

Comments on the Interview Series, Winter 2009-2010

Re: An Interview Series

by Anonymous on Thu 24 Dec 2009 12:05 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

What an amazing interview with Laura. I loved it. I have been reading your website since about 2 years ago, learned a lot from it, but unfortunately, probably not enough to save my relationship, and him...

Four and a half years ago, we strongly attracted and fell in love with each other. My love for this man was greater than for anyone else I had loved in my past, and he told me the same. We wanted to get married, me that never believe in marriage before, and him having gone through a very bad marriage that ended in a nasty divorce. He was with me for life... he said. When we thought we could not love each other more, we just found ourselves even more in love with each other. That part of finding ourselves so madly in love, deeper and deeper, lasted about 6 months. Many times in the relationship, I knew he was the person I needed in my life, he was rocking my lizard like crazy, like nobody else had done it so far, except probably for my parents. Did I rock his lizard too!!! We kept on provoking each other, we pushed and pushed and got really good at it. When I thought I developed the skills to stop it from bothering me, it lasted no more than a couple weeks at a time. He sure found a way to go around it and pushed even deeper. I did the same for him. I tried to develop boundary, which has always been very difficult for me (in most of my relationships, not only with love relationship) and succeeded at times, but never long enough. I did not pick the wrong person, I knew that.

Was that working for me? I was getting sick, physically sick. So I quit, several times, only to come back with him to try some more. We tried different types of counseling, at his suggestion, different counselors each time. We were only getting better and better at provoking each other. We still loved each other very much. After 4 years of this, I gave up, my physical and mental health became more important than my relationship. So I decided to leave him, for good, last April. Like every other times before when I left him, he pursued me, tried to convince me to get back with him. My hopes of a better relationship with him was being fed slowly, but I never gave him hints that I hoped to get back with him, after I find myself ready to tackle our relationship and to bring it, along with his efforts, to a vintage love. I needed to see, from him, real hints that he was changing too. I could not stop loving him, and still do, and I miss him so much. I could not imagine myself starting it all over with another man, growing older was easy for me to imagine with him. I could see us holding hands with love so deep for each other, as we always did in moments when we were at peace.

In September, he could no longer continue life without me, and committed suicide. He left his 2 sons and mine, something I never thought he would do. He wrote me a beautiful letter, in which he asks me for understanding and forgiveness for choosing to end his life now. He said he loves me so much, and to keep being the beautiful and loving woman I am, that he never stopped loving me and still does, as he was leaving us. I felt so much guilt that I did not save him, did not read the clues that he was going to end his life, that I thought of joining him, that if he is no longer here, I did not deserve to be here either. I went close to end it myself, but got out of this. I finally realized, after intense counseling, and with talking a lot with my close friends, that I am not responsible for his decision to commit suicide, BUT, I keep thinking that yes, part of it is my responsibilities. I did not give him hope to reconcile, I did not read the clues, I chose to not be there when he needed me. Although I know I am not responsible for his choice, I keep thinking of your 50% responsibilities. In the interview, I heard you say that you and Sandra had thought about suicide rather than divorce, without you two knowing about it. I am no longer haunted and torturing myself so much with the why, why, WHY of his choice to end his life, but it has not left me yet. I am still going to counseling, and find myself a bit stronger, and understand that this too will pass, but the hurt is there, and I miss him so much.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Sat 26 Dec 2009 12:03 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Oh dear! How awful! How terrible!. Let no one doubt how powerful is the Imago and how powerful is the Lizard! I am so sorry

for you. I firmly believe that lessons of wisdom always arise out of suffering, but no one wants to go this far.

I am glad my words have helped. Yes, guilt will be more difficult for you, I fear, cuz there is no one around to take

on the

other 50%. But that idea is still there. He could have chosen differently and didn't. Oh owe!

People speak of "fatal attraction" as if it is a dangerous and rare "psychological disorder." My experience is that the energy of the Imago, the attraction toward the Biological Dream, the hope of achieving Vintage Love can be extremely

powerful: dramatically or slowly enduring or in between.

Please be at peace, as much as you can. Take lots of time. Have understanding friends and even professionals around you. I

suggest you temporarily (5 years) shed friends or family that do not "feel" understanding to you. Become an expert at grief.

Bless you, (for I think these things only happen to the blessed),

Al

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by Anonymous on Sun 27 Dec 2009 04:54 AM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Mr. Turtle,

Having read some of your ideas, I wanted to ask you:

How can one explain behaviors such as suicide or cheating and leaving the relationship for someone they just met?

I remember you wrote, **all people make sense all the time.**

Does that still apply in those cases? If so, how?

Also, I seem to have difficulty understanding or believing that there are no intermediate stages between power struggle and vintage love. Do you wake up one day and say "now I am in vintage love?" Have you thought of other stages one must pass through in order to get there?

Sincerely,

Acute Reader.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Sun 27 Dec 2009 02:16 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Acute Reader,

I imagine there are a whole bunch of people, who read my website, who would love to tackle your questions and share their answers. For those students, of what some are now calling "Turtle Logic," you have given a delightful pop quiz. Let's see how others check out my answers.

A couple of starting thoughts. Answers to all your questions, except the one on suicide, would be found in my [Map of Relationships](#), which I gather you have read to dig into. Take your time.

The suicide question seems to me a bit more complex. Yes, I believe that all people make sense all the time. This statement assumes a very specific definition of the phrase "make sense," which you can pick up in my articles on [Diversity](#). I see humans (computers, too :)) as sense-making entities. Their behavior is always governed by the

factors inside and around them. Many of the factors that govern behavior may be unknown to the person who is acting.

There are no senseless acts, only acts by someone whose sense we don't see yet. Seeking to understand behavior always involves a) guessing and b) getting data from the actor so that the guesses become more and more reliable. But the guiding principle I still see as "all people make sense all the time."

When you read my Map of Relationships, you'll probably grasp the idea that most of the "work" of a relationship takes place between the Power Struggle and the stage of Vintage Love. That work, (I call it the [University of Life](#)) mostly skill learning, sharing of "secrets," and "healing wounds," usually takes years. The faster you both stubbornly learn, the shorter it takes. The longer you postpone the learning, the longer it takes. I think it took Sandra and me about 9 years. My website is all about making that learning process faster. In many ways I act a bit like a scout who has crossed the mountains ahead of you all, and have left my notes on the journey on my blog. And so, "no," it is certainly not a matter of waking up in Vintage Love. Good instincts on your part.

My guess on suicide is that it is either a) as an intentional signal to others (and thus not meant to be successfully ending in death but in drama) or it is b) an intentional way of getting away from the pain of hopelessness. Could always be a bit of both. Either way I think of it as a "bit clumsy" and kind of dysfunctional in that it often doesn't achieve its goals. I think there are better ways to talk and signal people and there are better ways to get rid of hopelessness. Either way, suicide seems to involve tricky work with the person's Lizard. The same is true of partnership murder.

Affairs or "escapes" are pretty easy to figure out; i.e. the guessing about the departing one's sense is easier. Probably depends on when in the relationship this happens. If during the Romantic Phase, it's probably that the person just "isn't into it as much as their partner." If it is later, that is an escape from the Power Struggle or from Door #2, then the departure or affair has probably been coming for quite some time. Either way the left-behind partner is often blind-sided partially because of their own "blindness" to what is going on in their partner.

I hope this rambling is fun. T'was fun for me. Check out more on my website for more answers. Best wishes, Al [Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by Anonymous on Mon 28 Dec 2009 05:38 AM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Mr. Turtle,

Thank you for your prompt response. Suicide seems counter-intuitive as an action of the lizard. As far as I understand, the brain stem, or the lizard, its sole purpose is to seek safety and survival. It achieves this by taking control of the cortex and making the higher being "flee", "freeze" and "fight".

How then, is the lizard responsible for taking its own life? Since the lizard has no brain of its own, does the cortex "trick" the lizard and choose to end the higher being's life? Or another way of saying this is - Suicide is an act of the cortex rather than the lizard. Is that safe to conclude?

Also, in the radio interview you talked about your first marriage and its subsequent divorce. Post-divorce you chose to engage in self therapy and trying to learn where you went wrong.

After some self realization and therapy, did you ever attempt to reconcile with your wife after divorce? Why or why not? If you did, what did you go through?

Lastly, after reading some of your ideas, I am starting to believe that it doesn't matter who your partner is, i.e., there is no "one" that people should go out looking for. In that all relationships follow the map regardless of how great one's partner might be. Most people justify divorce by claiming that they are so unhappy with their current partner that it only makes sense to leave them because they will find this happiness elsewhere, only to realize in time that they will be unhappy all over again.

My question here is -

1. Are there levels of happiness as far as partners are concerned? That is, after that romantic phase has ended and one is deep into the power struggle stage, does the level of happiness depend on the partner? Will one be less "unhappy" in marriage #2 than marriage #1 because the new partner is different?

2. Assuming that vintage love can be achieved between ANY two individuals who have fallen in love, why is it that most people don't achieve this with their high school sweethearts? Can't we enlighten people and convince them that it is fruitless to try to look for the "one" and that it all boils down to working towards Vintage Love. It seems to be a social norm that people date a lot of partners before picking the one. Why do people, or their lizards, believe that they need "date" a lot of people in order to find the "right" one, when in reality there is no "right" one?

Sincerely,

Acute Reader.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Tue 29 Dec 2009 12:59 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Acute Reader,

You seem a pretty curious person. I think of that as a wonderful trait, and I bet it has driven you crazy, or others crazy, at times. I think "curiosity," "stubbornness," and "gentleness" as extremely valuable characteristics. I believe the Polynesians would call it "patience with perseverance," or ahonui.

One thing before I share any more. Sometimes your questions seem to assume that I am in some way "all wise," know the truth, or even that the "truth is knowable." I just want to caution you that while I can share what I think, what I believe, etc., **I don't have "the truth," - just my truth.** I want you to decide which part of my sharing you chose to believe as your truth. Ok, enuf.

Suicide. I've done a bit of thinking about this over the past days. It seems to me much more than "counter-intuitive as an action of the lizard." I imagine that reptiles or mammals don't commit suicide. Sure that a beaver in a trap may chew off it's foot and die of loss of blood, but I believe that suicide is a function of our cortexes somehow tricking our Lizards. Since a Lizard can be fooled into thinking all is "safe" when it isn't, and since it can be fooled into thinking it is "gonna die" when it isn't, there's no reason to think it can't be fooled into thinking it is participating in a "safe" action or a "move toward safety" action while the person is "offing themselves." In the past couple of days, I came up with three pretty easy ways. So I imagine there are a whole bunch more.

About my **first marriage and reconciling**, well, that's a bit personal, but may be instructive. I divorced when I didn't know "anything" much about relationship skills. I didn't really learn much about those until far into my now marriage. My first wife remarried, it seemed to me, very quickly after the divorce was final. So there really wasn't a chance to reconcile. But this answer, I think, avoids your question. Here's the answer. Years later I would share my belief, that I still hold, that "if I had known this stuff (marriage/relationship skills), I would probably still be married to my first wife. I would have saved my kids the horrible challenges of being raised in the middle of a divorce." Sigh!

The **answers to the next set of questions** seems to be already in the Map of Relationship, and I draw your attention to two specific fun articles about [Finding Mr. or Ms. Right](#) and [It Takes One to Make a Marriage and Two to Make a Divorce](#). I hear you thinking that there is no "one" right person. I believe there are a whole bunch of them, but that all a person needs is one of them. The dating process seems a series of "checking each other out" until the process of Romantic Love kicks off, at least to some level, in both people. If that Romantic Period lasts long enough, and converts itself into the Power Struggle, then you are probably with a (I say again, "a") candidate with whom to journey toward Vintage Love.

I see no correlation about happiness and first or second or third marriage. Partners, I believe, do not make you happy. **You make you happy.**

And last question about "**Can't we enlighten people?**" I have been told by 100s of couples over and over that "I wish this stuff had been taught in High School." I heard that phrase again during a session this last Monday. I think

it boils down to a question of "who is the 'we' in your question." I'm ready to teach and share. I have. You think if there is such a need, that the market would be huge. Oh, well. What about you? I suggest you look at the question some more and come up with some practical ways to go about it.

I have my way - on the web, in person, etc. [Scott Dodson](#) came up with his way in a book.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Laura Lavigne](#) on Tue 29 Dec 2009 01:28 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

This is Laura and I just read your letter. I Wanted to send you my warmest, biggest hug along with thoughts of peace and healing. One minute at a time.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by Anonymous on Tue 29 Dec 2009 06:02 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

Laura, I think this is intended for me. Thank you so very much for your thoughts. It is, like you said, a matter of one minute at a time.

It has been a very exhausting and difficult time so far since his suicide, requiring a tremendous amount of strength to keep moving forward. I do believe I will find peace within myself and total peace with him, wherever he is now. It is a very slow grieving time, and I think it is wise for me to not rush out of it. I do not enjoy the immense pain I feel, the whole array of emotions I go through back and forth, the understandable depression I currently find myself experiencing, but I know it has to take its time.

There are many moments when I understand, know and feel that it made complete sense for him to end his life, while at other brief moments, I felt angry that he did choose the path to end his life. The anger lasted a couple minutes at a time only, I think because somehow, deep inside myself, I understand him, and feel great empathy for him. Shortly after his suicide, I myself thought of ending my life, and I felt completely at peace with the idea, without any fear, any desire or energy to come out of it, sadly not even caring for the extreme pain I would have left my son with. (I still have not analyzed my own thought, if it is my lizard or cortex tricking my lizard, or something else.) Fortunately, having made calls the week before to receive counseling, just hours after this intense and powerful thought, a counselor reached out to me and rushed me in after hours. Now, the thought of suicide is completely gone, but I remember the despair, hopelessness, sadness so deep I felt at that moment, how can I ever feel angry at him? I think I understand how he felt.

He took the time to write an amazing beautiful love letter for me, and one letter for each of the three boys, so his mind, his choice to end his life, I imagine, was clear and at peace, or so he says in his last letter to me. He attempted suicide that same night but failed. He tried again and succeeded 2 days later. He was determined to end his life. As time passes, in between trying to understand this whole situation, what we went through during our time together and apart, taking care of myself and my son (his sons went with their mom, all her family believing that it is entirely my fault), taking care of the after suicide "matters", going back to my duties and work, I am now trying to let the space, the momentarily peace in between all those take its effects on me. I think this is how I will find healing, but I know it will take a long time. Despite missing him enormously, and despite all the pain his suicide "caused" on so many lives, I love him and respect his choice. I hope he finally found peace.

L.

[Reply](#)

Re: An Interview Series

by Anonymous on Thu 11 Mar 2010 01:53 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

There's something that I'd like some feedback on from these sessions- the amount of time each member of a couple needs to spend reassuring the other.

I married a woman who comes from a family where membership is very reliable- they don't exclude each other in anything like the way that my family did, once you're in you're in for life. She's quite comfortable debating and being what feels to me very abrasive. I get strong lizard reactions quite frequently which come as a complete surprise to her- why should it be her job to constantly reassure me, when the thing that I'm afraid of - being pushed aside out of the relationship- isn't going to happen, based on almost 25 years of experience?

Isn't it my job to parent myself and get over it?

Thanks,
Andy
[Reply](#)

Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 11 Mar 2010 04:25 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Andy,

I wondered if we would hear this point of view and I am glad you shared it. Perhaps we should use it as one topic in next week's session.

My first response is to look at the twin questions, "Why should she do anything" and "why should you do anything." If you are happy with what is going on, AND she is happy with what is going on, then I say, don't change anything. Go for it!

But I doubt that is why you are listening to Laura's show. "Gee, I am so happy that I think I will listen to a series on relationships!"

In my office things are simple. People come in because a) one or the other or both are unhappy with what is going on, and b) at least one is "fed up" with it and wants change. The unhappiness varies from mildly unhappy to extreme pain. The "fed up" varies from "gee we got to do something" all the way up to "I'm going to leave you if nothing changes."

Those people who accept what is going on and "parent themselves" and "learn to live with it" don't come in. to my office My experiences suggest that most marriages don't come in. I think it's probably around 90% of marriages or partnerships don't come in (for any help) - they manage. I am ok with that. I don't seek to change them at all.

What I see is that coming together, falling in love, raises the bar of what people want to a super high level. People glimpse or sense their appetite for the Biological Dream. People want Vintage Love. Then they start to wake up to "the reality of tough living together." They often thrash around a lot during this "waking up." They still want that dream. They are variously pissed because the dream seems to be slipping away.

Then they reach a decision point. Three choices face them. Do I split and try again? (eventually 80-96% do this causing massive social chaos and expense and pain) Do I drop my expectations and just put up with it? (My guess is that by age 65 probably 96% of couples living together do this.) Or do I learn to make that beautiful dream a reality, do I move toward Vintage Love with my partner? I call these choices Door #3, Door #2, and Door #1. And I created a Map of Relationships and gave names and body to these concepts so as to help people with their choices.

My sadness was that most people don't even know that Door #1, the University of Life, the pathway to Vintage Love and a future in the Biological Dream, that that door does exist. They feel caught between "giving up/running away" or "putting up with the uncomfortable."

I personally rejected that choice when I faced it. I did not accept when people said it was impossible. Now, I can share what I've done and learned and struggled with and succeeded. I can keep it a secret. Those are my choices.

I was taught a long time ago that the job of each elder, each of us as we get older, is to sift through what we have learned, put it in order, and make it available to those younger people who follow us. I believe that. I think it is a noble cause. This is why I called my website Al's Relationship Wisdom. I don't think I am sharing "the wisdom." I am sharing my wisdom. And I keep working on it.

Your question, I think is beautiful. What is your wisdom about the situation? Are you suggesting that when your partner does things that trigger your lizard, the best thing to do, the right thing to do is put up with it? In my world, I'd invite you to engage with her to find a way so that both Lizards can be relaxed - together.

Still this is I think a great, ongoing, illuminating point and discussion.

Thanks, Andy
[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by Anonymous on Thu 11 Mar 2010 07:34 PM PST | [Permanent Link](#)

You've done this before, haven't you?

I was laughing aloud when I read your reply!

Yes, a rough patch in our marriage made us very aware of what we'd really like, and how very nice it is when you get a shot of that...

It's so tempting though, when the crisis is easing, to just enjoy the relative quiet and not make waves. We stay tender for a long time.

The hardest part for me is knowing when to put on my big boy boxers and suck it up, and when to say Wait a minute, this isn't working for me.

Andy

[Reply](#)

Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Fri 12 Mar 2010 04:48 PM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

I have found your work to be inspiring and illuminating! My partner and I are separating for a time (I'm the clinger - he is the avoider) and even though I hate the thought of separating, I am giving him space. I have been listening to the Harville Hendrix talk and had many moments where what he was saying (and you) make so much sense and I can see where I have been reacting very badly!! I was wondering, at the end of Harville's talk, there is a break and he was going to talk further about dialoging but the recording ends. Is the rest of this accessible? Would love to hear the rest of it. Also thank you so much for posting all of your information up for free! It is the best I have come across.

Regards, still learning

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Sat 13 Mar 2010 06:34 AM PST | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Kez,

Thanks for the kind words. I am not sure which Harville audio you are referring to. Harville Hendrix has made ever so many tapes and videos. Some are still available. Some are a bit more private than others. The website that offers most of his stuff is at

<http://www.imagotherapy.com> .

I did post excerpts from his Clinical Update at an Imago Conference in Colorado many years ago. I didn't think it was available any more. It happened to be the group of thoughts that led me to the "disease of the disease" concept related to Power Struggle. If that is what you are referring to I might be able to find a reference of where to order it. I do not have "legal" right to post it and will be happy to take it down if challenged. Still I thought it very good.

Let me know.

Oh, and by the way, I do not think of people as Clingers or Avoiders any more. I think of them a clinging in this relationship or at this time and Avoiding in this relationship or at this time. Tis the same concept but with a bit more awareness that people change depending on where they are.

My best. Al

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Mon 15 Mar 2010 04:07 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al, thank you for replying so promptly! The lecture I was listening to was the one on emotional symbiosis.

This rang so many bells for me, one of those moments when I became acutely aware of how I have been operating. I take you point about not labeling people as clingers and avoiders - but rather how they relate in that way to each other, because I recognize that my partner and I (we have been married 20+ years) have been relating in this way, at various times interchanging - but I recognize that my lizard panics and clings more! Could I ask your opinion on something? My partner wants and needs time out, and even though I hate the thought of it, I have agreed to separate for 3 months to give him space. He has told me that he 'loves me but is not in love with me' and wants to keep and

open mind during separation. When I asked if we could try again, especially given all the things I am finding out about myself, he just says we will see. I really want to go through the door of vintage love, I still treasure and value our relationship (we have great kids) but... Al, in view of his comment, is there still hope? I have put into action your 4 points and am working tirelessly on me!

Thanks again, kez

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 17 Mar 2010 12:19 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Kez,

I hear your question. I was actually thinking of your question during the last of my [online chats with Laura Lavigne](#) yesterday and probably answered it a bit there. But here is a longer answer.

I think of "hope" as an emotion, similar to "feeling confident" or "feeling sure." As with all emotions, "hope" comes with a sense of "how much ness." Little hope, medium hope, super colossal hope - like from 0 to 10. In a relationship I think the critical issue is whether there is some or none - zero hope.

All couples I know who are in Vintage Love have gone through periods when the "played with" no hope. And so I think that having no hope is part of normal life. Somehow these couples managed to experience no hope and recover.

When both people's hope-o-meters are on zero, I believe they are either moving toward breaking up (divorce) or toward Door #2 and joining the grey people. Either choice is good, though you can die before you pop out of Door #2 or find a new partner. Either way, sooner or later, you'll have to get to work again. (Unless you die in the meantime.)

Actually the trick seems to be to move from zero hope to a tiny bit of hope. How do you, did they, did I, do this? By doing action that is in the right direction, action that moves toward Vintage Love - at least a tiny bit. For example I teach everyone how to Mirror. Mirroring, the act of making someone feel heard, is incompatible with feeling completely hopeless. And so, if I am feeling hopeless and my partner mirrors me, my hopelessness shrinks just a tiny bit, and that's all that is necessary for the time. My hope-o-meter just rose off zero.

It takes two people to stubbornly "do nothing" in the right direction for that sense of complete hopelessness to settle into both or them. Either one can break that up. It takes only one. And so I wrote an article about [It takes Two to make a Divorce and only One to make a Marriage/Partnership](#).

You say you are working tirelessly on you. Wow. What a give to any relationship to have even one person working at all! -- but tirelessly, whahoo!

Yep. Hope. Good luck, Al.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Wed 17 Mar 2010 10:38 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

Thank you again for taking the time to reply to me. I am learning so much from your essays - it's like a light is finally being shone in the darkness, and kind of a relief to know that other people (including yourself) have gone or are going through similar things. My hope-o-meter is on about 8, my partners is probably on 0 at the moment. We have been really struggling for the last 12 months (the classic him moving away and me doing all the wrong things and pushing to hard) it really has been to intense, hence his need to have space. I have another question for you - as I said I am tirelessly working on me (and you really made me smile with your comments!) and am learning to mirror, prevalidate and validate. I am also attempting to work in a better way at working through frustrations and resentments. When I do the mirroring etc. technique my partner is responding quite well at times. But there are times when he gets angry and says I'm probing and trying to analyze him and control him and the situation. I guess my question is this - during my separation do I just be patient (very hard but I'm learning!) and keep doing the four steps

and just do the mirroring technique when he talks to me rather than me attempt to initiate anything? Do I attempt to do any healing for him during this period or just wait? And how do I handle mirroring technique when things go horribly awry (which I have learnt usually do when I think I know what the outcome will be!!)

Regards, Kez

[Reply](#)

Re: An Interview Series

by Jeff on Tue 16 Mar 2010 07:25 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Al- You mentioned in the last podcast that Sandra thought the two of you had reached vintage love about four years before you did. If it's not too personal, I'd be really curious to hear more about why you didn't think so. What changed?

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 17 Mar 2010 12:32 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Jeff,

I can't and won't speak for Sandra, That's her right, but I can speak for me.

I am a pretty stubborn conservative guy. I have to be pretty darn well convinced of something before I take it on as my belief. Been that way for a lot of my life. That's one of the traits that helped me find answers, teach 'em to individuals, couples, then make charts, then write papers, then publish them, then teach 'em freely. It only took me a couple of decades. But then, I am happy with the results.

In the case of Vintage Love, the question is "when have you arrived? Or are you still working on it?" It's kind of a personal call. I waited a bunch of years for a preponderance of evidence. It wasn't an event or a change. It took me longer to say it.

Al

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by Jeff on Thu 18 Mar 2010 09:58 PM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

Sounds like a difference in the way you process and understand stuff. Thanks for sharing and explaining that. I heard you say "I didn't think so" and thought- whoa, there's something interesting, and then the thought seemed to get lost in the conversation.

[Reply](#)

Re: An Interview Series

by Coral on Thu 25 Mar 2010 12:58 AM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

I am curious as to how these concepts fit when someone has a midlife crisis.

It's clear that the lizard is in full escape mode, but I can't seem to see how the personality change fits or how the (inappropriate) betrayal can "make sense" after so many years of what seemed like a good relationship.

I honestly never saw it coming. I am the your discussions on betrayal and trust very helpful.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 25 Mar 2010 08:46 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Coral,

I think these principles and maps fit precisely with what we often call a mid-life crisis. Actually most of the couples I am currently seeing have been married or together for 12 -35 years. Could be called Mid-life relationship therapy! :)

What we call midlife crisis I believe seems to be a meld of a) one or both partners waking up to being in a career they've never liked and b) they are waking up to a relationship that has features they realize they don't like at all but haven't been doing anything about. The former issue I think is a function of **Purpose** and the latter is just a matter of waking up in **Door #2**. Both "dismay" about your career and "dismay" about your partnership can hit at the same time.

The question is "What are you gonna do about it?" Check the [Map of Relationships](#) for all of this.

You will also find references to your situation in [Using Turtle Logic](#) or my article on [Out of the Blue](#).

Oh, and I find it more effective to think of the "betrayal" as being all about what happened in the years before your partner started to act out. I make up that these two betrayals happened during the time when you thought "the relationship seemed good." One betrayal is your partner's not telling you what was going on, and the other is you not noticing and acting on your partner's clues that they were withholding information from you.

Best wishes. Al

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Thu 25 Mar 2010 01:24 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

I have been listening to the interview series and one thing really stood out to me. You mentioned that when you Sandra a book to read she threw it across the room. But then a couple of weeks later she bought her own copy. I gave my partner one of your essays (Vintage love + the map) - he didn't throw it, but has not looked at it at all. Here is another question for you (sorry about so many questions - story of my life!) what do you do when you follow all the steps, read everything, can feel the change in self, acknowledge (again and again) and empathize with their making sense - but the partner stubbornly resists reading. The reply I got when giving the article was 'Oh, so now your an expert!'

Regards, Kez.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 25 Mar 2010 09:24 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Yes, Kez, This seems quite a problem. I think teachers all over world struggle with it. You have a good idea but no one wants to listen. They seem to want to discover if for themselves.

I was taught that a good teacher just manages the situation so that the "learner" cannot escape without learning.

Another thought is that this is one of those skills that Mirroring teaches. No sense in talking to someone unless they are interested in listening - first. Check them out.

Most couples come in my office and **both** really want their partner to listen to them, but neither is willing to listen themselves to their partner.

And I've learned that no one wants to hear my complaints about this horrible situation! :)

I've found the way to go about solving this problem is to first become an excellent listener myself and in that way earn "their" willingness to listen to me. That I can do.

But it took a lot of courage and stubbornness.

My best to you. Al

[Reply](#)

Re: An Interview Series

by Andy G. on Thu 25 Mar 2010 11:26 AM PDT | [Permanent Link](#)

One passing comment from the last Laura broadcast jumped out and clung to me: You felt that you had "reached vintage love" when you stopped thinking that you hadn't!

I've been thinking a lot about choice- nothing has made me more content in my marriage than resting in the certainty that I felt when I first saw her, that we were meant to be together.

Being her biggest fan, doing my part to listen to her actively, I find I'm spending much less time dwelling on what I don't get from her and more choosing to be happy with her.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Thu 25 Mar 2010 09:28 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Really good, Andy. I like it. I kept and keep saying, "Even if she doesn't meet my every need, she is sure a damn great deal for me!" I stopped pushing, complaining, maneuvering, and all things started getting better.

Cool.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Wed 31 Mar 2010 04:20 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al,

Have been making my way through your talks with Laura. I am getting a lot out of them, they add another dimension to the essays. Al I have yet another question for you. I have been reflecting romantic love and vintage love. I'm just wondering if a long term partner falls in love with someone else - is this real romantic love or is it that because they are in the 'septic tank' of the relationship that it seems real or just a release of long suppressed chemicals? And - is it possible to achieve vintage love with a partner who thinks they have found the ideal elsewhere?

Regards, kez

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 31 Mar 2010 08:30 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Kez, such a bunch of curiosity suggests you are seeing some interesting situations.

Long-term partner falling for someone else! Is it real Romantic Love? My tendency is to guess that all Romantic Love is real and just lasts longer or shorter. If someone sifts into Romantic Love I would guess that the couple, for all their work had not gotten very far into the University of Life, if at all. They could have been in Door #2 for a long time and were now in that Choice Point caught between Power Struggle behind them and the three doors in front. One partner may have sense a more clear view of Vintage Love, while the other was still primarily hopeless. Falling in love is certainly a Door #3 action.

Pent up chemicals i.e. pent up PEA? Nope, I don't think so. Built up resentment and hopelessness and low self-esteem maybe. Those will generate lots of PEA when a new hope comes along.

Can you reach Vintage Love when your partner is in Romantic Love with someone else? Hell no. Let's see how I can say this. During the last half of the University of Life the level of Empathy grows between the couple Ability to read each other's needs becomes stronger and stronger. Mutual respect begins to reach maximum. No one will be looking for someone else, which is a behavior of someone living in a non-empathic situation. My guess is that the person "left behind" thought they were in the University of Life, but were not. Bummer. Well, can always start again.

The starting point of the University of Life is not easy. And it always takes both to enter together. I always work hard with couples that point by focusing on Exits and a No-Exit Decision. This is a paper I have not written partially as it comes directly from Imago with almost no modifications by me. If you attended an Imago Getting the Love You Want Workshop, you'd do it.

I am more often seeing one person who is trying (more or less frantically and more or less competently) to enter Door #1. They stick one foot in, learning as much as possible. That's all to the good. But they still have to have their partner join with them. Frequently their frantic behavior drives their partner away from the door. Not good.

Also my belief is that the journey through the University of Life takes quite a time - years in fact. What Laura and I were doing, I think, was chatting about the "freshmen courses and freshmen orientation courses." Most of the University seems a (A) repeated review of, and reflection on, [the courses](#) at a higher level of awareness due to almost continual application and skill practice. As skills grow there continues a (B) deeper and deeper delving into understanding each other, vast development of empathy and finally there (C) are incisive workings on healing the wounds (frustrations) that each bring into the relationship from their childhood.

Hope this helps your understanding.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Wed 31 Mar 2010 04:55 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Al, thanks again for your prompt reply! You are right - I'm really curious about so many things! I have discovered so many things about me - too many to list, however probably the two that stand out are 1. I didn't realize how much my dysfunctional childhood impacted on me, my lizard and my partner, and 2. When things happened out of the blue (!) I have slowly come to realize that there were signs, but I didn't hear them or interpret them properly. I also really like your idea of the biological dream, and reflecting on your works made me realize that I do take things more intensely than my partner. I have always known what I didn't want in a relationship, however because of the way I was raised, have never really seen a great marriage to learn from! I realize now that skills are needed to make a great relationship. The reason I was pondering on romantic love and vintage love is that you commented that often an affair is a wake up call - and shows that person what they don't want in a relationship, therefore beginning the process of growth (and total panic in the partner, who hopefully moves to action). Can a couple go through all of this, survive the episode (supposing the affair ends or romantic love fades) and go on to achieve vintage love (after much work!!)? And, sorry another question, if a partner refuses or avoids talking about, or even admitting to an affair (again physical or emotional) how can you work through frustrations and resentments?

regards, kez

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Fri 09 Apr 2010 03:45 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

I have just been reading about passivity, and in one of your comments you said you seldom recommend individual therapy anymore. Just wondering why? regards, kez

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Sun 11 Apr 2010 02:25 PM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Kez,

A subtle little note you found. Yes, I don't recommend individual therapy very often. The most effective therapy (psychic/mental health recovering modality) that I know of is a committed long-term friend relationship that ends in Vintage Love. It is deeper, more thorough and vastly less expensive than any other form of therapy.

I see group work is good, if done/facilitated well, in restoring a sense of self and self-esteem as well as in developing interpersonal skills.

Individual work is useful in developing a sense of self. I think that is why you find it in my notes on the problem of Slaves and CoDependents. I see the undeveloped sense of self is most critical for these people. The drawbacks of individual therapy are the comparatively limited abilities of a therapist to help the client develop self-esteem and the completely one-sided nature of the communication process. All boundary skills and talking skills are managed by the therapist and thus not learned by the client. I do recommend it for people who are currently struggling with getting any connection and who display severe lacks in the areas of self awareness.

And, of course, I will see anyone who wants to see me. I just prefer to get them simultaneously focusing on developing their integrity and developing their connections with others.

Hope this helps.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by kez on Mon 10 May 2010 04:50 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Hi Al,

Just thought I would post and update on me! I can't tell you enough how much your essays have helped me, and made so many things clearer, but also given me hope in a practical way (thanks Al). I am really coming on in leaps

and bounds and feel happier and calmer in myself. I still don't know what will happen down the track - but my hope-o-meter is on 10! I have (yet) another question for you Al. I have put into practice all of your advice, and finally have learnt patience. I still make mistakes - but I am learning! My partner is I think calming down as well, and (joy of joys) seems to be responding in little ways. What I am wondering is this - do I bring things up, for example frustrations or talking about the relationship - or is it best to wait (be patient) for him to bring things up. The other thing I was wondering is if a psychologist has told someone that the process of divorce would be a personal growth experience - how do you get past something that an 'expert' has said? Is this a case of being patient and hopefully let actions (mine - giving space, changing behaviors etc) speak louder than words?

Regards, kez.

[Reply](#)

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: An Interview Series

by [Al Turtle](#) on Wed 26 May 2010 10:33 AM PDT | [Profile](#) | [Permanent Link](#)

Dear Kez, Congratulations.

Tis quite a journey, going through [Door#1 and on through the University of Life](#). And if you think about the process this way, only a fraction is "classroom time" - i.e. reading my papers or other books. [Probably 98% is laboratory time or practice](#). And making mistakes, lots of them, is part of that process. Be kind to yourself and your partner as you go along.

The process seem to be a) do it, b) reflect on whether it worked c) if it worked do it again, d) if it didn't work wander back to the classroom, e) try again.

Your last question is much more fun. Who the hell to we believe? MSNBC, FOX, psychologists, f..... experts, wow! Ultimately I believe we each decide on a minute to minute basis what we believe. It sure is exciting sometimes to watch the news and see how I and others decide what we think is B...S... and what we choose to believe.

Now this "psychologist" might be interesting to learn from. What isn't a personal growth experience? Among my psychology friends we have a term for this - AFGO, or another f..... growth opportunity! (Groan!)

In the case of divorce I recommend that people grow ASAP so that they can avoid the actual break up. Divorce the relationship (the way you've been treating each other), but not your partner. Seems the least expensive way to go.

[Reply](#)