



Learn to Love

**Dealing lovingly with an illness that
affects the relationship.**

Tutorial 2

www.Learn-to-Love-Letter.com



Index

1	Why a tutorial? _____	3
2	Everyday challenges _____	6
3	Some basic thoughts _____	8
4	The rule of love _____	9
5	What this implies for the relationship _____	9
6	Renovating your daily life _____	10
7	Exceptions and limits – even to love _____	12
8	Further thoughts _____	13
8.1	What could prevent us from living this rule of love _____	13
8.2	What helps us to live the rule of love _____	13
9	What have I learned? _____	14



1 Why a tutorial?

An insight we might admit to from our personal as well as our professional world might be that:

Partnerships do not collapse because of a lack of love but rather from a lack of knowledge. If we knew more we would make them work better.

Does that seem too easy? Perhaps, but it is easy to agree that we all want the same things, i.e. happiness and contentment - especially in a partnership. But how can we achieve them? When we look at our families and friends we can't help but be shocked at the number of separations and divorces. Moreover, many couples who do remain together do not give the impression of being particularly blissful. Why is this the case if everybody longs to be contented?

Could it be that some of us never learned how to be happy in a partnership? After all, how many of us had the opportunity to consciously prepare for a partnership or indeed for married life? In an age of specialization, society does not have a single specialist institution that we might consult when it matters - i.e. before we commit ourselves. A lucky few of us have role models, but how many of us have ones that are really useful?

We believe this model might be. We would like to **invite you** to work **your way** through it - alone, **with a friend, or with your partner**. This tutorial could give you knowledge that would enable you to change the quality of your partnership and to make it more secure, more relaxed and happier.

Partnership, love, family are the themes that affect our personal lives. Talking about these themes means having to get personal i.e. talking about things that mostly remain in the private sphere.

We intend to talk about personal matters. Each tutorial is built around three sample relationships. We have created them from the multitude of stories that have been lovingly shared with us in our professional lives. Some points from some of the stories we have heard are reflected in the samples. However their circumstances have been altered in such a way that nobody's individual story can be recognized.

You might feel that the stories depicted in the examples are exaggeratedly simple. That is the intention. We believe it is beneficial to use sharp contrasts in order to clearly demonstrate the efficacy of altering conditions. The stories are not intended to be great literature but rather working papers. The representations of common situations with their potential for sudden conflict are intended to demonstrate the universality of one's own problems, i.e. that they are "normal."

The seemingly simplistically harmonious solutions depicted in the second part are an envisioning of one of our fundamental beliefs; i.e. that apparently small modifications in our dealings with each other can have dramatically positive and happily permanent consequences.

Occasionally, you might recognize a slightly altered story in a later tutorial, which treats an apparently dissimilar topic. The reason for this is: depending on the particular point of view, a further issue (conflict) might come to the fore. Relationships, like communication networks, are very much intertwined.



Learn to Love Letter

We invite you to learn from the experience of others - as we always have done and continue to do. We invite you to share your experiences and insights with us and with others. To facilitate this, we have created a guest book where you can ask questions but also respond to the questions of others who are working with the tutorials. Perhaps it will be your idea that will make the difference in somebody's life.

But who are these other people? We think they are people like you: People who take their relationships seriously enough to want to improve them: People who believe they themselves and their relationships can be improved: People who are prepared to take advantage of the Internet - to learn - with and from others: People who value flexibility. We believe this offer is equally useful to men and women, young and old, to young people in relationships that feel old and to older people who want to re-invigorate relationships that have gone cold.

As in all our projects, we are assuming that you agree with us on the fundamental equality of men and women. This conviction is reflected in the language we use. The statements usually apply equally to either gender.

From our point of view, such tutorials are an optimal method to work profitably on one's own relationship at one's own pace. The first 14 tutorials deal with the basic rules of how to deal with conflict in the partnership in such a way that a more relaxed relationship can be established.

Let us agree on something else. Conflict is a normal part of every relationship. They will arise anew and will have to be solved anew. However, neither our upbringing nor the role models in our societal environment have ever been of much help in either resolving existing conflicts or avoiding new ones.

We rarely meet people who can be of real help with the specific issues we need to successfully resolve or who can tell us how or why to make a specific move.

To help overcome this problem, we have created an overview of the tutorials. This will help you identify the tutorial, which contains the topic that is important to you right now. It makes more sense to begin with the topic you and your partner have identified as most relevant to you regardless of its sequence in the list of tutorials. Search it out together and work through it together. Simply doing this with your partner is an important step in improving your current situation.

What does it mean if you cannot identify any success? In our experience, change takes time. Another factor is the length of time we have already used to get used to an existing pattern of behaviour. This applies even when we intellectually recognize that; "this isn't working and we have to make changes." Even then, the power of habit plays a role. The longer we have taken to form a habit, the longer it may take to (re-)form it.

If time has passed and there is still no success, it might be because there is an unconscious "objection" to your achieving success, contentment or happiness.

We will be dealing with this question from tutorial 30 onwards (expected in the 3rd quarter 2010)



Guide to the tutorial

- Based on several real-life examples. Examine the structure of partnership problems and thus recognize the source of hurt.
- Get to the philosophical basis of core problems by asking both serious and humorous questions
- Learn problem-solving rules
- Question these rules and in doing so, discover their importance. Recognize that breaking the rules will result in hurt.
- Look at the examples again through new glasses.
- Scrutinize the limits of the rules.
- Some tips on how to jointly apply these rules.

Tutorials 1 to 18 can and should be gone through in the sequence of your choosing. Tutorials 20 –30 are designed to deepen topics that have been previously addressed. They are most useful if you have already worked through the particular topic.

Copyright:

This document is protected by copyright. All rights reserved. The purchase and receipt of this “Learn to Love” tutorial permits private use only. All commercial use of this “Learn to Love” tutorial outside the private sector is prohibited. Violators will be prosecuted.



2 Everyday challenges

Example 1:

Lars is a good engineer. Unfortunately, his increasing consumption of alcohol has been depriving him of his ability to work regularly. He hasn't had a job for quite a while. He has been married to his wife Sabrina, a respected nurse, for five years.

When they met, Lars was the gregarious type who only drank too much at the occasional party. However, pressure had built up when his company had begun to lay off people. As old friends disappeared, those remaining spent more time in the pub wondering where the axe would fall next. Lars did not share his worries with Sabrina but of course she knew what was going on in his head. She understood and tolerated his increasing need for a last stiff drink before going to bed.

Months had passed and Lars had begun to miss days at work. No, he said, it was not the hangovers. After all, what was the point of working on his career when he was going to be made redundant anyway? Sabrina had not been unhappy when he had eventually lost his job. She saw it as a chance for him to get his act together again and to start afresh in a new company. She had understood the need to put their plans for a family on hold. Of course they could not have children when times were so uncertain...

Maybe it was not Lars fault that he had not been able to find a permanent job. The periods between jobs began to get longer and Lars self-confidence began to erode. He had been a fitness freak and a snazzy dresser but now he was spending more time in bed and not looking after himself when he did get up. He became increasingly moody and withdrawn and often began drinking in the early afternoon.

Even though she was an experienced nurse, it was a while before Sabrina accepted that her husband had a problem with alcohol and needed medical assistance. It took her some time to find the courage to say this to Lars. He assured her that he was in control. Sure, he was on a bit of a downer but wasn't that understandable? He could stop drinking anytime!

Increasingly, Sabrina found herself defending Lars against barbs from her family and friends. She still believed in him but she could feel her own strength draining away. Sometimes she found herself wondering if their relationship had a future.

Example 2:

Elke and Julian have had two happy years together. Unfortunately, Elke has recently been suffering from abdominal pain, which has been making it difficult to be intimate with Julian. She is reluctant to tell Julian who will only worry unnecessarily. Deciding to keep things to herself, Elke is sure the pain will go away of its own accord. When it does not, she tries some natural remedies. She doesn't think much of doctors. However, weeks and then months pass and the pain does not get better.

Meanwhile, Julian has noticed a disimprovement in their relationship. Elke has become increasingly withdrawn and doesn't seem to desire him as much as she used to. He wonders if he has done something to annoy or hurt her but he can't think what. He doesn't know what to do.



Learn to Love Letter

Example 3:

Julia and Mario have been living together for 5 years. They intend to get married some day but are not in a hurry.

Julia has a secret. An uncle abused her when she was about twelve years old. She has never shared this with anybody. Recently, the memory of her suffering as a child has been interfering in the enjoyment of her sex life with Mario. She loves him but is more often not in the mood to sleep with him.

Mario does not see this as very unusual. After all, it is common knowledge that woman do not desire sex as much as men. That, according to the magazines he reads, is just the way it is. But, he does not like it and can't help feeling that Julia does not love him as much as she used to. This has been dragging on for a year and he feels things are getting worse.

It is bad for Julia too. At some point Mario had begun to turn on the charm and woo her anew. Intellectually, she appreciated what he was trying to do but had only felt harried and pressured by his efforts. Eventually, he decides to stop bothering her. She is glad and hopes that she will be soon back to herself.



3 Some basic thoughts

Love and relationship – what does it mean?

Are you familiar with these or similar scenes?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks:		

May I express my requests when my partner is ill or dealing with some traumatic problems?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

Does my partner have the sole right to decide on what happens to his or her body?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

Is it OK to hide a problem in order prevent unnecessary worry (Elke)?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

Do I have a duty to consult a doctor if I am ill. Is it an issue for the relationship?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

In what circumstances can I request or insist that my partner consult a doctor?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

Have Julia and Mario found a good solution to their problem?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>

Before you read on: Please go through these questions together and as thoroughly as possible. Please imagine how a **strong, sensitive, loving couple** with a lot of **staying power** would respond to them.

Give yourself lots of time before you read on.



4 The rule of love

*If you have a problem
that is a burden to the relationship,
it is your duty to solve it.*

*Everybody is obliged to take care
of their own health –
both physical and mental.*

5 What this implies for the relationship

In the end, the atmosphere is more **relaxed** because we both accept:

- Both of us own our own problems.
- Both of us have the obligation to maintain our own health.
- Neither of us is responsible for the health of the other.
- We both accept that health is an important matter in our relationship.

Of course, this will work only if it works for both partners equally. If only one partner is prepared to apply these rules and the other refuses to, the following questions should be addressed:

- What advantage do I have when I am ill?
- What is my partner there for?
- What do I want from my relationship?
- Do I desire a relationship based on equality?
- If not – why not?

Adhering to these rules is a further step in the direction of **trust** in one's partner and thus in the relationship.



6 Renovating your daily life

Example 1:

Lars accepts his responsibility. Following a frank discussion with his wife, in which he recognizes that he is ill, he realizes it is up to him to do something about it. Lars's acceptance unburdens Sabrina, who had a faint feeling that it was somehow her fault: If she had been a better wife she might have been more able to motivate Lars to climb out of the pit he had fallen into – or even to have helped him avoid the trap of alcohol in the first place.

They talked about their dreams - and found that they were still attainable. Their love was still strong and intact.

Together they set up a plan - within 6 months they wanted to create the cornerstones for their dreams (well-paid work for Lars, 2 years earning together, beautify their home and then have one or two children).

The day after this conversation, Lars went to the doctor and within two weeks he organized treatment.

Time jump:

After 6 years they looked back. They had done it - even if it was sometimes difficult. The withdrawal had worked and Lars remained abstinent. It took another four months until he found work. Through his perseverance he gained recognition and was promoted after a further 12 months. Their children Silke (3) and Jan (1) have completed their happiness.

Example 2:

Elke does not realize how close she is to losing her partner until a good friend tells her how unhappy Julian is. Tearfully, she admits how her fear of what a doctor might find was almost paralyzing her. Julian listens so sympathetically that she cannot believe how she had kept it from him. From his point of view, he is just relieved to discover that the problem had nothing to do with him. He is happy to have his woman back.

A few days later Elke consults a gynecologist who discovers two cysts, which turn out to be benign.

After the little surgery to remove these cysts, the pain disappears soon and Elke feels much better.

Julian no longer feels rejected or excluded from Elke's love.



Example 3:

Mario gets home early one evening and prepares the kind of romantic candlelit dinner Julia likes. When they are both relaxed, he takes her hands in his and tells her that he loves her and knows that she loves him. He says that he cannot pretend to be happy with their recent sex life and wants to know to what extent it is his fault. He asks her to please tell him what is wrong.

Julia is quiet for so long that Mario thinks she is finding the courage to break it off. Finally, she begins to tell him about her suffering at the hands of her uncle. Marion is overwhelmed by feelings of rage, powerlessness and tenderness. He listens in silence as the trickle of words turns into a river as Julia lets her feelings pour out for the first time ever. Julia apologizes for her apparent rejection of him. Mario demonstrates his forgiveness by holding her tightly and assuring her of his love.

Julia recognizes the need to consult a specialist and Marion agrees to accompany her. They meet a sympathetic woman who listens to Julia's story. "You have made the first, important step in the healing process," she tells them.



7 Exceptions and limits – even to love

While diseases such as cancer, and some incurable mental illnesses may constitute exceptions, nevertheless, this rule is a good point of reference for both parties. When both partners accept the rule - and the boundaries it presupposes, they will be able to discuss the subject of illness and its consequences in a more relaxed manner, because both are aware of their primary role in this connection. Insofar as they are able to discuss the topic openly, neither will be in danger of not knowing his or her responsibility in a given situation. On the other hand, a boundary to one's area of responsibility implies that a partner has the right to feel nervous of the seemingly inevitable consequences of seeking professional medical help. Fear of change and fear of having to confront certain topics often prevent people from seeking professional help.

In circumstances where the less-directly-affected partner notices that such fear is paralyzing potentially remedial treatment, they are allowed to patiently and lovingly remind their partner of his or her responsibility to do what it takes to get better – in this case seek professional help.



8 Further thoughts

8.1 What could prevent us from living this rule of love

What could prevent us from living this rule of love are our conscious or unconscious **fears**. For example, the fear that I am perhaps

a failure, incapable or even weak.

might inwardly “force” me to keep everything to myself and to prevent anything that bothers me from escaping. The reason being, I don’t want to reveal how weak, incapable and flawed I really am.

Please discuss this and decide whether you have ever been prone to such or similar fears. Should you discover it to be the case, discuss whether such fears could have “legs” in the light of the love and support you get from your partner.

8.2 What helps us to live the rule of love

Regardless of what might prevent us from easily following this rule, we can consider the following:

- Do I love my partner?
- Does fear play any role when we are in love?
- Is there any stronger power than love?
- Wouldn’t this knowledge help us to **patiently** and **steadfastly** express our love? Wouldn’t we automatically, **stick to our guns** and fulfill our obligations – no matter how difficult?

Try to find other reasons why this rule would work. Practice it and you will be amazed at how easy it becomes to do so. Surprise yourself.

