

Praise for Heart of Relating

This is truly a “Course in Miracles” for relationships.

Malcolm Stern, Co-founder of “*Alternatives*”,
Psychotherapist and Author

Heart of Relating is a very useful and important work. It gives you, in a concise way, deep insight into how to know yourself and how then to communicate from your essential self to the essential self of others. We are at an epochal time of change in which humanity, worldwide, needs conscious communication skills to be taught and learned as the heart of a secular ethic that empowers all people. This book will give you a jump-start in being a leader in fostering this necessary transformation.

Richard Moss, MD., Author of *Inside-Out Healing* and *The Mandala of Being*

Every week my work colleagues would ask, “What’s the topic?” On “Love Without Falling” Week, I showed them the Love Paradigms Model and they all wanted copies. It touched a chord.

Anonymous member of the first *Heart of Relating* Study Group

I love Heart of Relating - what a passionate offering to the world. I was inspired to fuse your exercise in “Look Who’s Talking” Week with my own work on a teaching weekend and also adapted your wonderful diagram in a workshop for parents. You have clearly articulated what is deeply true and I am sure that your work will be a resource for facilitators to enhance all kinds of self-enquiry workshops.

Joanna Watters – Teacher and Founder of *This Beautiful Work*:
supporting a radical acceptance of present moment reality

My heart was firmly closed to relationships when I started to use Heart of Relating to explore my inner world. After only a few weeks, I literally felt my heart opening again and an important, loving relationship fell into this space.

Elena Brandwood, Occupational Therapist

*This is **the** manual for the nuts and bolts of healthy relating, which should be handed out at birth! I want to see it in every school, church, government, social services department and community of every kind.*

Sally Eaves, Retired School Teacher

The message is pure, simple, easy to grasp and from the heart. As a therapist I will certainly use Heart of Relating with clients.

Kat Collier, Massage Therapist

A beautiful blend of deep wisdom and useful strategies for cultivating authentic relationships; most importantly, with ourselves first.

Linda Lantieri, Author of *Building Emotional Intelligence*

On “Ego Watch” Week I made an Egometer, which I put on my car dashboard. This has transformed my driving. I’ve always enjoyed the thrill of powerful cars, which endangered and scared passengers. The Egometer showed me how often I was speeding and accelerating just to feel better than others. Now I have a smaller car and my Egometer’s indicator stays mainly central – meaning that I am calm and non-reactive.

Ian Fenwick, HR Study Group Member

Copyright © 2015 Carmella Bhahn

The moral right of the author has been asserted.
Front cover photograph and design: Carmella B'Hahn

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the publishers.

You are encouraged to use this material in both your personal and work life and are requested to always mention *Heart of Relating* as the source of what you share. Talk and tweet and about what inspires you and help it reach the people who will benefit from it, but please observe the copyright laws and recommend that friends and clients, etc. purchase their own copies of this work. Thanking you.

House of Hahn

Matador

9 Priory Business Park,
Wistow Road

Kibworth Beauchamp

Leicester LE8 0RX, UK

Tel: (+44) 116 279 2299

Fax: (+44) 116 279 2277

Email: books@troubador.co.uk

Web: www.troubador.co.uk/matador

ISBN 978 1784622 923

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.

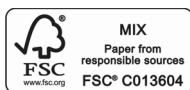
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Typeset by Troubador Publishing Ltd, Leicester, UK



Matador is an imprint of Troubador Publishing Ltd



CARMELLA B'HAHN

*Heart
of
Relating*

COMMUNICATION BEYOND EGO



Also by Carmella B'Hahn



Benjaya's Gifts (with M'haletta), 1996

Mourning Has Broken, 2002

When I was nine, my headmaster, Mr Partington,
inscribed in my autograph book –

Enquire within upon everything

I did.

This course was crafted for
and is dedicated to
anyone
moved to do likewise –

especially
my son, Asher.

Contents



Introduction Pages

Finding the Words: My Story	1
A Paradigm Shift in Relating	3
“Paradigms of Relating” Model	6
Choose How to Use	8

The Weekly Teachings

1. Awakening the Body	17
Listening to our bodily senses	
2. Oh, Yes I Can!	21
Releasing limitations	
3. Look Who’s Talking!	25
Expanding the identity from which we relate	
4. In the Zone	31
Finding our core	
5. Watching the Match	35
Aligning with the unspoken	
6. Inner Talk	39
Transforming the critical voices	
7. Ego Watch	43
Identifying ego antics	
8. Who’s Driving?	47
Holding the wheel of our life	
9. Speak for Yourself	51
Owning our particular vantage point	
10. Love Without Falling	55
Loving from the inside out	

11. I'm All Ears!	59
Understanding true listening	
12. Wounds Listen	63
Noticing the filters through which we hear	
13. Joining the Dots	69
Understanding assumptions	
14. The Judge's Pendulum	73
Calming the right-wrong swing	
15. Going Into Space	77
Creating spacious connections	
16. My Media Message	81
What are we broadcasting?	
17. Juicy Gossip	85
Valuing discretion	
18. Larger than Life	89
Shrinking exaggerations	
19. Time Travelling	93
Fully engaging with the present	
20. Who Said That?	97
Releasing tribal programming	
21. Thought-Bodies	101
Clearing our mental fields	
22. Please, Please Me	107
Changing unreal niceness	
23. The Real Deal	111
Discovering the power of authenticity	
24. Clear as a Bell	115
Speaking with crystal clarity	
25. Heart and Head Weave	119
Marrying feelings and reason	

26. Moons in Moccasins	123
Practising empathy	
27. Savouring Successes	127
Noticing how far we've come	
28. I Think I'll Feel	131
Finding the guidance of our felt sense	
29. Bird's Eye View	135
Seeing the bigger picture	
30. Lost in Translation	139
Choosing well in the electronic world	
31. Bows and Arrows	143
Balancing the masculine and feminine	
32. Space Invaders	147
Attending to our own business	
33. Mirror, Mirror...	151
Seeing our own reflection in others	
34. It's Contagious!	155
Becoming positively infectious	
35. Let's Face It	159
Taking our heads out of the sand	
36. Feeding the Needy	165
Responding effectively to neediness	
37. Between You and Me	169
Talking about unmet needs	
38. What <i>Do</i> I Want?	173
Creating constructive outcomes	
39. The Heart of Anger	177
Understanding anger and its causes	
40. Fire Prevention	183
Minimising conflict	

41. Standing My Ground	187
Remaining centred when facing anger	
42. Resolution and Retrieval	191
Clearing and salvaging relationships	
43. The Embrace	195
Welcoming all and sundry	
44. Advanced Forgiveness	199
Dissolving grievances	
45. It's a Mystery	203
Living in the unknown	
46. Marvellous Mistakes	207
Releasing the concept of failure	
47. Question the Label	211
Ceasing stereotyping	
48. Roles in Persona	217
Examining the roles we play	
49. Actions Speak Louder	221
Hitting the spot with action	
50. In the Field	225
Building group resonance	
51. Beyond Separation	229
Experiencing communion	
52. Gratitude's Grace	233
Living in appreciation	
Appreciations	237
Guide to using <i>Heart of Relating</i> (essential reading)	240
About the Author	245
Endnotes	246

Finding the Words: My Story



I was speechless as a child for no apparent reason and unable to connect with others or life in a normal fashion. Doctors agreed that I was not autistic, just highly sensitive, and no rational cause was ever found for my silent state. Locked in my inner world, I became an avid people-watcher with a growing fascination for how humans relate. This has never waned.

My first hesitant words tumbled out at six and I remained verbally challenged and petrified of speaking in public for the next 20 years or so. School was difficult – to say the least – and there was no “How to Relate and Communicate” class on the curriculum to assist my progress. Finally, at 29, when speaking live on BBC Television to millions of viewers about the unusual water birth of my son, Benjaya, I realised that at least I had cracked the challenge of speaking to an audience!

So, now I could speak in groups of all sizes, but I was disturbed by communication in general. I was particularly confused by the blatant mismatch between what many people said and what they appeared to be feeling. I longed to discover how to match my inner and outer worlds and how to relate well – especially for my children’s sake. I knew that they would imitate my behaviour *and* that *their* natural relating skills held the key to how I wanted to behave around them! They were exquisitely present with everything they encountered; totally authentic without trying.

Sadly, I realised that much of my own intrinsic knowing was in hiding. My teenage desire to look good, be special and be admired had created a mask and I had fallen into emulating others and trying to be someone else rather than allowing my Self to unfurl and express. To create satisfying relationships, I would have to drop this mask and set about replacing anything I had absorbed that no longer resonated with me. Replace with what? This was the question that spurred me on to become the hunter/gatherer of the *Heart of Relating* teachings.

It took decades of collection and practice to cover so much ground, but

every one of the 52 pieces offered here forms a necessary facet of what I see as the hologram of the art of relating; relating not just to individuals, but to life itself. I succeeded in creating what I needed for myself and it is with delight that I offer these teachings to you as part of my legacy.

A Paradigm Shift in Relating



A revolution in relating is underway across the globe: a paradigm shift in how we relate with all that exists. It is a movement towards relating from our essential Self – the inherent identity that lies beyond our ego. My sincere desire is that the *Heart of Relating* teachings add momentum to this collective wave.

My definition of “paradigm” is:

A particular way of viewing, experiencing, valuing and thinking about our reality.

Human beings enter life with about 100,000,000,000 brain cells, a small proportion of which are wired to oversee our basic bodily functions, but the majority of cells are unwired, awaiting programming from both the societal ways of our time and our particular life circumstances, family beliefs and values.

It is as if we, as youngsters, automatically don the invisible glasses of our culture – which all have a similar lens prescription – and through these lenses we perceive and frame our world. In addition, the colour and depth of tint of our lenses adjusts according to our unfolding personal interactions and life experience. We will continue to wear these metaphoric glasses until the realization dawns that we have been viewing and interacting with life in a prescribed way. When this is brought to consciousness, we can question whether there are changes we feel drawn to make.

Change will, to some degree, happen naturally once we gain insight about what has been clouding our clarity, however, we will need to be pro-active if we want change to last and become embedded in our actions. New habits are born by repetition of action, which grounds our head knowledge – hence the practices in this course.

Heart of Relating focuses specifically on the shift in relating, which includes our relationship with ourselves, others and life, but there are paradigm shifts happening in education, medicine, science, technology and other fields.

Quantum leaps in awareness occur when the number of people consistently behaving in new and similar ways reaches a critical mass. The next incoming generation will then accept these predominant ways of being as normal... until the desire for expansion and change is stirred in them.

There is a model at the end of this section that encapsulates what I see as the main components of the two overlapping paradigms of relating at this point in history: the pervading “outside-in” paradigm and the emerging “inside-out” paradigm. This course is designed to assist the migration from the former to the latter, recognising that we are usually in a state of flux and that wherever we are right now is absolutely fine. It supports the truth of Eckhart Tolle’s statement,

If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place.

In a nutshell, the outside-in paradigm of relating is one in which we often feel at the mercy of that which we perceive as being external and separate from ourselves. We communicate mainly from our ego-identity, and failure, fault, blame, right and wrong, good and bad are all a natural part of our mindset and vocabulary.

When we are functioning from the inside-out paradigm, keeping our integrity by staying true to our inner truth is paramount, no matter what is happening externally or what anyone else thinks of us. We perceive and relate from our essential identity beyond our persona; from the aware Self that perceives ego antics. We aspire to “stand with” rather than “separate from” others and life.

Cutting edge research and wisdom teachings agree that the energy *behind* our words – our state of *being* – forms the quality and direction of our lives and relationships. When we are not “at home” with ourselves – not feeling safe – communication tends to go pear-shaped, leaving a mismatch between how we feel inside and the words that leave our lips. *Heart of Relating* helps us recognise when we have drifted off-centre and shows us how to return to the comfort of our home base. It points to what is causing dysfunction and helps create heartfelt, authentic relationships that embrace challenges as catalysts of awakening. The teachings also help us clean up and match our language to our feelings, and from this aligned place, the many practical skills for effective relating – in these pages or from any other source – have a much higher chance of working.

When embracing the inside-out paradigm, a foundational shift happens as we move from an underlying belief such as this:

Things are not right – I haven't got there yet, but I will make it one day if I keep trying.

To this:

Life is about being present with and opening to what's here now; whatever is presenting itself.

The *Heart of Relating* teachings support the release of striving, seeking and anything that belittles or pushes away any part of ourselves or others. They advocate compassionate acceptance of what's here now and remind us that we will miss what we are looking for if we search for it outside of ourselves.

I, like others who write from this perspective, realize that using words accurately without creating some form of separation is impossible because our language was formed in an “outside-in” paradigm. By Week 51 – Beyond Separation, we will see that even the concept of inside and outside is actually incorrect because the more awareness – or beingness – we experience, the more inseparable inside and outside become. Despite this anomaly, I have chosen to use the inside/outside concept throughout the course because I believe it is a useful stepping-stone to the perception shift that will enrich our relationships and communication.

A new language will develop, of that I am certain; a language that will clarify the difference between the “I” we speak from as ego and persona and the “I” that is a knowing awareness that doesn't exist as a personalised entity. For now, I can only express myself in the language of our time through my own particular lens. You have already noticed, perhaps, that I have chosen to use “Self” when meaning our innate identity and “self” when referring to our persona.

There are countless initiators of this paradigm shift in the field of relating who have informed and inspired me; individuals who have dared to question the status quo and have spent much of their lives discovering alternatives. To them I am extremely grateful, and – believing that inclusivity and networking are vital to the emerging paradigm – where their work expands my own, I have pointed you in their direction.

Now I suggest that you begin by using the model of the two paradigms of relating to see where you stand and where you would like to be – practising self-acceptance if necessary.

The OUTSIDE-IN Paradigm of Relating

I'm on a journey to somewhere else

The world outside my body is separate from me. I conceptualise what I perceive and then relate from my interpretations and opinions *about* it.

How other people perceive me is important. I often morph my behaviour to what I think others want, in order to get approval/results of various kinds.

I engage mainly with the spoken word and what is presented externally, rarely sharing the truth of what I feel inside. There is a mismatch going on.

I relate mostly from and to the human identities (persona) of both others and myself, e.g. appearance, roles, conditioning, status, gender.

My circumstances, history, what others have told me and what I see as my limiting character traits prevent me from fulfilling my dreams.

My ego reacts and my emotional state swings in relation to others and my external world, which I believe is responsible for sending me off-balance.

I imagine I know a lot about others and often pigeonhole them, speak on their behalf, generalise, stereotype, gossip, blame and judge.

On balance, I mostly value: speed, setting goals and making things happen; fixing things and people; the intellect, logic and information.

I am entitled to get my needs met by the world. It's ok to tell white lies, coerce others, and compete to get what I want: there is scarcity out there.

This has gone wrong. Who failed? I deserve to be made to feel bad about this, and to expose and punish those guilty of mistakes or wrongdoings.

I resist, resent, and complain about things that feel uncomfortable and consequently sabotage my natural sense of well-being.

All is in flux, both paradigms merge in us in varying degrees. Neither is wrong.

The INSIDE-OUT Paradigm of Relating

Wherever I am, I'm home

Everything is connected. I experience being *of and with* life and relate using my full body's senses – including feelings, intuition and reason.

Staying true to my own integrity and authenticity is paramount. I notice relationships blossom best when I relate from who *I am...* beyond ego.

I listen and attune to what is going on inside others and myself, behind the words and presenting behaviour. I aim to align my words and feelings.

I relate from an expansive identity that embraces the non-physical Self, i.e. awareness and intuition, and connect to this in others when I can.

I welcome the awareness of what is limiting me and trust that I can find surprising ways to break through. I expand and open to my limitless Self.

I aspire to be in the driving seat of my responses to life's circumstances and know that ultimately I am responsible for my behavior and state of being.

I speak for myself from what I feel to be true in the moment. I am curious and interested in our differences and keen to learn from them.

I value: silence; spaces to just be; feelings; not knowing; sitting with what's not ready to move... until it is; receptivity; insight; *and* intellect/logic etc.

I meet my own needs where possible and clearly and cleanly express them when necessary. I trust that my true needs will be/are being met somehow.

I compassionately accept "failure" and allow it to spur creative change. Every challenge I encounter offers insights about who I am.

I live closely with my inner smile and am grateful for life's rich diversity and the opportunity before me to wake up to greater awareness.

Where do you stand now?

Model by Carmella B'Hahn

Choose How to Use



STOP for a moment before leaping into this material. *Heart of Relating* is now yours and you are free to find your best possible method of relating to its contents so that it succeeds in enhancing your relationships and communication patterns for life. You can dip and dive; see what fires or moves you; find your tripwires; talk about topics to all and sundry; use one of the guided structures; read it straight through; or all of the above! Whatever method you choose, I encourage you to engage fully in the practical application of the teachings on the practice pages, to add to what you grasp with your mind from reading the quotes, text and stories. Lasting change requires application of knowledge and insights, to daily living.

Each tree takes exactly a year to form one concentric ring, which is visual evidence of its growth. This is what I am asking you to consider right now.

ARE YOU WILLING TO GIVE YOURSELF THE LUXURY
OF ONE YEAR OF TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE
TO SET UP YOUR RELATING SKILLS FOR LIFE?

I know that you won't be alone if you have a barrage of reasons for not taking on one more thing that needs a regular time commitment. We tend to reassess our time priorities only when we get sick or some other circumstance pushes us to the edge. I empathise, and yet I know from experience that telling ourselves and others why we can't find time to do and become what we want to, will serve only to keep us in the exact same position. If we truly want something to occur, there has to come a point when we say, "I choose this as a priority. How can I make it happen?"

There is a choice from two recommended formats if you choose a structured method:

Option A – *Heart of Relating Solo* (Doing the course alone)

Option B – *Heart of Relating Duo or Group*

(This option is highly recommended for optimal benefit.)

The basic pattern for options A and B is this:

◆ Beginning of the week

Thoroughly read (preferably twice) the four pages of the week's chapter and then do the journal work and preparation exercises from the practice page.

◆ During the week

Follow what you have been asked to do under the practice page subheading, "During the ... Week".

◆ At the beginning of the following week

Capture in your journal what had the most impact (and attend your duo or group meeting if taking option B). Then start the next week's lesson as above in "Beginning of the week".

In-depth suggested formats for both options, which guide you how to use the course alone or with others, can be seen at the end of the book. PLEASE VISIT THESE PAGES BEFORE DECIDING how to proceed. Once you start, a simple weekly rhythm will become clear.

You will need:

- ◆ A JOURNAL small enough to carry around – A5 size ideal.
- ◆ A WEEKLY 45-MINUTE TIME SLOT ALONE
plus 1 – 2 hours weekly if meeting in a duo or group.
- ◆ THE COMMITMENT TO KEEP GOING... no matter what.

Bear with me as I impart the rest of the preparation information, all of which I believe is necessary to share after noting the feedback of the pilot study group.

What we each know and practise in our way of relating is unique, and perhaps you are already masterful at some of these teachings. They will almost certainly not all be new to you. You might be knowledgeable *about* some themes and yet could benefit from embodying them further into your way of being, which is where the exercises could be invaluable. Despite having written these exercises, I took part in the pilot *HR* study group and learned a vast amount about my own patterns of relating. I therefore humbly suggest that you practise both the new and familiar teachings to expand and refresh your knowing.

This course is about partaking in a whole, integrated package that needs to cover all the bases to make overall sense. The order of themes was carefully

chosen to build a foundation of understanding, so dippers and divers be warned! I recommend you start at the beginning and refer to later topics as required, e.g. “The Heart of Anger” and “Marvellous Mistakes” come later, which could be a crucial support when faced with anger issues or struggling with having made a “mistake”. If you peruse the contents pages and scan the chapters in advance, you will have a good idea of the topics covered so that you can jump forward if you need that specific support.

If you are in a partnership or group, you will have to keep to the unfolding order but can personally explore specific topics as needed or wanted and return to these later with others.

If venturing alone on the course, the choice is yours to speed up or slow down the suggested weekly rhythm, *however*, consider that spaciousness is likely to be more effective than speediness. Often a deeper learning will reveal itself when given the space. The pilot feedback made it clear that a week *is* needed per section, and spreading each lesson across two weeks could work even better because more time means more live examples of the topic at hand. Yes, yes, that would take more time in the long run, but this really is a life training!

Humankind tend to approach new ideas by first holding them at a distance, with doubt as the default position:

What if I disagree... or don't understand... or get it wrong... or need to drop my cherished beliefs?

Suggestion: Be like a hungry owl who devours the whole mouse; taking it all in and trusting its wise guidance system to absorb what is needed. Throw yourself in with courage and clear intention and you will be more likely to catch the essence of these rich pickings.

To make things easier to integrate, it is necessary to have some weeks that are more about understanding wider concepts than “solving” and “action”. If you are a solution-oriented person you might find yourself asking after certain lessons, “Yes, but what do I *do* with this?” My answer is: be patient and know that grasping a deep concept can be a major step towards a solution presenting itself.

We all have preferred learning styles: visual, hands-on, auditory, conceptual, etc., and this course was created with this in “mind” – taking you into the head, the heart, the intuition, nature, and action. It is designed to stretch your learning modality repertoire, and if you find yourself untouched by a particular practice, you are invited to use your ingenuity and create one for yourself.

After many of the chapters, I have suggested resources to support the theme and take you deeper. Where these are easily accessible – online clips or articles – I strongly suggest you take the time to look at them. Where they are books, you will no doubt want to tune in more carefully as to whether you want to explore the topic further by purchasing material.

We all have wounds and it is inevitable that some of you will be triggered by certain themes and practices. Please seek professional support if you need it. Relationships can send us to deeply painful places, but I particularly like this quote:

Relationships are the crucible for awakening.

- ROBERT AUGUSTUS MASTERS

(Author/Relationships Expert)

(A crucible is defined as a container in which substances are subjected to a high temperature, or as a difficult trial in which elements interact, leading to the creation of something new.)

Now, I have one last thing to put to you before you move on. The revolution in relating, that I mentioned earlier, is happening because people like you are craving more healthful and effective ways of relating. If these teachings work for you, if they inspire you, will you support my dream and spread the word as far and wide as possible? Would you be willing and able to join those generous readers who are buying one or more extra copies of *Heart of Relating* to give as a gift to others who could make an important difference by embracing and sharing this course? I dream of partners, families, students, teachers, therapists, group members, business people, leaders, healthcare workers, church and community members, all learning to relate together, with heart.

For more about the “Buy One, Set One Free” campaign
see: www.heartofrelating.com/books/heart-of-relating

*We do not grow absolutely, chronologically.
We grow sometimes in one dimension,
and not in another; unevenly.
We grow partially. We are relative.
We are mature in one realm, childish in another.
The past, present, and future mingle
and pull us backward, forward,
or fix us in the present.
We are made up of layers, cells, constellations.*

*- ANAÏS NIN
(Novelist)*

The Temptation¹

Humans learn like this:
(Apply model to learning to ride a bike)

Step 1. Unconsciously Unskilled

“Is there something to learn?”

***Step 2. Consciously Unskilled**

“Wow – I have a lot to learn!”

Step 3. Consciously Skilled

“Look at me, I can do this now!”

Step 4. Unconsciously Skilled

“Done that. What’s next?”

The skill is now automatic and integrated, and new neural pathways have been made in the brain.

Friendly Warning!

*Step 2 holds the temptation to give up.
This is where we usually feel out of our comfort zone
and want to retreat
to the safety of familiar habits.

Stay with this step and the rewards will flow.

The
Weekly
Teachings



WEEK 1

Awakening the Body

Listening to our bodily senses

** Opportunity **

To feel more alive and in direct rapport with others by employing a whole range of bodily senses when relating.

*Most people don't inhabit a living reality
but a conceptualized one.*

- ECKHART TOLLE
(Author and Consciousness Teacher)

TIP FROM HR STUDY GROUP

*Write or type out each week's key focus or practice questions
and stick them somewhere visible to jog your memory.*

Post-its are great for this.

We have bodies that can touch, feel, taste, smell, hear, see and intuit. As youngsters, unless stifled, we instinctively engaged these luscious faculties with gusto, staying with each encounter until satiated – grabbing a finger, earth in the mouth, stamping in puddles, watching insects, howling in discomfort, inhaling mama’s smell, knowing our hunger, sleeping when tired, etc. What happened? How come so much of adults’ relating is head-led and disembodied? Experiencing our bodily senses directly is fundamental to successful relating and is a beneficial place to begin.

Spoken words are invaluable in helping us gain rapport and greater understanding of each other, however, they can trap us in the mental realm and create distance. Naming everything is useful and yet can give us a false sense of knowing what we’ve named, e.g. “That’s an oak tree” can stop us from sitting *with it* to sense its presence.

The same is true of labelling humans. When my hair went silver, I noticed young people looking straight through me as they hadn’t before, as if their mental labelling scanner was saying, “Older person... not of interest to me”. This “categorise and dismiss” behaviour is an example of outside-in relating. Inside-out relaters are more open; they know everything is connected and use bodily cues, including intuition, to sense which connections to follow.

DO WE COMMUNICATE FROM A STANCE OF SEPARATION –
OBJECTIFYING AND SHARING OPINIONS *ABOUT LIFE*,
OR FROM A SENSE OF *BEING WITH LIFE*?

This shift from the head (thinking about) back to our natural, open childlike way of relating (being with) needs us to discern the difference between thinking and awareness. The challenge, which we will visit from various angles, is to allow ourselves to drop into deeper awareness and to learn to use our amazing thinking process consciously in conjunction with this awareness. Relationships with all and sundry – including this course – will improve dramatically once we engage our bodily senses and loosen any notion that we *are* our thoughts and intellect.

* Story Time *

All that Matters is Love

Abigail Robinson²

My strongest memories of my grandmother are of her in a Vitesse sports car with red leather seats and a polished wood dashboard, her white hair flowing stylishly out of her headscarf and dark glasses adding to the exuberance and outrageousness. Those days, full of vodka, speeding fines and an abundance of chocolates, were long before Alzheimer's tempered her soul.

When I visited her at the nursing home, where at ninety-nine she became a resident, I was saddened and disturbed by this transition. She was too far away to reach with just words. Absent and unmoving in her chair, only love would pull her back, would allow her to meet my gaze as I crouched in front of her.

I had learned from my work as a healer to gather myself into a fully embodied presence, which means surveying all of my thoughts and feelings, however difficult, and, if necessary, including any sensations of numbness. When I witness all of myself and my sensory experiences, I can ensure no part of me is an obstacle to being an open conduit for love.

Puzzled my grandmother would say: "I don't know you!" and I would reply, "It doesn't matter who I am, all that matters is that I LOVE YOU!" On some occasions our conversation had to be shouted above the exaggerated drama of loud soap operas and in front of staff and residents:

I don't know why I am SO OLD and STILL ALIVE!

You are DYING, piece by piece, A LITTLE BIT AT A TIME.

IT'S DIFFICULT DYING!

...It's DIFFICULT LIVING!

I don't remember anything!

You don't need to remember anything. All that matters is that I LOVE YOU!

One day, soon after I had spoken again about love, thoughtfully and slowly, my grandmother looked at me as if feeling its truth fully for the first time and said:

Somebody once told me that there is one thing that IS important to remember:
ALL... THAT... MATTERS... IS... LOVE!

* The Practice *

Awakening the Body

You will need your journal now and at the beginning of each week's practice.

Awakening the Senses Exercise

Do this in nature or inside. Find a *small* area that catches your eye – around a tree or flowerbed, bookshelf, fruit bowl etc. Now carefully observe, name and describe to yourself in detail what you can see.

Next, put on a blindfold or close your eyes and employ all your other senses. Spend about five minutes touching, feeling the textures, listening, tasting if appropriate, smelling, and sensing the essence of the subject of your attention. Keep releasing *thought about* and sinking into *being with* and experiencing your chosen focus.

Use your journal to catch what touched you in this exercise and note how this could relate to your communication.

During “Awakening the Body” Week

See how often you can catch yourself lost in thought *about* something – maybe categorizing and dismissing someone/thing. Congratulate yourself for noticing and open to what your body might have to say:

- ♦ What are my body senses telling me about this and is there a constructive action I could take in response to what it's saying?

For example: You are having a dinner party and a guest begins describing in graphic detail an encounter he had with a sharp knife. You have a thing about sharp knives and realise you are wincing and your appetite is diminishing. Your body is saying, “NO, STOP! This isn't nourishing.” You can suffer in silence or employ another option such as honouring your body's message by asking the guest to change the subject.

Note what has had impact on you this week and how you will apply it.

Supportive Resources: David Abram³ and Thomas Huebl teachings⁴
How Schools Kill Creativity, TED Talks video, Sir Ken Robinson.⁵