The Invitation of True Intimacy

Relationship as a Modern-Day Crucible for Transformation and Healing
(a summary by Pat Evert)

- Preparing for a healthy relationship

Learn how to take care of yourself. Practice radical self-care, self-kindness, and self-compassion. This will release your partner from this burden, which is not theirs to carry. Become very curious about your emotional triggers. To what degree do you believe another person will fill the void for you, make the emptiness go away? There is just something, well, uncanny about the relational field to remind us of everything we have yet to integrate and work through within us. Your partner is here to encourage and walk with you (not for you) as you turn toward, meet, and offer safe passage to what has been knocking at the door of your heart for so long. It is always in the end a movement of the unknown.

- The unwanted lover

In our quest for a deep intimate relationship, what shows up is sadness, loneliness, anger, despair, grief, self-loathing, confusion, jealousy, fear, and shame. But it is important to remember that these ones come not as enemies but as true lovers, seeking just one moment of your presence, your compassionate communion. As you go deeper with this inquiry, you will encounter a profound truth along the way: you will never be able to be more intimate with another than you are with the unwanted lovers within.

- A devastating act of love

We can count on our partners to relentlessly illuminate everything that is longing for wholeness within us when we allow another to truly matter to us. Aspects of ourselves are aching to come out of the shadows and into the warmth of holding awareness, not to harm but as forerunners of wholeness. Please be kind to your partners in response to the inevitable conflict that will arise as you make this journey together. Learning how to harness the energy of conflict and to engage it directly, skillfully, and with an open heart is essential on the path of intimacy and requires the encoding of new circuitry. At times, love will come as peace, connection, and flow; at other times as a flood of rage, separateness, and conflict.
• The Achy Yoga of Intimacy

It won’t be easy to open to the crushing potential of heartbreak, disappointment, and deflation that intimacy is uniquely designed to activate. **It will require a new level of commitment to staying close to yourself** in the face of an inevitable confrontation with those feelings and aspects that you split off from at an earlier time. The most sacred function of love is not to meet all of your needs—but to introduce you to the eternally creative terrain of the unknown and the vast, limitless depth of your true nature. **We must release our partners from the burden of trying to meet our needs and engage myself in this noble endeavor.** No matter how disturbing what is evoked may be, we can commit to turning toward it and receiving the secret offering of the lost pieces of ourselves. Above all, please be kind to yourself and your partner if you decide to take up the achy yoga of intimacy, knowing that it will take everything you have to navigate. And it may never conform to your hopes and dreams.

• Into the alchemical relational vessel

When we step into the crucible with another, our intelligently crafted strategies to avoid exposure, which may have once worked well, break down and we are no longer able to shield ourselves from the open, raw exposure that true intimacy always evokes. It’s as if the “other” is playing the role of a sacred enzyme that dissolves our protective barriers and armor, revealing the tender material beneath. In addition to providing a transformational container in which we can come to know ourselves at deeper and deeper levels, the connection is also sure to activate profound feelings of exposure, abandonment, rejection, jealousy, etc. You are teetering on the edge of a cliff. But it is a cliff of grace. A portal has been opened; your guide has appeared as a mirror into everything that you are. The beloved sees you as you are (perfect) and this is terrifying. You will likely come face to face with the greatest fear you’ve ever known but have never been able to articulate: that you are loved. You have no choice but to let go of the stories and deep convictions of the unlovable one, the broken one, the unhealed one, the imperfect one, the flawed one, and the lonely one. **The beloved will ceaselessly remind you that your heart is at risk of breaking open in any moment,** and perhaps never being put back together again—at least not in the same way.

• What is the beloved?

**The beloved** is what reveals to you the inside of your own heart. Your eternal friend, the beloved will use the entirety of the phenomenal world to find you and will never, ever give up on you, even when you have given up on yourself. The beloved has no interest in you resolving her mystery but only in fully participating in it. The beloved has no bias and is equally prepared to take form internally or externally—whatever it takes to awaken you to the mystery of his or her presence. **As you become more and more willing to practice compassion and kindness to whatever appears—the beloved will come alive within you.**

• Relationship as the royal road

It is no secret that relationship is, for many, the royal road to profound (and often excruciating) revelation about where we really are in our lives. **It reveals the ways**
we’re holding on and holding back. Most of us have had the opportunity to become painfully aware of the seemingly miraculous power of our partners to touch our sore spots and elicit the most unexplainable and outrageous reactions within us. A rich area of intimacy to explore is the degree to which we’re willing and able to allow another to deeply matter to us, to let them all the way in. On the one hand, you long for this intimacy with another in the core of who you are; on the other hand, you’re terrified of it and will actively defend against even the possibility of having to encounter old feelings of rejection, abandonment, and heartbreak. Some of the more defended areas of your heart you might need to proceed slowly in meeting and integrating seemingly unlovable parts. They trigger an avalanche of emotion within us. Before we realize it, we’re terrified of rejection and abandonment. While these moments are deeply painful and unsettling, they are profound opportunities to encode new circuitry, to replace the self-aggression, self-abandonment, and complaining, blaming, and resenting with new pathways of slow, attuned self-care. We can realize just how rare and precious the opportunity is that we’ve been given: to both wake up and grow up. It’s not so much that our partner is doing something to us but that when we open ourselves to the transformative activity of intimate connection, all of those previously unmet aspects of ourselves that have been lurking in the unconscious seeking the light of day tend to come erupting to the surface. But we can slow down and investigate how we are avoiding certain aspects of our emotional landscape, and then become more conscious about whether we’d like to engage in a different way. These are invitations to come closer. Such sacred claustrophobia will not support our dreams of a life of safety, certainty, and a consistent flow of positive feelings. Intimacy is not to provide for our neediness. Rather, we are asked to open to the possibility that the energy of intimacy has come into our life to unfold and reveal the creativity of the unknown, to introduce us to the wholeness that we are, and invite us into the mystery where we’re never quite sure how it will all turn out. When we view intimate relationship in this way—as an alchemical, at times relentless crucible for our own healing and awakening—we send out an open invitation into the seen and unseen places, beckoning all that seeks further integration to come out of hiding. It is a turning point in your life to know deep within you that you have the capacity to reauthor a new world. It will require turning toward yourself in times of activation, when you need yourself more than ever, and away from the old, worn-out path of self-abandonment. Inside the crucible, the “other” will always push up against that which is unresolved within you. How fortunate! How painful. What grace. By committing to taking love’s journey with them, knowing nothing about the route or the destination, knowing that it will take everything you have and are to navigate it.

• Disconnection as a portal in relationship
We don’t need to feel connected all the time. Such will only breed disappointment. The beloved will use everything to teach us how vast love is. Offer sanctuary for our partners to at times feel disconnected without pathologizing this state, to feel safe enough to move closer to the other in all its forms. To see that the beloved will at times show up as “feeling connected” and at other times “feeling separate” (and longing for connection).
Before we scramble to fix the feeling of disconnection and get tangled up in our habituated conclusions about what it means about ourselves and the relationship, turn toward it. Listen to it. Hold it. This is a portal to go deeper into love. Connection and separation are both arrows of the beloved.

• **Navigating the landscape of vulnerability and boundary**  
  We can act in ways that are current, kind to self and other, and which honor the truth that we are both separate and connected.

• **The Holy Art of disappointment**  
  What is it like for you to disappoint someone? What are the consequences if you are not able to “make them happy”? Should you just go ahead and try to make them feel better at all costs, even if detrimental to your own self?

• **Loneliness and aloneness**  
  In ‘aloneness’ none can know my experience as I do. Each of us longs for Union. It was never meant to be resolved, only to draw us nearer. We sense we’ll be asked to meet deep waves of feeling. “Loneliness,” on the other hand, usually involves a resistance to our immediate experience, a subtle turning from shame, fear, sadness, and rage. These ones surge in our lives not to be healed, but to be held and allowed back into the inner ecology of soul.

• **Both separate and connected**  
  Intimacy is likely to illuminate pretty much everything that remains unresolved within us. We tend to lean toward either separateness or connectedness. What can be problematic is the disowning or the avoidance of the other pole, or the acting out of it in less than conscious ways. We need a balance of the two. In the infusion state we’ll do just about anything to meet the needs of the other, to privilege them far above our own, and compromise our own integrity for the security of staying close. All the while longing for our own integrity, wholeness, and authenticity. The result of the avoidant state is where we cannot allow ourselves to depend on another, for the other to matter too much. All the while longing for connection, to be met, to be seen, to be held.

• **Healthy intimacy is not the same as emotional fusion**  
  Allow them to matter, take a risk in leading with our vulnerability, and prioritize connection and its preciousness in our lives. It is also important to be on the lookout for unhealthy fusion, to assert our independence, disappoint our partners, allow them to struggle and confront feelings of aloneness, and to remove the burden we may have unconsciously placed on them to meet our needs. Stay committed to working with the chaos, contradiction, and aliveness of these energies as they arise. This art form evolves slowly, as it marinates and cooks in the alchemical vessel of the body.
• **Relationship as Amplifier of the Unlived Life**
We can count on our partners to relentlessly illuminate everything that remains unresolved within us, when we allow another to truly matter. There is nothing like a close relationship to illuminate the orphaned emotions and vulnerable parts of ourselves. We attract and are attracted to those aspects in the other that we have disowned in ourselves. Learning how to transmute the energy of conflict by way of an open heart is a secret doorway into the evolutionary potential that relationship offers. Emotions, as wisdom-guides, remind us of the two great relational fears, of being abandoned or overwhelmed by the other. The invitation of the beloved, in each of its forms, is to step fully into the crucible of relationship where we no longer limit the mystery of love’s expression, resisting the temptation to have the fires of love conform to our requirements. The beloved has not come to confirm what we think love is – but rather to introduce us to the creative terrain of the unknown. We remove the burden from the external other to take care of this sacred task for us, which was never theirs to carry. They are able to return it to us, as the ultimate act of love, where it will be safe enough for them now to come closer.

• **The contradictory nature of feeling and relationship**
A relationship has ended. An old dream has died; recycled, sent to the other world. All that is left is a burning, a longing, but for what? Should we move into the next relationship or stay alone? There is no answer to this question, only an invitation into its unresolvable core. But in the realm of the beloved, there will always be contradictory feelings. I want you. I’m repelled by you. I want to connect. I want to be separate. I want to be seen. I want to hide. We dance inside the opposites of abandonment and fusion, unsure where to turn. This is all so very human.

• **The magic of attunement**
On a flight from Denver to Oahu, I sat next to a lovely couple who must have been in their early to mid-70s. I was struck by how attuned they were to one another. They were alive to what was needed in a given moment, but not more. Intimacy without fusion. Communion without impingement. All in a perfect flow of mutual co-regulation. They finally glanced over at me, my intention to not create a scene lost to the crushing power of love that flows between two people. They both smiled and the man patted me on the shoulder, his eyes near bursting into tears himself. He understood. We understood together. No words. We stepped into some sort of crucible outside time and space where the veil parted and only love remained. I was so grateful that they allowed me into the sanctity of their love-world for a moment, and into the mystery of lover and beloved as it unfolds here, into eternity.