective that is developed through mindfulness.

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WHOLE BRAIN LIVING

"I learned the hard way that we each have four distinctive groups of cells, divided between our two brain hemispheres, that generate four consistent and predictable personalities. Neuroanatomically these four groups of cells make up the left and right thinking centers of our higher cerebral cortex, as well as our left and right emotional centers of our lower limbic system. Collectively, I call these personalities the Four Characters. Getting to know them inside of your brain is a ticket to freedom." — Jill Bolte Taylor

Character 1: Left-Brain Thinking
Verbal, linear in language, thinks linearly, past/future based, analytical, focuses on details, seeks differences, judgmental, punctual, individual, concise/precise, fixed, focus on ME, busy, conscious, structure/order, organizes everything, categorizes well, is naturally mechanical, is neat, plans well, respects authority, critically judges right/wrong and good/bad, counts everything, is protective

Character 2: Left-Brain Emotional
Constricted, rigid, cautious, fear based, stern, loves conditionally, double, hidden, righteous, manipulative, deserves, tried and true, independent, egoistic, selfish, self-absorbed, self-righteous, self-promoting, critical, superior/inferior, right/wrong, good/bad, anger/name-calling, feels guilty, internalizes shame, negative self-judgment, anxious, where, blames, holds grudges or resentments, no respect for authority

Character 4: Right-Brain Thinking
Non-verbal, thinks in pictures, thinks experientially, present moment based, kinesthetic/body, looks holistically at the big picture, seeks similarities, compassionate, lost in the flow of time, collective, flexible/resilient, open to possibilities, focus on WE, available, unconscious, fluid/flow, aware, expansive, connection, accepting, embraces chance, authentic, generous of spirit, clarity, intention, vulnerability

Character 3: Right-Brain Emotional
Expansive, open, experiential, risk taking, leaders, friendly, kind, empathic, loves unconditionally, forgiving, trusts, supports, grateful, playful, joyful, goes with the flow, awe-inspired, curious, creative/innovative, collective, sharing, equality, contentment, hopeful

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We need both sides of the brain to survive and thrive in the world

The left hemisphere comes from the perspective of the individual separate self and functions to keep you safe from danger

WHOLE BRAIN LIVING

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Our Evolving Mental Models
The key to better relationships
Is the enduring drive to understand . . .

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Our Evolving Mental Models
The key to better relationships
Is the enduring drive to understand . . .
Recognize that every person carries their own
unique story and understanding of any
situation

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Others are playing by the rules of a game that
is an integral part of their personal stories

Many of us are engaged in the competitive
WIN-LOSE game *of the conceptual, judging and*
comparing left brain

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The Infinite Game

*The alternative to the WIN-LOSE game
The goal is for everyone to win by working together. The intent is for our game (our connection) to continue – for humanity and the world to survive*

The Cycle of Love is an essential part of this Infinite Game

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Conflict and Disagreement

Conflict and disagreement are inevitable as we each meet with our own unique mental models

Playing the WIN-LOSE game, you try to win the argument or get your way

Playing the INFINITE game, you seek to understand the other – expand your perspectives and allow your mental model and story to grow

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Conversational Receptiveness

We need to actively listen and make the other person feel heard.

We need to visually show the other person that we are engaged in their point of view by:

- Showing that we are open to new information*
- Highlight your points of agreement*
- Acknowledge and restate the other’s point of view*

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*Recognize our
COGNITIVE BIASES*

THINKING ERRORS THAT ALL OF US MAKE

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The Negativity Bias



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The Negativity Bias

Our ancestors survived by tuning into negative aspects in their world to identify potential danger

We need to see 5 positive thoughts to balance each negative thought

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Mind-Reading

Believing that you really know what another person is thinking.

*"I know why she hasn't called me."
"She did that just to hurt me."*

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Countering **Mind-Reading**

Believing that you really know what another person is thinking.

*"I know why my friend didn't call me back."
"She did that just to hurt me."
I should give others the benefit of the doubt,
and maybe check things out.*

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Overgeneralizing

Making broad assumptions based on the facts on hand

*"You can't trust anyone."
"They are all the same."*

57

Countering **Overgeneralizing**

Making broad assumptions based on the facts on hand

*"You can't trust anyone."
"They are all the same."*

*One rotten banana doesn't make the whole bunch bad.
Other people are individuals just like me.*

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Polarizing

All or nothing, black or white, good or bad thinking

*"There's nothing positive in our relationship.
We have nothing in common."*

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Countering **Polarizing**

All or nothing, black or white, good or bad thinking

*"There's nothing positive in our relationship.
We are total opposites."*

"Actually, I can always count on her to be there and look after the details I take for granted." "We actually share important core values."

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Personalizing

Taking things too personally

"He did that deliberately just to hurt me."

61

Countering **Personalizing**

Taking things too personally

"He did that deliberately just to hurt me."

Maybe he's having a bad day. I'll let it go.

62

Catastrophizing

Believing the worse things will happen

"My boss probably thinks I'm useless and she's going to fire me!"

63

Countering **Catastrophizing**

Believing the worse things will happen

“My boss thinks I’m useless and she’s going to fire me.”

“My boss understands that I’m still learning. I should ask for some feedback.”

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Disqualifying the Positive

Downplaying the positive aspects of the situation or minimizing the good

“We used to have fun together but now we just tolerate each other.”

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Countering **Disqualifying the Positive**

Downplaying the positive aspects of the situation or minimizing the good

“We used to have fun together but now we barely tolerate one another.”

“Actually, I really enjoyed our quiet day together shopping and running errands.”

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THINK

True Is this thought true?

Helpful Is this thought helpful to me and my situation?

Inspiring Is this thought inspiring me to positive action?

Necessary Is this thought necessary? Is this thought meeting my *needs*?

Kind Is this thought kind?

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THE 4 MINDSETS
to inform our relationships

1. Joy
2. Peace
3. Love
4. Compassion

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Joy

In your imagination, bring to mind scenes from your memory that invoke selfless, timeless joy – moments of flow when your abilities match the challenge at hand, communing and connecting with nature, at play with children and sharing laughter among old friends, experiencing awe, moments in nature



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Equanimity/Peace

Imagine yourself in your personal sanctuary of peace – hear the sounds that bring you peace (perhaps the sounds of nature, waves washing upon the shore, leaves rustled by the wind, water trickling over the rocks in a stream and serene music of Bach or Pachelbel), feel the sensations that soothe your body and mind, inhale the scents that calm your mind, and feel yourself in the presence of a person or being – real or imagined - who invokes timeless peace.



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Metta/Unconditional Love

Feel yourself in the presence of a person or being who accepts and loves you just as you are. See yourself connected to the universal cycle of love – accepting the love you have received throughout your life and send that love to all whom you know and to all living beings.



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Compassion

Recall being in the presence of someone who understood your suffering, accepted you just as you are and lifted you up with caring words and actions. Recognize the suffering and deep vulnerability of another living being and express your deep caring.



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Progressive Awakening with the Evolution of Mental Models

Like scientists constantly testing and revising theories to take in new information, we are continuously awakening, expanding our world views to accept more and broadening and deepening our conscious awareness

We are writing ever more expansive and inclusive life stories.

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
OVER A MILLION COPIES SOLD

Completely Revised and Updated

the
Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work

A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert

JOHN M. GOTTMAN, PH.D.,
and NAN SILVER

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The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work

John M. Gottman

- 1. Enhance your Love Maps— a deep, detailed understanding of one another*
- 2. Nurture fondness and admiration (each shares a deep sense of respect and appreciation for the other)*
- 3. Turn toward each other instead of away - even in brief interactions and small talk*
- 4. Partners let the other influence their decisions by taking the others' ideas and feelings into account*

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The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work
John M. Gottman
 5. *Solvable problems* are minor short-term issues that we can squabble over and turn into major arguments
Perpetual problems come up repeatedly over time
 Both can be major sources of conflict but we can find ways of talking about them without distressing each other

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The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work
John M. Gottman
 6. When we feel trapped in a gridlock – stuck in the same recurrent problems, we each have to accept our own responsibility with productive dialogue
 7. Create shared meaning. Though we might differ greatly in our values and preferences, as a couple we need to develop a shared agreement on our roles in the relationship

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The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
John M. Gottman

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling

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Positive Sentiment Override
John and Julie Gottman

Where a partner's positive, overall view of their relationship and the other overrides occasional negative behaviours

- *5 to 1 Ratio: maintain at least 5 positive interactions for every 1 negative one*
- *Nurturing friendship by turning towards bids for connection*
- *Appreciation: recognizing the other's strengths and expression gratitude*

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"The Emergent Love model is a revelatory re-conceptualization of how we create love." —EMILY NAGOSKI, PhD, bestselling author of *Come As You Are* and *Burnout*

LOVE
BY DESIGN

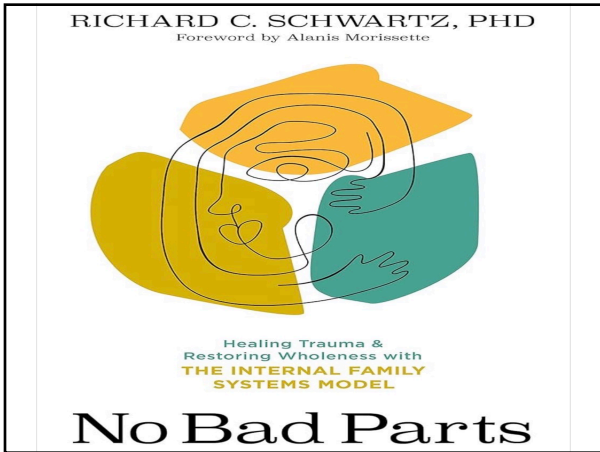
SARA NASSERZADEH, PhD, DipPST, CSC

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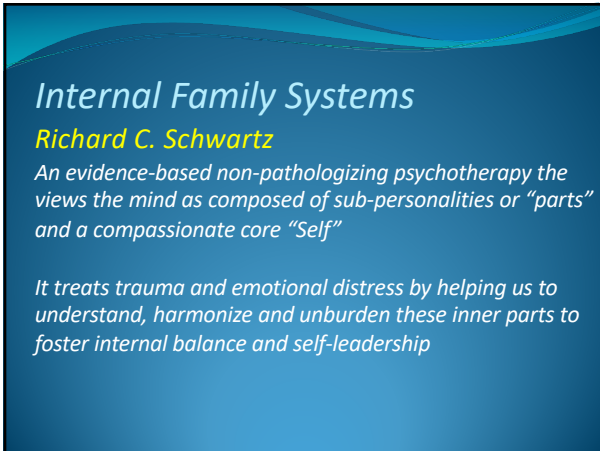
6 Ingredients to build a lifetime of love
Sara Nasserzadeh

1. *Attraction*
2. *Respect*
3. *Trust*
4. *Shared Vision*
5. *Compassion*
6. *Loving Behaviour*

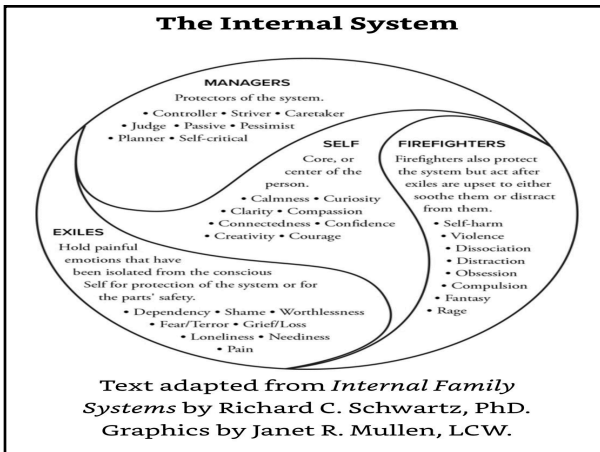
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Internal Family Systems

The Self: the confident, compassionate and calm essence at the centre of each person that remains undamaged by trauma and acts as the inner leader

Parts: distinct, sometimes conflicting aspects of the psyche that hold specific emotions, memories and roles

Managers: protective parts that manage life and prevent painful emotions from coming to the surface

Firefighters: reactive parts that act impulsively to calm the system when painful emotions break through

Exiles: wounded parts frequently from childhood that carry trauma, fear, pain or shame

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Every life story . . .

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*Every life story . . .
is really a love story*

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*Healthcare is Self-Care
Pass it on!*

*POSITIVE POTENTIAL MEDICINE
davidicuswong.wordpress.com
divisionsbc.ca/burnaby*



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Our Next Empowering Patients Talk

What You Should Know About LUNG DISEASE

Are you at risk for lung disease?

- Recognize and manage the symptoms of asthma, chronic bronchitis and emphysema*
- Bronchitis vs pneumonia: know the difference and if you need respiratory vaccines*
- Are you at risk for lung cancer and should you be screened?*
- Daytime sleepiness? Learn about the symptoms, testing and treatment for sleep apnea*

Tuesday, March 24th, 2026

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