

THE RE-CONNECTION HANDBOOK FOR COUPLES

INSIGHTS AND PRACTICES FOR CULTIVATING
LOVE, SEX AND INTIMACY
(EVEN IN DIFFICULT TIMES)

JUSTICE SCHANFARBER



*For everyone who feels an absence and longs to reconnect with
their significant other.*

Useful from "early disillusionment" right through to "last hope".

*A deeper path - far beyond advice about date nights and
communication tools.*

*Addresses common patterns of conflict and disconnection in
relationships.*

Sample pages only - To buy the full book [click here](#).

copyright © 2015 Justice Schanfarber

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author.

Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause. This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

All personal vignettes and stories are true. Some are composites. Names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

How did we get so disconnected? 3

1. Contradiction and paradox:

The difficult work of holding opposites 5

Navigating our partner's dilemmas 11

2. Anxiety: Invisible hand of relationship 15

3. Boundaries: How distance connects us 29

Differentiation and Fusion 30

4. Communication 34

Emotional vs rational 35

Holding the relationship container 40

The talking stick 43

Intentional touch 47

Tolerance for physical pleasure 50

5. Untangling love, sex, and intimacy 52

Love and re-connection 53

Intimacy and re-connection 57

Sex and re-connection 66

6. Eroticism, attraction, and desire 79

7. When our partner changes 85

8. Re-connecting through hopelessness and uncertainty 92

Conclusion 94

About the author 96

Sharing this book 97

INTRODUCTION



The re-connection of people in a marriage or relationship is not at all like the re-connection of an air conditioner, car transmission or internet server. The re-connection of human beings is not a mechanical procedure. There is no manual, and any attempt at providing “5 foolproof steps to re-connection” or a “30-day re-connection plan” would be dishonest and ultimately futile.

The re-connection of people in a marriage or relationship resists too much cleverness or technique because disconnection in a marriage or relationship is not essentially a sign of breakage, failure or a problem to be fixed.

Relationships are a winding path with many branchings, switchbacks, entry points and detours. The path is not entirely mappable. We all have to find our way as much by feel as by guidance, sometimes through the dark.

The search for re-connection might have us gazing wistfully backward whence we came, looking for something familiar, something we believe we lost when we took a wrong turn somewhere. But true re-connection is not sentimental, nor is it necessarily repair or reclaiming (although it might include

elements of both). We re-connect at a *new* point on the path, at a place we've not been before. Real re-connection is less about getting something back, and more about finding our way forward. Perhaps most accurately it has flavors of both; we arrive at a place that feels familiar and is yet unknown.

This book attempts to honor the mysterious nature of the connection between two human beings, even as it outlines predictable patterns and provides workable practices for supporting the re-connection of estranged or disconnected lovers.

Re-connecting with a spouse is partly an act of will between two people, and partly grace, a blessing. We cultivate the ground, plant the seeds, and then hope for generous conditions.

Not every part of this book may be applicable to you right now. Sex, for instance, might be a crucial doorway to re-connection for your relationship at this juncture, or it might be currently off the table. Approach this book more as an almanac or encyclopedia than as a step by step manual. Use the parts that suit you now, and revisit as required, as your particular relationship path directs you.

You're sure to recognize yourself in some of the stories in this book. If these reflections of yourself feel gratifying, enjoy them, use them to deepen your insight and understanding. Take heart from whatever validation presents itself. When you are confronted with a story that contradicts your own, practice tolerance. It is someone's story, perhaps someone dear to you. Refrain from rejecting it simply because it is not your story.

Throughout these pages, you'll be asked to shift back and forth between active participation in a re-connection process, and quiet reflection on the relationship environment and all that has transpired within it. This shifting of focus back and forth between outer action and inner reflection is good life practice, and mirrors the requirements of a living, vibrant, connected marriage or relationship.

HOW DID WE GET SO DISCONNECTED?

Disconnection is a recurring theme in my counselling work with couples. One partner, (sometimes both) finds themselves pulling away, even if they don't fully understand why. Other times both partners have felt disconnected for some time.

It seems like there are endless ways to become disconnected from a partner, lover, spouse. Too much attention, not enough. Too different, too similar. Affairs. Resentment. Fear. Boredom. Often it's something that escapes definition; there's just something in the way.

Connection can fade slowly; a troubling natural outcome of a normal life together - kids, job, family, friends. Many couples find themselves growing apart even as they pursue the life they thought they wanted.

Or disconnection can be swift; the result of a sudden revelation or event; an affair; death in the family; an insight that changes everything.

My clients almost always come to counselling believing that their relationship troubles are a result of mistakes made. Cause and effect. There's an assumption that feeling disconnected indicates a problem, some kind of deficiency. I'd like to suggest a broader perspective. Whatever disconnection or trouble you're experiencing in your marriage or relationship may be natural and valuable, "normal" even, though painful. Everything in the world ebbs and flows, comes together and comes apart. The fact that you are currently ebbing in your relationship does not necessarily indicate wrongdoing or the impending end of the relationship (although it might).

Everything that is alive fluctuates, and relationships are no exception. Only dead relationships are static. A living relationship is sometimes pleasurable, sometimes excruciating. Either way, something new is always being born. This isn't just a positive spin that I like to put on life and relationships (believe me, that's not my style). If we look deeply into the nature of life on earth, don't we find a reality that matches what I've outlined above? Ebb and flow. Fluctuation. Change. Growth and decay, and sometimes a very fine line between the two.

Where I live in British Columbia, large cedar and fir trees die and then become the ground for hemlock seedlings. The disconnection in your relationship will provide the ground for new liveliness of some sort, if you attend to it, allow it, remain curious.

1. CONTRADICTION AND PARADOX: THE DIFFICULT WORK OF HOLDING OPPOSITES



Throughout this book (and your life and relationships) you will encounter contradictions. This is one thing we can be absolutely certain of. How we handle contradiction in our lives helps define who we are as lover, partner, spouse.

Contradiction asks much of us. On the one hand, there might be an opportunity to create greater congruence in your life by confronting the contradictions embodied in your own speech and actions. On the other hand, it takes great capacity to hold opposing points of view and disparate experiences without rejecting one or the other or both. I call this “holding opposites.”

The possibility for re-connection in our marriage or relationship is related to how we handle the contradictions we inevitably encounter; how we hold opposites. Our ability to tolerate, and as we’ll see, transform, our experience of contradiction into something more powerful requires a certain kind of personal capacity.

“Capacity” is an important concept in couples work. When I talk about capacity, imagine a cup. When the cup gets full, it overflows. In relationships, our cup gets full from anxious feelings that come from, amongst other things, an inability to tolerate the contradiction all around us.

When the cup overflows, these anxious feelings are expressed as rage, withdrawal, criticism, blame, denial, exasperation etc. We can try to iron out the contradictions we see in ourself, in our partner, in our life, in the world... or we can work on making our cup bigger. The advantage to making our cup bigger is that it holds not just the anxious feelings of contradiction, but ALL the complicated feelings that give life its richness and depth.

We may wish for simpler times in our relationship, a time when things were more black and white, but re-connection doesn't want that. Re-connection wants you to grow your cup, to expand your capacity for holding the complexity that comes with a deeper, maturing relationship.

Some people habitually sniff out the contradictions in others and feel obligated to point them out. They believe it is their job to iron out the wrinkles they see in their partner. This includes playing "devil's advocate." If this is your tendency, please consider that this kills eroticism, dampens desire and attraction, breeds resentment, and makes re-connection difficult. Your first task in re-connecting with your loved one is to catch yourself in the act of using contradiction against yourself or others. I'm not asking you to ignore the contradictions you observe. On the contrary, please

continue noticing them. I'm asking you to orient around contradiction differently, to change your relationship to contradiction. Stop treating it exclusively as a problem to be solved. If you will practice accepting contradiction as a normal aspect of life, you will be preparing the ground for re-connection in your relationship.

Much conflict and disconnection between lovers and spouses is due to a misunderstanding about contradiction. Contradiction is normal and healthy. It's inevitable. If we see our partner's inherent contradictions as a flaw or weakness, we essentially take a stand against their basic human-ness, and that is the real disaster. We also very likely take the same stand against our own human-ness. We remain apart, separate, because we have rejected a real part of being human.

Paul watched his wife Marilyn eating pie for dinner after they both came home late from a frantic day at work. Just yesterday she had confided to him that she wanted to eat more healthfully. Now as he watched her hungrily annihilate two pieces, he pointed out how her actions were in complete contradiction with what she had said yesterday. When the three of us talked about this in session, Paul maintained that he was trying to support her. Marilyn erupted in frustration. She felt anything but supported. This was an ongoing dynamic that was becoming a major obstacle and source of disconnection in their relationship.

When we are feeling combative, it's easy to point out contradictions in the other as evidence of their shortcomings, implicitly making them “wrong” or “bad.” This reveals a narrow view of contradiction and it misses the deeper gifts and insights that working with contradiction can provide. If we believe, even unconsciously, that we should do away with contradictions, we have become too perfectionistic and are likely to find ourselves frustrated and lonely; disconnected.

We can judge ourselves and others based on the contradictions we observe, or we can inquire into these same contradictions with a curious mind and open heart. We might ask ourselves “What are the various parts of this person that are trying to have a voice?” We might try assuming that both sides of any contradiction hold an important truth, and rather than pitting them against each other, we might experiment with “backing up” until our perspective is broad enough to include both sides. This type of inquiry asks us to soften our focus.

We're accustomed in this culture to seek answers, facts, quantitative data, to narrow our focus until we've solved the problem. It's a reductionist way of seeing each other and the world, and it keeps us from finding solace in the mystery; it keeps us from experiencing the sweet surrender and easy humility of simply not knowing. “Simply not knowing” is a wonderful state of being. Have you practiced it? When we allow ourselves to be washed over by waves of contradiction, and we stop insisting on sorting

out each one, we might find ourselves on new unfamiliar ground, a place where fresh experiences and re-connection become possible.

With some practice allowing contradiction, it begins to transform. Contradiction that is allowed, that is *honored*, can begin to mature into its wise relative: *paradox*.

Contradiction is that annoying know-it-all brother in law who seems oblivious to the way he rubs everyone the wrong way. Paradox, on the other hand, is that enigmatic uncle, mysterious and calm, whom you feel good around, even if he's strange and maybe a little bit crazy. Contradiction is two dimensional, black and white. Paradox is multi-dimensional, full of colour. Contradiction is blunt, a dead-end, right and wrong, end of story, a door closing. Paradox is a door opening. As much as contradiction is confusing and deadening, paradox is illuminating and enlivening. Contradiction cuts us off. Paradox connects us. Contradiction is an annoying problem of logic. Paradox, like love, is mysterious and awe inspiring, unsolvable. When we see only the contradictions in our partner, we are looking at them like problems to be solved, like broken machines. When we are able to look at our partner and see the deep paradox underneath the contradictions, we begin to see them in their fuller mystery. We view them with our heart's intelligence, not just our reasoning mind.

You don't need to figure this out entirely to work with it. It's ultimately not any technique, but rather plumbing your own depth and growing your own capacity that turns contradiction into paradox and enriches your life and relationship. If you will simply

allow contradiction in your life, in the world, in your partner, rather than fighting against it, you will have begun this practice.

PRACTICE: HOLDING OPPOSITES

You notice a contradiction in your spouse. Now slow down and take a breath. Notice if you have an impulse to confront your spouse with their contradiction. What does the impulse feel like in your body? Is it a pressure? Tension? Where do you feel it? Breathe into the sensation. Whatever the sensation is, stay with it until it softens or changes.

Imagine your capacity expanding, growing large enough to accommodate ALL the parts of your partner, ALL the parts of yourself... even the contradictions (especially the contradictions).

Remind yourself that your partner's task is to reconcile their own contradictions in their own way, in their own time. You can never solve their mystery, nor should you.

Do these ideas about contradiction and paradox get you thinking at all differently about your relationship?

We've just scratched the surface.
Ready to go deeper?

Purchase your copy of the full book to continue learning about -

- *How anxiety invisibly drives conflict and disconnection (and what to do about it)*
- *Why good boundaries are crucial for making good relationships*
- *The one communication issue that de-rails most couples again and again*
- *Important distinctions between love, sex, and intimacy*
- *The surprising nature of eroticism, attraction and desire*
- *How to handle changes in each other and in your relationship*
- *Navigating your partner's dilemmas, doubt, confusion or uncertainty*
- *And more...*

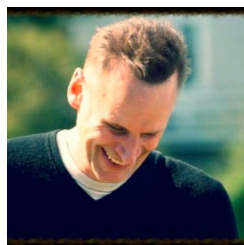
To buy the full book and continue your journey of re-connection [click here](#).



“I’m going to call it right now – I think your book is going to be very successful, reach many and have a profound effect. The mindfulness approach to anxiety is helping me in so many ways, and not just with my husband – with the kids too, or when I can’t sleep. The way you’ve explained it totally clicked for me. To say this is the book I need right now is an understatement.”

~ Jodi Mann, Restaurateur and full time mom

“In The Re-connection Handbook, Justice Schanfarber avoids the cliché prescriptive advice so often found in a ‘self-help’ work such as this. His ability to reflect on the complexities of human nature rather than affixing blame is particularly valuable. Relationship advice is a well-traveled road, but Justice is able to point out some of the more subtle landscape that just might make the difference between falling asleep at the wheel and staying engaged in the journey.” ~ Daniel Clement, Director – Open Source Yoga



“The most practical, straightforward and useful book I’ve come across on how to create a healthier, more vital relationship right now.” ~ Angela Inglis, Musician/Recording Artist