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Practicing Love



POLARITY AND LOVE

As many of us know, it is often easier to get along with friends we love than with the intimate partner we love. Why? One reason is that with our intimate partner we want to share not only love, but also sexual polarity. We sometimes get frustrated with our intimate partners because few of us have really understood that there is a big difference between sexual polarity and love.

Sexual polarity is a universal and natural force that can be felt not only with people, but also with photos, memories, fantasies, animals and places; in other words, it may occur with anything or anyone, as long as there is a Masculine and a Feminine pole.

Love is non-separation, the willingness to embrace, the openness of a heart that knows no resistance. Love occurs where fear is not. Love is non-avoidance. Love is the realization of no difference, of perfect unity, of coincidence without a “me” and “you.”

It is the work of a lifetime to open in love without fear and resistance,

to enjoy the ecstasy of perfect unity in relationship. It is actually far easier to learn the basic laws of sexual polarity and enjoy the passionate play between Masculine and Feminine. However, it still requires hard work because we often resist aspects of the Masculine or Feminine, and therefore we resist embracing that which would allow full sexual polarity in our intimate relationship.

If all we want in our intimacy is love, then it is completely irrelevant who animates Masculine or Feminine energy, or when. But if we want love *and* the flow of sexual polarity in our intimate life, then we must accept the fullness of Masculine and Feminine expression.

Especially today, men and women are resisting letting go of their hard-won 50/50 balance. They are afraid of slipping backwards into old sex roles. Instead, they are trying to learn to give and receive love better—but are, for the most part, ignoring the cultivation of full sexual polarity in their relationships. Many partners say, “We love each other, but something is missing in our relationship.”

That “something” is usually a clear and uncomplicated enjoyment of sexual polarity. “Something is missing” because one or both partners are weak in the animation of their natural sexual essence. They may try their best to be loving, but the fullness of their sexual gift remains unexpressed, or perhaps even actively avoided.

As we grow through the practice of Intimate Communion, we must practice these two arts simultaneously: the art of opening in love and the art of cultivating sexual polarity by gifting from our unique sexual essence.

We learn to love by accepting each other as we are, letting go of our resistances and learning to relax and truly feel each moment as it arises and disappears. And we learn to gift from our sexual essence by trusting the natural energies of our body, by honoring the ongoing play and pleasurable opposition between Masculine and Feminine

forces, and by consciously empowering and understanding—rather than inadvertently negating—the universal force of sexual polarity that we feel every day with our partners, our friends and total strangers.

Of the two, love is far more important to practice than sexual polarity. After all, some of us with more Neutral sexual essences don't even care much about sexual polarity—and most of us will care less and less about sexual polarity as we grow older.

Love is the lesson we are here to learn, from birth to death. In the end, love is all there is—or isn't. We will either die easily in the knowledge of love or we will regret that we have not loved enough. Sexual polarity doesn't make a damn bit of difference in that final moment.

To grow from a Dependence Relationship, to a 50/50 Relationship, into the practice of Intimate Communion, we must learn to love more and resist less. We must learn to accept more and avoid less. We must learn to relax more and contract less. This growth takes constant practice. Over and over again we will discover our unlovingness, and in that moment we will have an opportunity to learn how to relax, breathe, let go of our resistance and love.

We have already examined the practice of sexual polarity in previous chapters. Now let's focus on the practice of love in Intimate Communion.

HOW TO PRACTICE LOVE IN INTIMATE COMMUNION

In the practice of Intimate Communion, the most important thing to remember is to love. When you feel yourself turning away from your partner, turn back toward him or her and, to the best of your ability, open your heart and love. We have many old habits that we learned in childhood: ways of turning away from and even punishing our intimate

partners. For instance, when we wanted to hurt our parents we might have gone into our room and hidden, refused to communicate or told them we didn't love them. These old habits of hurting others or hiding from them when we don't feel loved are still active. We perform the same habits with our intimate partners. Intimate Communion provides a counter-practice to these old habits of unlove.

Intimate Communion requires that we practice loving *through* these old patterns. When we want to get away from our partner, we instead practice remaining fully present in the relationship. When we feel our body becoming tense, we instead practice relaxing our muscles and breathing fully. When we feel our emotional shell cutting us off and separating us from our partner in anger, fear or indifference, we instead allow our heart to feel through the separation, into union with our partner. These practices of love in Intimate Communion are a counter-effort to our old habits of separation, withdrawal and punishment. These practices of love involve relaxing the body, opening the emotions and allowing our unguarded heart to feel our partner, directly and fully.

This process of opening is something that we need to practice over and over again. When our partner hurts us, it is often very difficult to remain open to him or her. Yet we gain nothing by closing down, turning away or punishing our partner, even if he or she has intentionally hurt us.

As children, we played this emotional game: If you don't love me, I don't love you. If you hurt me, I'm going to hurt you. If you don't want to be with me, I don't want to be with you. It's a childish game, and the results are that two people who love each other create a situation where they are unable to communicate or break through the tension of separation they have created.

In a Dependence Relationship, this attitude of "If you hurt me, I'm

going to hurt you” is prevalent and often acted out in games of withholding money, sex and attention. “If you don’t give me what I want, I’m going to hold back my money (or sex, or attention) from you.”

In a 50/50 Relationship, partners think they can “talk it through.” They think that if only they could hear each other’s needs, they could come to some kind of agreement. In some cases, this is quite true. Clear speaking and good listening can work wonders with conflicts that are based on misunderstandings about each other’s needs.

In many cases, however, there is a real difference between the partners’ needs, rather than just a misunderstanding about them. For instance, very often the more Masculine partner wants “space” and “freedom” in a relationship and the more Feminine partner wants more “closeness” and “intimate time” together. What can be done in this kind of situation? Is a 50/50 compromise the only solution?

For the Masculine, the priority in life is the mission, the quest or the desire for increased freedom. For the Feminine, the priority in life is the flow of feeling or the desire for more loving. Throughout an intimate “discussion,” the Masculine is always trying to achieve the goal of freedom. The Masculine likes to solve problems, and thus interprets any negative emotional expression that the Feminine makes as a problem to be solved (or something that needs to be “fixed”) in order to relax and enjoy relationship. The Feminine, on the other hand, desires to feel contact with the flow of love. Throughout the intimate discussion, the Feminine is not so much trying to fix something or work toward some future goal as hoping to establish intimate contact and real feeling with Her intimate partner.

Thus, the more Masculine partner is always “discussing” in order to solve some problem. The more Feminine partner is always “discussing” in order to create deeper contact, to stay in touch and to allow a greater flow of feeling between partners. That’s why discussion can be a good

way to work through intimate difficulties, but not a great way. If the two partners are both sexually Neutral, discussion works fine. But if one partner is more Masculine and the other is more Feminine, they are really talking for different reasons and therefore will be fulfilled by different outcomes. The Masculine partner will relax when the “problem” is solved. The Feminine partner will relax when the flow of love is deeply felt.

In Dependence Relationships, you withhold from each other in order to get what you want. In 50/50 Relationships, you talk with one another in the hopes of reaching a compromise so that each of you can get some of what you want. In the practice of Intimate Communion, however, you realize that, regardless of what each of you is saying, you both want the same thing, but in different forms. The Feminine partner wants to feel the flow of love. The Masculine partner wants to feel the freedom of there being no problem. Love and freedom are both expressions of the same, simple, unbounded feeling; by letting down your defenses and resting in the simplicity of open-hearted feeling-consciousness, you are love and you are free.

Therefore, in Intimate Communion you simply relax into loving communion with your partner *first*. You remain fully present with your partner, feeling through any impulse you may have to turn away or close down, and look directly into each other’s eyes. You counter any tendency for your heart to contract by consciously feeling through your sense of contraction, so that you are actively feeling and practicing union with your partner, rather than actively contracting and separating yourself from your partner.

Over time, you learn to practice being present, loving and open with your partner even when you disagree strongly with each other. In an active moment of Intimate Communion, something magical happens: The Feminine partner feels the flow of love and the Masculine

partner feels that there is no problem. Through the intense unity and openness that Intimate Communion generates, the Feminine partner is already relaxed in the feeling of love and the Masculine partner is already relaxed in the freedom of open consciousness, not driven by any sense of “problem.” Practicing partners are simply present with one another, open and feeling.

In any intimate relationship that involves a more Masculine partner and a more Feminine partner, there will *always* be an opposition of desires. The Masculine partner will want to be free to accomplish his or her mission. The Feminine partner will want more quality time in intimacy, more flow of deep feeling. The Masculine partner is likely to desire an opportunity for polygamous sexuality. The Feminine partner is likely to desire a more deeply fulfilling occasion of monogamous sexuality. The Masculine partner will be hurt when his or her direction or purpose is criticized. The Feminine partner will be hurt when his or her radiance or beauty is criticized. There are many, many differences between the needs and desires of the Masculine and Feminine, and all of them can be sources of opposition between partners. The conflicts and disagreements never seem to end.

In a Dependence Relationship, partners usually cycle through phases of abusively painful fighting and passionate making-up. In 50/50 Relationships, partners are constantly trying to achieve better communication so that they can work out their differences and reach a compromise on which they can agree. But in the practice of Intimate Communion, partners realize that as long as one is more Masculine and the other more Feminine, their differences will never come to an end. They realize, in fact, that this is the source of their sexual polarity: their differences.

They accept the fact that as manifestations of sexually polarized universal forces, they will always be in a playful opposition with each

other, like two planets kept in orbit with each other by the opposition of gravity and centrifugal force: Gravity works to pull them together while the centrifugal force of their independent motion works to keep them apart, and the result is an ongoing coupling, held together by the tension of opposing forces.

In the midst of their constantly opposing desires and tendencies, Intimate Communion requires that partners practice staying in direct relationship. This is the practice of love. Whatever differences arise, each partner practices relaxing the body, allowing the breath to remain full, feeling through old habits of emotional closure and communing in love with the partner. Each partner is a partner in *practice*. Their relationship is based on a commitment to the practice of Intimate Communion, not a commitment to play the old games of childhood withholding or the new games of adult communication and compromise. Intimate Communion is about relaxing into and as love itself, in the present moment.

When partners are already relaxed in Intimate Communion, then they can work out the details of their lives together. This is a creative matter and is unique for each person and partnership. How you choose to live your lives, independently and together, is entirely a matter of creative investigation and ongoing experimentation. If you are practicing Intimate Communion during this experimentation, then you are already getting what you really want in intimacy, regardless of the details of your lives. The Feminine is already getting the full flow of love. The Masculine is already enjoying the freedom of non-problematic consciousness. On this basis of love and free consciousness, which must be practiced moment to moment, partners engage the creative work of sculpting the style of their lives together.

In Intimate Communion, the Masculine practices the realization of His true nature as free consciousness and the Feminine practices the realization of Her true nature as boundless love. Together, they realize

that although their lives may look different, their practice is the same: The moment-to-moment realization of a love that is not threatened by rejection and a freedom that is not limited by fear or loss. Together, they practice this moment-to-moment realization of free love, the open consciousness that *is* love. In the fullness of Intimate Communion, the Masculine and Feminine enjoy the same ultimate realization, although their journey through the stages may appear quite different.

LOVE FLOWS WHEN YOU GIVE IT

Although love is something that we often try to *get* from our intimate partner, we actually feel love most when we are *giving* it.

Is your intimate partner really the source of love in your life? Most likely, if your partner was to die, you would go through a period of grieving and then, eventually, you would find another person whom you loved. Although this person would be different from your previous partner and the texture of the relationship would be different, the love would be the same. Love is love. We are either loving or we are not. We can love anyone with whom we are willing to open, feel, let down our guard and commune.

We don't *get* love from another, as if that person were our precious and only source of heart-fulfillment. We are either open to loving or we are not. We often act as if we need an excuse to love, such as a special person or some certain behavior on the part of our partner, but we could simply choose to open our heart and love right now. We can practice loving in this very moment, even if we are alone, just as we can practice loving in relationship to an intimate partner. We need not wait for a better partner, or a chocolate dessert, in order to relax into the sweetness of love in this moment. We can simply practice loving by relaxing, breathing fully, letting down our guard and feeling throughout

our body and into all relations. We can learn to love, whether or not our present experience is painful or pleasurable.

When we are not loving, we close ourselves off from the full flow of life and so we feel empty. We then seek to fill the void at our feeling-center with one source of potential fullness or another. But it doesn't work. This void cannot be filled because it is not really an empty space; rather, it is something that we are doing. This void is actually being created, moment by moment, by our *doing* of unlove, by our acts of closure, tension and separation.

Yet when we cease to divide ourselves from life, when we relax our boundaries and allow ourselves to open in love, we find that we are already full. We are already not separate, but deeply connected, filled with energy and the flow of life. However difficult it may seem, we are always capable of practicing love: relaxing and breathing and feeling.

There is no distance between us and the fullness of love at all. If we are only willing to open and *feel*, right now, then we *are* love. It is this practice of feeling, this practice of loving, that serves to move us from a 50/50 Relationship into the practice of Intimate Communion. We need not wait for anything or anyone, as long as we remember to love in this moment.

HER “COMPLAINTS” ARE ACTUALLY GIFTS

In the beginning of my relationship with Ophelia, like many men, I couldn't understand why Ophelia always seemed to be complaining about our relationship in one way or another. And Ophelia couldn't understand why I seemed to “love my work more than her.” It was only after years of observing the same pattern in many other relationships that I began to see that these tendencies of the Masculine and Feminine essences were actually gifts—if understood and used properly.

The Feminine sexual essence is *acutely* sensitive to the flow of love in relationship. In my own life, I witnessed that Ophelia was usually the first one of us aware that something was amiss in our relationship. In fact, as my acceptance of her gift deepened, I saw that the expressions on Ophelia's face were usually direct, moment-to-moment reflections of how distracted or loving I was in relationship with her. So I learned to trust her sensitivity to the flow of love more than my own. After all, she was more attuned to this dimension than I was.

Of course, there were times when Ophelia was just wrapped up in her own emotional weavings. Therefore, along with my trust of her sensitivity, I developed discrimination as to when she was enveloped in her own emotional constructions and when she was accurately reading the flow of our love—usually more accurately and more responsively than I.

If I was in a first-stage moment of dependence, hoping to be fulfilled by Ophelia, then I just wished Ophelia would stop complaining about our relationship. From a first-stage point of view, her complaints seemed to be entirely *her* problem.

If we were in a second-stage moment, assuming independence and equality, then I tried to talk with Ophelia about what she was feeling, and tried to get to the bottom of it. We would spend time sharing our feelings, our thoughts, our desires, so that we could understand why we were dissatisfied with what we were getting from each other.

We also realized our personal responsibility for our own happiness, and therefore we were careful not to become dependent on one another for our happiness. In such second-stage moments, we help each other grow, but we are also careful to maintain our own boundaries in true 50/50 fashion. She has her life to live and I have mine, even though we share a relationship.

But as the years went on, I saw over and over that Ophelia's Feminine

sexual essence was uniquely gifted—exquisitely sensitive—in a way that mine was not. So, in my embrace of Ophelia, I learned to honor and receive this gift of hers. I learned to trust her sensitivity to the flow of love. After all, if I was completely honest, I would have to admit that more often than not, I was more concerned with where we were going rather than how we were loving in the moment.

Over time, I learned to trust and learn from her responses in relationship, moment by moment. Ophelia was an especially-suited reminder for me to be fully present in relationship. So, in the practice of Intimate Communion, I receive Ophelia's relational sensitivity as a gift of awakening, as a reminder of my highest purpose and as a reminder to give my highest gift: to give love.

THE MASCULINE COMMITMENT TO LOVE AND MARRIAGE

To the Feminine, marriage or a committed intimate relationship is a fertile ground that provides the basis for love to grow. For the Feminine, true marriage *is* love. And, since love is the main desire for the Feminine, She looks forward to a true and loving committed intimacy or marriage. But this is not true for the Masculine. The main desire for the Masculine is freedom. Therefore, any man or woman who is in a Masculine moment will resist the constraints that marriage seems to pose. Thus, if we are to practice Intimate Communion, it is very important for each of us to understand how the Masculine relates to love in committed intimacy, stage by stage.

The first-stage Masculine simply views marriage as a necessary evil. Something to get over with. Many bachelor parties are filled with phrases like “being shackled to a ball and chain and throwing away the key.” This is how the first-stage Masculine views marriage, even if He

is deeply in love with His intimate partner. Marriage is viewed as a voluntary loss of freedom, and therefore the best man is supposed to be there to make sure that the groom shows.

The second-stage Masculine is careful to make arrangements so that, indeed, marriage does not become a loss of freedom! The open-marriage, “just living together,” 50/50 Relationship with two separate bank accounts and a third to which each partner contributes, are all inventions of the second-stage Masculine, in both men and women. “Why risk constraint when I could have my relationship and my freedom, too?” This is the voice of the second-stage Masculine.

Whereas the first-stage Masculine simply resigns Himself to a ball and chain for the sake of sex, love and family, the second-stage Masculine attempts to arrange an “out,” just in case. This out may take the form of a prenuptial contract or simply a verbal understanding that “although we live together and love each other in a 50/50 Relationship, I have my life and you have yours.”

Whereas the ante of family and finances is rather high in a Dependence Relationship, the rules of a 50/50 Relationship are agreed to with safety and low risk in mind. The up-front investment is made with great caution and without “rushing into anything that either of us will regret later.” The second-stage Masculine is quite skilled at protecting His freedom via uncommitment in the name of equality and healthy independence.

Any man or woman with a highly developed Masculine is especially cautious when it comes to entering a long-term commitment in intimacy. The threat of possible constraint is too great. “Maybe I won’t be able to live my life the way I want.” So the second-stage Masculine, in man or woman, is always reluctant to commit. He doesn’t want to risk His all-important freedom: financial, creative or spiritual. He wants to be able to do what He wants to do when He wants to do it without being tied down.

A great shift occurs for the Masculine as it grows from the second to the third stage. This shift is from wanting to acquire freedom to learning to *be* free, moment by moment, and therefore becoming a gift of freedom in other people's lives. The second-stage Masculine does His best to preserve His own freedom, but the third-stage Masculine is a natural demonstration of freedom in all situations, and therefore a gift of freedom, to others and to the world. Paradoxically, though, this demonstration of freedom is always in the context of limitation.

I remember the day I decided to ask Ophelia to marry me, to enter into formal commitment in the practice of Intimate Communion. We had been living together for several years by that time. I loved her and fully expected to spend the rest of my life with her. Yet, when the time came to actually ask her to marry me, I felt like I was going to die.

We were sitting at a little table in our favorite cafe one evening, and I had ordered a bottle of wine with which to christen the proposal. We were looking into each other's eyes, smiling, and I had a feeling that Ophelia sensed what was about to happen. I poured each of us a glass of wine, and then lifted my glass to propose to her. But when I tried to speak, nothing came out.

I quickly drank my glass of wine and poured myself another as Ophelia watched incredulously. Again I tried. And again I failed. Afterward, when Ophelia was recounting the incident, she said it looked like I was choking to death. The words just would not come out of my mouth. I drank my wine and poured myself another glass. This went on until the bottle was empty.

Finally, I reached across the table and drank what was left of Ophelia's glass! With sufficient lubrication, the words eventually pressed out of my mouth, along with some tears from my eyes. Ophelia was crying, too, although I'm not sure whether from pain or happiness. She accepted my proposal, but what we remember most about the

incident was how difficult it was for me to ask her to marry me.

When I tell this story in workshops, most men and an increasing number of women empathize with my difficulty. The biggest desire of the Masculine is freedom, and the biggest fear is constraint. Even though I loved Ophelia without any doubt, my Masculine sexual essence still felt that formal marriage was a possible constraint, a limitation on my freedom, a reduction of possibility, and therefore I was rather, shall we say, reluctant to enter into such an arrangement.

The Masculine always wants to keep as many possibilities open as it can. In fact, many wars have been fought in the name of freedom, in an effort not to be constrained by political ideology. Marriage is certainly as tangible a force in a person's life as political ideology. It is no real wonder then—if the Masculine is willing to sacrifice His life to maintain His ideological freedom—that I had to drink enough wine to soften His grip on the freedom of my bachelorhood.

In the practice of Intimate Communion, the Masculine knows that to be free is to be able to remain open in love through gain and loss. And so he practices this loving, this freedom of heart, even while being crucified upon the limitations of life. His heart remains open to infinity, even though his life is wrought with necessary constraint. This practice of fearless freedom, or love, is the mission of a third-stage man.

Also in the practice of Intimate Communion, a third-stage man is willing to practice loving even as he knows the inevitable loss of all that he loves. Ultimately, therefore, he realizes that love is the only practice that transcends the appearance and disappearance of all things and people. When his practice of love becomes sufficient, when he no longer fears constraint in relationship or in the world, then the Masculine is absolutely free: Fearless.

In the practice of Intimate Communion, the Masculine commits to marriage knowing that ultimate freedom is in perfect and fearless love,

and that marriage is an ideal form in which to practice such love. Paradoxically, by committing to the practice of love in the form of limitation, the Masculine realizes freedom.

This is the practice of Intimate Communion, moment by moment: You practice giving love, even when you fear unlove, even when you fear loss and even when you fear hurt. By doing so, you eventually realize that you are always able to love and you are always able to be free, as the force of love. But this realization requires great practice. The marriage commitment in Intimate Communion is a commitment to the moment-to-moment practice of love, and therefore to the realization of freedom.

Since the Masculine is inherently committed to freedom, He is also paradoxically committed to marriage—if and when He realizes that freedom lies in the moment-to-moment practice of love. Intimate Communion is about committing to the practice of love. It is not a commitment to family, sex, financial support or creating a beautiful life together—although a marriage founded in Intimate Communion may certainly involve any or all of these things. A commitment to a relationship of Intimate Communion is nothing more and nothing less than a commitment to the practice of love, and therefore to the realization of perfect freedom—which is the ultimate Masculine desire.