



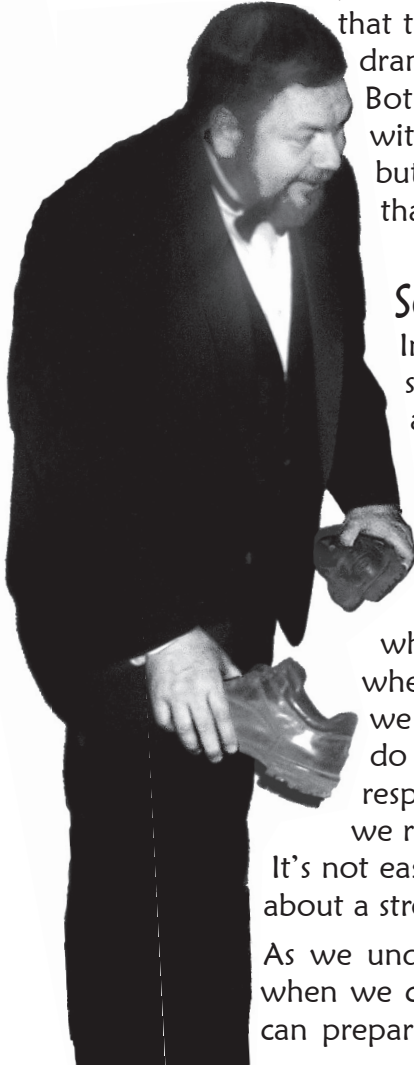
# Loving is an Action Verb

	<p>We already said, "I love you" - what's left to do?</p>	<p>What do I expect from them? Is it reasonable?</p>		<p>Can we improve our home as well as our house?</p>
<p>How will our relationship change in this project?</p>		<p>If they cannot do this, did I pick the right partner?</p>	<p>We can be so happy - But when we get angry - <i>Yikes!</i></p>	
	<p>Will we ever be able to see our family's renovation?</p>		<p>When we are not in harmony - does it mean we're all washed up?</p>	<p>'Maturity' - What does it mean when people talk about that?</p>
<p>Will my partner even want to do any of this stuff too?</p>		<p>My partner won't talk about feelings - Can we still grow?</p>		<p>What will all this feel like?</p>

## ***Loving is an Action Verb***

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**Most of us yearn** for the fairy tale ending – the happily ever after. The contestants win the game show and end up going to the beautiful Bahamas. Cut to commercial. The princess marries, and the prince whisks her off to paradise. The movie ends with a kiss, a sunset, a wide-screen picture of the beautiful land. The end. We are left to imagine that they are ‘all set’ now. All done. They’re fine. That’s great, and I love those stories too. But our stories tell us about our inner journeys and if we think they are over when we declare our love, then we are going to be extremely surprised to learn that the drama has just begun. Really, now the inner drama and interpersonal construction really starts. Both inside and between us, we will learn and grow with our living partner. Love will keep us involved but is not a substitute for the patience and exchanges that will really build a working home.



### **So, what’s in store for me?**

In the formation of a family, we shift from our self-centered focus (which had its good and bad aspects) to a transcended perspective of our family’s needs, goals and situations. We move beyond the day-to-day pursuit of our own needs. We look for ways to please and ways to get cooperation. We may have different emotional states from our partners. We may be subdued when they are energetic. We may be sad or hurt when they might be busy at the same time. How do we learn to span these emotional realities? How do we consider them all relevant and prepare to respond? By nature we are self-absorbed. How do we rise above that? Right, you are thinking – “Me?”

It’s not easy, but it is possible and even necessary, to bring about a strong family.

As we understand that we are not a completed package when we cross the threshold of our first family home, we can prepare ourselves for the lessons ahead. So, prepare

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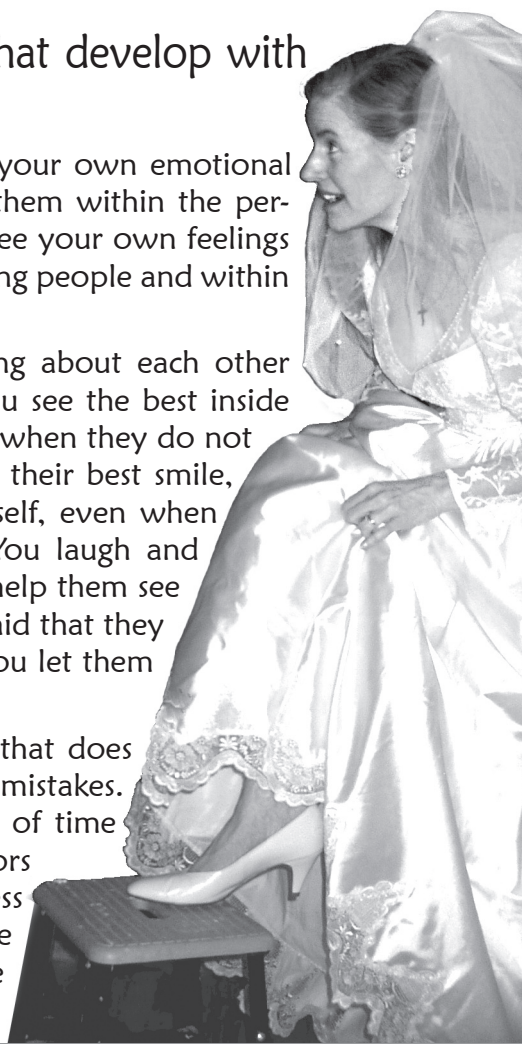
the way! Some of the inner gymnastics you are likely to encounter are described in this chapter. As an athlete myself, I like to think of the process as working out in preparation for a team sport. There are individual workouts with fatigue and muscle aches, challenges when you wonder if you can figure out how the body could possibly cooperate with the demands. There are team drills, one-on-ones, and breakouts; and then -- the sweet spot when things start to glide through! And the puck finally moves down the ice with a coordinated group of players cooperating to pursue the goal. Somehow without realizing it, after lots of little skill drills, you find yourself in a team that moves smoothly through barriers, much to your own surprise. Then on to the next practice and the next challenge. Ever building your game and your teamwork.

## Some of the skills of love that develop with our practice & care:

**Maturing** - You learn about putting your own emotional state and needs aside and placing them within the perspective of the whole family. You see your own feelings as a piece of the bigger picture—among people and within situations.

**Acceptance** - Is the day-to-day caring about each other while seeing beyond the faults. You see the best inside the other person, and forgive them when they do not achieve it. You see their potential, their best smile, their most handsome or beautiful self, even when they are covered with sawdust. You laugh and love through these moments. You help them see their worth even when they are afraid that they fall very, very short of the mark. You let them be human.

**Bad Math** - This is the part of love that does not keep score. You don't allocate mistakes. You talk calmly about any waste – of time or materials that occur due to errors by either one of you. If one is less accurate much of the time, you face it together and perhaps reassign the



cutting jobs. But no one gets the mistakes docked from their love-check.

**Consideration** - You stop to see how the other is – inside. Not just the quick hello, or “I’m ok.” You look in their eyes. You see their health and their energy levels. You notice if they have eaten. You give them a nudge to take care of nourishment or rest. You help them along. You encourage and comfort.

**Inclusion** - You place their needs into your plans. You think of them from the start and keep them in focus. You are interested in how they view your goals and how you have put them into your plans. You want to know if they like it and are pleased. You want them happy.

**Sharing** - You become willing to share your thoughts and more. Mental space is a premium. Most of us really favor our own thoughts and find it hard to give credence to another’s point of view or ideas. But in love, you learn how to welcome input. You provide your partner with openings. You give signals for them to get your attention and provide avenues to let them insert comments. You practice opening this doorway until the each of you can open the door with some ease.

**You will use all those new emotional muscles to share:**

- thoughts
- feelings
- needs
- pace of work
- plans
- dreams...

And -- a loving family home!

**Combining** - It’s not just taking turns – ‘mine,’ then ‘yours.’ It is blending your individual points of view and then responding to the new notions as if

**Our Attitude  
about Hearing  
each Other**

You chose your mate for good reasons; and your ideal is deep trust. Well, here is where you exercise that trust.

You get to share your best and your worst with your partner and know that you will still be loved. We all get into trouble when we do not face our own limitations or try to be what we are not.

When you face your limitations together with someone you love, you are cherished.

After all, you have pledged yourselves to each other -- warts and all... That means you can show the “warts.” So, give yourself some room in your own mind and move your pride aside.

When you look accurately at your own strengths, assets, and limitations,

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you will find the special reasons the two of you are drawn to each other.

Your home, and your projects, will end up reflecting who you are and become a special expression of your unique assets. So, fearlessly face yourselves. Gently reflect the other. Lovingly accept the limitations. Give grace to each other. God made so many unique people and so many special strengths.

When we try to be what we are not, we are misusing God's gifts and will find ourselves in ugly situations. As an analogy, one might have a nice violin, but to use it to paddle a canoe will find you with a ruined fiddle and a spinning boat. We need to accurately see who we are and understand our special uses in order to truly express beauty in our results.

The process of home renovation, of reaching toward an ideal, gives us an opportunity to bring about a new reality, but it also challenges us to face who we are and what our special purposes are. The process of personal discovery is part of the growing we do as adults; and in our family, it is a special gift that loved ones can give -- to accept each other and help with the tender realities of how we really fit into this world.

Are you a paddle or a violin? Do you move the boat across the water or make music? Your distinct talents may be your fondest quality in one situation, but misapplied, may be a key to ruin. It is with love and kindness, that we discover ourselves. Love goes both ways, in the speaking and in the hearing.

In this manner, a family matures. In learning how to lovingly help one another see the limits of our abilities, and in lovingly accepting the possibility that we are not all things. We are mortal, and are still loved. That brings peace to our hearts.

they belong to both of you together. You do not lose your identity, but allow your ideas and facts to become detached from whoever originated them. They are no longer personal possessions. Ideas are now a precious entity created by the two of you. They get your respect and care.

**Suffering the New** - You bear the strain of new ideas - actions - order until it gets smooth because it is worth it. You both give a wide margin of error to the process. You can feel your emotional muscles ache and strain just like your biceps when you are at the gym. But you press on because the discomfort inside is only temporary and the gain is fantastic. The suffering is small and largely due to confusion from gripping an old view of the self-world too tightly. When you 'get it' that you are involved in a process together that does not need a final



answer every moment, you will relax and find out that it is in fact much easier.

**Wisdom** - You come to understand the process of learning and decision- making. How these take time and how you need to let them percolate in order for the **Home Team** to arrive at conclusions. You learn to wait. You help others with waiting. You learn to turn away anxiety when you do not have the answer.

**Forgiveness** - First in your own heart you learn to forgive, even before the other has named or perhaps even seen their blunder. You prepare the way for them to be welcome again in communion with you. You ready yourself to move on. You do not require an apology, but can peacefully talk with your partner later (when they are open to hearing) about your concerns. You do not count (you use that bad math again – that calculator without an addition key). You prevent yourself from practicing “grudge talk” inside your own head. You toss that kind of talk out and deliberately do something nice for the one who offended you. (Yeah, that will show them!)

**Respect** - You honor your partner in the sense that they see their own presence. If they are being serious, you don't laugh; if they are trying to be sweet, you accept their intent. They have made an overture, and you consider their lead. If you need to offer another point of view that will sidetrack them, you do it in private, with tact. You never demand respect—you can only give it away. If you try to take respect, it disappears from reach the instant you do.

**Manners** - You learn to abide (live) in social ways that are easy for others to tolerate. You learn how to be polite even when you are angry or hurt. You learn to refrain from complaining – even when you have much to complain about.

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You learn how to ask nicely, even when under pressure. You learn compatible ways to exchange information and to work out differences. You don't cause extra problems; you help solve the ones that come your way.

**Emotional Pollution Control** - You learn how to read your own moods and find ways to tend to them that do not disturb the whole family. Of course everyone has anger, frustration, loss, sadness, irritations, and the like. You learn how these weigh upon you and how to provide yourself with avenues of expression and resolution that harm no one but give you relief. You become aware of your impact on others and learn how to neutralize the negatives you may inadvertently contribute to the scene.

**No Mind Reading** - You become aware that people have the right to refrain from saying everything that is on their minds. Give them credit for not uttering the nasty comment you are sure is under the surface. Your partner is exercising self-control.

At the same time, you also learn how to express your own needs appropriately so that you don't put others in no-win corners. If you find yourself saying, "If you really love me you would..." then you are in the mind-reading tent and need to come out. Let it go; leave it be. And get out there and say what you need, and politely. If your partner had not thought of it on their own, OK. Tell them your cool romantic



idea; it might go over well and become a nice event. Work on this.

**Self-Control** - Money, sex, games, alcohol, temper, words.... Each of us needs to accept personal responsibility for our actions. For the areas in which you tend to go wild, start a dialogue with your partner so you can help each other gain self-control. Ask for reminders and let them know comments are welcome and humor can help. Just sitting down to talk and plan around our actions can break the ice and increase our awareness. Talking candidly (and with love) can assist us in taking personal account of our choices and their repercussions. Remember, though – you cannot force anything on the other person: self-control is just that. If this is a really big problem, see a counselor and get some extra help. No need for this kind of waste to gnaw at your loving relationship.

**Recognition of Larger Truths** - Is tolerating varying points of view. You develop recognition that other points of view do not challenge your own, but can also be true. You learn to see shades of right – and that elements of truth can be heard from many contributors. Like a group jigsaw puzzle with each person handling a single piece, we can see so much more when we look at how all the pieces fit together. In this light you realize that no one person will have the whole truth, that all pieces are flawed in that they are not complete, even your own, but all are needed to see the real picture.

**Giving up Pride** - You reach a conscious awareness that you are not perfect and come to terms with that. You even let your partner know it. You don't need to be handled with kid gloves anymore when you are wrong. Life gets easier for you and for those around you when people can

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talk with you about your limitations. You will be more successful because you will be able to plan more effectively for what will really happen because you are able to account for limitations also. And your love for each other will deepen because it is more real. Instead of loving the image you project, they get to love the real person you are inside. (And -- Psst - They loved you already!) It takes real love to love an imperfect person.

**Sustained Love** - Of course we say, "I love you." But when things get tough, with maturity we learn to hold this statement in the front of our minds even when our feelings get derailed. Love is an intention – even more than a feeling. The feelings of love can ebb and flow like any tide, and that is normal. No human can retain the same state of emotional feeling constantly for years. You know that is not natural. Yet – when you hold the intent to love in the front of your mind, you will experience the feeling of love on many occasions over the years.

**Synergy** - Your energy will add to your partner's and then multiply as the two energies work together. You are not just roommates sharing expenses; you are doing all this stuff here,



and growing and performing feats impossible to do by yourself. The products of this communion come from a joint land that exists only in the love held between you; it is like Oz or Brigadoon. Others will see its results – in your attitude, maturity, your peace with each other, and in your kids. But you will know where it comes from: the secret shared places you build with your partner.

## Notes from Loving is an Action Verb

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Circle a few of the special strengths you see in your partner and yourself. And - *for yourself* - Write a suggestion for a few of the blank ones to help you grow.

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Maturing

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