

Finding Your True Passion:  
The Power of Honesty in Action

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## Foreword: The Art of Honesty

Do you find yourself stumped about what you are supposed to do in relationship because your partner's requests don't seem fair or realistic? Here you will learn about the fifth relationship skill: Honesty. Not just being a good person, but the ability to be honest and true to yourself even when the conversation seems unfair.

When you are having trouble getting to clear, effective communication, it is likely that you are stumbling into a “double bind” which is blocking your ability to make the relationship thrive. This chapter will address some of the trickiest questions of relationship communication:

- How to know when you're being double bound.
- How to understand and overcome any double bind.
- How to be true to yourself when your partner isn't being fair or reasonable
- How to understand and serve your partner, despite what he or she says.

We believe that by understanding and overcoming double binds, you can eliminate a great proportion of the communication problems in your relationship. By developing honesty in-the-moment, you and your partner can experience each other fully, with passion and spontaneity. We look forward to your participation!

Warmly,

Mark Peysha



Director and Coauthor

Cloé Madanes



Narrator and Coauthor

## Introduction: Some Questions

### Why do we get into trouble?

When Karen stood up, she felt so depressed that she had already attempted suicide. Tony knew that she was stuck, that something was preventing her from making a new decision in her life, but he didn't know exactly what that was. The fact is whether they know it or not, people always have a dream of how things could be for them – we call this a compelling future. When people are depressed, they feel cut off from a compelling future. Tony knew that his job was to locate the part of Karen's life that seemed to her to be incompatible with her dream of a compelling future.

When Tony first began questioning Karen about what made her depressed, she had all kinds of responses – that she didn't feel good enough, she thought that everybody hated her, and so on. However, thoughts like these are usually not causes of depression – they are by-products of not living the life you are meant to live. If you find yourself regularly focusing on disempowering thoughts and statements, odds are that you are feeling cut off from your compelling future – in other words, there is a decision in your life that you are avoiding. In Karen's case, her desperation came from feeling helpless to improve her relationship with her husband.

**Tony** *Is that why you're depressed, by the way, truthfully? Isn't that the real reason; that you feel like you're trapped in a relationship where you're so unhappy, and you don't have the guts to get out, or you're afraid you'll make a mistake and get out?*

**Karen** *I'm afraid I'll do the wrong thing. I don't know what's the right thing to do anymore. I've already been through one divorce, and I don't want to muck up this one if it's the wrong thing.*

**Tony** *So the bottom line is: you don't want the identity of having been divorced twice?*

**Karen** *I don't care about being divorced twice. I care about hurting him if it's the wrong thing.*

**Tony** *But you're already hurting him. If you're unhappy, trust me – Men, [turning to Andrea] if the woman you're with is totally miserable and unhappy, are you happy? [No.] Are you hurting if every day she's unhappy? Are you hurting inside, yes or no, men? Give her an answer. [Yes.] So you're already hurting him. So if that's it, maybe you should put him out of his misery.*

When faced with an obstacle, it is important to define it as a problem that can be solved or a question that can be answered. Tony has reframed Karen's problem as a decision that she has not been able to make regarding her marriage. She is not happy with her husband, yet she doesn't want to feel

responsible for hurting him by leaving him. Tony is looking for ways to move her to take action that will make her happy instead of killing herself. He will now show her that by remaining indecisive and unhappy, she is being dishonest as well as hurting him and herself.

When you have doubts about how to proceed in some area in your life, what you need is clarity. Karen has been talking about her depression as if it were a creature with its own volition – the desire to die, the seriousness of her emotions and moods, her struggles. The truth was that depression was a by-product of her not knowing how to make a certain difficult decision in her life. The fact is that getting depressed is not a good way to make an important decision in your life! In fact, in most cases, depression only serves to distract everybody from the real problem and to prevent the decision that must be made. If you are depressed, then one thing is certain: a question is bothering you. What you need is to get clear and honest on the question that is triggering you to become depressed. Karen had questions like, “Should I leave him?” and “How can I leave him?” Because she didn't know how to answer these questions – not wanting to hurt Warren and not wanting to do the wrong thing – she became depressed. Tony's job at that point is to discover what the problem is in the relationship and to give Karen a way to answer her question.

### Whose problem is it?

Karen feels that she can't be happy in the relationship, and yet she can't leave. The third alternative that she's explored is suicide. Tony will begin by exploring other options.

Tony *Right now you have no intimacy I assume. You guys don't make love, do you? When's the last time you guys made love?*

Karen *I can't remember. A long time ago.*

Tony *Well, then why don't you just leave and be friends because that's all you are? I mean, if you have a friendship. Do you have a friendship?*

Karen *Yes.*

Tony *Well, then why don't you end this marriage and have the friendship? Because that's what you have? There's no intimacy between you. The only difference between the person you marry – you don't marry somebody just to have as a business partner or a friend. You can have lots of friends. He can be a great friend for you. But you're dead inside.*

Karen *I guess I haven't because I wanted to know if the problem was me or us. And if it's me, and I can fix it, I will.*

This is an essential relationship lesson: if you cannot define whose responsibility it is to revive your relationship, then what are you most likely to do? Wait for something or someone to clarify these responsibilities? Wait for your partner to figure out exactly what is needed? The only place to start in relationship is with you, because your emotional and communication patterns enable the relationship in its current form.

**Tony**      *Oh, you'll fix it? Okay, well let me just tell you, the problem is you. Because you're not telling the truth, and you're not being yourself. And let me tell you, the problem is us, meaning he's not being himself and telling the truth either, is he?*

**Karen**      *No.*

**Tony**      *So everybody wants to figure out whose problem it is. Whose problem it is, it is your problem. And if he was here, I'd be telling him it's his problem.*

## What is a double bind?

The formal definition of a double bind is the simultaneous communication of two contradictory injunctions within the context of an intense relationship. You must take action, but you are given mixed messages on how to act, and you feel that you are damned if you do, damned if you don't. It sounds complex, but it's actually quite simple, and it's one of the main reasons why people don't take action. Let's review some examples:

**Example A: Someone tells you to “be spontaneous.”** This is a paradox – they are directing you to act on your own accord. It's impossible to fulfill the command without violating it as well. If you say or do something in response to the person's command, you are not being spontaneous – you're merely reacting to their order. On the other hand, if you do nothing, you are also not being spontaneous.

**Example B: A wife wants her husband to make more money, but she hates it when he stays at work late.** If working late is necessary to making more money, then he doesn't feel that he can win.

**Example C: You call your friend on the phone and he or she says, “Why don't you ever call me?”** You are calling your friend, but you're not acknowledged for doing so. In this case, you're not blocked from taking action, but you are blocked from feeling that you have achieved what you set out to do.

**Example D: You do a session of heavy physical exercise. At the end, even though you are exhausted, you criticize yourself for being a**

**wimp.** Even though you give your all, this is not sufficient and you cannot take pride in your accomplishment.

The double bind is not an abstract concept. It is one of the most common triggers we have for feelings of helplessness and frustration at not being able to take action. In fact, you could say that “where there is inaction, there is a double bind” – there is a failure to get rewarded for taking a course of action. Think of it this way: here's a simple model of communication defining the act of obeying a request.

### 3 Phases of Obedience: The Structure of Double Binds

1. A command is given. It is necessary that you take action, even if it means you are giving yourself a command.
2. Action is taken. You follow the command.
3. Action is rewarded. Your action is acknowledged

In a productive, efficient communication, these three steps are straightforward. Your father asks you to bring him a glass of water, you go and bring it to him, and he thanks you. Of course, human communication is not always that easy! This is because the closer we are to each other, the more complex our desires and expectations become. For example, a wife says, “Tell me that you love me” and her husband replies, “I love you.” Suddenly, she feels disappointed, and he feels that he has been trapped. Why? Didn't he do what she asked him to do?

When we feel double bound, we fall into what Martin Seligman terms learned helplessness – a state where we feel that it is impossible to get rewarded for taking a course of action. As a result, we feel punished no matter what we do, we feel we cannot escape the pain, and we never learn how to solve the problem. The person working out at the gym never feels rewarded for the workout and thus starts to avoid the gym. Your friend who doesn't acknowledge you for calling him becomes more and more difficult to call. And the husband may begin to feel that his wife's request for love is a trap. Fortunately, double binds are not necessary. There are simple and clear steps for clarifying and overcoming double binds which will enable you to solve problems in your communications and your relationships that have become roadblocks and instances of learned helplessness.

### Six Steps to Overcome Double Binds

#### Step One: Identify the Two Contradictory Messages.

Can you think of a double bind that we have seen in the exchange between Tony and Karen up to this point? Actually, a double bind takes place in Karen's communication with herself – she knows that action has to be

taken in relation to Warren. However, faced with the pain of leaving and the pain of staying, she cannot make a decision to either leave or stay. Part of the problem is that Karen has defined her decision as a **dilemma**. You create a dilemma when you give yourself only two ways to take action – either stay or go, live or die, take action or be passive, obey or disobey. Where a dilemma consists of two unacceptable choices, you have the beginnings of a double bind and learned helplessness. Here is Karen's dilemma:

**Stay with Warren** and be miserable = PAIN

**Leave Warren** and feel the guilt of abandoning him = PAIN

Since she cannot accept either option, she has become suicidal. Tony has already worked to deconstruct Karen's dilemma. If Karen stays with Warren, and remains depressed, she's already hurting him. On the other hand, she could leave the marriage without abandoning Warren as a friend. **Whenever you encounter a dilemma, remember that when you have two options, you have a dilemma. If you create three options, you have a choice.** In order to make the best decision about anything, it is necessary to develop at least three options.

Tony has begun to develop choices for Karen, but this doesn't seem to help her. She is still unable to either feel enthusiastic about her relationship or to feel justified in leaving her husband. Tony invites Warren onto the stage in order to challenge him and strengthen him so that he can either inspire passion in Karen or at least become strong enough so that Karen can separate from him with a clear conscience.

**Tony**      *What do you think changed? Because I see the sadness in you and the sense of loss of that.*

**Warren**    *A lot of it is because of the simple fact that I was too scared to hurt her feelings because of her ex – the way he treated her. And a lot of things – when we first got together, she said I reminded her of him. And I kept on saying, “I'm not him.” And that must have played on my mind more than I realized, and I backed off.*

**Tony**      *Because he was physically abusive to her, right?*

**Warren**    *Yeah, I felt she was fragile, which was, as I know now, my mistake.*

**Tony**      *Yes.*

**Warren**    *And that's how I treated her. I walked on eggshells around her.*

As soon as Warren starts describing the change in the relationship, he describes a perfect double bind. Karen told him that he reminded her of her abusive ex-husband, and he felt unable to avoid that comparison. Let's understand this in terms of the three phases of obedience.

## Three Phases of Obedience

1. **A command is given.** When Karen compares Warren to her ex-husband, she implies that he should not be abusive, aggressive, or intense.
2. **Action is taken.** The only way Warren can avoid this comparison is to completely eliminate any intense or aggressive behavior.
3. **Action is rewarded.** This is where it breaks down – Warren became less intense; Karen withdrew and became depressed.

### Warren's dilemma:

**Be intense** and be compared to Karen's ex-husband = PAIN

**Be gentle and timid** and Karen stops being attracted to him = PAIN

The worst part of this situation for Warren is that being compared to Karen's aggressive ex-husband, he deprived himself of the strength and the initiative that may otherwise have helped him to resolve the problem. Even though he was getting no results from walking on eggshells, becoming aggressive and intense was unimaginable. So Warren ended up in a state of learned helplessness, where he felt that he could do nothing to help Karen.

Warren *I basically tried to be the nice guy.*

Tony *Yes. So when you became the nice guy, what happened to your passion?*

Warren *What passion?*

Tony *Did you have passion before that though?*

Warren *I'd like to think so.*

Tony *And by being the nice guy – what was it about being the nice guy that killed all your passion?*

Warren *I thought I had to be the nice guy, and I wasn't getting the passion I was looking for back.*

## Use It Now: Exercises for Step One: Identify the Two Contradictory Messages.

Inaction feels like a roadblock: you want something to happen, but nothing happens. Are there any areas of your life where there is inaction or a major problem?

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Do you have yourself in a double bind situation? Be aware that you probably have double binds in a number of your relationships – at home, at work, with a friend. Think of one circumstance in which there is a distraction or insufficient clarity. Can you see a double bind there?

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The first message in a double bind situation is the direct command that is spoken out loud. What, in your case, was the first message?

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The second message in a double bind is the incongruent, or opposite message. Oftentimes this is the “hidden” message. What was your second message?

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What do you do when you feel double bound? Which message do you respond to?

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What do you feel would happen if you failed to respond to one of the messages? What would be the actual consequences?

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Remember double bind relationships occur when you seek to get rewarded for strict obedience and responding to commands.

## Step Two: Understand the Consequences of Those Messages.

Tony *You are a nice guy, am I right? Or not?*

Warren *Oh, I hope so.*

This is the typical response of someone who has become double bound in their relationship: "I hope so." They have no confidence in what makes their partner happy, and have no ability to make a decision on their behalf. Someone who is in a double bound lives in a world of indecision, where rewards are not connected to actions taken. Being successful in a relationship means being honest, being yourself, and being unafraid to bounce your own spontaneous thoughts and feelings off of your partner. When you are afraid to even acknowledge whether or not you're a nice person, you cannot give your partner the kind of presence that sustains a relationship. Tony will ask Warren to take a stand about what kind of man he is.

Tony *How would you clarify yourself? What kind of guy are you? I mean, really if she wasn't – when nobody else is around, what are you really like?*

Warren *I'd like to think I'm a nice guy. I'm a normal guy that makes mistakes and tries to do the right thing.*

Someone who lives within a double bind situation would typically have an apologetic manner. Since they are damned if they do and damned if they don't, they can do little or nothing to bring about a positive response. When Tony asks Warren about his identity, he responds tentatively, as if the decision of who he is belongs to somebody else. When a person gets tangled up in this helpless, apologetic, double bound state, it is essential to clarify what kind of results they are getting for it.

Tony *What are you trying to avoid losing by being gutless?*

Warren *Karen.*

Tony *What if I told you that that very gutless is what's causing you to lose her?*

Warren *I'd believe it.*

Tony *What if I told you that you'd be better off taking her and doing whatever is necessary, or letting go once and for all, than playing this middle-of-the-road, weak, toast, piece of s-t life where you don't feel like a man? Would you agree or disagree with that statement?*

Warren *Definitely – agree.*

Someone who is in a double bind tends to think in terms of avoiding pain. However, when someone is preoccupied with the possibility of pain, well that's a painful state to be in. In other words, you can't avoid pain by merely avoiding it – you must be proactive and strong about what you want, even if it means negotiating with others about what has to happen. In Warren's case, his habits of avoiding judgment, avoiding pain, walking around Karen, and holding back emotionally were in fact the behaviors that were driving Karen away. He would have been much better off declaring his real beliefs and his needs. That would at least have created the opportunity for dialogue.

## Use It Now: Exercises for Step Two: Understand the Consequences of Those Messages

If you have allowed yourself to be double bound, what results grew from this?

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When you double bind yourself, does this increase the passion and honesty in your relationship? Or does it create a “false front” of conformity to the other's requests?

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How did this double bind situation affect other areas of your life?  
Your family?

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Your work and career?

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Your major life decisions?

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### Step Three: Take Responsibility for Your Own Power

What does it mean to take responsibility for your own power? Does it mean that you beat yourself up with guilt about what you didn't do in the past? Does it mean that you “positive think” yourself until you become powerful in real life? Simply put, taking responsibility means that you are deciding to value the solution over the problem. You can continue to feel that you're “damned if you do and damned if you don't” or you can simply decide to get out of your dilemma and find another way. Now that Tony has clarified the double binds, he moves to find the desires in both Karen and Warren that lie beyond the double bind. If you can find something that you value over your problem, you are very close to solving the problem.

Tony now moves to locate the emotional resources in Warren that will help him to overcome the helpless, timid state to which he has become accustomed. Tony will now elicit Warren's dark side. By “dark side,” we mean the part of Warren that has internal certainty about who he is and what he wants, even if it means possibly being wrong. One of the benefits of being a “bad boy” or a “bad girl” is that your desires become clear. What is hurting Karen most in the relationship is that she cannot be sure whether Warren actually loves her from his soul, or whether he is staying with her out of a sense of uncertainty or conformity. In a sense, by choosing

to be double bound by Karen, Warren is putting her into a double bind as well. He wants her to love him for who he is, but he doesn't show her who he really is: "Love me for who I am, but I'll be whatever you want me to be." In a relationship, it's important to put your best foot forward and make it clear what you want and need from the other person. If you make this clear while remaining conscious, honest, and open about your desires (in other words, with love, without being bratty and selfish), then you are on the road to relationship honesty. In many cases it is the woman who wants the man to create that sense of certainty. In this case, Karen clearly wants Warren to step forward and take a stand. By asking about a time in Warren's past before he knew Karen, Tony is seeking to access a part of Warren that is unafraid to ask for and take what he wants.

Tony *So what would you do in the past that was dark and that you enjoyed?*

Warren *Fighting and beating people up.*

Tony *It felt good, didn't it?*

Warren *Yeah. It did at the time. And then once I came to my senses and thought back on it, I thought, "Well that was bloody stupid."*

Tony *But you liked the feeling of being able to step up and just face something even if it was bigger than you were and conquer. Am I right?*

Warren *That's it – conquering it and feeling that I was better than some one for whatever reason. And that's also one of the reasons that I backed off with Karen. Because of what her ex had been doing and how I didn't want to be put in that position where I could turn into that person.*

Here we have it – Warren used to know how to access his dark side, where he would take what he wanted without apologies. However, when he started to feel that he would be "put into that position" where he could "turn into that person," he lost his ability to enjoy himself in that way. Is Tony advocating violence and aggression? Of course not! However, what Warren in particular needs to recover is his independent ability to stand up for what he wants. This is specifically what Karen wants and needs from him. Many of us distance ourselves from our dark side because at some point we equate it with hurting other people. Both men and women often suppress the part of themselves that is intense, a bit aggressive, and certain about what one wants. The problem is that this dark side is also the part of both men and women that is sexy and that sparks passion in the relationship. What Tony will do for Warren is to help him recognize that his intensity is not inherently damaging but a natural instinct and a source of strength.

Tony *It's a sense of breaking through and dominating that you enjoyed.*

Warren *Yeah.*

Tony *Yeah. And what do you break through and dominate now?*

Warren *Nothing.*

Tony *How does that make you feel?*

Warren *Like s-t.*

Tony *So how do you feel about your life right now, in terms of yourself outside of her?*

Warren *Not good.*

Tony *Yeah. When's the last time you kicked something's ass – something, a problem, a person, yourself?*

Warren *Not for a long time – years.*

Tony *Would you like to now?*

Now that Tony has elicited Warren's desire and commitment, he will question Karen closely about what brought her to Warren during the years when he was more assertive and confident.

Tony *When you guys were making love, did you feel like he was taking you in the beginning? I don't mean taking you without love, but I mean taking you further.*

Karen *Yes. To a degree, yes.*

Tony *You wanted him to go even further.*

Karen *Yes.*

Tony *Look at that smile! So did you tell him that?*

Karen *No. Obviously, no.*

Warren *No.*

Tony *You actually gave him the opposite signal. When did you tell him – what about him scared you? You said it scared you.*

Karen *He told me about his past, and I think at some point I told him I didn't know how I would handle it if that ever occurred. I wasn't saying I didn't want it to happen. I was saying I didn't know how I would handle it. I think I was trying to prepare him for that.*

Tony *Preparing him for that fact the you wouldn't know how to handle it.*

Karen *That I'd probably freak out.*

Tony *You'd freak out. But the truth is you wanted it.*

Karen *Okay. Probably did, yes.*

Did you catch that? Karen just clarified the double bind: she never told Warren not to be strong, assertive, and aggressive. She only told him that it scared her. In other words, Warren's decision to suppress his strength and assertiveness was never necessary, and, in fact, it was never Karen's wish. Thus, Warren's double bind was completely self-inflicted, based on his own interpretation. The truth is that all double binds are self-inflicted, and all double binds are based on a misinterpretation.

## Use It Now: Exercises for Step Three: Take Responsibility for Your Own Power

Think of the consequences of the double bind in your life. Were you really double bound, or did you double bind yourself? Look back and be honest. Don't beat yourself up; just be honest.

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What will happen if you continue to be double bound in that way? Are you willing to continue to live with those consequences?

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Now think of a relationship in your life where you are the senior member (at work, with your children, with your siblings). Can you think of a time when you may have “set” a double bind? Did you ask for something that

you did not permit to happen? Did you ask for something that you did not reward?

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What has the impact been on that relationship?

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How could you make your communication and your desires more clear? Remember, double binds occur out of a lack of clarity. Specifically, double binds occur from wanting someone to do something specific, but to do it of their own accord. Can you think of a way that you may have ordered someone to do something “of their own accord”?

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What actually happened? How effective was your communication? Did you get what you wanted?

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How can you be more clear about your desires? How could you be more careful about rewarding this person for their efforts?

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## Step Four: Recover your Sense of Self

Let's take a moment to review. We've defined the double bind in terms of the three phases of obedience.

### Review: Three Phases of Obedience

1. **A command is given.** When Karen compares Warren to her ex-husband, she implies that he should not be abusive, aggressive, or intense.
2. **Action is taken.** The only way Warren can avoid this comparison is to completely eliminate any intense or aggressive behavior.
3. **Action is rewarded.** This is where it breaks down – Warren became less intense, and Karen withdrew and became depressed.

What do you think? Do you see anything wrong with this scenario? Remember Warren's error? Karen told him that if Warren were ever to remind her of her ex-husband, she might freak out. She didn't tell him she didn't "want it," she only told him that it might make her lose control. What did Warren do? He obeyed her wishes. This is the problem: if you are in a double bind, then you are presupposing that **obedience** is the basis of the relationship. Warren assumed that if he obeyed Karen's command (not to be like her ex), then he would be rewarded. When he failed to get the reward, he became confused and double bound. The problem is that romantic relationships aren't that simple! A thriving, passionate relationship is rarely based on obedience and conformity to the other's wishes. Romance requires more initiative. Relationships that are fully alive will usually have the partners looking deeply into each other's needs, finding surprising and passionate ways to serve and even challenge each other. And if you find yourself disagreeing with your partner, speak your mind with passion! That is the route to passionate honesty and intimacy. So here's the bottom line about double binds: double binds come from trying to "obey" the person "setting" the double bind. You can be double bound as a child by your parents or as an adult by your boss or by your superior in a hierarchical organization such as the military. (And if you've been double bound for long, it may be time to make a shift!) However, if you are double bound in your romantic relationship, you need to make a quantum shift in your thinking. You will not get the relationship you want from "obeying" your partner like a child – especially if you do not necessarily agree with your partner's demand. Of course, a relationship is a two-way street and does require compromise, negotiation, discussion, and giving to the other even if you don't fully understand. These are different from blind obedience. If you care about your partner, ask them what's really going on! Figure it out!

The secret to overcoming a double bind in a relationship is to recognize your partner's needs and to focus on meeting them. Warren was double bound because he failed to understand Karen's deeper needs and to understand that Karen's desires for him were conflicted. She wanted him to act a certain way, which also scared her. In order to serve the relationship,

Warren needed to look beyond the surface and to see what her true needs were: she needed a man who was sensitive and genuine, but also a strong, assertive protector. Double binds within relationships come from a mixture of desire and fear. If you can understand your partner's needs, you can resolve the double bind immediately.

## What Are the Six Human Needs?

If the secret to solving double binds lies in understanding and serving your partner's needs, let's talk about what those needs are! Human Needs Psychology is based on the premise that human motivation can be explained by a desire to meet one or more of the following six universal human needs. In other words, most people's focus, in making a decision, in assessing their feelings, in their habits, and in their relationships, can be looked at as an effort to meet six fundamental emotional/ psychological/ physical needs. So these needs are a useful measuring stick for understanding the state of your relationship and your communications. Let's review them.

### 1. Certainty

Everybody needs some basic sense of stability about their basic necessities – food, shelter, and other material resources. When people cannot control their physical circumstances, they may seek certainty through a state of mind (such as religious faith or a positive outlook).

### 2. Uncertainty/Variety

People also have a need to change their state, to experience a range of physical and emotional actions and sensations. Therefore they seek variety through a number of means – stimuli, change of scene, physical activity, mood swings, entertainment, food, etc.

### 3. Significance

Everybody needs to feel special and important in some way. People will seek significance through obtaining recognition from others or from themselves. When people feel insignificant, they may make themselves feel significant by getting angry or depressed. They may also meet their needs paradoxically, by having others recognize the significance of their insignificance.

### 4. Love/Connection

Humans need to feel connected with someone or something – a person, an ideal, a value, a habit, and/or a sense of identity. Connection may take the form of love or merely of intense engagement – for instance, one can feel connected by means of an aggressive interaction.

## 5. Growth

Everything in the universe is either growing or dying – there is no third alternative. People are not spiritually satisfied unless their capacities are expanding.

## 6. Contribution

Just as people cannot survive without others contributing in some way to their welfare (no baby grew up on its own), they cannot be spiritually fulfilled unless they are contributing to others as well.

The first four of these needs are primary biological drives that must be met in some form, whether through positive or negative behavior. For instance, one can meet one's need for significance (feeling worthy and special) by building something (positive) or by tearing something or someone down (negative). The human nervous system will interpret both of these behaviors as sources of significance, even though one is sustainable and good for the individual and the other is destructive and harmful. An individual experiences a higher quality of life by finding more positive ways of meeting these first four needs, the needs of the personality, and then moving toward a focus on the last two needs, the needs of the soul, growth and contribution.

How does this relate to double binds? If all communication and behavior stem from an effort to meet Six Human Needs, then by understanding a person's needs, it is possible to understand his or her communication in a new way. If someone in your life is giving you mixed or contradictory messages, instead of getting confused, try understanding which needs they are trying to meet. Let's revisit our examples of double binds and imagine new solutions.

### **Example A: Someone tells you to “be spontaneous.”**

*Problem:* If you say or do something in response to the command, you are not being spontaneous – you're merely reacting to the stimulus. On the other hand, if you do nothing, you are also not being spontaneous.

*Solution:* Decide that you are going to meet your partner's needs. Your partner wants you to be spontaneous. Don't get defensive and worry that you are boring. Every successful relationship needs to meet all Six Human Needs. Do something to surprise your partner.

### **Example B: A wife wants her husband to make more money, but she hates it when he stays at work late.**

*Problem:* Working late is necessary to making more money, so the husband doesn't feel that he can win.

*Solution:* If it's true that the wife truly wants the husband to make more money, then she needs to understand that sometimes additional work is required. However, odds are that what she is really asking for is increased presence, connection, and attention from her husband when he is home. Of the Six Human Needs, she is craving connection and the significance of knowing that she is important to him. The husband can do this through words, touch, gestures, or gifts, depending on what the wife responds to most. He can think of a ritual that will give her connection and significance after he has been working late.

**Example C: You call your friend on the phone and he or she says, “Why don't you ever call me?”**

*Problem:* You are calling your friend, but you're not acknowledged for doing so. In this case, you're not blocked from taking action, but you are blocked from feeling that you have achieved what you set out to do.

*Solution:* Odds are that your friend is testing you to see whether you care for him or her and is asking for reassurance that you enjoy calling and spending time together. Give this reassurance, explain how busy you are, and apologize for not having been able to spend more time together.

**Example D: You do a session of heavy physical exercise. At the end, even though you are exhausted, you criticize yourself for being a wimp.**

*Problem:* Even though you give your all, this is not sufficient and you cannot take pride in your accomplishment.

*Solution:* What needs are you trying to get from yourself? You are vying for significance – the sense of being enough – and you are connecting with yourself for failing to do so. Even though you may be criticizing yourself in order to challenge yourself to do better, the fact is that self-criticism may also discourage you from exercise in the long term. What you need to do is quantify: to set specific, reasonable goals for your exercise. When you do not attain those goals, either improve your performance or adjust the goal. When you do attain your goals, let yourself feel successful, significant, and connected to what matters most to you.

Each of these cases presents an opportunity to become double bound, to respond with fear to the communication of someone close to you. On the other hand, each of these double binds also serves as a wake-up call to understand and respond to your partner's needs. If you can identify which of the Six Human Needs your partner is asking for, then think of some ways to meet your partner's needs. No need to get caught up in a dilemma or a double bind. Serve their needs directly.

## Do It Now: Exercises for Step Four: Recover Your Sense of Self

*Remember, if you can understand your partner's needs, you can resolve the double bind immediately. The basic human needs are: certainty, uncertainty/variety, significance, love/connection, growth, and contribution.*

Which of your partner's needs are not being met?

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Which of your needs are not being met?

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The secret to overcoming a double bind in a relationship is to recognize your partner's needs and to focus on meeting them.

How can you help meet your partner's needs?

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How are you going to reconcile the two sets of needs? How are you going to make sure you both get your needs met?

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## Step Five: Ritual of Recovering Your Self

In the film Tony has Warren break a chair as a symbol of his strength and masculinity. Warren breaks the chair to demonstrate that he can access his aggression and his intensity without hurting anyone. In this ritual, Warren is recovering his former self – the former self that he liked better. The chair throwing exercise was a ritual symbolizing Warren's former strength and aggression.

In Step Five, we ask you to perform a ritualistic action that reaffirms your sense of self. This action must not involve anger or aggression toward anyone. The ritualistic act should contain some symbolism related to the double bind message and the means to diffuse it. In Warren's case, breaking the chair reclaimed his identity as an intense man while showing Karen that she would not be the object of negative intensity. In your case, your

ritual of self-recovery may be completely different: it can be based on something you used to do that gave you the sense of individuality, independence, or wholeness. It can be taking a walk on the beach! If you don't feel that you have precedent in your life for being the way you want to be, then think of something that you've never dared to do before. You might do something that one of your role models might have done. What is important here is not the activity, but the focus and the meaning that you give the activity. Whatever you choose to do, give yourself the gift of recognizing your wholeness and your independence. Give yourself the appreciation and connection that all of us need from ourselves, And empower yourself with the inner strength and heart intelligence to do whatever needs to be done to resolve the double binds in your life.

## Do It Now: Exercises for Step Five: Ritual of Recovering Your Self

Rituals can be a good way for people to let go of past hurts and anger. People can write their sad thoughts or feelings on balloons and let them float away. Sometimes individuals will bury symbolic objects as a way of separating from the past. What would symbolize, to you and those around you that you are recovering your true self. Here's a hint: all of us have things that we used to love doing but that we don't do anymore. Did you have a favorite hobby or activity during which you really felt that you were being who you were meant to be?

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What needs were you meeting when you used to do that, feel that?

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Why did you stop that ritual? Did someone object? Did you decide you were too old to do it? Did you make other commitments in your life that made it difficult to engage in that activity anymore?

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How could you adjust that ritual so that it would be possible again in your life today? Warren gave up fighting and he gave up soccer, which he thought meant giving up the intense, aggressive part of himself. Tony

helped him find another way to meet those needs within him. For instance, he could take up sports again. What could you do?

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What kind of regular rituals could you set up, where you feel yourself tapping into your old power, your emotional and spiritual center? Your ability to take on challenge and grow? How would these affect your life?

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If you find yourself falling into a double bind – whether you're giving incongruent messages or whether you're double bound in response to a message – what can you do to break out of it?

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## Step Six: Stay the Course

Here's a warning: If you or your partner has been double bound for a long time, then it is occasionally going to feel unfamiliar to be proactive and free. If you are accustomed to being stuck in and conforming to dilemmas, it may seem difficult to skip over the usual ineffective dilemmas and to go straight for your partner's needs. If you are used to helplessness, then helpfulness may be a new feeling. It is a time that you will be reeducating and retraining yourself – and your partner will also have to get used to having their needs met in new ways. What do we mean by this? Take note of your partner's needs. Discover not only which of the six needs they favor most but also what their rules are for feeling their needs are met. Some people only feel Significant if they are told something in a certain tone of voice or see a certain facial expression. Others feel significant when having their hand held. You can do this indirectly, by observing your partner, or by asking your partner what you can do for them that they would enjoy.

**Tony** *Now what do you feel right now? Tell me what you feel right now. Look at him and tell me what you feel right now.*

**Karen** *Oh, I just feel full of love. I'm ecstatic.*

Tony *Do you love that he has that much power but you could see a little tear behind that eye when he said that?*

Karen *Yes. [Laughter]*

Tony *Why do you love this powerful man, yet he still had that little tear when he got that you still love him and that you're excited by him?*

Karen *Because even though I know he's – that's because of that caring side I love, but the strength is still there. He's got both.*

This shows the integration of the internal conflict within Karen that had led to the double bind. Previously, she had thought that a man could be either powerful or caring, but not both. Since she wanted both qualities for different reasons, she became confused and gave Warren mixed messages. Warren had also believed that in order to be sensitive, he had to shut down his natural intensity, when in fact he can draw upon both his sensitivity and his power. Now they both understand that the sensitivity she requires from him is not contradictory with the power and strength she admires and desires. You may want to involve your partner in this process. Your partner may be surprised to find that you are both entangled in a double bind situation. Or perhaps your partner has a whole different perspective on the problem. It is also a good idea to go over what you believe to be your partner's needs. Your partner may feel their needs are different than what you believe them to be. Discuss ways for each of you to have your needs met. Remember that a thriving, passionate relationship is rarely based on obedience and conformity to the other's wishes. Romance requires more initiative – relationships that are fully alive will usually have the partners looking deeply into each other's needs, finding surprising and passionate ways to serve and even challenge each other.

## Use It Now: Exercises for Step Six: Stay the Course

Rank your partners needs. The six needs are: certainty, uncertainty/variety, significance, love/connection, growth and contribution.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

What are some rules your partner has about having his or her needs met?

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What kind of feedback from your partner do you need to watch for to let you know you are meeting his or her needs? (Remember, you don't necessarily have to require a "thank you.") Get in tune with your partner's needs!

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## Congratulations!

You have finished watching the film and doing the exercises in the chapter. Now you are on your way to experiencing a more enjoyable and fulfilling life. One of life's most gratifying experiences comes from having a passionate and loving relationship with your partner. You can only have this type of relationship if each partner has the honesty, passion, and sufficient independence to create the excitement of diversity and interaction. By keeping an eye open for double binds, and by holding to a standard of loving honesty, you can experience that pleasure as well. We look forward to being with you in the next Action Book.

## Six Steps to Breaking Free: The Truth About Passion Summary and Power Questions

These questions will guide you through the process of breaking free of your double bind and help you to find the passion in your relationship.

1. **Identify the two contradictory messages**
  - a. How are the two contradictory messages in conflict?
  - b. Are you experiencing your partner's communication as a dilemma – with only two choices?
  - c. What are some other ways to interpret your partner's communication?
  
2. **Understand the consequences of those messages**
  - a. What happens when you get into a double bind? What happens when you give your partner mixed messages?
  - b. Is this double bind leading you into greater passion, growth, and spontaneity?
  - c. What will happen if this double bind continues for five years? Ten years?

3. **Take responsibility for your own power**

- a. Are you willing to continue to let double binds stop you from being spontaneous, truthful, and effective?
- b. What would happen in your life if you overcame this double bind? What opportunities would present themselves?
- c. What is your partner really asking for? How could you give to them? How could you enjoy that?

4. **Recover your sense of self**

- a. How are you going to take the initiative in becoming more passionate in your relationship?
- b. How are you going to better serve your partner so you can meet his or her needs?
- c. How are you going to feel when you can be completely honest emotionally? What are the possible risks? What are the possible rewards?

5. **Ritual of recovering your self**

- a. What rituals could you set up in your life that will remind you of the choices you have in your life? What will remind you of the potential you can enjoy?
- b. What has stopped you in the past from engaging in such rituals? What adjustments could you make so that you can enjoy these rituals without harm to anyone?
- c. Can you schedule or commit yourself to these rituals? What will you tell yourself about them as you do them?

6. **Stay the course**

- a. How are you going to maintain this deeper level of commitment in your relationship?
- b. What challenges could come up as you become more honest and open in your relationship? How are you going to address these possible challenges? (Hint: what are your partner's top two needs?)
- c. What surprises will you plan to keep the passion alive in your relationship?

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Anthony Robbins and Cloé Madanes continue to work together perfecting new methodologies of indirect negotiation to foster greater harmony and effectiveness in social systems ranging from families to corporations and government organizations.

The Robbins-Madanes Center for Strategic Intervention is dedicated to the solution of interpersonal conflict, the prevention of violence, and the creation of a more cohesive and civil community.

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