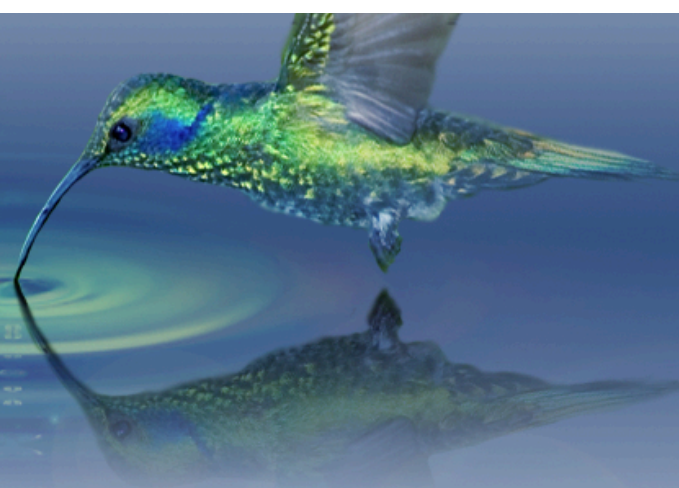




Relationships



The Co-Commitment Program: *Activities for Transforming Your Relationship*

From

Conscious Loving: The Journey to Co-Commitment
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Claiming Creativity

The Choice Map

The ability to know and to state clearly what we want is a central skill in conscious loving. Many of our conditioned roles have taught us to be very aware of what others want. In fact, many of our clients have said that they had learned it was selfish to consider their own wants at all. When asked, "What do you want?" the co-dependent says, "I just want what you want, dear." Hundreds of times we have heard our clients say, "I have no idea what I want." Others do not even know how to know what they want.

The purpose of this activity is twofold. The first is to give you

tools to construct your internal map of response show to know what you want. People make choices based on a unique set of internal experiences. For example, when considering where to go for dinner, one person may remember the taste of their favorite dish, another may picture the decor in a particular restaurant, and another may recall the level of noise and smokiness. Our responses to these internal maps are generally unconscious.

The second purpose is to give you experiences in making choices and noticing your responses. So many of us have had negative experiences around making choices that we give up, suppress our wants, develop secret strategies for getting our needs met, or develop a sense of scarcity about resources. Kathlyn overheard a family's conversation in a restaurant recently. The mother asked the young daughter, "What do you want to eat?" The little girl said, "I want the lobster." Her father immediately said, "No you don't. That's too much for you." Her mother said, "Oh, that's so rich, you'll be sick! Wouldn't you like something else?" The girl was firm in her decision, and an argument ensued that left the girl in tears and both parents on edge. Imagine the difference if one of them had asked, "What is it about the lobster that you like? Its shape, or the fun of finding the meat and dipping each piece in the butter?" Or, "What would you like that's under ten dollars?"

Choosing a meal is far simpler than choosing what we want in a relationship. Most of us lack experience in going beyond the boundaries of what we have learned. As children we were usually provided with a set of choices and have continued to look for the visible, externally obvious alternatives: to pick this or that. Our insides are much more imaginative and can put new things together that our conditioned selves couldn't generate. This experiment is designed to help you discover the *process* of choosing.

Instructions

Take turns reading the directions to your partner, and leave time for discussion at the end. There are two roles in this activity: choice-maker and instruction-reader. Decide who is going to go first. Choice-maker, get comfortable in a chair and leave your eyes closed during the directions.

Instruction-reader, read aloud the following instructions verbatim.

1. Begin saying "I want" out loud, pausing for fifteen to twenty

seconds between each repetition. Notice what thoughts, images, and sensations arise during the pauses. Say "I want" four to five times, with the pause in between.

2. Now tell me out loud what you notice during the pauses. Repeat "I want" and pause, noticing and saying out loud what you are aware of and where you notice your experience in your body. For example, you might say, "I want," and feel a twitch in your left eye. Just tell me out loud what you notice: "I felt a twitch in my left eye." Notice if more than one internal response occurs. For example, you may notice a twitch in your left eye followed by the brief image of your grandmother playing the piano followed by the memory of her clearing her throat. Let yourself say your process out loud just as you experience it.

3. Now experiment with different vocal tones and intensities. For example, say "I want!" righteously and emphatically, or in a whining whisper. Again, pause and notice your internal responses, saying them out loud. You may notice that you have a judgmental or critical voice that comes in and says, "This is silly, I haven't got time for this nonsense!" or, "You're bad and selfish and always get everything!" Just report these voices as they occur.

4. Say "I want" as you reach out to grasp something imaginary. Pause fifteen to twenty seconds and notice what arises in your thoughts, images, sensations, and emotions. Tell your experience out loud.

5. Think of something you know you like and want and imagine it in front of you. Say "I want" as you reach out for it. Pause for several seconds and notice what arises. Now think of something you know you really dislike and imagine it in front of you. Say "I want" as you reach out for it. Pause and notice your internal experience. Tell me the differences you noticed between the two experiences.

6. Now ask yourself, "Do I want a drink of water right now?" and watch your internal experience very closely. If you decide you do want a drink, go and get one, noticing your reaction to satisfying your wish. If you did not want a drink, notice how you knew that you did not.

7. Now focus on your relationship. Close your eyes and ask, "What do I want in my relationship?" Pause for twenty to thirty seconds to notice what you come up with. Repeat this question out loud two or three times. Sometimes you won't get an answer but rather an opening or a shift in body sensation, such as your shoulder

tension. An answer may come later.

Discuss what emerged, then switch roles.