



**Hello and a very warm welcome to you!**

I hope this newsletter finds you well in this month of February, a month where our intimate relationships seem to be getting much attention with the now much publicized Valentine day. In my practice, I can see first-hand how February 14 has become for some of us an opportunity for joyful celebration while for others it has sometimes become a dreadful event that might open up the wound of loneliness and bitterness – whether we are or not in a relationship.

Relationships, especially intimate relationships, seem to bring out the best and the worst in us. For most of us, no matter how challenging they might be, relationships are what the greatest fabric life is made of. In the absence of an intimate relationship, some of us might feel a painful void and even have difficulties projecting themselves into an appealing future. By contrast, when we are engaged in deep, meaningful and best of all passionate relationships, we feel alive to an extent that hardly any other circumstance in life seems to match. When we are in love, everything and anything seems possible. Yet, more often than not, many people engaged in longer-term relationships seem to have a long list of grievances about their partner, their countless flaws and their inability to enjoy lasting happiness together. It is as though we spent much of our lives and energy focusing on a key to our happiness that resided outside of ourselves, believing that only by finding that perfect external source of love could we become truly fulfilled.

Now, what if in that search we lost sight of our most important and intimate relationship of all: our relationship to our own self? It is my belief that while relationships carry with them the true meaning of human existence, their quality is first a function of the quality of our relationship to our own self.

What we might call our self-relationship is best built upon a strong foundation of self-love – a sense of compassion for ourselves, a warm internal embrace of who we are at any given moment, knowing that the road ahead will allow us to become more of who we know ourselves to be at a deeper level. With self-love, an increasing level of self-acceptance is attained, which allows us in turn to reduce our expectations from others and to become more understanding of other people and their individual journey. Love starts to flow more and more unconditionally, for ourselves and for those around us. As we expand our ability for self-love, we also increase our sense of self-worth, which makes it easier not only to receive love and attention from others but also to develop healthier responses in our relationships. Little by little, love does not have to satisfy a set of criteria to qualify as such – it becomes an experience that just is and which can come from a variety of sources, in a variety of forms.

### ***The proof is in the self-loving...***

It there is a relationship you are not fully satisfied with or a challenging interaction you would like to prepare for, follow the simple steps below:

- 1- Remember a time when you felt a high level of self-appreciation independently of any circumstances, maybe feeling totally aligned within yourself, a time where your internal flow or whichever important self-embracing quality was fully present in you. Notice the feelings you had, their location in your body, the quality of your breathing, what you told yourself (or not), etc.
- 2- Now project that image of yourself having those feelings onto an imaginary screen in front of you. Look at yourself from outside, noticing any important characteristics of that version of yourself you are now seeing – your posture, the quality of your voice, the way you look at people or things around, etc.
- 3- Now imagine that version of yourself entering a room where the person you would like to improve your relationship with or to prepare for an interaction with is. Notice from outside how you approach the situation, what you might choose to say (or not), how you might choose to position yourself in relation to that person, etc.
- 4- Rehearse that scenario several times before the actual meeting with the person you are thinking of, maybe even imagining you could step into the picture at times and feeling how it goes as you approach it in that state. Always finish the exercise with the image of yourself back onto your imaginary screen.

*If you make it a habit to follow these steps, you will start noticing significant shifts. And let me hear about it – I would love to know about your insights and wins!*



*One of my favourite quotations about love:  
"Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction." (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)*