

Heartful



Relationships

Course One

The Foundations

HEART♥FUL RELATIONSHIPS

Course One

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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. Locked in my silent 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, 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 first son, Benjaya, I realised that I had come a long way in cracking the challenge of speaking to an audience!

So, now I could manage to speak in groups, but I was still disturbed by relating and communication in general and particularly by the blatant mismatch between what many people said and what they appeared to be feeling ~ a pattern I’d observed since childhood. I longed to discover how to match my inner and outer worlds and how to relate well ~ especially for my child’s sake. I knew that he would imitate my behaviour and I was concerned that his innate relating skills would be conditioned by me if I wasn’t super careful. As tiny children are, he was exquisitely present with everything he encountered and totally authentic without trying. I realised that an abundance of learning was on offer by him!

I knew 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 kept spurring me on to be the hunter/gatherer of these *HR* teachings.

Shockingly, Benjaya, drowned in a local river, aged five. Despite the unthinkable loss, I was comforted by knowing that I had listened deeply to him during his short life and done my best to model healthy ways of relating. When he died, I experienced how few were able to relate to me authentically in my grief, and my sensitivity increased to the harmful way many “grown-ups” speak to children as a matter of course. And so, I began writing educational articles and leading workshops. Then, when my second son, Asher, neared puberty, I initiated Sunday communication lessons ~ skills that he uses to this day as an adult.

It took decades of collection and practice to cover so much ground, but every one of the weekly sections offered in *Heart♥ful Relationships* 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 as an individual and a parent, and it is with delight that I offer these teachings to you knowing that it will spare you much time. ENJOY!

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 these 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 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 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 step-by-step practices in this course.

Heart ♥ful Relationships focuses specifically on the shift in relating, which includes our relationship with ourself, 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.

The model, coming up, 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 Eckhart Tolle’s statement:

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

The Outside-in Paradigm of Relating

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.

The Inside-out Paradigm of Relating

When we are functioning from the inside-out paradigm, it is paramount to keep our integrity by staying true to our inner truth 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.

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. This course 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 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'll make it one day if I keep trying.

To this:

Life is about being present with and opening to what's here right now.

These 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 is and remind us that we will miss what we are looking for if we search for it outside of ourselves.

I realize that using words accurately without creating some form of separation is impossible because our language was formed in an “outside-in” paradigm. 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 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 awareness identity and “self” when referring to our persona.

I am grateful to the countless initiators of this paradigm shift in the field of relating who have informed and inspired me. Where it is useful, I have pointed you in their direction.

I suggest that you begin by perusing the model of the two paradigms of relating (on a larger screen than a phone) to see where you stand and where you would like to be, practising self-acceptance if need be.

The OUTSIDE-IN Paradigm of Relating
I'm on a journey to somewhere else

The INSIDE-OUT Paradigm of Relating
Wherever I am, I'm home

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

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

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.

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 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 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 mostly from and to the persona (physical identity) of others and myself, e.g., appearance, roles, conditioning, status, gender.

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.

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

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.

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

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

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.

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

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 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.

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.

This has gone "wrong". Whose fault is it? If I make a mistake, I (and others) should feel bad about it. Failure is unacceptable.

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

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

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.

Model by Carmella B'Hahn

All is in flux, both paradigms merge in us in varying degrees.
Neither is wrong; they simply have different effects on our wellbeing.
Where do you stand now as you begin this course?

Week 1

Look Who's Talking

Expanding the identity from which we relate

~ **Opportunity** ~

To question and expand our identity
to include both the physical and
non-physical aspects.

After an extraordinary near-death experience:

*...In that state of clarity, I also realised that
I am not who I thought I was:
Here I am without my body, race, culture, religion or beliefs...
yet I continue to exist!
Then what am I? Who am I?
I certainly don't feel reduced or smaller in any way.
On the contrary,
I have never felt so huge,
this powerful,
or this all-encompassing.*

~ ANITA MOORJANI
(Author *Dying to be Me*)

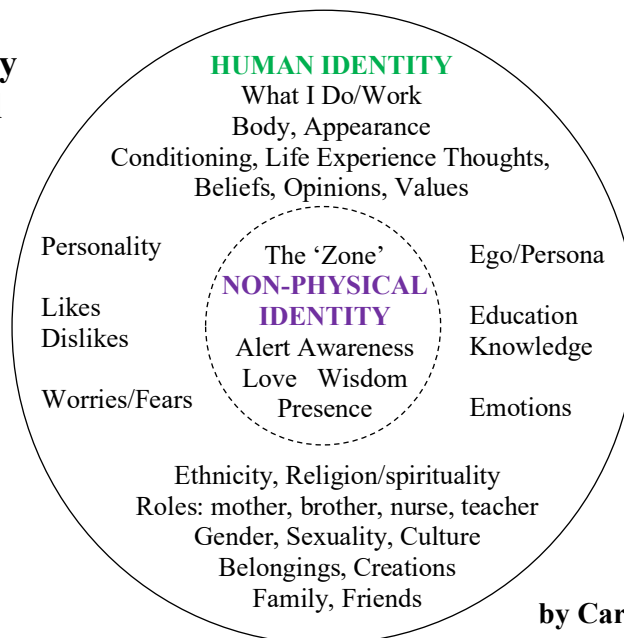
Our sense of who we are ~ our identity ~ is the place from which we relate; the springboard for every word we utter. If asked, “What is your identity?” most of us would probably describe aspects of ourselves from the “Human Identity” circle below. After all, we show up in this life as unique, physical beings with varying personas (persona meaning: aspects of our character that are presented to and perceived by others).

Our roles become more and more part of our identity as we grow up; some becoming so all-consuming (the parental role being a prime example), that it is often a tall feat in the pulls of everyday survival to remember that there is so more to who we are. Many of us feel we have lost our sense of self and carry a longing for enough space to rediscover who we truly are.

Perhaps, a simple perception change, here at Week One, will help. What if this human identity is an essential *part*-expression of who we are *and* we also have a non-physical identity that is a wise witness to the playing out of this physical life? What if this non-physical Self *is* awareness itself; an identity beyond beliefs, roles, opinions, conditioning, etc. that resonates with truth? Can we explain the sense of ancient wisdom evident in the eyes of newborns? Is the simple answer that they *are* incredibly wise? What if we were born with pure awareness and over time have accrued layers of persona (or ego) that hide this expansive core?

This is what wisdom teachers throughout time have told us is so. The original purpose of meditation and spiritual practice was surely to discover this state of Self and include it in daily living, along with our authentic human self, as much as we are able. Yes, we may know this, but how easy it is to forget ~ especially when egoic patterns enter our relationships!

Identity Model



by Carmella B’Hahn

TO RELATE FROM THE INSIDE-OUT
WE NEED TO GET WISE TO THE *SOURCE* OF OUR EXPRESSION

Poem Time

This poem arose when I'd just begun writing this week's "Look Who's Talking" pages. Inspiration struck after returning home from my weekly singing evening in a beautiful venue with a roaring fire. It is a mixture of reality and wishful thinking and I offer it as another way of perceiving the many "I"s of identity.

Tell Me Who You Are

The harmony singers drifted homeward,
leaving two of us
basking by the deep red fire.

"Tell me who you are," he asked of me,
"if you are not too tired."



"I have many 'I's," said one of them,
"which would you like to meet?"

"The embodied wise one," he replied,
without missing a single beat.

Smiling, I reached for his hand
and we sat in warm silence,
out of our minds,
sharing a harmony without words.

~ CARMELLA B'HAHN

The Practice

Look Who's Talking

In his first week's practice, we will explore and become more conscious of what we mean when we say, "me" or "I". Hopefully, we will expand our perception of what makes up the whole of who we are. (Next week, "In the Zone" covers how we can more readily access our "non-physical identity".)


10/15 min Visualisation Exercise (Open and close your eyes as needed)

- Revisit and take in the outer Human Identity circle of the model, pondering on the combination of your make up as a person. Jot down in your journal the aspects of you that seem important to your identity e.g., mother role, health, home, job, income...
- Now imagine a large bag in front of you of any design you like ~ make it gorgeous if you choose and visualise yourself slowly putting each of these aspects of your human identity in the bag. Know that it's temporary. You can get them all out again at the end if you like.
- As each "thing" goes in, notice any feelings, e.g., resistance, lightness, sadness.
- When everything is in the bag, ask, "Where am I now? Outside or inside the bag?"

Alternative: If you don't like visualisations, do the same exercise with a real bag of your choice and slips of paper with parts of your identity written on them, or even objects to represent aspects of self. Connect fully with everything you put in the bag before doing so.

Make journal notes about anything arising from this exercise, especially the answer to the question, "Where am I now?" when everything is in the bag.

During "Look Who's Talking" Week

- Notice this week how much you think, communicate and act on automatic pilot from your human identity/persona as if that is *all* you are. Remind yourself every day of your innate wise witness and see if you can experience more calmness and a wider perspective with less investments in life's dramas. Practise relaxing into simply being and watching with interest while any apparent difficulties unfold around you.
- If you agree with the statement on the next page, write it out/print it and recite it, either aloud or silently, as often as you like during the week until you feel it sinking in deeply.
- At the end of the week, write in your journal about any ways that your sense of identity has changed (if any) and ask yourself what you want to remember, and maybe activate, from this week's lesson.
- If completing *Heart  ful Relationships* with a partner/friend, as with every week, you will meet together at the end of the week and follow the suggestions in the Introduction.

Recitation Practice



A question was introduced in this first week
that is absolutely key to this course:

Who and what is the “I” from which I am relating?

This central theme is reinforced
by four statements for you to recite.
There will be a different one for each week of Module 1.



*I have a body
but I am not my body.*

*I can see and feel my body,
and what can be seen and felt
is not the true Seer.*

*My body may be tired
or excited, sick or healthy,
heavy or light,
but that has nothing to do with my inward I.*

I have a body but I am not my body.

~ from The Pocket Ken Wilber.