



BraveHeart Women

Be. Create. Collaborate.

Purpose and Prosperity Revealed

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Healing Through Love

by Dr. Erica Goodstone

I am a Relationship Healing Expert helping men and women heal their relationships through love. My journey has not been a simple, straight path to internal wisdom and external success. There have been twists and turns, heartaches and insecurities, loss, death, and fear of exposure for more years than I care to recall. But let me start at the beginning.

I was born a winner. While my mother was in labor, my father bought a hospital raffle ticket in my name for 25¢. Shortly after I was born, the news came that I won the \$25 raffle bond. Then, when I was eight years old, my mother entered a contest and won a small diamond. She had that diamond set in a ring with a small ruby and gave it to me. I loved that ring and wore it everywhere. You can imagine how upset I was the day I lost my ring on the dock of Lake Mahopac, in upstate New York, where we vacationed every summer. My daddy came to the rescue. He slid his finger along the cracks in the dock; and lo and behold, his finger went directly into my ring. And so I had my ring back and cherished it for years to come.

Although my parents loved me deeply, they managed to suppress my independent spirit and free self-expression for a good portion of my life. My beloved father had a favorite saying: "Children should be seen and not heard." Extremely shy and quiet, I lived up to his expectations as I developed into a "very good girl." At the same time, my mother groomed me to be a little version of her. One of my relatives actually called me "Little Muriel," after my mother, rather than Erica. Then there was an incident that clinched my lack of self-confidence and sense of worth. When I was five years old, my mother was hired as head counselor at the summer camp I was attending. For that entire summer she insisted that I call her "Aunt Muriel" rather than "Mommy" so that I would not stand out from the other kids and would not receive any special treatment. The lesson I learned was that "everyone else's needs are more important than my own."

Childhood was fun for me in many ways and at the same time extremely painful because I was shy, insecure, unassertive, and could easily be hurt. My participation in sports activities helped to mask my inner insecurities.

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In my neighborhood, the girls and boys played together. We engaged in boy-girl wrestling matches, competitive hikes through the woods, and ice-skating games in which the kid who was the outside tail of the line got whipped around and had to really hold on. We built igloos after some huge snowstorms, and we ventured down Suicide Hill with our sleds. My friend and I challenged everyone to handball matches—and we usually won!

Something began to change during junior high school. No longer in the “in” crowd, I created my own group, The Go Girls. Even then, I had an entrepreneurial spirit but did not have any concept of monetizing it. Since I was shy and awkward, boys did not pay much attention to me until my body began to develop, earlier than most of the other girls. That sudden attention embarrassed and confused me. Nobody explained what was happening. Girls seemed to back away from me, and I didn’t know why.

In high school, my familiar sports equality no longer worked. If I played paddle ball with a guy and beat him, he would suddenly lose interest in me. He would then choose a girlfriend who didn’t play any sports, someone who would praise and admire him for his athletic ability. Again, I felt confused and inadequate, and I didn’t know why.

Although I really wanted to go out of town to college, in my family that was not encouraged for girls. My brother went away to an engineering school in Wisconsin, shared a big house with several guys, and had lots of parties and personal adventures. Even as children, my brother had been allowed to take horseback riding in camp, but as a girl I was not given that opportunity. So, with my very high academic record, I was encouraged to attend the local Queens College/SUNY.

At that time, in the late 1960s, a woman basically had the choice of becoming a teacher, a nurse, or a secretary. In my family, the only option was to be a teacher and have a secure pension. Briefly, I explored a few majors. In Home Economics, the women appeared to be dowdy, asexual, prim and proper future housewives. When I switched to Physical Education, the women were more aggressive, masculine, competitive, and certainly not feminine. So I settled on Elementary Education with the addition of psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

Upon graduation, I was placed in a top-level elementary school with a non-graded primary program with classrooms that had no walls and one-way mirrors. The principal was controlling, hostile, and manipulative and could observe us, unannounced, at any time. I was miserable. A group of us decided to quit at the end of the first semester. I quit on a Friday in December. My mother yelled at me the entire weekend: “How can you quit a secure job with a good retirement?” I was 20 years old.

Monday morning I secured a job near 5th Avenue in Manhattan as Executive Secretary to the President of Gotham Recording Company. I felt alive and free and part of the real world. I was invited to watch live recording

sessions with some famous talents, and many interesting men invited me to lunch at exotic restaurants and private men's clubs.

As secretary to the president, I also received an education about the reality of life at that time. Men often asked me to lie to their wives, giving them a false story that their husbands were at a meeting. Then I saw my "happily" married boss, the man I was so impressed with, kissing and making out with the most prestigious woman in the company. I also got to see everyone's salaries. To my dismay, I discovered that the men, with half the education, earned at least twice the salary of the women, who worked day and night for the company. So when my well-meaning uncle lectured me to "Go back to teaching. It's the best job for a woman," I listened.

I secured a new job teaching fourth grade in a disadvantaged neighborhood in Brooklyn, N.Y. Every afternoon I'd race home to play tennis, my outlet and most enjoyable pastime. I decided that if I were teaching tennis and other sports that I loved, I would be happier. So I returned to school, made up undergraduate credits in health and physical education, and three years later, upon receipt of my master's degree, started a full-time position at Bayside High School, Queens, NY. At first I really enjoyed teaching at the high school level, but after only a few months I felt that familiar sense of being in a regimented environment, isolated from the real world and unable to meet and socialize with eligible men.

That's when I discovered I could teach at the college level. I started with an adjunct position at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, N.Y., where I'd hang out in the cafeteria with the Dean of Academic Affairs and the coaches of various teams. Finally, I felt that sense of freedom and ability to socialize, as well as the sense of accomplishment from teaching an entire course rather than only two-week segments of each skill activity.

Wanting a full-time college teaching position, I enrolled in a unique doctoral program at New York University in Human Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Living. That led to my full-time position at FIT/SUNY. In this position, I taught many physical activity courses as well as human sexuality, stress management, health education, meditation, and yoga. Here I gained knowledge and developed life strategies that guided me toward my life's purpose as a Relationship Healing Expert.

I entered my doctoral program during the "Free Love" era. The words of well-known professor Dr. Mary Calderone made me question my current beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. She said, "Sex and love go together."

From as early as I can remember, my mother gave me messages that rarely talked about love. First and foremost, she instilled in me: "Don't get pregnant." Second and more devastating, she often reminded me: "Smart women handle their men." But I was never taught HOW to be a "smart woman." So I would play games with men. I would act indifferent or too interested. I would act unfeeling or too sensitive. I would pull away and

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avoid sexual contact or give in to sexual activity too easily. I was confused, and none of my strategies really seemed to work. But I did NOT get pregnant until I finally got married at age 40, and then I suffered a heartbreaking miscarriage. Thinking back on this, I realize I had followed my mother's advice to my own detriment.

My Ph.D. dissertation was based on the work of ego psychologist Dr. Margaret Mahler. Her observations of mothers interacting with their infants in the first three years of life revealed some profound effects that could last a lifetime. Without an adequate bonding experience, the child could develop separation anxiety, anxiety about merger, and intense ambivalence that might impact future relationships. Having a personal sense of all of these emotional states, I chose to examine the long-term effects of these anxieties upon adult love relationships.

My physical pain from athletics and my intense emotional pain from years of low self-esteem led to my search for relief and understanding. I received and studied all sorts of touch and emotional release therapies (Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, Trager, Shiatsu, Polarity, Rolfing, Bioenergetic Analysis, Rebirthing, Past Life Regression, EMDR, etc.), spiritual teachings (Siddha Yoga, Infinite Way, Bible, Kaballah, Living Love), meditation, chanting, and traditional psychotherapy. Nothing could quickly resolve my internal belief that I was not good enough.

Then, the week before my final dissertation oral exam, I attended an Association for Humanistic Psychology conference where I observed the "magic" performed by my future mentor and teacher, Ilana Rubinfeld. A young lady was lying on the massage table coughing and saying she had pneumonia. When Ilana asked her about the people in her life, she blurted out, "Get off my chest." At that point, she had a coughing fit. It was obvious that her pneumonia was related to the emotions she had been unable to express toward both her mother and her husband. This gentle yet powerful work, The Rubinfeld Synergy Method of Talk and Touch, put together the missing pieces of the mind, body, spirit connection—for my Self and for my future clients.

After receiving my Ph.D. degree, I combined the principles of the Rubinfeld Synergy Method (which combined Gestalt Therapy with gentle touch), Masters' and Johnson's Sex Therapy methods, Acupressure theory, and Polarity Therapy in my work with private clients. I continued having a small private practice while maintaining my full-time professorship at the college. Finally, I decided to write a book incorporating all of the healing modalities and knowledge I had gained to date. It was the culmination of my life's work, my baby. Putting my book out into the world was, for me, like giving birth. With enthusiasm, I worked with an agent and sent the book out to several publishers, receiving such rejection statements as "We have many other books on sexuality." and "This book is like 'Touch 101.'" Discouraged,

feeling as if I had just had a miscarriage, I put the book into a file box, where it remained for about 13 years. I had temporarily stuffed my feelings and lost an understanding of my life purpose and my own value. Imagine the pain I felt, literally "Soul Pain," every time I saw another person publish a book on only one aspect of what I had covered in my comprehensive book that had received so much rejection.

Then I took an early retirement and relocated to Florida. No longer a professor and attempting to build my full-time private practice, I attended some networking events. When they discovered I was a sex therapist, some people would giggle. When they heard I combined sex therapy with touch therapy, they expressed strange concepts of what I was doing. From my years of intensive training in several different disciplines, I had developed a much broader depth of understanding than many traditional psychotherapists, sex therapists, or body therapists. But I was perceived by others as somehow less qualified. It has taken me many years and hard work to overcome feeling inadequate due to such external invalidation.

Then, in July 2008, I enrolled in an online mentoring program that promised to help me write my book in 12 hours or less. That course turned out to be much more than a book-writing course. It provided mentoring for creating an online presence through social media and for publishing a book as well as an e-book. In the eighth month of this nine-month course in which I was struggling to write a new book, one of my mentors said to me, "Why don't you publish the book you already wrote?"

That course brought me back to writing, first with articles at ezinearticles.com and then with various blog posts. Writing about what I truly believe, the power of love and what it takes to create and sustain love, I have gradually released the fear of sharing my book with the world. Finally, *Love Me, Touch Me, Heal Me: The Path to Physical, Emotional, Sexual and Spiritual Reawakening* was published as a complete book as well as in four parts as books or e-books. Getting my book published was like giving birth to myself, retrieving and revitalizing a lost part of my Self.

What makes me a Relationship Healing Expert? I have earned a Ph.D., an academic credential, and I have also earned a hard knocks, visceral, life degree in letting go of emotional baggage, healing from my past, and learning to find the love within. I have discovered that I cannot take my clients any place that I have not already been. I have been in the depths of despair, feeling shame and humiliation, sadness, grief, insecurity, and generally feeling less than others around me. I have also felt, at times, an attitude of superiority until someone showed up to knock me down a peg.

I waited until I was 40 to marry. My parents had separated when I was 19; and my beloved father passed away two years later, presumably of a broken heart. I vowed then that once I made the commitment to marry it would be for life, no matter what. My husband, on the other hand, married me

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reluctantly, attempting to prove that he was not marriage material. During the first few years together, I had to release my belief that I was not good enough—not pretty enough, not smart enough, not creative enough, not successful enough, and basically not worthy of receiving love.

After many years of reading, writing, studying, teaching, learning, and guiding others to discover the love within, I have gradually arrived at a place of internal ease and self-acceptance. At the same time, my husband and I have developed a deep love and appreciation for each other's similarities, differences, perceived strengths, and perceived weaknesses. When all else is brushed aside, the only thing left is love, pure love.

When I work with individuals, my goal is to shine the light on their own unique capabilities and passions. I help them understand their current situation and emotional states in terms of early childhood upbringing and memories, current and previous relationships, societal images and messages, and all the potential influences in their life. My goal is to develop a true sense of self-love, self-appreciation, and self-acknowledgement.

In my work with couples, I have discovered some simple truths about men and women and the way the world works. Many women meet the man of their dreams, their Prince Charming, and manage to intrigue him and capture his heart. While in that stage of winning him over, the woman may forgo her own needs and eagerly follow his lead. This pattern often lasts for many years. But life has a way of bringing change.

A man will feel disillusioned much sooner if the woman does not live up to the promises she made. Some women appear to be "hot" and sexy, only to rapidly lose that desire once they are comfortably established. Other women who were initially cool and calm may later reveal intense emotional mood swings, intolerance, and a lack of respect and emotional support.

At some point, often as a woman is approaching menopause and her hormonal balance shifts, she may realize that she has not been true to herself. If she decides she can't live this way anymore and makes some sudden changes, the man in her life may become completely ungrounded. The woman he loved and married is slipping away, and he wants her back the way she was. Unwilling to go back to her old ways, she has not yet developed her new, more authentic, way of being. This inevitably leads to conflict, turmoil, relationship stress, and a general sense of malaise.

When the inevitable life stresses and personal changes occur in a relationship, many women and men choose to escape. Some have an affair, some latch onto an addiction, and others escape quickly through divorce. Those who travel for business may have short-term affairs, assuming they can compartmentalize their emotions and keep their marriage intact.

The process of becoming intimate with another is complex and intricate and is often complicated by early childhood abuse. We cannot escape our own internal demons by ending a current relationship and seeking a new

partner. Men and women need to develop their own authentic power; learn how to express their true needs, wants, and desires; and negotiate within the couple to get both people heard, acknowledged, and fulfilled.

- Have you reached a point where your old patterns no longer serve you?
- Are you tired of having to take a subservient or dominating role?
- Are you ready to be your authentic self, but you're not sure how to start?
- Are you afraid you'll lose everything you already have if you change?

If you have any of the above fears, you are not alone. Change is scary. Once change has begun, it may be impossible to return to that familiar old comfort zone. But change is also inevitable. Our relationships must shift to accommodate our internal growth. Sometimes our intimate relationship can withstand the change. Sometimes the relationship has run its course and no longer serves our most basic and pressing needs.

Here are some words of comfort, wisdom, and comprehension to take with you on this journey of life change.

It is not your fault. You did not cause the problems you are now facing, no matter how much it appears to be “your” fault. Each of us can only do what he or she believes is best in the moment. If you had an affair that you regret years later, think back to how you were feeling and what circumstances led to your vulnerability and desire for this escape.

It is not Us versus Them. We are all in this life together. Develop empathy for your partner and empathy for yourself as well. You can feel and express empathy without taking responsibility for the other person's responses. Without making assumptions, you can work together to find solutions that satisfy both of you.

Accept, acknowledge, and appreciate your similarities and differences. One of my favorite sayings is *Viva la difference!* Learn to enjoy and appreciate the differences that help you to complement each other and create a powerful synergy together, stronger than either of you alone.

Embody your authentic feminine power and authentic masculine power. One of my favorite movie lines is “Me Tarzan, you Jane!” If you are a man, let your inner Tarzan overpower your woman with love and sensuality, strength, and passion. If you are a woman, become that feminine creature who is strong and able, yet soft and compliant.

The Paradox of Love If you want love, be prepared for war. Speak up. Don't back down. Don't hide your true feelings. If you want a loving, peaceful, and respectful relationship, then be prepared to fight for that. Sometimes it requires yelling and letting out your temporary rage. Sometimes it pushes you to the depths of exasperation and tears. It can be exhilarating and

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comforting to let your worst self out, to have your partner witness you at your worst, and come back for more of the entire package that is you.

Love brings up anything unlike itself for the purpose of healing and release. Don't be fooled when your man's hostility takes over or your woman's fangs tear at your heartstrings. Often these outbursts and nasty putdowns are automatic responses. Something you or someone else has said or done may have triggered an emotional memory connected to some much earlier painful or traumatic experience. Learn the art of non-response, non-reaction, and not taking it personally. That forces the person with the outburst to stop pointing a finger at you, to come back to self, and to self-reflect.

Love everyone unconditionally, especially yourself! Remember, we are all human beings. We all have a mind, body, and spirit. We are all seeking love, acceptance, acknowledgement, appreciation, and joy. Learn to forgive others for the ways in which they disappoint you. Learn to continually forgive yourself and love yourself for who you are right here, right now. Love your body. Appreciate your mind. Connect with your spiritual source. Allow your life to unfold in the natural, beautiful, flowing way that life is lived from moment to moment.

My Global Dream is for men and women to let go and release the pain and suffering caused by unmet childhood needs, neediness in the present, desire for control, and the belief that love comes from external sources. Imagine what a wonderful world this would be if men and women surrendered into acceptance and appreciation of self and others. Imagine if everyone could heal through love.

About the Author

Dr. Erica Goodstone is a Relationship Healing Expert helping men and women heal their bodies, their relationships, and their lives through love. Author of *Love Me, Touch Me, Heal Me: The Path to Physical, Emotional, Sexual and Spiritual Reawakening*, she is also a syndicated columnist with hundreds of articles about healing, love, and relationships published on such sites as ezinearticles.com, examiner.com, yourtango.com, and selfgrowth.com, and her own blog, <http://CreateHealingAndLoveNow.com/blog>.

As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Dr. Erica helps clients to reconnect their mind and body, heart and intellect and to recover their passion and purpose in life. An AAMFT nationally certified marriage therapist and AASECT nationally certified sex therapist, she is a diplomat for the American Association of Integrative Medicine, the American Academy of Pain Management, and the American Board of Sexology.

You can contact Dr. Erica directly at <http://DrEricaWellness.com> to get her free report, "Relationship Success," or go to her BraveHeart community at <http://BraveHeartWomen.com>. Look for Create Healing and Love Now.