

**A PATH
FOR
COUPLES**

**TEN PRACTICES
FOR
LOVE AND JOY**

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INTRODUCTION

After just four sessions using the Practices in *A Path for Couples*, a couple came into my office talking about the positive changes in their relationship.

“I don’t know what you did, but it worked,” Jack, a doctor at a prestigious medical center, said. “I feel so much closer to Sally.”

Sally smiled. Her body language, which had been reserved and tense in the first two sessions, had softened. “Yes. Something big has shifted in our relationship. Jack isn’t as mad, and I’m not walking on eggshells. These old patterns and conflicts are easier to manage.”

“And?” I asked her. Sally, a forty-year-old nurse practitioner, had a tendency to see the glass as half full.

“Okay,” she laughed. “I feel so much more at ease. It is easier to talk to him, and of course that leads to connection. Our kids noticed it too. They are so much better behaved.”

“It’s not magic,” Jack added. “I feel safer now that Sally isn’t going to snipe at me, or undercut me. Of course, I have to stop provoking her, as well.”

“That sounds good,” Sally laughed again. “We’ve been doing the Ten Practices at home. And we can talk about things, and reach decisions without blowing up.”

“Even the remodel.” Jack laughed. “Who knew?”

Every couple that uses the Ten Practices will not have such a positive response, but it’s common for me to hear stories of couples making great changes quickly, whether it’s those I have in counseling, or those who use these practices at home.

Sally and Jack were perfect candidates for *A Path for Couples*, even though they both had demanding jobs, and parented two children, ages eight and ten.

They have a committed relationship. And they know that they have to look into themselves if they expect change to come to their communications.

When Sally said that she is no longer “walking on eggshells,” she was noting an important truth in her relationship. She was afraid to become vulnerable to Jack. Probably she had learned to protect herself

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in other relationships or as a child, so she had brought some bad habits and painful beliefs to her current relationship, like all of us do.

Jack became aware that when he moved toward Sally, he sometimes felt angry with her. That's what Sally felt, his anger. As Jack learned to describe his desire to connect with her, Sally could feel his warmth.

Sally and Jack needed instruction on how to be truly vulnerable to each other. I have been working with couples like Sally and Jack for twenty-five years. The Ten Practices they are using are designed to help couples create:

- More joy and love
- Less conflict and fewer power struggles
- More intimacy
- More creativity and collaboration

Like a lot of couples, Jack and Sally had a few topics or patterns that regularly caused stress, and which had been repeated over and over in their long relationship. So it makes sense that they need a disciplined, regular method to examine these habits and to change them.

Some couples will have immediate results, like Sally and Jack. Others will take longer. But I can offer a couple of guarantees. If you don't look at yourself and your own reactions, the regular conflicts you get into with your partner will persist. The pain and distance you and your partner create will persist.

If you regularly (once a week) do the Practices in this book, you will feel safer, happier and more creative in your relationship.

After a couple of more months with Sally and Jack, they were doing the Ten Practices regularly at home, and our sessions were less frequent.

"I can sense that we've just started the healing you have described," Sally said during one meeting. "I feel Jack's intention: to be on my side, to be my partner. What a relief."

And Jack spoke very softly, unlike his usual forceful presentation.

"There is a gift that Sally gives me every day, her love. I can feel how that opens up something deep inside me, something that was always there. Something like kindness or peace, or ease."

Sally looked lovingly at Jack.

"With you, I can learn how to love."

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The Ten Practices that Sally and Jack are learning have been created using powerful ideas about relationship, mindfulness and consciousness, which have only recently begun to permeate Western culture. Eastern disciplines like meditation have taught us how we can train our minds to become more compassionate and aware.

Key ideas from these disciplines have been adapted to models of relationship with the idea that you and your partner can transform your partnership into a path of healing and awareness.

These ideas are becoming more popular. Why?

When you begin to work on your relationship using this powerful new model, you experience more love, joy and vitality.

This book describes a series of ten simple exercises for couples. Besides adapting powerful meditation and consciousness tools to relationship healing, the Practices utilize the latest research in positive psychology and trauma work.

The Practices were inspired by the thousands of couples I have met in the twenty-five years of my professional career. Couples like Jack and Sally. Maybe couples like you and your partner.

You lead a busy twenty-first-century life. You are in a committed relationship. You might be parents. You probably work for a living. You maintain stable lives for your family.

Because of your own self-understanding, you have noticed that you have certain predictable patterns of behavior with your partner when you are stressed or anxious. These patterns can persist in a relationship for years or decades.

You understand that the path of love and awareness can help you transform these old patterns.

Important writers and teachers such as John Welwood, Stephen and Ondrea Levine, and Gay and Katie Hendricks have written about how the path of conscious relationship can also open us to deep knowledge of ourselves, to the greatness of the human heart, and to the mysterious feelings of connection and creativity, which we can experience with our partner. These feelings are the source of tremendous healing and liberation.

My wife, Debra, and I have been followers of this path since 1979. We were young when we met, and like many couples, we needed help to survive and to thrive. So we pursued a path of awareness, and we immediately became more aware of our own reactions

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and patterns. Knowing we needed to change these bad habits, we developed the Ten Practices and have done each of them many times.

We have learned that love and mindfulness can carry us on a vast river of healing, beyond our habits and expectations, and into powerful states of joy and consciousness.

In this way, we are not so different from other people who pursue a path of liberation, people maybe like you, who believe that you can become more loving and creative with your partner.

But in your day-to-day lives, you often become so busy with mundane errands that you rarely connect deeply. There is a hunger in your soul, which can be assuaged.

The Ten Practices in this book lead to freedom. Not just the freedom from bad communication habits we learned as children, but the freedom to blossom into your full capacities as adults, loving, powerful, and wise.

You can experience the vastness of love and forgiveness that are possible in your relationship. You become more compassionate and wise. You can see your partner as disciplined and able to become more loving and aware.

On this path, you unleash your natural creativity, power, and positive energy in communion with your beloved partner.

What a great life calls to you!

All client names have been changed to protect privacy.