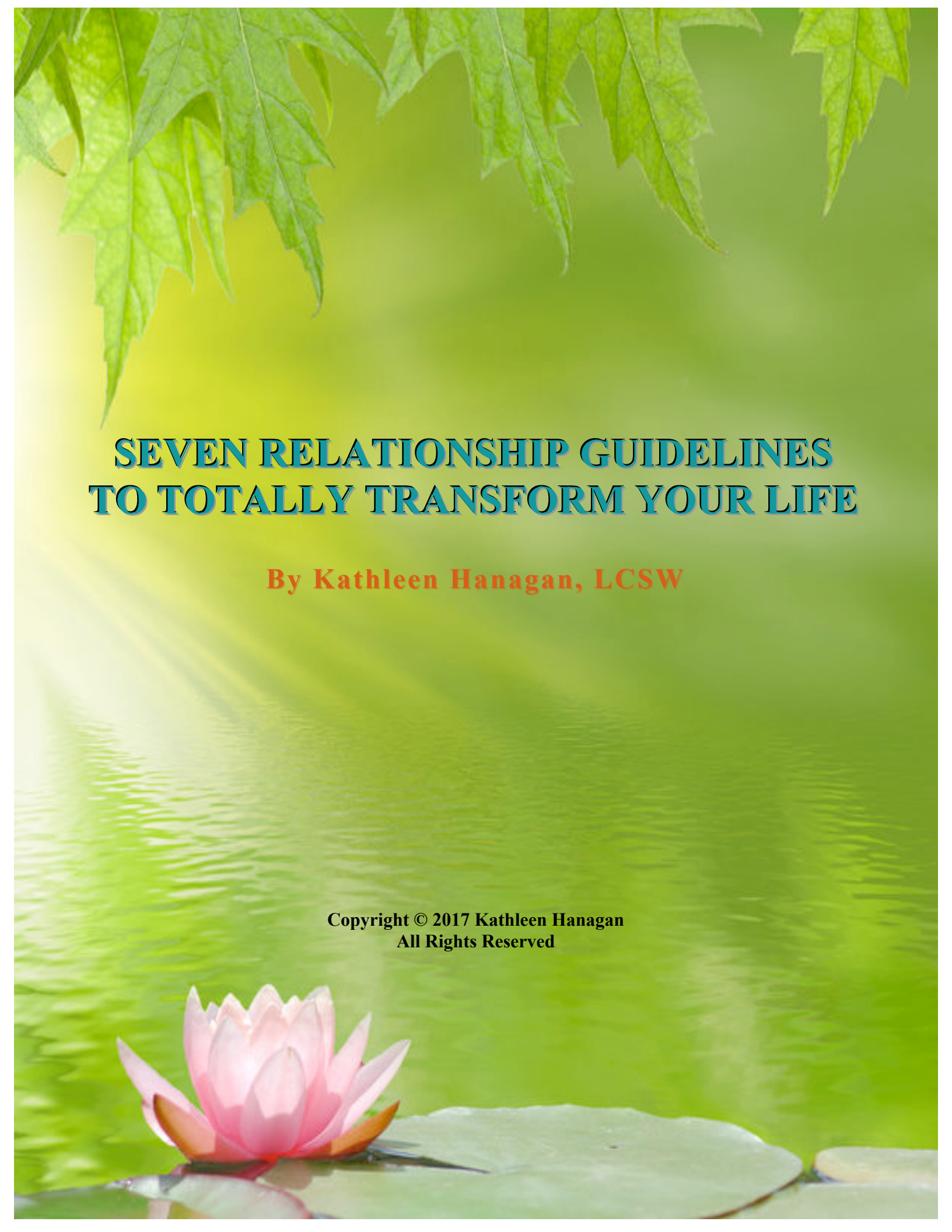




SEVEN RELATIONSHIP GUIDELINES TO TOTALLY TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

By Kathleen Hanagan, LCSW

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Seven Relationship Guidelines To Totally Transform Your Life

I am here to tell you that things as they are hold the key to all you have been looking for. What, you ask, could I possibly mean, if you are anxious, depressed, unhappy in your relationships, broke, sick, even downright angry about your life? That is exactly what I want to speak with you about. Wherever you are in your life, no matter how you feel, and whatever your circumstances, YOU can begin where you are in this very moment, to open to more joy and peace than you have ever felt before.

I want to make this as simple as I can. I have distilled the wisdom I have come to know from the inside out, after 25 years as a psychotherapist, a mother of 3 grown children, and a relentless spiritual seeker for over 5 decades. I have traveled around the world and spent weeks in silent meditation at the feet of spiritual masters in India, lived in the Andes and learned from holy men and women, taken inner and outer journeys with shamans, andwell, you get the picture. I have been asking questions about life and love and existence from my heart for a very long time in this life, and, as I have been told, for many lifetimes before this.

I ask you to come on this journey with me for a few minutes, so that can share the essence of what I have learned with you. I will speak to you about the 3 doors to the LOVE you have been born to experience. It will be easy to remember, since the first door is the door to YOU.

LOVE is who you are. You may have heard that before, but I want you to really take it in. LOVE is not a commodity, something to seek or grasp or not have enough of. YOU ARE LOVE, and you are known by your LOVE. It is what is unique about you. It is impossible to not have enough of it, because it is what you are made of. Spirit resonates to LOVE and commands what are called adamantite particles, the smallest particles of existence, to come into form. The very fabric of your body, mind and spirit is LOVE. That is why we hear over and over that “LOVE is all there is.”

So if you are LOVE, made of it through and through, why are you seeking it? Why do you feel you don't have enough, or at times that it has been taken from you? As with so many spiritual truths, when it comes to everyday living, it is very difficult to apply what you know and believe in your heart of hearts. You look around this world and see so much anguish and pain and what appears to be unLOVE. I do as well, and I have come to know that though this is not our natural condition, it is certainly all around us, these manifestations of humanity's fear. It is how you respond to all this, the story you tell yourself, that makes all the difference. As Byron Katie says, *“Without our stories, we are pure love.”*

There are three main doors to walk through if you want to experience LOVE: the door to Self, the door to Source, and the door to Others.



We all come from the SOURCE of all LOVE, which many call God. I will call this SOURCE, here, since God is such a charged word for many. When we take human birth, the vast LOVE that we are comes into form as a little baby body, with a yet undeveloped awareness. By taking birth, we lose the memory of how grand and magnificent we truly are. We are left

seeking a mirror to remember who we are, and since we came from with the Source of all

LOVE, then SOURCE would be the only true mirror of who we are. But as an infant, the first mirrors we encounter are Mom and Dad. Thus the beginning of using the doorway of relationship as the portal back to who we are, and, depending on how well Mom and Dad did reflecting back to us the LOVE we are, the beginning of feeling not quite enough.

Since Mom and Dad have also been searching for who they are, they can only reflect back from their own limited sense of LOVE, which is the legacy from their parents. With their help, we create a template, which leads us to unconsciously seek similar mirrors in our close relationships. This is the cause of many of our relationship addictions and struggles, and the great disappointment we inevitably experience when we expect to fill our emptiness through someone else, before we have done the essential work of remembering who we really are.

Not only does this remind us to take on the task of healing and clearing our relationships with our parents, but it instructs us to open the other two portals: the one back to the SELF, and the one back to SOURCE. And the wonder, which poets and mystics have expressed so eloquently, is that opening any of those doors with an open heart can lead to our awakening in time.

As the Persian mystic poet Rumi says,

*“For a long time I searched for the image of my soul,
but there was no image to reflect it.*

After all, what is a mirror for? It is to reveal to each one of us who he is and what he is.

The mirror of the soul is nothing else but the face of the Friend; the face of the Friend belongs to our spiritual home.”

That Friend is YOU. We come back to that first doorway—the one to YOU. I cannot emphasize enough how essential it is for you to keep the hinges on that door well oiled. It is the key to your happiness in all relationships, and in life in general. When you come to know and feel yourself as the LOVE you are, all your relationships will change for the better.

I have had a tendency in my life to choose intimate partners over and over who wanted me to be different than I am---a bit more tame, less intense, calmer, not seeking as much, more content with the things that made them happy. You get the picture. I tried, over and over, vacillating between feeling inadequate and not quite right, to defiant rebellion and a reactive sense of needing to be who I am.

Maybe this is true for you, or maybe you have been a person who wanted a partner to be less intense so that you could feel more comfortable. Or maybe someone wanted you to be more intense, more passionate, or more or less than what you naturally are. What I am describing is one of the most common breakdowns in intimate relationships.

Relationship Guideline #1

Accept what is true about yourself and your experience fully. Stop resisting what is. Only in this way will you be able to accept another.

This means accepting that you are angry, sad, tired, jealous, broke, depressed, overweight, and whatever else is true. You start with acceptance, letting go of resistance. No judgment, simply seeing what is. You don't have to like it, or want it to stay the way it is. But it is resistance to what is that causes suffering. The Buddha taught this thousands of years ago. Pain is part of being human, suffering is fighting against it, being attached to something or someone else.

One of the ways I work to cultivate self-acceptance is imagining making a lot of space inside my heart for myself to feel whatever I feel. I learned this from Stephen Levine, a spiritual teacher who has had a great impact in my life. Stephen would say that we must learn to allow whatever arises to float in merciful awareness.



We are all accustomed to contorting ourselves to meet the expectations and demands of the outer world from an early age. We develop false selves that we mistake for who we really are, sacrificing our aliveness for outer acceptance. It is helpful to remember that you are not your body, not your thoughts and not your feelings.

This poem by Rumi is a sweet reminder that we must greet all aspects of ourselves as a welcome “guest.”

THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they are a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, still, treat each guest honorably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice.

Meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes because each has been sent as a guide from beyond

This work of self-acceptance is no easy task for many of us. When we don't become conscious of the ways in which we fail to accept ourselves, we tend to attract people into our lives who fail to accept us as well. There is a universal law “*As within, so without*”. This brings us to the next guideline:

Relationship Guideline #2

Take back your projections and own that whatever you have a charge about in a relationship with someone else is actually a quality that belongs to you.

There are many powerful tools to help you do this. I often refer to the Radical Forgiveness worksheets from Colin Tipping's work. You can find it on his website, www.radicalforgiveness.com. If I have a charged reaction to another person, I will do one of the worksheets to reclaim that quality or pattern of behavior as my own.

Byron Katie's work is also a potent tool, where you undertake the "turn around," and face into what it is that is true about you, rather than the person you are in relationship with. It may be that the "turn around" has you see that you do that to others, or to yourself.

This can be very confusing at times, since the law, "As within, so without," applies both ways. Let's say for instance, you are in relationship with a person who tends to be very stingy. Anyone would concur, and you are simply frustrated that you are faced with this person's miserly nature over and over. You become fixated on it, disgusted with it, wanting it to change. You resist looking at yourself, since it is so obviously a trait of this person.



It may indeed be true of this person, and now it is true of you as well. Your own less than generous nature attracted that person in the first place and has been activated, and as soon as you can fully acknowledge that, you have the option to be the LOVE you are. You don't have to like the quality of stinginess, but you do not need to withhold LOVE because of it.

This second guideline is a key to making the shift from being a victim to living as the true CREATOR of your own life. It takes a certain amount of rigor and a commitment to truly look at yourself with radical honesty.

Relationship Guideline #3

Practice compassion until it is as second nature as breathing. Begin with yourself, and return there as soon as you are out of compassion with someone else.

*"Sex is the seed, love is the flower,
compassion is the fragrance."*

~Author unknown

If you want to be happy and fulfilled, you must become your own BEST FRIEND, and cultivate a deep and sustained sense of compassion for yourself. In all my years of inner and professional exploration, I have come to know that compassion for yourself is the key to true happiness, and not feeling it is the source of much depression, anxiety, addiction and low self-esteem. It allows you to contact the LOVE you are and set loose a change in you that has no off button! It is essential if you are to have healthy relationships with others.



To cultivate compassion, you must develop your observing self, which can be done through meditation, therapy, and other forms of focusing inward. Yet this is not enough, for this observing self must be connected to SOURCE, and is not simply a part of the mental functioning of the mind. This is one of the most vital aspects of

the work I do with people, helping them make that powerful connection to their HIGHER SELF(HS). HS uses our spiritual intelligence, and connects through attunement to the experiencing self, which actually stimulates areas of the brain to fire. In a sense, we become “rewired” for the compassion, which is our basic nature. The observing self and HS must not be confused with the inner critic, or judge, which we all have. When the judge or critic appears, the HS learns to greet that part of self with compassion.

Through actual scientific experiments, it has been proven that something that is observed actually changes as a result of being observed. In essence, we bring the light of consciousness to what is happening. To cultivate compassion, we see through the eyes of the heart, and the effect on ourselves is profound.

In recent years, scientists have discovered what are called “mirror neurons” in the brains of mammals. The perception of an action by someone else has been shown to fire the same neurons in the brain of the observer as in the brain of the one acting. For example, if someone is thirsty and drinks a glass of water, the observer’s brain fires the same neurons as if s/he was lifting the glass and drinking.

This is also true when we perceive affective states, such as when someone is in pain, joy, fear or shame. That same affective state resonates within the observer, which illustrates so profoundly how connected we all are. Neural patterns, family legacies and social structures all keep us believing in the illusion of separateness. Developing compassion liberates us of this illusion, and returns us to our ONENESS.

Clearly, if we are unable to have compassion for someone else, it is because we have lost that compassionate connection to our own self. I think you get the picture by now. It is all about YOU. There you have it. YOU are the key to your own happiness. Once you really get that, you are ready to move on to the Relationship Guideline #4, which will at first seem to contradict what I just said about it being all about YOU.

Relationship Guideline #4

Let go of I, me and mine. Practice taking nothing personally.

So, if it is all about YOU, then what do I mean here? It is only when you have fully claimed all of you and your experience that you can begin to make the shift in consciousness that allows you to see the impersonal nature of all of life. I was once given the challenging spiritual practice to attempt to go one month without using the pronouns “I,” “me,” “mine.” I did not last a day. For one thing, it is challenging to speak with someone else unless they know what you are up to, but more importantly, it takes being very awake to refrain from the automatic self-referencing that we are all addicted to.

I have taken this practice on many times, and it always helps me become more present to what is happening, and more accepting of what is. For instance, when I am in the garden, I may have the idea to move a plant or weed or prune some roses, and I say to myself, “Weeding, pruning, replanting.” It is a moving meditation, and removes me from the equation.



People think and say and do what they will. There is a saying “What you think of me is none of my business,” which has filtered through the recovery culture in recent years. It is a reminder that good, bad, or indifferent, people’s opinions of us are their projections upon us. If you are not identified with I, me, or mine, it is easier to remain neutral when someone is less than affirming.

Basically, everything that happens in life is neutral. It is our reaction to what is happening that creates the suffering. If I experience shame, for example, when I

see that I cannot pay my bills, it is common to believe that the lack of money is causing the shame. Lack of money is simply lack of money. Somewhere inside me there was shame before the lack of money happened, which has the opportunity to be expressed now that it is triggered by my lack of money.

It is quite the opposite of what our ego (I) believes it to be. And now that the shame has appeared, learning how to feel it so that we can heal it is the key. It has come up so that we can release it. If I am over identified with my shame, it will be very challenging to let it go. If I remember who I truly am, connected to SOURCE, everything that happens is an opportunity to heal my perceived separateness from the ONE.

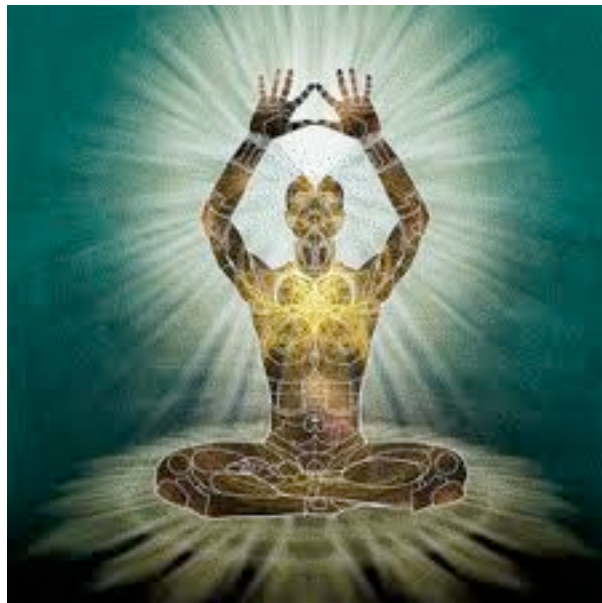
Relationship Guideline #5

Cultivate your co-creative partnership with all of life, including the non-physical dimensions of reality. Embrace your multi-dimensionality.

We live in a time where science and spirituality are speaking of similar things. If we are a unity of body, mind, emotions and soul, only 25% of that whole is physical. We cannot see mind, emotions, soul, and yet, we are all that. So when I say cultivate your co-creative partnership with all of life, I mean multiple dimensions, from the food you prepare and eat and receive energy from, to the fairies in your garden, the ancestors, saints, angels, and countless other expressions of LOVE that your higher self participates with, whether you are conscious of it or not. Calling this “woo woo” at this stage of the game says more about your resistance to the reality of life than anything else.

We are all always in relationship, whether consciously or not. When we intentionally experience ourselves in relationship with all of life, we experience a fullness and aliveness that can never be taken away, no matter what the state of our outer lives or personal relationships. At any given moment, by remembering the BIG PICTURE, we connect to the energy of JOY.

We are creators, and all the teachings about the law of attraction are showing us that we are the “co” in co-creation. Through us, SOURCE has a unique way to express itself. We are never truly alone, always connected to the web of life. When we live with this knowing, we experience a sense of belonging to life that brings great JOY. We can feel the bliss in our very own aliveness, available every moment.



Relationship Guideline #6

Cultivate your capacity for awe and tenderness. This connects you to your essence, and allows you to see the essence in others.

When you think about it, children are masters of awe and tenderness, as are animals. They have not become hardened in adaptations that are meant to protect their essence.

When we fall in love, we naturally speak the language of awe and tenderness with our Beloved. During the courting stage there is much more time spent looking at magnificent sunsets or lying in front of a fireplace caressing each other tenderly. Once a couple becomes caught up in the pushes and pulls of everyday life, less and less time is devoted to such activities.



Research on couples who have been partnered for many years and who still claim to feel passion and an “in love” feeling for each other has come up with some interesting findings. Compared with the reaction when looking at friends, seeing the spouse, activated parts of the brain associated with romantic love, much as it did when couples who had just fallen in love took the same test. This I associate with the feeling of awe.

In the older couples, researchers spotted something extra: parts of the brain associated with deep attachment were also activated, suggesting that contentment in marriage and passion in marriage aren’t mutually

exclusive. This second finding has to do with a feeling of comfort and security, which I associate with tenderness. The chemical oxytocin is found in high concentration in these couples, and is the same chemical that is released when a mother nurses a baby, or when we stroke someone or something we love.

After many years of working with couples, I have noticed that some couples, no matter what the conflict or struggle they may be experiencing, share this sense of awe toward each other. I see it in their eyes, and it is usually accompanied by a tenderness that is palpable. They deal with their differences with greater ease, and have an easier time repairing after an emotional rupture. They are also couples who make it a priority to share sacred time with each other on a regular basis.

Cultivating awe and tenderness asks that you take the time to be present to such moments, which activates parts of the limbic system that bonds you to others. It is virtually impossible to maintain an illusion of separateness in such situations.

Relationship Guideline #7

Gratitude, Gratitude, Gratitude.

There is nothing like gratitude and a mood of appreciation to connect you to the LOVE you are. Studies of truly happy people have shown that only 40% of our set point for happiness is genetic. The rest has to do with choosing to focus on the reasons you have to be grateful.

The very simple practice of naming or writing 5 things you are grateful for every morning as you are drinking coffee or tea and starting your day is one of the most powerful tools to ensure a positive feeling for that day. When I had lived in the Andes for a year and returned back to the US, I had such a very different attitude about life, which was directly connected to having lived such a simple existence. In the third world, I could not find almond butter and the kind of rice crackers I so liked to eat. I was utterly grateful for my simple diet and living conditions, and the first time I shopped at Whole Foods, I felt overwhelmed at all the choices. It did not take long for me to become accustomed once again to all the abundance, and lose the sense of gratitude I had for such plenty.

This can easily happen in relation to the people we love. Familiarity breeds a kind of indifference, a taking for granted, and we forget to listen deeply and remember that each person is LOVE incarnate. Consciously cultivating gratitude and appreciation is one of the most important keys to a blissful life.



Saying “YES” to Your Life



Depending upon many factors, including our woundings and conditioning, we tend to resist, blame and judge ourselves, and others, to a high degree in our culture. There are no pills to take away the pain of not accepting who we are, or feeling stuck in blame. This is the work of consciousness, and having a coach or guide to hold up a compassionate and clear mirror is so important. I have such gratitude for the teachers and therapists and shamans who have held to the vision of my wholeness when I could not.

We live in a time where there is a collective call to partner with creation and realize our unmanifest potential as never before. There is a big push to find one's purpose in life, and people walk around with the ache of not knowing their true purpose. We will not awaken to who we really are if we seek meaning outside of ourselves. There is not ultimately any purpose we must find “out there.” The spiritual teacher Doreen Virtue has said,

“There is no competition for your life's purpose.”

Carl Jung wrote that each of us follows our own *telos*, an unfolding path to a goal, an alive and guiding theme within our life. *Telos* is not a force that pushes us toward an event: it is more like a hidden purpose within, which pulls us towards a goal as if we are being called. When we look behind, we can see the unmistakable tracks leading us toward that purpose.

Essential in achieving our soul's purpose is to go within and connect with the deepest and most authentic part of the SELF, and from there to exercise our will. We must align our will with Heaven, both inwardly and in terms of action. In Chinese script, the character meaning “heart” is included and at the core of the character for “will.”

It is also true that the search for our purpose can be yet another attachment which causes suffering when we have not yet found it. There is a form of letting go of that search that frees up LOVE, when we say, “My purpose is to live as LOVE. I say ‘YES’ to that”

Here is something you can remember, a code, you could say, that will help you when you have strayed off course, as we all do, and have lost your connection with the LOVE YOU ARE. In saying a resounding YES to your life, remember the following:

Y is for YOU

E is for EROS

S is for SERVICE

We have talked at length about YOU, and the 7 guidelines to help live as the love you truly are.

Let's take a moment to talk about EROS. Wherever you are along this journey on Earth, diving deep into Self or SOURCE, or other, most of us return over and over to the erotic impulse, which leads to the longing to share intimately with another human being. Eros resides in all beings, and none of us would be here without it. Eros was the Greek god of Erotic Love, a life-affirming fellow who has been trivialized as Cupid.

According to Plato, EROS is the fundamental creative impulse having a sensual element. We are multi-dimensional beings, and EROS is the signature element of this third dimension of physicality on Earth. It is the BE HERE NOW part of life, and we all know how important and challenging it is to live and be fully present in our hectic lives today. As we become more consciously aware of EROS, we deepen our appreciation for beauty in all things. In a very real sense, we fall in LOVE with the Universe.

EROS is everything here on earth. It includes our relationship not just with sex, but with food and all things sensual. To experience EROS, we must be embodied, which means that our souls must be fully connected to our bodies. So, to consciously enjoy a strawberry, a rain shower, or the grass under your feet, YOU ARE EMBODYING EROS, WHICH WE MUST BE ABLE TO DO IF WE ARE TO BE FULLY HAPPY.

The final aspect of saying YES is to find your expression of SERVICE. We are never fully free until we serve, because it is through serving that we offer our gift to the world. And there is a gift that only YOU can offer the world. There is a way that LOVE manifests as YOU that no other can. Steven Levine, to whom I am forever grateful for being such a wise teacher, wrote this message, which has sat on my desk for many years, reminding me daily that it is not about me after all.

VOW OF SERVICE

Act for the benefit of all others.
Clear the mind so you can see the way.
Remind each other of our true nature.
Act with grace for no reason.
And stop making excuses.
Nothing is random or preset,
so respond from true freedom.
Don't let fear or beauty block your way.
It takes courage to be moral,
to give up the dissatisfaction.
Compassion is fearlessness.

PRAYER FOR COMPASSION

If you have followed me this far, you have hopefully been reminded that above all else, in this very moment, that YOU ARE LOVE, complete and perfect, whether you feel it or not. The sun is still shining somewhere above the clouds, even on the rainiest of days. The light of SOURCE shines as LOVE through you, no matter what you do or how you feel. And you want to feel happy, alive, inspired, as much as possible. So I am sharing with you one of the most powerful prayers that has helped me through times of deep darkness, and in times of joy, to remember that in the truest sense, all is well.

Every time you read this prayer, you tap into a wealth of LOVE and healing, which washes over your entire body, mind and spirit. I recommend that you read it reverently as a practice for 30 days, and if you will, write to me and let me know what the results are. I began this practice in 2005, while living in the Andes, and it opened the door to a new life for me. Here is the prayer:

I know there is one power, the source of life within me.

This power is the creative principle of the universe, the wholeness of life's perfection, the free flow of LOVE expressing itself as compassion. I, _____, am now aligned with this power. I open my whole being to allow its gentle waves of wisdom to roll through my consciousness and enfold me completely.

With the power of LOVE, I claim divine compassion for myself. I allow the most gentle, loving, and tender emanations of compassion to cradle me. Compassion in its own peaceful way, now dissolves any judgments I have upon myself and my experience. Divine compassion relaxes all my tendencies to lay blame, find fault, or condemn my reality. I now surrender any beliefs in my unacceptability, as compassion sweeps through me and carries them all away.

In the currents of compassion, the strength of self-worth, knowledge and confidence is revealed. The infinite, patient kindness of my Inner Source elegantly returns me to clarity, with which I perceive my true path, my real purpose, and my natural beauty.

With the power of compassion's guidance, I declare my unconditional commitment to actualize my soul's purpose on Earth at this time. I consciously open myself to whatever unlearning is necessary for me to fully live my life as LOVE. Divine compassion carries me in waves of peace through the next gateway of growth.

I joyfully see all beings as my brothers and sisters through the lens of compassion, to feel our hearts and minds joined as one.

Willingly, I let compassion nurture my life on the planet. I accept its presence with gratitude and humility, knowing that the Source within me holds me always in its loving embrace. In perfect peace I rest, knowing that this is done, and all is well.

I thank all of you for your time and attention. I hope that you can take away some of the wisdom I have shared and use it right now in your life. Apply it with a sense of lightness, taking nothing too seriously. And above all else, be merciful with yourself, and thus with others.

Wishing you deep love and joy,



Kathleen Hanagan, LCSW, has been a cultural shaman in the field of conscious awakening and sacred sexuality for over 30 years. She is a licensed psychotherapist, ordained High Priestess, Imago relationship coach, spiritual teacher, certified psychodramatist, and poet. As she says in her one of her poems, *“We must become fluent in awe and tenderness.”*

Kathleen’s philosophy is that your Soul knows exactly what your life is meant to look like, and that you are here to remember that design as you learn from life’s countless lessons. She has guided and inspired thousands as they courageously touch the longing at the center of their lives.

An international speaker and workshop leader, Kathleen’s warmth and open style are balanced by a clear and focused ability to get to the heart of the matter. If you are serious about taking quantum leaps in releasing limiting patterns and beliefs to experience more joy, Kathleen is someone to meet. If you want to experience a life of freedom by offering your unique gifts to the world, while manifesting abundance and living a full and vibrant life, [get in touch here!](#)



You can learn more about Kathleen’s work at www.KathleenHanagan.com