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Are You Certified to Love?

This may sound a little crazy, but:

- We take a test and are issued a license before we can operate a car;
- We have to apply for a fishing license before we can even catch a fish – which ensures that you know and follow the rules;
- Even to operate a sail boat you need a skipper's license where among other things you are tested in your navigational skills.

So why, I ask you, are we allowed to get into relationships or even, God help us, have children without knowing how to navigate those often challenging waters without knowing anything about the rules or the steering or anything else? Go ahead and call me crazy, but I think we should be certified to love. And if we were making up the certification exam, this is what I would put on it. (Read More)

1. What were your parents' patterns (or blueprints) for love? In other words, what did you see them do in their relationship? Was there abandonment, betrayal, superficial connection, or maybe one or both of your parents tended toward controlling or domineering behavior?

If you can't answer this question in one or two concise sentences, you have work to do. Because guess what my friend, you will repeat what you learned in childhood. Or maybe like so many of us, you'll go 180 degrees in the other direction as you attempt to not be your mother or your father. Mind you, this is not blaming or putting anybody's parents down. Don't forget, our parents could only emulate what they learned from their parents.

2. What is the most effective way to communicate in a love relationship? For example, do you point out whatever my partner is doing wrong, by saying:
 - a) "You never come home on time."
 - b) "You never listen to me."
 - c) "You aren't meeting my needs."

Any of the above are wrong, wrong, wrong. These constitute blaming, making wrong, and putting down types of statements. What we want are "I statements followed by a request." Here you would identify your feeling and without blaming your partner state what the issue is. Then you would make a request. For example, "I feel hurt when it seems as though you've broken an agreement we have made without checking with me first. Would you mind checking with me before you change agreements we've made?"

3. While your partner is speaking, you should be:
 - a) Listening for what's wrong with what they are saying
 - b) Preparing a rebuttal in your head
 - c) Deciding if you agree with what they are saying or not so you can let them know.

Again, wrong, wrong, wrong. What we want is deep listening -- not analysis or critique. Your goal here is to understand your partner's feelings.



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4. The purpose of a relationship is:
- To have someone to have sex with?
 - To have someone to be a companion?
 - To grow in your capacity to receive and give love?

If you pick anything other than “c”, not that “a” and “b” aren’t great and fun, but I think it is obvious you missed the boat on this one since ‘c’ is the deeper purpose. Even your skipper’s license won’t help you if you only focus on sex and companionship.

5. If you and your mate, find yourself in heavy water you should:
- abandon ship
 - start bailing for all you are worth even if the ship is going down
 - get help

Research shows that 2/3 of all divorces could be prevented if people got help. So look for a specifically trained couples therapist who works both on insight and behavior change.

6. It doesn’t make any difference whether you share common goals, interests or spiritual life with your partner. True or False.

False. Research shows that the more of these things you share with your partner, the more satisfying your relationship is likely to be. Work on developing as many of these aspects of your relationship as possible, and remember spiritual life could be that the two of you share beautiful sunsets together. The key is you stop doing and take time for being.

If you mastered the above, we will issue you a license to love. And if you are interested in learning more about it, come to our Opening Your Heart To Love Workshop on May 21st. I’ll be sharing more about these and other relationship tools, and I will give you a certificate in the end.