



Relationships

The second gate to living now is **Relationship**. Relationships provide a prime opportunity for real, honest, and open human connection. And yet, relationships, when not nurtured, grow stagnant, and can hold us back instead of move us forward. This present moment calls us to courageously pass through the gates of more profound relationships today.

Anais Nin said:

“Love never dies a natural death. It dies because we don’t know how to replenish its source. It dies of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of witherings, of tarnishings.”

The pandemic for many of us, has given us the opportunities to clarify the relationships we want to have and what they mean to us. That being said, many relationships that are meaningful to us may be not being properly nurtured or cared for. Living now means doing just that.

Nothing like relationships can bring you closer to the present and the possibilities within it than real, honest, and open human connection. And yet, relationships can also become stagnant, holding us to pasts that won’t serve our growth tomorrow. We are called to pass through the gate of more profound relationships today.

Key Points for the Week

- Relationships are never fixed entities, they require ongoing care and nurturing to deepen and grow.

- Finding those who truly see and listen to us, helps bring our best selves forward. Doing this for others does the same.
- By focusing on loving-forward and not backward, we make love present and not just past.

Quotes for the Journey

“For one human being to love another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation.” – Rainer Maria Rilke

“We are each driven by a deep urge to form an intimate connection with the world around us and most of us do this through relationships.”
– Caroline Reynolds

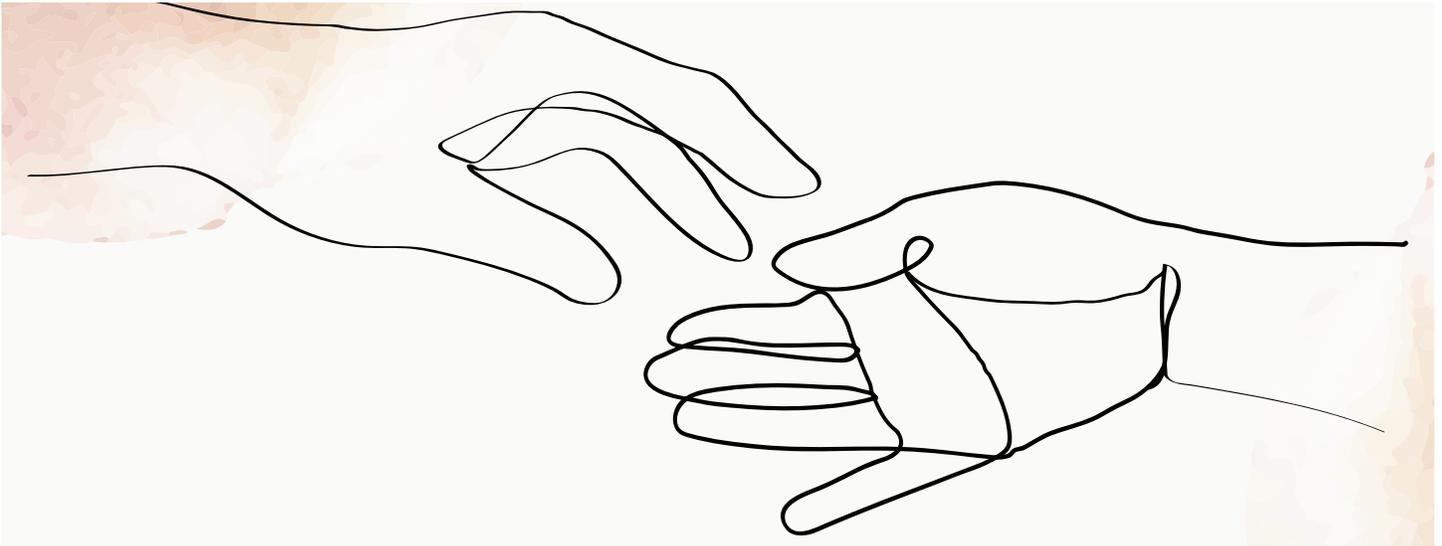
“I wish I could show you, when you are lonely or in darkness, the astonishing light of your own being.”
– Hafiz

Never underestimate the empowering effect of human connection. All you need is that one person, who understands you completely, believes in you and makes you feel loved for what you are, to enable you—to unfold the miraculous you.
– Drishti Bablani



Discussion Questions

1. What, for you, is the key to successful relationships?
2. What does it mean to you, to love someone for who they are in the present, versus who they may have been for you in the past? Is there a difference?
3. Considering Anais Nin's thought that "*Love never dies a natural death...*" are there relationships in your life you would like to commit to seeking to renew with new life or are there some that need to be let go of?



Optional Process

OPTION ONE:

Revealing the Power of Relationships in our Lives

Looking at your life in five year increments, write down what was an essential relationship for you and why? OK, if you/re a hundred, you may want to just pick a few highlights to meet the time restrictions of this exercise.

Example:

Years 1-5: my mother. She was my caretaker, and I especially learned much from her both good and not so good about dealing with anger and challenges.

Years 15-20: Allen Feldman. Taught me so much about how to be a loving partner, father, and human being. He had a talent at getting so intimate with people that I greatly admire and strive to, to this day.

Years 30-35: April McAllister. This is before she became my wife. This was the beginning and shaping of my longest romantic relationship and partnership, that also involved becoming a father to her son, Gavin. This is where I really showed myself the kind of partner I am, instead of just the one I told myself I wanted to be.

Looking at this list, how do you see the influence of relationships on who you are and how you live your life? How have your relationships evolved as you have evolved and vice versa? Is there someone known or unknown to you that you would like to call forth in your life? What would you want them to teach you about relationships?

OPTION 2:

Practicing Resonance in Relationships – Resonate Listening

Dyad or small group listening exercise

Listening is essential to a trusting meaningful relationship. When we have resonance with another we are relating to them at a meaningful and compassionate level. *“Resonant Listening”* is a skill that we can use to build trust and understanding in our relationships.

In breakout rooms or arrange the chairs for two or three member groups to see and hear each other. Think of this as chatting with someone on a park bench. Each person is given the same amount of time to share (2 min.) depending on the time and size of the group. The chosen first speaker tells of a time or situation that made them feel uncomfortable, or hurt. The other person(s) only listen. The speaker is the only one speaking. The listeners are listening from the heart not the head. Listen to the speaker for the words or sentences that resonate with you. When the speaker is complete the listener(s) can then respond.

The responding listener should repeat back to the speaker what was shared. (**Example:** *“when you said your boss did not give you credit for your accomplishments, I felt that disappointment of doing well and not being recognized for it.”*) If the speaker shares of the death of a pet, the listener would respond by saying, *“as you were sharing the loss of (Lucy the cat) I was there with you in that feeling of loss”*.

The listener must listen and not be planning a response; the listener should try to feel what the speaker felt at the time of the event they are sharing about.

The exercise should end with the speaker sharing how they felt about being really listened to and not interrupted or told **“I know how you feel”**.

When complete ask questions of the group reminding them not to share what anyone else shared in their small groups together without permission. However, they can answer questions like, *“What did it feel to fully listen?”* *“How did it feel to be fully heard?”* Facilitators, ask if this is something

participants can see themselves practicing to improve any of their personal relationships.

Option 3:

Loving-Kindness Meditation

Discuss the premise of this meditation. Each one of us have different parts or voices (or it could be belief system) within the complex that is us. This voice could be a strong confident voice — like I am good at being a Mom or Dad. The voice could be weak — like I am afraid of fireworks, or judgmental people. During this meditation, you will be asked to identify a voice within you. If you can't, find a belief system that is related.

First, become comfortable in your chair or cushion, sitting with a relaxed but straight, posture, with your shoulders relaxed. (Pause)... Allow your hands to rest comfortably in your lap. Gently close your eyes... (Pause)... Settling into awareness of the body...and the breath. Feeling into our body right now...noticing what's here. Open to whatever is to be experienced in the body in this moment. Connecting to the breath...noticing the wave-like movements of the belly...

(Do an invocation to remember who we are - truly and with no boundaries.)

Now we will do a Loving- Kindness meditation

In this practice, we'll be cultivating loving kindness with intent to bring ultimate congruence for all parts/ voices of ourselves.

We all have within us, this natural capacity for lovingkindness and peace. And a friendship that is unconditional and open...gentle...supportive within ourselves. Lovingkindness is a natural opening of a compassionate heart...to ourselves and to others. It's a wish that everyone be happy and peaceful and congruent. We begin with developing lovingkindness toward ourselves...allowing our hearts to open with tenderness, Now, allow yourself to remember and open up to your basic goodness. You might remember times you have been kind or generous. You might recall your natural desire to be happy and not to suffer. If acknowledging your own goodness is difficult, look at yourself through the eyes of someone who loves you. What does that person love about you? Or, you may recall the



unconditional love you felt from a beloved pet... It may help to use the imagination and to picture yourself as a young child standing before you... perhaps 4 or 5 years of age... if that allows tender feelings of kindness to flow more easily... And, as you experience this love...notice how you feel in your body. Maybe you feel some warmth...or heat in the face. A smile...a sense of expansiveness. This is lovingkindness, a natural feeling that is accessible to all of us...always.

Resting with this feeling of open, unconditional love for a few minutes ...(Pause) Letting yourself bask in the energy of lovingkindness and peace...breathing it in...and breathing it out...inviting feelings of peace and acceptance... So, beginning now to wish yourself well by extending words of loving kindness to yourself. You're invited to alter these phrases and choose whatever words express your wishes of loving kindness and peace toward yourself and others.

And now, offering these words in your mind for yourself... May I be filled with loving-kindness and peace especially peace and love for any part / voice in me that may feel out of alignment with my heart. May I and this voice/ part be held in loving kindness and peace. ... May I and this voice/ part feel connected and calm... May I and this voice/ part accept myself just as I am... May I be happy... May I know the natural joy of being alive... And, now repeating in the mind these words of friendship and kindness to yourself once again... May I, the whole I, be filled with loving-kindness and peace and alignment. May I be held in loving kindness and peace. ... May I feel connected and calm... May I accept myself just as I am... May I be happy... May I

know the natural joy of being alive

Now you can open the circle of lovingkindness and peace by bringing to mind someone who is dear to you. Someone whom you care about and who has always been supportive. Reflect on this person's basic goodness, sensing what it is in particular that you love about him or her. In your heart feel your appreciation for this dear one, and begin your simple offering... May you be filled with loving-kindness and peace. May you be held in loving-kindness and peace May you feel my love now... May you accept yourself just as you are... May you be happy... May you know the natural joy of being alive...

Now bring to mind a "neutral" person. This is someone you might see regularly but don't know well...It might be a neighbor, a grocery store clerk Bring this person to mind now, and repeat the words of loving kindness and peace. ... May you be filled with loving-kindness and peace. May you be held in lovingkindness... May you feel my love now... May you accept yourself just as you are... May you be happy... May you know the natural joy of being alive...

And now, if it's possible for you, bring to mind someone with whom you've had a difficult relationship. Perhaps they create roadblocks. Perhaps it's someone you don't like to feel sympathy or compassion for. See if it's possible to let go of feelings of resentment and dislike for this person. Remind yourself to see this person as a whole being...deserving of love and kindness and peace. As someone who feels pain and anxiety...as someone who also suffers. See if it's possible to extend to this person the words of loving kindness in your mind... May you be filled with loving-kindness and peace.

May you be held in lovingkindness and peace... May you feel my love now... May you accept yourself just as you are... May you be happy... May you know the natural joy of being alive...

Now, allow your awareness to open out in all directions...yourself, a dear one, a neutral person and a difficult person...and of all beings...humans and animals living everywhere...living in richness, poverty, war, peace, hunger, abundance...Aware of all the joys and sorrows that all beings experience... May all beings be filled with loving-kindness and peace...May you feel my love now. May you accept yourself just as you are... May all beings be happy... May all beings awaken and be free... May all beings be happy... May you know the natural joy of being alive.

And now, bringing this practice to a close by coming back to extend kindness to yourself. Sit for a while and bask in the energy of loving kindness and peace that may have been generated here.

Complete the meditation with a blessing and when your group is all present in mind and body, invite members to share their experience.



Weekly Prayer

I climb the ladder and with deep faith I enter the gate of all relations. I remember my first connection is my belonging within the Infinite Creator. From this rightful connection and acceptance I emerge as a thread in the great tapestry of creation.

I call this primordial nature my Ancient Source, Intimate Partner, Beloved, Mother, Father, Rhythm and sound beyond words. In this web of all related interactions the frequency of unity rises and I feel my connection with the whole. I vibrate as the Divine source dancing me into a beautiful life that attracts and connects with the soul of people wherever I am.

I know the way I treat myself attracts others that resonate the same. I am in relationship with everything and everyone, so I strengthen my core to reflect the love I am made of. I create safe environments where sacred trust and honesty can be shared. I become a good friend by taking care of myself so I know how to ask for support when I need it. I give a hand to those in need, and I keep knowing that love only increases when I give it freely, instead of keeping it safe trying to protect myself.

I am ready to dive into a new intimacy with life, with those around me and those who are making their way to being a part of my life now. Amen!

Affirmation

When I remember my first relationship with Source, everything else flows through its natural course.

I give myself permission to give and receive love, remembering that when I claim what's truly good for me, my acceptance increases the good for those around me.

Next Week

Our topic next week is "Relevance."

This week is a good time to ponder what is really most relevant to you. What happens for many of us, is that without awareness, what we are treating as most relevant—our frustration with so and so, or our negative self-image, or what some politician is doing—sometimes in the long run, is deep down meaningless to us. Living now, means not only remembering, but treating what's most important like it's most important.