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NO MORE FIGHTING

**5 Guaranteed Steps to Stop All Fighting
With Your Partner**

**With Real Love Nothing Else Matters—
Without It Nothing Else Is Enough**

By Greg Baer, M.D.

SECTION ONE

THE GREAT SECRET

The Real Reason for Marriage Problems

What's the secret to a great marriage? What can you do to make yours better? Because any relationship is a natural result of two people making independent decisions, we can't meaningfully talk about the relationship between two people until we first understand the nature and causes of individual human behavior. (Understand that throughout this report, when I refer to "marriage," I'm including every kind of long-term, committed, exclusive relationship. "Marriage" is just a convenient term and not meant to refer to a legally binding relationship.)

How many times have you been irritated with your partner? For most people it's a LOT of times, and each time you can come up with a reason why HE is the cause of your irritation, right? What if I told you that your partner is NEVER the cause of your irritation. That would change everything, wouldn't it? Let me prove it to you.

It's All About the Burn

Imagine that you're standing in a doorway, talking to a friend, and as I walk by, I lightly bump you from behind. Turning to see who bumped you, you wish me a good morning and turn back to your conversation. Now imagine that several days later you have a severe sunburn all over your back, and again I lightly bump you from behind. Turning suddenly, you slam your back into the edge of a door, and there is an explosion of pain. Angrily, you demand to know how I could be so thoughtless in hurting you.

Am I responsible for your anger? Of course not. If my behavior alone—bumping you on the back—were responsible for your pain, your reaction would have been the same on both occasions. But you reacted quite differently the second time. Why? Because you were already in pain, and I had nothing to do with that. You chose to be angry at me instead of taking responsibility for your own pain—a result of your choice to fall asleep on the beach in the sun the day before.

The same thing is happening with you and your partner. Yes, I know that your partner does things that are inconvenient and inconsiderate, but your reaction to those events is still mostly to a lifetime of pain—to a lifetime of sunburn—and related only minimally to the behavior of your partner. Really. Trust me on this, after counseling with thousands of couples.

Other people are never responsible for how we feel. If we understood that, our marriages would change dramatically. How could we keep being angry at anyone after realizing that he or she is not to blame for our feelings?

So now we've arrived at the critical question: What DOES cause our feelings of irritation, disappointment, frustration, and more?

REAL LOVE—THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS IN EVERY LIFE and EVERY MARRIAGE

We cannot interact in a healthy way with other people—especially our partners—until WE are emotionally healthy ourselves. And we can't be emotionally healthy until we have what we need most. Intuitively, you already know what we need. More than anything else, we all want to feel LOVED, and we can see proof of that as we realize that love is the most frequent subject of our music, novels, discussions, and often our behavior.

But not any kind of love will do. We need to feel loved UNCONDITIONALLY, what I call Real Love. *Real Love is caring about the happiness of another person* without any thought for what we might get for ourselves. It's also Real Love when other people care about *our* happiness unconditionally. With Real Love, they're not disappointed or angry when we make our foolish mistakes, when we don't do what they want, or even when we inconvenience them personally. We don't have to EARN Real Love. We've deserved it from birth.

When I use the word *happiness*, I do not mean the brief and superficial pleasure that comes from money, sex, power, and the conditional approval we earn from others when we behave as they want. Nor do I mean the

temporary feeling of satisfaction we experience in the absence of immediate conflict or disaster. Real happiness is not the feeling we get from being entertained or making people do what we want. It's a profound and lasting sense of peace and fulfillment that deeply satisfies and enlarges the soul. It doesn't go away when circumstances are difficult. It survives and even grows during hardship and struggle. True happiness is our entire reason to live, and it can only be obtained as we find Real Love and share it with others. *With Real Love, nothing else matters; without it, nothing else is enough.*

Sadly, few of us have sufficiently received or given that kind of love—not just during our marriages—but for our entire lives. From the time we were small children, we observed that when we didn't fight with our sisters, didn't make too much noise in the car, got good grades, and were otherwise obedient and cooperative, our parents and others smiled at us, patted our heads, and spoke kindly. With their words and behavior, they told us what good boys and girls we were.

But what happened when we did fight with our sisters, made too much noise, got bad grades, and dragged mud across the clean living room carpet? Did people smile at us or speak gentle, loving words? No—they frowned, sighed with disappointment, and often spoke in harsh tones. Just as the positive behaviors of other people communicated to us that we were loved, the withdrawal of those behaviors could only mean that we were *not* being loved. Although it was unintentional, our parents and others taught us this terrible message: "When you're good, I love you, but when you're not, I don't—or certainly I love you a great deal less."

This conditional love can give us brief moments of satisfaction, but we're still left with a huge hole in our souls, because only Real Love can make us genuinely happy. When someone is genuinely concerned about our happiness, we feel connected to that person. We feel included in his or her life, and in that instant we are *no longer alone*. Each moment of unconditional acceptance creates a living thread to the person who accepts us, and these threads weave a powerful bond that fills us with a genuine and

lasting happiness. Nothing but Real Love can do that. In addition, when we know that even one person loves us unconditionally, we feel a connection to everyone else. We feel included in the family of all mankind, of which that one person is a part.

Without sufficient Real Love, we can only feel empty and alone, which is our greatest fear. Without Real Love, we suffer from a severe, ongoing sunburn that we carry around everywhere. In any given negative interaction with your spouse, it is the longstanding lack of Real Love in your life—your sunburn—that determines how you feel, not the behavior of your spouse in that moment. No kidding. In any given moment, you react to the amount of love you feel from everyone, past and present, not just from the person you're interacting with.

The Effect of Real Love

Before we can really understand the effect of Real Love in our lives, we need to actually feel it. Without that experience, the intellectual understanding is shallow—like trying to understand a strawberry without tasting it. Take your time as you read the following paragraphs. If possible, read them in a place where you won't be distracted, so you can visualize and feel the experience as you read.

Imagine that you're having a difficult day. Several people have confronted you about mistakes you've made or assignments you've not completed, and you're feeling both inadequate and irritated. The computer isn't working—again—and your car is in the shop for the third time in the past two months. You want to pound your fist on the wall and scream.

In the midst of your frustration, a man and a woman walk into the room and address you by name. Even though you've never seen them before, you feel as though they've known you all your life. Somehow you sense from their peaceful and inviting expressions that you can trust them completely. They ask you to go with them, and without hesitation you get up and follow them.

Side by side, you walk between this couple for some time, finally turning into the driveway of a beautiful home. Walking through the front entryway, you enter a spacious, well-lighted room, where many people are talking to each other. After seeing you, several of them come over to greet you. Although you've never met them before, you feel no anxiety, because you see in their faces and gestures nothing but a sincere and unreserved welcome.

In a way you can't describe, you sense that everyone in this room feels loved and happy, and you know that no matter what mistakes you've ever made or what flaws you have, these people accept you completely. As you sit and talk with them, you realize you don't need to do anything to impress them, nor do you have a need to hide anything from them.

Utterly relaxed, you begin to tell them the story of your life. You talk about your mistakes, your foolishness, your weaknesses, your fears, and your successes. They understand everything you're saying, and they accept you and care about you. You know there is nothing you could do that would disappoint or irritate them, nor would it be possible to feel embarrassed or ashamed around them. For hours you talk and laugh with these new friends.

Allow yourself to enjoy this feeling. Let it sink in and fill your entire being. Allow yourself to float in a calm, sweet ocean of the peace you feel. You'd like to stay in this place forever, but the day draws to a close, and eventually you must go home. As you leave, your friends invite you to return any time you wish, and you know they mean what they say.

Now come back to the real world and consider this question: While you were with those people, did you feel any inclination at all to be angry at them—or to lie to them or withdraw from them? The idea is ridiculous—how could you feel angry or otherwise react negatively toward people who unconditionally accept and love you? Moreover, while you were with those people, did you feel any inclination to be angry at anyone else—at any of the people you know in real life? Were you irritated about the dysfunctional

computer or the car in the shop? Were you irritated at your spouse? No, you weren't—even though she hadn't changed a bit—because while you were with those loving people, you felt unconditionally loved—what you've always wanted most—and lost all negative feelings. Again, we've proven that it's NOT the behavior of our spouse that is irritating us. It's the lifelong pain of not having the love we need most.

Conditional Vs. Real Love

Conditional love is distinguished from Real Love by the presence of disappointment and anger. You can point out the mistakes of your spouse, for example, and still be unconditionally caring about her happiness. You can describe her mistakes so she can avoid the behaviors that affect her in a negative way. The instant you become disappointed or angry, however, your primary concern is no longer her happiness. You're thinking about yourself and how she has failed to do what you want.

We often try to justify our disappointment and anger by explaining that we're disappointed or angry at our spouses' behavior but not at them. That is rarely the entire truth. Let's suppose, for example, that your wife fails to give you an important phone message. You might claim that you're irritated only at the inconvenience, but be honest here: After her mistake, do you feel any differently toward her? Before you deny it, ask yourself whether you tend to avoid her—physically or verbally—or speak to her in a different tone. When she makes mistakes like this, you probably give off a hundred signals that something is different in the way you feel about her, and she feels that. Almost all of us feel some disappointment and irritation when our spouses inconvenience us, and those feelings always indicate that we didn't get something we wanted. In those instances, we can't be unconditionally concerned about their happiness.

If you continue to have doubts about whether you often love your spouse conditionally, ask her if you treat her differently when she does something you don't like. When we're disappointed or angry, our spouses know that our primary concern is for ourselves. That's not Real Love, and the effect is uniformly damaging.

WHAT WE USE WITHOUT ENOUGH REAL LOVE—IMITATION LOVE

Without sufficient Real Love in our lives, the pain and emptiness are intolerable, and in order to eliminate or reduce those feelings, we're willing to do almost anything. Everything we use as a substitute for Real Love—to temporarily make us feel better in the absence of what we really need—becomes a form of Imitation Love, and all those substitutes are one or more variations of four things: praise, power, pleasure, and safety.

Praise

When people give us their approval, we feel praised and worthwhile, and if we can't get the Real Love we need, we'll do a lot to win that approval. Regrettably, we almost always have to earn it. In order for people to smile at us, compliment us, and want to spend time with us—all signs that they accept or "love" us—we have to be talented, beautiful, wealthy, witty, cooperative, grateful, successful, or otherwise worthy of acceptance. That kind of acceptance is conditional, because all the signs of it—the smiles and kind words, for example—disappear when we make mistakes, inconvenience people, and fail to live up to the expectations of others.

The problem with praise is that it's a LOT of work to earn—exercise, clothing, make-up, plastic surgery, long hours at work, and more. And when you do finally get that precious morsel of praise from a spouse or anyone else, how long does it last? In just a moment or two, the feeling is gone, and then you have to work to earn it all over again. It's a frustrating and hollow cycle.

Another reason praise is often unfulfilling is that when most people praise us, they're rarely saying something about us. They're saying that when we're cooperative and perform according to their expectations, they like how we make them feel—but we're quite willing to keep on doing whatever it takes to earn the sensation of praise, gratitude, and acceptance, because it's still much better than the emptiness that accompanies a lack of Real Love.

Power

Although it's mostly unintentional, any time we successfully manipulate or control someone, we enjoy a sensation of power over that person. We use money, authority, sex, flattery, and personal persuasion to influence, control, and even hurt people. When you control someone, you actually feel more connected to him or her in a brief, shallow way. It's not Real Love, but when you control the people around you, you feel less powerless; you feel less of the emptiness and helplessness that are always associated with a lack of Real Love.

We tend to deny our efforts to control our spouses—it's not a flattering behavior to admit—but whenever we try to get people to do anything, we're controlling them and using power as a form of Imitation Love. If you doubt that you control your spouse, consider how you feel when he doesn't do what you want. Your disappointment or anger indicate that you want to control his behavior—however unconscious your efforts may be.

Pleasure

When we don't feel unconditionally loved, we often use pleasure—food, sex, drugs, and many forms of entertainment and excitement—to feel better temporarily. Certainly there's nothing inherently wrong with pleasure, but when we compulsively seek it, we're using it to fill a deep emptiness.

Safety

Without sufficient Real Love, we're already experiencing an insufferable pain, and we'll go to great lengths to keep ourselves safe from anything that might prolong or worsen our pain. To minimize painful disapproval, we stay away from unfamiliar situations, tasks, and relationships, and then we confuse that feeling of relative safety with real happiness. I've known many couples who believed they had a "good marriage" until they discovered that their "happiness" was only an avoidance of conflict, not a sharing of Real Love.

Falling in Love—The Nature and Effect of Imitation Love

Once we understand Imitation Love, we can understand why relationships start off so well in the beginning and then fall apart. One of the big problems with Imitation Love is that it really does feel great. That doesn't sound like a problem, but falling in love is rarely anything more than simply finding someone with whom we can have an abundant exchange of Imitation Love.

Doesn't sound very romantic, does it? But it's true. Picture a guy looking across a crowded room and seeing a woman for the first time. He turns to his buddies and says, "I think I'm in love." I hate to break the bad news, but he does NOT mean that he has suddenly fallen into a sudden unconditional concern for her happiness (Real Love). Not a chance.

People fall in love because of the abundant and relatively equal exchange of Imitation Love, and the enormous problem with that is that the effects of Imitation Love ALWAYS wear off. So two people marry—or move in together—because the feeling of Imitation Love is so wonderful, but then they expect those feelings to continue. When they don't—when the feelings of Imitation Love fade—the disappointment is HUGE. We even feel betrayed, and then the disappointment, irritation, and blaming begin. THAT is why relationships start off great and then go downhill.

WHAT WE DO WITHOUT ENOUGH LOVE (REAL OR IMITATION)—GETTING AND PROTECTING BEHAVIORS

Insufficient Real Love creates an emptiness we cannot ignore, especially when we also don't have enough Imitation Love to make us feel better temporarily. Our subsequent behavior is then often determined by our need to be loved and our fear of not being loved. Without Real Love, we do whatever it takes—Getting Behaviors—to fill our sense of emptiness with Imitation Love. To eliminate our fear, we use Protecting Behaviors. The Getting Behaviors include lying, attacking, acting like a victim, and clinging. The Protecting Behaviors include lying, attacking, acting like a victim, and running.

Lying

We use lying as a Protecting Behavior when we make excuses, shade the truth, or do anything else to avoid the disapproval of others. We don't lie because we're bad; we lie because we've learned from countless experiences that it works. People really do disapprove of us less when we hide the truth about our flaws, and we'll do almost anything to keep from feeling that withdrawal of acceptance.

We use lying as a Getting Behavior when we do anything to get other people to like us—when we tell people about our accomplishments but not our flaws, communicate positive feelings that are not true, change our physical appearance to attract people to us, or tell people what they want to hear so they'll like us. We don't think of these behaviors as lying, but they are, because we don't tell other people we're manipulating them. We lie so often that we don't even realize we're doing it most of the time. Your partner, for example, does not lie to hurt YOU, but to protect HIMSELF. This understanding is critical.

Falling in love is a process of lying. We hide our flaws and exaggerate our virtues, all to attract a partner. It's not intentional, but the results are disastrous. Dating is little more than institutionalized lying. However unconscious our lying is, however, it creates a foundation for a relationship that cannot be healthy.

Attacking

Attacking is any behavior that motivates another person through fear to behave in a way we want. We attack people when we criticize them, physically intimidate them, withdraw our approval, make them feel guilty, and use our positions of authority at work, at home, and elsewhere, all to get Imitation Love—usually in the form of power—and to protect ourselves from fear. With anger, for example—the most common form of attacking—you may be able to make your wife sufficiently uncomfortable (afraid) that she'll do whatever you want in order to stop you from making her feel bad. With your anger, you can get her to give you attention, respect, power, flattery, approval, even sex. But of course, if she's giving you these things

not because she's genuinely concerned for your happiness, but simply to avoid your anger, all you're receiving is Imitation Love.

Although we may temporarily get what we want from anger, it ALWAYS has a negative effect on relationships. Have you ever been angry at your spouse and at the same time felt more loving toward him or her? Or more loved? Or enjoyed your relationship more deeply? Of course not, and yet we continue to get angry at our partners. We must learn to eliminate it from our lives, and with an understanding of Real Love, we can do that.

Acting Like a Victim

If we can convince people that we've been injured and treated unfairly, they'll often stop hurting us and may even give us their sympathy, attention, and support. That's why we act like victims. Victims communicate—verbally and with their behavior—with variations on the following three themes: (1) Look what you did *to* me; (2) Look what you should have done *for* me (and didn't); and (3) It's not my fault. Victims have excuses for everything and blame everyone but themselves for their own mistakes and unhappiness. We all act like victims at times. Whenever we're confronted with a mistake we've made and say, "I couldn't help it," we're acting like victims. When we complain that we've been treated unfairly by our spouses, we're acting like victims.

Again, however, acting like victims has the same detrimental effect as the other Getting and Protecting Behaviors. Have you ever acted like a victim and felt unconditionally loved by anyone? Does that behavior lead to a more richly rewarding relationship? Never. Acting like a victim is an attempt at manipulation, and what we get as a result cannot feel like Real Love.

Running

If we simply move away from a source of pain, we're less likely to be hurt. Withdrawing from conversations (verbally and physically), avoiding people, and leaving relationships in a state of fear or anger are all forms of running. When people say they're shy, what they're really saying is, "I've felt

empty and afraid all my life, and I've learned that when I allow people to see who I really am, they criticize me or laugh at me, making me feel even more unloved and miserable. So to minimize that pain, I simply stay away from people or avoid speaking." Drugs and alcohol are other ways to run. All running is injurious to relationships, because when we withdraw, the other person feels the withdrawal of our attention and affection.

Clinging

Clinging is obvious when a child grips tightly to his mother's skirt, but as adults we also cling emotionally to the people who give us attention, hoping we can sometimes squeeze even more out of them. We may do this by flattering the people who do things for us, or by being excessively grateful. Sometimes we're clinging to people when we tell them how much we love them and need them—we hope our words will encourage them to stay with us and return our expressions of love. Effectively, we're begging for more Imitation Love. Just one example of clinging would be saying to your partner, "Do you really have to go out tonight? You never stay home with me anymore."

THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECT OF GETTING AND PROTECTING

When you lie to your spouse, get angry at him, act like he's hurting you, withdraw from him, or cling to him, you are not primarily concerned about his happiness—the definition of Real Love. You use those behaviors—mostly unconsciously—because you want to protect yourself, or get something for yourself, or both. When we use Getting and Protecting Behaviors, our primary concern is for ourselves. On these occasions, the people around us can't possibly feel like we unconditionally care about them, and they're quite right—we don't. That has a terrible effect—on us and on others.

What is the effect of Getting and Protecting Behaviors on others? They hear us say—accurately—"I don't love you." And they're right, because all those behaviors benefit US, even if we use them unconsciously.

When we use Getting and Protecting Behaviors, the effect is just as negative on US. All these behaviors can succeed only in manipulating people for Imitation Love, so when we use them, we cannot find the Real Love that will make us genuinely happy. We cut our own throats. Tragic.

Getting and Protecting Behaviors Are Always Wrong

Our primary goal in life—our very reason to exist—is to be genuinely happy, and we achieve that condition only as we feel unconditionally loved and share that love with other people. Whatever contributes, therefore, to feeling loved, loving, and happy is right, while anything that interferes with feeling loved, loving, and happy is wrong.

When you're angry at your spouse—to use just one example of getting and protecting—do you ever feel closer to him or her? Do you ever feel loved, loving and happy? All the Getting and Protecting Behaviors are selfish and destructive. From extensive personal experience we've all learned that when we're lying, angry, acting like victims, and withdrawing from relationships, we're never happier, nor do we contribute to the health of our marriages. Because the Getting and Protecting Behaviors detract from feeling loved, loving, and happy, they are always wrong. Instinctively, we even know they're wrong, because when we're confronted about them, we usually deny them.

Anger, for example, is always wrong. I am not saying you shouldn't be angry, nor am I suggesting that you can't talk about your anger. I'm only stating in the strongest possible terms that anger—along with all the other Getting and Protecting Behaviors—is destroying our happiness and our marriages. With Real Love, we can learn to eliminate those behaviors and replace them with joy.

So Why Do We Use Getting and Protecting Behaviors?

If Getting and Protecting Behaviors have such a consistently destructive effect, why do we use them? Because they work—at least temporarily.

In the absence of Real Love, these behaviors often produce an immediate and predictable relief from our pain and emptiness. When, for example, you drop hints here and there about your husband doing something for you, you may wait years without getting the desired result. When you get angry and make a fuss, however, you can sometimes get him off the couch in seconds or minutes. We're seduced by the immediate rewards of anger, and we've experienced that since childhood. Our parents effectively used anger to motivate us, so we tend to do the same with our spouses.

We also use Getting and Protecting Behaviors because we simply don't know anything better. Everybody around us uses them—our own parents used them with us during our entire childhoods—so they become normal to us. We don't know any other way to behave, even though these behaviors are killing us and our relationships.

All this could sound quite discouraging, but it's not. If the LACK of Real Love is the cause of Getting and Protecting Behaviors—as well as all our unhappiness—then FINDING Real Love is the solution. And I have seen absolute proof of that so many thousands of times that I can state with absolute certainty that Real Love will eliminate these behaviors and give us the joy we want and deserve.