

# Relationship Alchemy

A story about writing a book and living it

A Final Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Diploma Program  
and Master's Degree in Process Work

Adviser: Jan Dworkin Ph.D

Study Committee Members:

Ingrid Rose Ph.D, Jan Dworkin Ph.D, Stephen Schuitevoerder Ph.D

By

**Viktoria Saat**

Process Work Institute

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## **1. Contextual Essay**

### **1.1. Introduction**

As the thesis project for my Masters and Diploma in Process Work, I wrote a book on relationships using what I've learned over the years of studying Process Work (PW), as well as other theoretical and practical knowledge gathered from working as a psychologist and counselor during the last 15 years. This contextual essay is intended to present my book to the PW Community, explaining which of the PW theoretical concepts were used, and describing some aspects of my personal process behind writing this book.

### **1.2. Literature review**

One of the core ideas in PW for me is that: the other is me and I am the other. What attracts and disturbs me in other people tells me about me, about difficult, less known parts of myself, which I marginalize and therefore project onto others. I always believed that another person is a huge source of learning for me. The other person helps me to get to know myself better and be a better partner in relationships with others and with the world in general.

Taking this into account, it is unfortunate to see that there are only a few books on relationships written by process workers for a process worker or a wider audience.

Arnold Mindell's "The Dreambody in Relationships" introduces PW approach in the fields of interpersonal relationships. Joe Goodbread's "Radical Intercourse. How dreams unite us in love, conflict and other inevitable relationships" – where using the context of a therapeutic relationship, the author talks about how dreams and dreamlike reactions influence interpersonal relationships. Another book worth mentioning is "Vital Loving. A Guidebook

for Couples and Families” by Gary Reiss. In this book, the author introduces the deep democracy attitude for difficulties in family life, and gives tools for working with abuse, domestic violence, and family crises of all sorts.

There are chapters in some of Arnold Mindell’s books introducing different aspects of relationships and ways of working with them. In one of Mindell’s earliest books “River’s Way. The Process Science of the Dreambody”, he writes about the relationship channel, giving an overview of how different psychologies see relationships. He also talks about well-known concepts of projection and transference, and adds dreaming-up phenomena to it. In “Sitting in the fire. Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity”, Arnold Mindell introduces the concepts of power, rank and privileges in relationships. In “Dreaming While Awake. Techniques for 24-hour Lucid Dreaming”, Mindell gives an overview of different process-oriented methods for relationship work, such as working on projection, transference/countertransference, dreaming up, power and signal awareness in a relationship, edge work, as well as discovering a relationship myth. He also adds the quantum physics concept of entanglement, referring to two separate processes being linked to each other. Mindell introduces the idea of the Second Training and shows how to deal with relationship issues, how we need to be aware of all three levels of reality: consensus reality, dreamland and essence level. In this book, Mindell also pays attention to addictive tendencies we all have, and how the atmosphere of a relationship can influence our addiction impulses. In his latest book, “Process Mind. A User’s Guide to Connecting with the Mind of God”, Mindell teaches us how to find our own processmind, how to find the processmind of the relationship, and how the wisdom of the processmind helps us to be more fluid in all relationships.

### **1.3. Inner calling and the battle with my inner critic**

I wasn't aware of my desire to write a book until a publisher contacted me to ask if I would be interested in writing a book on relationships. My professional life looked rather chaotic those days. I was working a lot trying to make enough money to cover my study expenses. I had just gone from working with little children and their parents in clinical and educational settings to adult counseling, education, and organizational work. It was a period of transition between different professional identities. During one week I could still be playing games with preschoolers, doing some diagnostic assessments and family work, and then giving seminars on performance review or outplacement to the top managers, serious, powerful people. It was a time when I was learning to step into my own power and identify with being an expert, even though I was new in the field. I had had a feeling that I was doing many different things, but I was not really an expert (thinking of an expert as someone who has deep knowledge in one specific topic). And I remember that after two years of this kind of life, I was dreaming of something I could go deeper into; something to make my central project. I was wishing to dedicate my time and energy to something specific, enjoying the process without being pressured by requests and deadlines. So when one evening I got an email out of nowhere, asking if I would be interested in writing a book, I said yes, without even thinking what it really means. I just felt that it was exactly what I had been waiting for to come my way. It seemed that my inner calling was shaped by the outer field into a book-to-be. I could not see it then, that this book was meant to predict big changes in my own relationship life, and become the vessel I can sail through life's difficulties in the next few years.

Before starting to write I had to face my inner critic. My inner critic is very demanding and never seems to be satisfied with what I do. It often gets me into the trap of 'not good

enough' whatever I do – but not doing is even worse. It always expects more from me, and while evaluating my efforts, it often shakes its head and says with a piercing look on its face that I was assumed to do better. So I knew, no matter how good my book was going to be, it would never be good enough for my inner critic.

As much as I can see, my studies in psychology were not purely academic or clinical. While I studied educational psychology in Pedagogical University, I was always more interested in working with real people's problems than being a scientist. During my university years I took a 4-years course in psychological counseling, which helped me to start practical work with clients pretty early. I had a tendency to be interested in theory and academic knowledge only as much as it could support my understanding of people's inner life and inner struggles. Somehow intuitively, I felt that theory is only helpful when it fits into a person's inner world, and that we can't fit people into theories. So my inner critic used to say that I am not scientific enough, I am not theoretical enough. I blamed myself for not being fluent enough in the language of clinical psychology, and felt myself not to be smart and confident enough while collaborating with my colleagues in the Children's Clinic, where I used to work as a psychologist.

So how was I going to write a book if I couldn't even use the language of psychological terms!? I was worried, what my colleagues, clinical psychologists, psychiatrist, and teachers would say about my book?

On the other hand, my critic represented a voice of all the teachers in the PW community. I was 23 when I first got acquainted with Process Work. I've been studying the paradigm for over 10 years now, and three years intensively in the Diploma Program. The way I perceive the world and myself has been greatly shaped by living and feeling Process Work. Nevertheless, I was worried that my knowledge comes mostly from inside of me, instead of theoretical studies. I needed a theory to support my inner world, to help me explain

what I knew intuitively. Yet, I wasn't sure I could explain Process Work to someone who was not familiar with it on the experiential level. Did I know enough?

Is the way I understand process work congruent with what the teachers are teaching us? What if I am getting it wrong? And even if I think I feel it, can I find the right words and language to describe it? Is it really Process Work I am going to write about? May be it is just my way of thinking, feeling, experiencing life and relationships. Who am I to talk about my own knowledge? Is it scientific enough? What is the theoretical background of my inner life? So here I am: an educational psychologist, not clinical enough, with the background in co-counseling, client-centered therapy, years in process work, mostly working on myself, and being in a 13-year-long relationship – is it enough to write a book?

Then I remembered “The Shaman’s Body”, a book by Arnold Mindell, and his words there that fascinated me and mysteriously stuck with me since I first read them many years ago: “I must drop my personal history and reputation to write this book”. I felt that I had to do something similar – I had to drop the identity I was trying to fit myself into and become who I really am. Or maybe even die, before my critic in coalition with all the inner and outer dream figures could destroy me. What a liberation it was! It was as if I got a permission to write whatever I wanted, whatever I felt, whatever I knew at some deeper level of knowledge without worrying if it be scientific enough. It helped me to rely on one and the only trustworthy source – my inner knowledge – an amalgamation of theoretical material, people’s stories, self-knowledge, and scientifically proven assumptions. I must have done something right, for after my book was published, a few people came to me and said that reading my book made them cry, it touched something on a very deep level, something they knew but could not put into words, and there it was.

#### **1.4. The audience, language, and structure of the book**

Who am I writing for? If I am not writing to please my inner critic, then who is the audience? The book is meant to introduce PW ideas and other psychological concepts to a wider public – to the people, who want to know more about themselves and their relationships, to those far from the theoretical field of psychological science.

Before starting to write, I conducted a survey among my friends and clients. I asked what they would want to learn about relationships. My wish was to write about something that would be really useful and interesting to the reader. My aim was to present deep and complicated concepts as simple as possible. The more readers could identify themselves with what I was writing about the better.

I wanted to avoid psychological terms or use them as little as possible. I didn't want readers to feel stupid or in need for certain prerequisites (experience and/or background) to be able to read my book. I wanted readers to enjoy reading and meeting themselves in every chapter. I often imagined my friends or clients, as if I was just explaining something to them; I envisioned certain people, who would be interested in different subjects, and wrote the passages addressed to them. I wanted to challenge myself and convey my book to as many layers of the population as I can.

I wanted my book to be easy to read not only by content, but visually as well. I divided it into chapters and subchapters; used the cases from my practice to illustrate theory; and tried to avoid long plain text, which would be hard to grab visually. The case examples were written in italic and they have a darker background. I wanted to give the reader a chance to start reading from any place and not feel lost. In the end of every chapter there is a summary of the chapter presented with bullet points.

## 1.5. Contents of the book

There are many ways to talk about relationships. There are many aspects and issues around this subject. What is important? I needed a structure to start with. As I conducted my survey, I found out that the majority of my friends and clients were interested in learning: how to change the other, how to understand why their partner is behaving or thinking in a certain way, how we choose the partner, how to keep love from ending, when to stay together and when it is right to separate. There were also questions concerning children, addictions, conflicts, crises, changes, etc.

I realized, I couldn't fit everything in one book and I had to exclude some things. How to make a choice? I listed everything possible: relationship issues I could remember learning about in theory over the last 15 years; topics I usually address with my clients; issues we discuss with friends over dinner; different situations my friends and I had faced in relationships; some current relationship problems my friends and I were dealing with in our lives. I thought about fascinating Process Work ideas that I love and want to share with everybody. I aspired to show the bigger picture, to be able to communicate a general organizing principle behind many relationship problems. I wanted to demonstrate how relationships are here to help us become who we are, how relationships and people we meet in our life are parts of our individuating process. I wished for the reader to understand themselves better, and to see, how becoming who they really deeply are could help them create a better relationship with themselves and their partners.

Step by step, different topics organized themselves into a logical pattern, representing various stages of a relationship, which replace each other through smaller and bigger crises:

1. **Falling in love.** *Being able to embrace this feeling fully.*

2. **How the choice of the partner is made?** *Who am I attracted to and what it says about me.*
3. **Getting to know each other.** *Letting go of the ideal – love at second sight.*
4. **Roles in a relationship.** *Flexibility and openness toward different roles. Sharing roles consciously.*
5. **Spinning together.** *Finding inner freedom in a relationship, respecting your process and the process of your partner.*
6. **Expectations.** *Letting go of expectations in a relationship. Guesthouse attitude.*
7. **How to change your partner?** *Changing yourself changes the other.*
8. **Dealing with accusations and conflict.**
9. **Crises and separation.**
10. **Relationship myth.**

## **1.6. Summary of the chapters**

My book is written and published in the Estonian language. Therefore, I want to give you a brief summary of each chapter with the additional information about Process Work concepts used in each chapter, as well as concepts from other fields. The titles and summaries of the chapters are translated and presented here the way they appear in the book.

### *Alchemy of Relationships*

#### *Table of Contents*

#### **I. Falling in love**

1. *Change*
2. *Dissatisfaction as a reason for change*
3. *Having a dream as a reason for change*
4. *Falling in love as the impulse for change*

#### *Summary*

- Love finds its way into us without asking. Falling in love is a creative and inspirational force. It is a gift.
- Feeling of love gives us strength to do something that we ordinarily would never do.
- Desire or need to change something comes from two sources: sense of

dissatisfaction and various fantasies. If life wants to teach us something, it provides us with an opportunity and means to learn, not the actual thing. Another reason for change is having a dream. Following your dream is a step into the unknown.

- Falling in love calls for change. Even if we have to let go of it for some reason.
- Falling in love is often compared to an altered state, which is different from ordinary states, and is usually an accompaniment of a strong experience, which shakes the stability of our lives and the usual flow.
- The experience of falling in love can be more beneficial if we approach it with awareness, explore it deeply, and expand the essence of this blissful feeling to other areas of our lives, not just a one-on-one relationship.

***Process Work concepts:***

- *Process of change. Primary and secondary process. Visions and fantasies as indicators of secondary processes. Dissatisfaction and/or desire for something different as an impulse for change.*
- *Edge. Edges as barriers to change.*
- *Edge figure. Getting to know edge figures. Negotiating the edge.*
- *Following the process. The courage to follow the process. Importance of awareness.*
- *Altered states. Being in love as an altered state. Altered states and their impact on our identity. Altered states as the way to go over the edge.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

*Synchronicity (Jungian analytical psychology). Meaningful connection between inner and outer events. Outer events as manifestations of the marginalized aspects of our unconscious.*

## **II. Following love**

1. *The deeper message behind being in love*
2. *Every flirtation does not mean you are falling in love*

### ***Summary***

- Follow love; use it as the source of inspiration. Discover yourself through the eyes of another, find in yourself that which only the other can see, be that, not only in this relationship, but in life in general. Flow, enjoy experiment, be disappointed, learn, and evolve, live.
- Falling in love as a disturbance wants to direct our lives in ways that only love comprehends. Sometimes the disturbance comes in the way of falling in love, with the purpose of us re-evaluating our paths.
- Falling in love should be taken seriously; even if for some reason, you decide not to follow it physically. Following love does not only mean being together with your beloved, enjoying physical and spiritual intimacy, but also learning to unravel the deeper meaning of this feeling.
- Every flirtation does not necessarily mean you are falling in love. It is possible that pursuing the flirtations in our lives has become the only way to satisfy some deep emotional need, experience something that is not reachable in any other way. What could be the reason behind following every promising flirtation? To feel important, needed? Excitement, adventure, playfulness, passion? Intensity of feeling, risk?

### ***Process Work concepts:***

- *Secondary process (less known aspects of me, something I am growing towards). The feeling of being in love as a dream door to our secondary process.*

- *Going over the edge. Love as an altered state and as an ally helping us over the edge.*
- *Unfolding. Finding a deeper meaning behind being in love. Unfolding the state of being in love and finding how this energy could help us deal with different problems and challenges in ones life.*
- *Addictive tendency. Following any flirtations as an addictive tendency. Finding unsatisfied deeper needs behind the urge to follow any flirtation.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Synchronicity (Jungian analytical psychology), outer events mirror and support inner (marginalized) experiences.*
- *Synchronistic events as meaningful manifestations of person's unconscious and conscious needs and wishes (Jungian analytical psychology).*

**III. When it is impossible to follow love**

1. *The reasons within you*
2. *Losing the dream*
3. *Dealing with the pain of loss*
4. *Pain and aikidō*

***Summary***

- Following love opens the door for our expanding identity, which might not please us in the beginning at all, especially, if the new identity contradicts previously held values.
- Losing love, we lose our dream and the part of our future connected with the dream. Sometimes the dream can be much larger than just a part of our lives. It can

be our whole life.

- If we cannot follow love, the energy and power of love that wants to flow out of us meets a strong resistance and turns back, pushing us down and causing a lot of pain. Just like an *aikidō* master, we have the ability to transform this energy to our own advantage.
- It is necessary to go through the pain of losing love; it is the easiest and fastest way through it. We have to cry, to endure, to contemplate about it, and find its place and purpose in our lives.
- The attachment to a lost love can make our lives poorer, and disable us from creating a new experience, positive or negative.

***Process work concepts:***

- *Burning your wood. The importance of working on previous traumatic experiences in relationships. Falling in love as a trigger for a previous traumatic experience to emerge in a new relationship.*
- *Beginner's mind metaskill. Ability to view every experience (relationship) as something new. Learning to trust the unknown and being open to the experience of being in love.*
- *Primary and secondary identity. Falling in love with the "wrong person" as personal growth. Opening up to the "not me", expanding borders of your identity — challenge of letting go of your old identity.*
- *High and low dreams in a relationship. Losing love as a low dream experience. Unfolding the loss. Using the energy of loss as the source of healing;*
- *Being addicted to suffering, finding the deeper meaning in suffering.*

#### **IV. Choosing a partner**

1. *Parallel worlds*
2. *Bringing the worlds together*
3. *Alchemy of love*
4. *Who do I really need*
5. *Let love find you*
6. *Partner opens me to myself*
7. *Choice for life*
8. *Let love blind you*

#### ***Summary***

- Our relationship exists in three parallel worlds: the world of everyday reality (consensus reality); the world of dreams, fantasies, desires and visions (dreaming); and the world of deeper meaning and intuition (essence). The relationship works well if all three levels are engaged.
- Similarly to alchemists, we hope that a new relationship is the elixir for eternal life and happiness. A perfect, well functioning alliance does not necessarily mean an idyllic existence in the ordinary sense. Relationship works well when there is a connection between different elements, when they complement each other in their own ways, possibly unknown to others; – this is why the unit works.
- The groundwork, which we can do before getting into a relationship, is to get to know our own parts and elements, and the three parallel worlds.
- Outer circumstances and people help us bring forth the hidden parts of ourselves. Various people help us see different parts of ourselves. Our beloved sees something that is just about to emerge in us. The person, who encourages and

supports this new side, helps us make contact with ourselves.

- When entering a relationship, we do not have to be certain that this is the right person for the whole life! Do not label the time spent together as a waste, even if the relationship is not currently working.
- Love is selectively blind. The energy of love is what helps us jump wildly over the fear of finding disappointment in our ideal.

***Process Work concepts:***

- *Parallel worlds: consensus reality, dreaming, essence – levels of awareness. Importance of each level.*
- *Who (which part of me) is falling in love and who is choosing a new partner – how our dreams and our deeper essence influence us and our choices.*
- *Self knowledge, importance of innerwork. Getting to know your dreams and your deepest self.*
- *Projection – living your high dream, becoming someone you hope you can become in a particular relationship, together with the new partner. Becoming the lover you are looking for. Living the change you are hoping for now.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Alchemy (Jungian analytical psychology) – relationship as a spiritual path. A relationship and your partner change you, and help you to grow and get to know yourself better.*

**V. Who am I attracted and what it says about me**

1. *Common edges*

2. *Resistance*
3. *Endless arguments and still together*
4. *Parental influence on partner selection*

### ***Summary***

- One way of finding out what wants to emerge in us, is to notice people and qualities that we feel attracted to. If we can see the deeper meaning behind the outward features, we can get a fascinating picture of our emerging identity.
- Thanks to us, our partners come in contact with the part of themselves that without us does not dare to reveal itself for some reason. We mutually fulfill our emotional needs.
- In long-term relationships the partners are held together by inner complexes and edges. One after the other we overcome them, encouraging each other with personal examples.
- During our lives we learn to bring our inner polarities together and live in peace with them. Subconsciously we are searching for someone to reflect our inner critic, who would have the same principles and limitations. Our partners are perfect for that, in arguments we often find ourselves arguing with the self-same inner critic.
- The success of long-term relationships depends largely on how well we can balance being together and being alone. The whole art is about how to be free, alone and together.

### ***Process Work concepts:***

- *Emerging (secondary) identity. Relationships and people who attract us as an opportunity to learn more about our secondary emerging identity.*

- *Secondary process. Something I am looking for or attracted to in others are the less known aspects of myself.*
- *Edges in a relationship. Individual edges, double edges, complimentary edges, symmetrical edges.*
- *Edges. Similar edges holds us together; by encouraging our partner over his/her edge we help to create a pattern to go over the edge in ourselves.*
- *Dreaming-up. Our partner could represent our inner edge figure, an inner critic we are not sufficiently aware of.*

**Concepts from other fields:**

- *How family of origin and our parents influence our choice of the relationship partner (family psychology and therapy).*
- *Developmental psychology: stages of psychosocial development by Eric Erikson – Love: Intimacy vs. Isolation. Once we know ourselves in isolation we are ready for intimacy.*

**VI. Getting to know each other**

1. *Developmental phases of living together*
2. *Shattering the ideal*
3. *Being bigger than the ideal*
4. *Letting go of the ideal or love at second sight*

**Summary**

- Like every system, a relationship has its own developmental stages: *partner selection, romantic symbiosis, losing the ideal, finding the style and sharing the roles of a*

*relationship, finding balance between stability and change, and the phase of existential evaluation.* Unresolved issues hold down the process and do not let new phases open in their fullness.

- Give up the ideal. The person you have chosen is larger than that ideal. They might not seem better, but they are certainly more diverse.
- The way we cope with the diverse sides of our partner does not only influence the longevity of our relationship, but whether it is of satisfactory quality.

***Process Work concepts:***

- *High dream. Being blinded by the high dream of a relationship and the vision of the ideal partner;*
- *No dream, deep democracy. Openness to the unknown. Inner and outer diversity. Being open to all the parts of our partner helps us to become more diverse ourselves.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Stages of family development (Family psychology and psychotherapy). There are many different concepts for periodization of the developmental process of couples and family. Periods: partner selection, romantic symbiosis, losing the ideal, finding the style and sharing the roles of a relationship, finding balance between stability and change, and the phase of existential evaluation. Periods are used to show that every organism, individual or group, any biome, is growing and developing through crises. Crises are here to help us grow.*
- *Crisis as an aspect of development, going from one stage to another.*

## **VII. Roles**

1. *Flexibility and openness toward different roles*
2. *Sharing roles consciously*
3. *Being attached to one role*
4. *Conflict between roles*
5. *Three states of self*
6. *Three levels of relationships*
7. *Child needs a Parent, and vice versa*

### ***Summary***

- Beginning a relationship, we step into a system with pre-existing roles. Some of them are tied to consensus reality; others have to do with our deeper essence and emotional needs.
- The role distribution of consensus reality is most influenced by customs, moral attitudes, and cultural stereotypes. It is important to have mutual agreement and acceptance about roles. It has to be clear to both partners, who fulfill what role.
- There has to be openness to enter different roles for both partners, and the openness of partners to step in and take responsibility for role-related tasks.
- Stiff, fixed, and closed roles burden and limit the relationship in the long run – life becomes a routine. Strong attachment to a role inhibits our personal growth, making us too one-sided.
- Usually, we do not want to give up our roles forever, but we wish to have the possibility of freely stepping out when need arises, and re-entering when needed.
- The self has three sides to it: Parent, Adult and Child. These three states of self are not bound to age or actual social roles. None of them is better than the other; all

three are crucial and mutually enrich each other. The problems may arise when we are too stuck to one state.

- In order for a relationship to function, the partners' states of self and related life positions have to be mutually accepted and supportive. The best combination would be where partners can fluently communicate on all three levels. What does "fit together" mean in this case?

***Process Work concepts:***

- *Field theory. Roles in a relationship are partly set by the larger cultural field and partly by the relationship myth.*
- *Deep democracy, inner diversity – the ability to let go of the role and step into different roles depends on our inner diversity and fluidity.*
- *Fluidity between different states – getting to know our inner dream figures.*
- *Rank and power – different roles have different weight. Switching roles consciously and unconsciously.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Transactional analysis (Eric Berne). Three Self-states: Parent, Adult, and Child. Communication between all three states within one person as well as how we communicate to each other while stuck or in favor of one or another state. The importance of good co-operation between different states of Self. Types of relationships when partners are stuck in one or another state.*

**VIII. Spinning together**

1. *Choosing the distance*

2. *Need to control*
3. *Control means love*
4. *Escaping the tyranny of control. Finding inner freedom*
5. *My freedom stops where yours begins*
6. *Giving up your needs for those of your partner*
7. *Conflict as a remedy*
8. *Till death do us part*

### ***Summary***

- In a well-functioning partnership partners are like quantum particles, like *Capoeira* dancers. Each must have their own axis around which they spin, and a common myth, the field, that holds them together.
- The stronger the emotional need to be together the less freedom one is capable allowing the other.
- Our wish to manage anxieties increases our need to control outer events. We often confuse love and control.
- In partnership we must be ready to put our own wishes and needs aside sometimes, to make space for our partner's wishes and needs. But it is crucial not to ignore one's own needs.
- When distance between partners becomes smaller, there is the danger of conflict. In this case, conflicts serve an indirect aim: when we quarrel, then we do not have to do everything together. So the pattern may form, that when you want to be alone and not feel guilty about it, you create conflict to achieve it.
- Sometimes, radical steps are taken when making breathing space. The more fixed a family system, the stronger and irrevocable are our values around it, the heavier

the tools need to be: a great conflict or sickness may sometimes be the only solution.

***Process Work concepts:***

- *Dreaming together – knowing the deepest self of yourself and your partner and respecting it;*
- *Following your dream and being held by the relationship myth.*
- *Burning your wood as working on your inner freedom.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Developmental psychology: stages of psychosocial development by Eric Erikson - Love: Intimacy vs. Isolation. We are sometimes isolated due to intimacy and vice versa – we are not isolated enough because we are afraid to lose intimacy.*

**IX. Expectations**

1. *Map is not a territory*
2. *Letting go of expectations. Guesthouse*
3. *Expectations and control*
4. *Control and helplessness*
5. *Who makes me happy?*
6. *Unrealistic expectations*

***Summary***

- Map is not a territory. Even the most accurate maps cannot provide us with certainty that nothing appears on the road, which should not be there according to

the map.

- Giving up expectations about yourself, your close-ones, and life in general is a difficult task.
- Unrealistic expectations towards each other are often the causes for a poor relationship.
- Most of our needs are satisfied in our closest circle, but we must not forget that our family is not a substitute for the whole world. We must learn to fulfill our needs in the larger context, independently, outside the relationship.
- A good relationship is like home base, where you come to refuel and recharge yourself, to manage well in life in general and to be happy.

***Process Work concepts:***

- *Beginner's mind, deep democracy – being able to have no expectations about your relationship, trusting the deeper wisdom behind the relationship myth and process;*
- *You are the other, the other is you. By changing yourself you are changing your partner.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Partners' unrealistic emotional expectations toward each other as one of the reasons of relationship problems (Systemic family therapy (Virginia Satir)).*

**X. Dissatisfaction**

1. *Rank and privileges*
2. *How to make your partner fit?*
3. *Formula of change*

4. *Levels of change. Identity, values, attitude, abilities, behavior.*
5. *How to evoke change in the other?*
6. *Is change dangerous?*

### ***Summary***

- Sometimes for the relationship to work, one is forced to contribute more than the other. His or her social, contextual or psychological rank and privileges give them more power and ability to change things.
- If we are not aware of our rank, we can wound the other. The most hurtful is when we see situations only from our own perspective, assuming that everybody has same opportunities. The assumption that all have equal possibilities fuels the conflict.
- The one who initiates change is most often the one who is disturbed by the situation, who wants it to be different. A person often changes only when feeling disturbed by inner or outer forces.
- To evoke change in others, we must first look at how our own values, attitudes and behavior which might contribute to an inappropriate behavior of our partner. When we change, they are disturbed, and when they get disturbed enough, they are forced to change.
- Change might feel dangerous and could separate us. Only when relationship is important enough, we find the strength within to change ourselves as well.

### ***Process Work concepts:***

- *Rank and privileges. Which partner has more power, ability, and responsibility to force changes in a relationship?*
- *Becoming aware of the different aspects of your power in a relationship.*

- *Entanglement. Changing yourself changes your partner and your relationship.*

### **Concepts from other fields:**

- *Richard Beckhard and David Gleicher's Formula of Change (Organizational behavior).*
- *Robert Dilts NLP model, Gregory Bateson, logical level of change (learning) – sustainable change is possible when all levels are involved.*

*In this chapter, I wanted to show that it is not easy to change someone, and it is better to look at your-self first. I used those concepts to show that sustainable change is only possible when it affects all levels. These concepts helped me to illustrate it in a structured and linear way.*

## **XI. Partner disturbs me**

1. *Expanding your borders*
2. *Disturber as an ally*
3. *Love and hate. Contradictory feelings*
4. *Taking the advantage of that which hurts me*

### **Summary**

- Disturbers come to our lives mostly as messengers of the need for change, to show the way. Some disturbers come to teach us about resistance. Others have a message that conveys a certain state or being that we need.
- The more diverse we are inwardly, the more tolerant we can be towards others, the easier it is for us to live with something that bothers us about our partner.

### ***Process Work concepts:***

- *Unfolding. Finding a deeper message in what disturbs us in the other, what we need for ourselves, integrating the secondary. Becoming the other. Cultivating this new quality in ourselves; finding a way to live it more in the relationship with ourselves and the world.*

### ***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Tension of the opposites (Jungian analytical psychology). Integrating your shadow (merge with the shadow) – learning how to live with the difficult side of ourselves and partners.*
- *Projection – difficult aspects of us projected to others. Taking projection back and working on it, integrating it.*
- *Process of individuation – bringing inner opposites together.*

## **XII. Conflict**

1. *Small arguments*
2. *Why we hurt each other*
3. *In conflict with conflict*
4. *Accusations*
5. *Three positions in a conflict*
6. *What fuels the conflict and what cools it down*
7. *The main steps for conflict resolution*

### ***Summary***

- *Small arguments are an indication that everything is working well in our*

relationship and we dare to show our discontent to each other.

- Often we feel like the pain we cause others helps to alleviate our own.
- Instead of being in conflict with conflict we might try and turn it to our advantage.  
We must learn to get to the gist of the conflict, and it is no use pushing it away before we have found the clarity about it.
- Often we react to criticism as something attacking us, before we even listen to its content. Understanding the accusations helps us personally and has a good impact on our relationship.
- In every conflict there are three possible vantage points: your own, your partners, and neutral. The ability to exchange these positions flowingly can help you take the conflict to a new level and find its resolve.

***Process Work concepts:***

- *Conflict. The importance of conflict, befriending conflict, conflict as an opportunity to grow.*
- *Crisis in a relationship as a part of developmental process of the couple, open attitude toward conflict and crisis.*
- *Accusations – the courage to bring something up and be open to the accusation; Learning to own the accusation you are bringing up.*
- *Three positions in conflict: my side, the side of the other, and a neutral position (metaposition);*
- *Escalation and de-escalation of the conflict, signal and feedback awareness – being able to see the signs of resolution and being open to the deeper message of the conflict.*

### **XIII. Separation**

1. *Why we need each other less than before*
2. *Reasons for separation*
3. *Staying together for others' sake*
4. *Life after separation*

#### ***Summary***

- If the relationship breaks up for some reason, we might be left with the feeling that we have failed, that our life is a failure. It is important to release that belief.
- The partners must go their own ways if they are not happy in a relationship. But keep in mind, that living together is not always only a joyful experience, just like separation or living alone might not be the only way out. Neither living together nor living alone provides us with happiness. Happiness is not in the form of the relationship, but in its content.
- Ending relationships and getting a divorce is becoming more and more available in our whole culture. It is likely that the next challenge is to learn to maintain our individuality and inner freedom, while being in a relationship.
- Saying good-bye to a relationship is similar to accepting a loss. We say farewell to the person we were together with, we say farewell to ourselves as we were together with that person.

#### ***Process Work concepts:***

- *Trusting the process, openness to all the parts of a relationship, being open to whatever the relationship process brings.*

- *Third party. Unfaithfulness. Unfolding the third party and integrating it into the relationship.*
- *Edges in a relationship toward the high dream – boredom and irritation.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Loss and grief, stages of grief, dealing with grief.*

**XIV. Epilogue**

1. *Stepping and not stepping into the same river*
2. *The myth of a relationship*

***Summary***

- Our relationships and people we connect with have been chosen by our life myth to play certain roles in our lives. Joys and sorrows brought along by these people are like challenges in a fairy-tale that we as the protagonists need to resolve in order to find the most precious treasure – ourselves.

***Process Work concepts:***

- *Life and relationship myths. Understanding the relationship myth and living it; how to become aware of the relationship myth.*

***Concepts from other fields:***

- *Life myth. Individuation, individuation process (Jungian analytical psychology).*

## **1.7. Completing the book. The book is writing me.**

I experienced it already while writing the book. I wanted to change and add more after completing each chapter or topic. The completion felt only temporary. I had to fight the ghost of perfectionism due to the deadline, and the limited size of the book. There were moments when I got tired of writing or bored of a topic and I just wanted to finish it, be done with it. Taking a break was even more dangerous, because then new ideas or different aspects of what I had just written about came to the surface. Time changes perception. I wanted to add and redo. It could have become a never-ending story.

After the manuscript was sent to the publisher, I had to let go and separate myself from what was done, so my critic would not get me with: “you haven’t done enough”. I did it so successfully that when I was asked to give a lecture on my book a few months after it was published, I had to re-read and remind myself, what exactly I had written about. I am amazed at the most mysterious state one enters when writing: somewhere between realities you create a writing reality, you separate yourself from your usual self, you merge with the book. At times, you can’t even say who is writing whom: am I writing the book or is the book writing me?

Process work helped me to see the wisdom of whatever state I was in during the process of writing. Some chapters came out effortlessly. I just had to be quick enough to follow what was flowing out of my mind, and to be able to write it down. I think it was a state that Mihály Csíkszentmihályi calls ‘the flow’, or a state of complete entanglement as we say in Process Work. This was the state where I couldn’t say who was writing whom, was I writing the book, or the book writing me.

On the other hand, some states were very difficult to be in. I felt stuck and wasn't able to move on with my writing. I learned that states become even more stuck when we move further against them. I learned how to be fully stuck, when the mind is completely empty or in a complete mess of different thoughts and ideas, and you just can't find the way out. I learned to stay in not-doing and not-moving, to go deeper into it, and trust that the only way out is to go through it.

Today, I would definitely add and maybe even change something in the book. If I cooperate with my inner critic on a constructive level and listen to its advice, I would definitely add some practical things to the theory – the exercises. I have created some inner work exercises that I would like to share in this essay (Appendix A). These exercises are for the readers of my book. I wanted the exercises to be as simple as possible. Therefore, I tried to avoid Process Work jargon as much as possible. I have tested these exercises on my friends and clients and adjusted them accordingly.

This book is a journey through my relationships to myself. I wrote about what I know, what I have experienced in my own long-term relationship, and as it turned out later, I also wrote about what I was going to learn and experience in my relationship. After the book was finished I had to face some new chapters in my relationship to myself and to my partner. It felt like the book wanted me to live all the chapters. The book turned out to be prophetic to me and my relationship. Today, I can say this book helped me to complete and add something to my real life, helped me to get in touch with my life myth and relationship myth on a deeper level.

I am grateful for the opportunity life gave me and I really deeply appreciate Process Work for giving me the tools which helped me to shape shift this opportunity into a book!

## Appendix A:

### Exercises

#### ❖ **Finding a deeper meaning behind falling in love**

*(This exercise will help you to feel more consciously into the state of being in love and to see how you can use this energy to deal with different problems and challenges in your life)*

1. Think of a feeling of being in love. Something you have experienced before, now or hoping to experience in the future. What is the most mysterious, attractive, awesome aspect of this feeling?
2. Describe it aloud. While describing, bring it into your whole body, posture, and attitude. Breathe into it, become it fully.
3. Imagine living like that now, being like that in the world, with yourself and others.
4. Look at your ordinary self from that perspective and give yourself advice.
5. Where in your life, in which part (relationships, work, family, larger vision) you need this attitude more.

#### ❖ **The other is you. Become the one you admire**

*(This exercise will help you to find out, how something that attracts you in other is in you as well, and how you can cultivate and use this quality more consciously)*

1. Think about a person you admire the most these days.
2. What fascinates you about this person? It can be the way this person speaks, moves, looks, the way he/she is. Describe it in details.
3. While describing, notice what you use the most: voice, posture, face impression, movement. Try to do it even more. Become this person as fully as possible. Stand like this person, walk, and talk, look around, etc.

4. Feel into the experience you are having while acting as that person. Put yourself aside and allow yourself to go even deeper into the momentary experience. What feels most fascinating, different, interesting. It might be the sound you are making, a posture, a hand movement, the way you walk, or the whole attitude to the world.
5. Go deeper into one aspect of this experience. Play with it. Forget yourself and the person, just stay with the experience. Enjoy it! What is so good about this? What is the core of this quality?
6. What is useful and needed in this experience for you? Are you sometimes already like this? How is this part of you already known to you?
7. What is against this kind of state and behavior in your everyday life? Why is it difficult for you to be more like this, if there is something?
8. Look at your life and see, how this quality might be helpful in dealing with small and big challenges? How could you be more like that in your everyday life?

❖ **Wisdom of the earth spot that brought us together**

*(This exercise will help you to go back to the early memories of a relationship and find the wisdom of the earth spot where your relationship started from. Become more fluid in your relationship and use deeper wisdom to deal with relationship problems)*

1. Think about the place you first meet with you partner, or the place you visited together in the beginning of your relationship.
2. Go there in your mind. Feel yourself being there. What is this place like? What is the atmosphere of that place? Is it busy, calm, light, dark, playful or heavy? What do you see, feel, sense? What is the most characteristic about this place?
3. Sense the field of this place, its deep essence. Try to feel into the place; don't worry if you can't explain it in words. Let yourself be moved by this deep essence. Show it with you hand movement. Be open to whatever is coming, trust your body.
4. Now let yourself experiment with this hand movement. Play with it. Notice, what attracts your

attention the most, what is right, fun, good, weird about this movement?

5. Go further, allow yourself imagine being that place, move and act like it. Become that place. Notice your feelings, sensations, impulses, thoughts, and images. Don't stop, play and experiment until you know who you are and what your nature is.
6. Imagine being more like that with you partner and then together with him/her connecting to the world like that? What does your discovery tell you about your relationship? How can it enrich your relationship?

***Additional tip:***

You can do this exercise with you partner:

At the same time, both of you meditate on your memory of the place you met, then, when you find the deepest essence of it, start to dance by yourself, then, slowly notice your partner, dancing next to you. Stay with your experience and relate from that state to your partner, do it slowly, noticing feedback. See what kind of a dance emerges between you. This is the wisdom of the place dancing you and helping you to see and feel each other.

**❖ Getting to know my inner critic**

*(This exercise will help you to get to know your inner critic and create a more constructive relationship with it)*

1. Think of who you are, how you see yourself. What do you know about yourself? What is your job, what kind of relationships do you have with people, what do you like these days?
2. What do you like about yourself? What makes you proud about yourself? What your plans and dreams are?
3. What don't you usually like about yourself? What do you want to change about yourself? How do you usually criticize yourself? What do you say to yourself?

4. Imagine becoming this critic fully. How does the critic criticize you? Tone of the voice, posture, hand movement, etc. Become this critic fully and tell yourself what are you unhappy with?
5. How does this critic usually appear to you? Is it always with you? Does it come out of a blue? When does it usually come?
6. Try to get to know your critic as much as possible. Ask specifically, what is s/he unhappy about? What does it really want from you?
7. Act out a dialogue between you and your critic. First ask your critic to be as specific as possible. Then see what you can agree with and what accusations seem to take it nowhere.
8. Let the critic know how you feel about its presence, how his way of saying things influences you.
9. What did you learn from this? How will you use this learning for your benefit?

❖ **Becoming my ideal partner**

*(This exercise will help you to realize your expectations toward your partner and help you to see how you can change yourself and help your partner change, and become ideal partners for each other)*

1. Think of the ideal relationship you are yearning for. What kind of attitude and relating you deeply need or expect from your partner?
2. Think what is already there, how your partner is already like this, even if just a little and rarely.
3. Now explore your yearning. What are you looking for, what kind of an attitude you seek?
4. Become this ideal partner. Imagine yourself being the way you expect your partner to be. Act like him/her, talk, and move. Imagine yourself in front of you relating to yourself as your imaginary ideal partner would do. Go into that fully; notice all the qualities of the state you are

in.

5. Now notice the attitude of the other (the receiver) that allows this to occur. Notice what you need from the receiver to help you to act like that.
6. Now switch to you ordinary you and imagine being more like that in your relationship with your partner. Play out both sides – being a receiver and also being the one you hope your partner will become. Imagine being the ideal partner you hope your partner will be with you.

❖ **Disturber as an ally. Finding a deeper essence in a disturbing quality**

*(This exercise will help you to find something important in the quality that is difficult for you in your partner and to see how this understanding can change you and your relationship)*

1. Think of the difficult aspect of your partner. Think what exactly disturbs you in your partner. Is it how he/she speaks, thinks, sound, moves, looks, or your partner's attitude in general? Try to be as specific as you can. Describe it in detail.
2. Now become your partner; show the aspect that is difficult for you in movement, face expression, body posture.
3. Put yourself and your attitude aside and just become your partner fully. Try not to have any opinion or attitude about this difficult part, just experiment being like that. Observe what happens. Try to go to the core of this quality.
4. Now try to dance this disturbing quality, start with a hand movement, and then bring it into your whole body. Add a melody and singing. See what character comes forth. See what is good and wise about this character.
5. See how you need to be more like that in your life, with your partner.
6. How might this change the way you feel about your partner?

❖ **Working on a difficult aspect of your partner and a relationship**

*(This exercise will help you to find an answer to a difficult situation in your relationship using a more intuitive and less cognitive approach to the problem)*

1. Think of yourself these days. How do you perceive, experience yourself? Feel into it and find a spot in the room where you feel this energy. Go there; mark it as a starting point (1).
2. Think of a relationship situation that is troublesome for you. Say a few words about it.
3. Think of yourself in this situation. How would you describe yourself? Feel into it. Make a hand movement.
4. Turn around and see what direction this hand movement takes you. This is your direction. Take a few steps in that direction and stop when you feel is right. Mark an end point (2)
5. Now think of your partner's behavior in this situation that is troublesome for you. How would you describe your partner? Make a hand movement, feel into it.
6. Turn around and see in what direction this hand movement takes you. This is your partner's direction. Take a few steps in that direction, notice what you feel and stop when you feel is right. Mark this place (3).
7. Now go back to the beginning point (1). Try to empty your mind as much as you can. You might even close your eyes. Turn to the direction of the final point (3) and slowly make a few steps toward it. Walk this direction and notice any sensations, fantasies, feelings you might have. Don't think or interpret yet, just notice. If needed walk this path a few times, until you catch something.
8. This is a superposition, a bigger view for you in that troublesome situation. It could help you to see a bigger picture behind this problem and could give you some thought of a resolution. See if you can look at the troublesome relationship situation from that point of you. How is it helpful?

❖ **Conflict and accusation. Picking up the accusation.**

*(This exercise will help you to communicate some difficult messages to you partner, doing it in caring and more structured way)*

1. Before you are going to bring something up with you partner, work on yourself and see,

how you are (can be) sometimes like your partner. Think how your accusation is also true for you, even if only 1%.

2. Ask your partner if it is ok, to bring something up. Make sure you have time and space for that. Take one accusation at a time.
3. Be direct and as specific as you can. Give an example.
4. If the partner can't or doesn't want to admit it, give him/her time to explain and defend. Be patient, there is a hope that your partner can accept the accusation after being able to stand up for his/her position.
5. You can encourage your partner by admitting some part of your accusation yourself. Tell them, how you sometimes could be like that yourself.
6. Notice how the atmosphere has changed. Thank you partner for listening.

Viktoria Saat

# Suhte alkeemia

