



JOURNEY TOGETHER

TURN
YOUR MARRIAGE
INTO THE
ADVENTURE OF
A LIFETIME

DAVID HAWKINS, PhD

Director of the Marriage Recovery Center

JOURNEY TOGETHER



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CONTENTS

Preparing for the Love of a Lifetime	5
1. <i>What's Love Got to Do with It?</i> Preparing for Your Journey	11
2. <i>Check Your Baggage: Understanding Your Triggers and Relational Vulnerabilities</i>	29
3. <i>Traveling Companions: Choosing to Travel Together, Again and Again</i>	49
4. <i>Shifting and Making You-Turns: Navigating Your Journey</i>	67
5. <i>Two Hands on the Wheel: Partnering Together on Your Journey</i>	87
6. <i>In the Driver's Seat: When You Must Travel Alone</i>	103
7. <i>Turn Down the Radio...and Listen to Me: Becoming a Better Listener</i>	123
8. <i>Staying in Your Own Lane: The Importance and Power of Boundaries</i>	145
9. <i>Watching Your Warning Lights: Preventative Maintenance in Marriage</i>	163
10. <i>Keeping Your Car Tuned: Taking Responsibility</i>	183
11. <i>Using Your Horn: When You Must Really Speak Up</i>	199
12. <i>Driving Test: Putting It All Together for a Love-Filled Journey</i>	217
Notes	227

PREPARING FOR THE LOVE OF A LIFETIME

*Love does not obey our expectations;
it obeys our intentions.*

LLOYD STROM

This morning my wife, Christie, asked all of us at the breakfast table, “What was the most exotic vacation you took growing up?” My son and daughter-in-law were there, and smiles broke out on all our faces.

“Car camping at Yellowstone,” I said quickly. “It was pretty exotic for a kid.”

“Jamaica,” Rita told us. “My best friend in junior high invited me to go with her family. We had papaya milkshakes every day.”

“Papaya milkshakes?” I asked.

“They were so good.”

As we took turns telling about our travels, I imagined sharing the adventure in each location, and hearing about the trips was enjoyable even when a story included a hint of unsettling danger. Colin said he once had to shake out his shoes every morning to check for scorpions.

Whether our experience is something like trying a new flavor of

milkshake or finding it necessary to check our shoes for scorpions, traveling stirs us, opening us up to new possibilities. And, yes, new sights, sounds, and experiences often unsettle us, too—but in a healthy way.

Travel Preparations

As we travel through this book together, we'll experience the bumps in the road that come with any travel. We'll encounter crowded intersections, face unexpected dead ends, and make surprising new discoveries. But this book isn't just any kind of travel book. It's about the kind of travel that opens us up to experiencing the love of a lifetime *through learning how to love well*.

Learning how to love well, a journey with no end, may be the best adventure you'll ever take. At first it might be a bit unsettling, but you'll quickly see that tensions and uncertainty are part of the trip no matter how prepared you think you are.

Recently, I approached Christie as she was preparing for our annual trip to Mexico. She was sitting on the floor with her suitcase in front of her, surrounded by everything she wanted to pack.

"How are you?" I asked.

"Stressed."

"Anything I can do to help?"

"Thanks, but no. I just feel like I'm forgetting something. But I'm so ready to get away from the rain."

"Me too," I said, echoing her sentiment.

Although preparations can sometimes be stressful, we always look forward to our trips to Mexico. Each one includes aspects of travel that are both familiar and new. We stay in a town we know and love but then take short trips to places we've never visited.

Part of the joy of travel for all of us who travel is seeing the sights and sounds we know, including welcome familiar faces and the people we love, as well as anticipating new experiences. But we'll also have experiences we didn't anticipate. Perhaps that's why it's said travel changes us. I believe that's true, even as we travel through marriage.

Traveling with an Open Mind

As I write now, we're in Mexico, and I just finished a marriage intensive—a several-day stretch of counseling—with a couple who flew here to work with me.

“We love Sayulita,” the wife said about our home-base town after their first day here. “The food here is so fresh, and the people are so friendly.”

We settled into our work, and it was immediately apparent that this couple would progress quickly. They were open, receptive, flexible, and resilient, and they leaned fully into our task.

“We want to resolve issues and make our marriage work,” the husband said. “We’ve been separated for six weeks, and neither of us like that. We’re eager to learn new skills.”

And they did. Our sessions went smoothly, largely because of their openness to discover where they had gone wrong and then learn how to make things right. They recognized the old “road map” for their relationship was no longer working and that sticking to their well-worn path would only lead to more disappointment.

“I must admit I came hoping you would change my husband,” the wife shared at the end of the third day. “I really thought he was the problem, and I feared you might not see his issues. But coming to a new place and participating in this intensive counseling really opened my eyes to my part in our problems.”

Her husband smiled broadly.

“Same for me,” he said. “I almost backed out of counseling because I figured we’d be a thousand miles from home and nothing between us would have changed. I’m so glad we came.”

The couple thanked me for my help.

“You should thank each other,” I said. “I simply helped hold the space for you both to do your work. You each came with different expectations, and even traveled to a foreign country, but you gave yourselves every opportunity to grow.”

Traveling with an open mind is what I hope for you as you move through this book. I want you to become fully aware of your experiences

in love, the roads you've taken and those you've avoided. I want you to come to a deeper understanding of the ways you've been challenged in your marriage. And I want you to discover opportunities for growth.

As you approach this opportunity to grow your relationship, it's imperative that you open yourself up to new possibilities, challenging how you view the world—especially your world of love.

Good Intentions Aren't Enough

A desire to travel and see new sights and sounds isn't the same as actually traveling. Intending to build a better and stronger marriage isn't the same as putting in the hard work to draw closer to your mate and have a healthy, happy relationship. In other words, good intentions aren't enough.

I intended to study abroad, but it never happened. I intended to travel to several countries I haven't visited, but that, too, has not happened. Good intentions can leave you disappointed if action doesn't follow.

Several months ago I listened to our grandson Caleb play a beautiful composition on the piano. Impressed and deeply inspired, I hugged Caleb and then took a photo of his music book. I immediately ordered it and vowed to learn this piece so I could play it for him.

Now, several months later, I haven't opened that book.

What happened to my intention to learn this minuet? Why haven't I even opened this music book?

You have your own version of this story, right? You've begun certain activities with the best intentions but then stopped. While you were sincere at the start, life got in the way. Old roads, deeply rutted, pulled you in old directions. Or, to be more honest, something else became more important to you. You weren't as dedicated to losing weight, learning that foreign language, taking that college class—or improving your love life—as you thought.

Achieving our best love life takes more than intention. We must vigorously pursue healthy and vibrant love, trying out new behaviors and attitudes.

This book, a guide for this journey of a lifetime, is about the “more”

of love. Those wonderful, heady, butterflies-in-your-stomach feelings of love are wonderful *and possible* throughout your marriage, but it takes work to keep experiencing them.

What does it take to achieve this ongoing, inspiring love? As we travel through this book together, you'll learn the importance of a clear road map, free from diversions and dead ends. You'll learn about the importance of fully appreciating self-defeating traits that steer you off course. And you'll learn about the subtle nuances of traveling well with your mate.

In short, this book itself is a road map that, when followed, will lead you to a stable, enduring, loving relationship.

The Road Ahead

What does the road ahead look like for you in your marriage journey?

I still think there's power in intention. I still believe in buying travel guides to far-off countries we'd like to visit. I still believe in buying music books after listening to ten-year-old children play Beethoven, attempting to fuel the desire to play those compositions as well. And I also still believe in good intentions as they pertain to where we want to go with our relationships. But along with good intentions, we must add work.

I smile at romantic comedies and chuckle when two unlikely lovers find their way to each other. So, yes, I believe in love. But I also believe in the work it takes to sustain it. I believe in the work it takes to identify and alter self-defeating, relationship-defeating traits and cultivate relationship-building skills that knit a couple together. I cry when two people in my work risk taking a new route, giving up routines and being truly ready to learn. I'm moved when a couple finds a way to set aside differences to repair their broken relationship.

So let's take the road in this book together and learn new lessons for your marriage. Learning to love well is perhaps the most exciting journey you can ever take. Are you ready for the love life of your dreams? I can help you get there.

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Preparing for Your Journey

*It's not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship
that makes unhappy marriages.*

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Eager for a weekend adventure in Mexico, Christie and I asked friends for some ideas.

“Go to Tequila,” one friend said, clearly excited for us. “It’s not too far away, it’s colonial, and it’s fun. You’ll like it.”

Another friend suggested Tequila, too, and then told us about a great place to stay. We checked it all out on a map, made our hotel reservation, and rented a car. We were set.

On Friday afternoon we packed our rental car and plugged the address of our hotel into the GPS. Then we left Sayulita and headed out onto the highway for our weekend adventure.

Along the way, we chatted excitedly about our trip as our GPS gave us directions. Then after driving along the scenic coast for about an hour, the GPS told us to turn right in 500 feet, onto a small, two-lane road.

“This looks like it might be a shortcut to Tequila, over the mountains,” I said.

We continued, commenting on the mango farms and the few, sleepy Mexican towns we drove through. Then suddenly the road came to an abrupt dead end.

“What happened?” I asked. “I don’t get it. The GPS can’t be wrong, can it?”

“Don’t know,” Christie said. “I’m sure this was the road it told us to take.”

“We did something wrong.” I looked around for some indication of our error. “Did we miss a turn?”

“I don’t know. Let’s go back out to the highway and make sure this was the right turn.”

We backtracked the ten miles, still searching for some clue about our mistake. We found none. Back on the main highway, we again critically reviewed the GPS directions. Directed to the same route we’d just taken, we decided to take it again.

Now back on the narrow road, we drove slowly so we wouldn’t miss anything. But then we came to the same dead end.

“This is crazy,” I said. “What are we missing? I can’t believe we just followed the GPS to the same dead end.”

“It must be wrong,” Christie said, clearly exasperated.

“Do we backtrack one more time?” I asked.

“I guess so. I don’t know what else to do.”

So we turned around and headed back to the main highway again. The ten miles of backtracking seemed to take forever this time. Once there, we triple-checked the GPS directions against our printed map. Then we followed them again, turning down the same narrow road, driving past the same mango orchards and through the same sleepy towns, watching and hoping for our GPS to give us the missed turn.

And for a third time we came to the same dead end.

“Now what?” I asked. “We’ve just wasted an hour. Maybe we should go back to Sayulita.”

“No,” Christie said. “It’s just time to ignore the GPS and look for another route. We’re going a different way.”

“A different way? The GPS is telling us *this* is the way.”

“The GPS is wrong! It must need updating. We need to try another route.”

We pulled over, took a deep breath, and again studied our printed map. We needed a new way, a new plan. Trusting our GPS wasn't working.

There *was* another way. It appeared longer, but it was likely surer.

“Well, we wanted an adventure,” I said, grabbing Christie's hand, determined to improve my attitude. “We've got plenty of gas, plenty of time, and we'll have to trust our instincts.”

We took the new route, but to do it, we had to let go of our preconceived idea that following the GPS route was the right way and the only way. In the end, the new route, combined with an adventurous spirit, made for a great trip.

What's Love Got to Do with It?

Our trip to Tequila was a bit like the trip you're taking with me in this book. You have a road map/GPS in your brain telling you exactly where to go and how to get there. It's your authority, right? It always takes you to your destination by the best route.

But what if your internal map, like our GPS, needs updating? It may not have all the most current information for navigating your life—especially your love life. What *seems* right may not *be* right. What appears to be the best route may not actually be the best route.

Now go on an adventure with me. Lay aside your inner GPS, your road map to love, in favor of exploring love from new directions.

Your first challenge is to ask yourself, “What's love got to do with it?” This is a critical question we'll look at in this first chapter and then come back to in all the chapters that follow.

We've been taught that romantic love—the heady “stars in your eyes” feeling—is what love is all about. In fact, that feeling is usually the first thing we think about when we think about love. We've been taught that the feeling of love is what holds a relationship together. But is this true?

That's probably what your inner GPS is telling you. We've all been taught that the romantic feeling of love has everything to do with our love life, and that feeling does have a lot to do with it, to be sure. We wouldn't move past the first date if we weren't attracted, both physically and emotionally, to the person we're with. Certainly those feelings give us the impetus to seek an ongoing connection.

But after the initial blast of excitement, there has to be more. When conflicts enter the scene, and they surely will, we need the skills to encourage the attraction to continue. While we must always have starry innocence, the warmth that comes from feeling respected by and respecting our mate sets the foundation for what is to follow.

You *can* have the love life of your dreams, and you *can* feel that special tingle when you see your mate across the room, *but* you must build upon the initial foundation for your relationship.

I find the concept of *building* lacking in so many marriage books. Many of them fail to tell you exactly what it will take to maintain that heady feeling of love. The authors fail to fully discuss cultivating love and eliminating roadblocks to sustaining it. That's what we'll learn in this book.

So building on the foundation of attraction, let's move into exploring some of the thorny issues you'll face in an intimate relationship. I'll arm you with tools so that when the struggles come, and they will, you can face them with hope and confidence.

What else will give you that hope and confidence? Facing reality. Facing the same old road with the same dead ends (illusions) only leads to profound discouragement. You can't sustain a romantic love life working off an outdated map or faulty GPS. You need to discover a better way.

But what is the better way?

A Better Way

I love the feeling of being in love. We've got to have it, or we give up and push away from one another. But it takes more than that feeling to build a marriage.

Again, when thinking about love, most of us do think about a feeling. Perhaps we even have an image in mind. A romantic dinner with a special someone. A weekend away at an exotic destination with someone giving us their undivided attention. We feel cared for, loved, and perhaps as though we're enveloped in a warm, fuzzy cocoon.

And we should hold on to these feelings. But we should hold on to them loosely. Without the skills necessary for building a healthy, long-lasting relationship, the memory of feeling love is only that—a memory.

A love life of our dreams requires understanding why and how we become disappointed in love. What happens to those loving feelings, and how can we recapture them? What are the mistakes we make again and again, and how do we avoid making wrong turns and coming to dead ends? We must evaluate and honestly assess the directions we're following in our love lives and prepare to alter our course as necessary.

Our Road Maps—Accurate or Not?

We've all heard that love is blind. I suggest that, instead, love is naïve. As I said, I'm a believer in the *feeling* of love, but we must build on that feeling for a healthy marriage. We must critically look at the events in our relationship that sour that feeling, look at behaviors that dampen our enthusiasm for love, and look at the issues clouding our vision and creating discouragement. This will require looking critically at our road maps.

Most of us alter our course reluctantly, if at all. Note how many times Christie and I traveled down the same road to the same dead end, sure that the outcome would somehow magically change. But outcomes don't change unless we do.

You arrive at your destination in life only with an accurate road map to follow. But what if your road map includes faulty expectations, erroneous beliefs, distortions in thinking? What if your road map is wrong? Worse, what if your road map is wrong yet you still cling to it?

Christie and I were fortunate that our GPS was absolutely wrong. While it took us three tries to change our minds, we did finally change

our course—and with great results. But what if our relational road maps are only partly wrong, as is often the case? What if they're just missing some critical details we need to direct us through specific challenges?

It's been said we'll become hopelessly lost if we follow a compass that's even two degrees off. This is true in our relationships as well: Two degrees off (if not more!) will put us hopelessly off course. Reflect on this for a moment. What if many of the things you do in your marriage put you in the right general direction for your desired outcome, but you're two degrees off—meaning you have certain beliefs, self-defeating behaviors, or traits that steer you off course?

Most of us are at least two degrees off when it comes to love. Most of us are lost. Yet we know only what we know, so we must begin with where we are today. Then if we learn we're two degrees or more off from our desired destination, we need to create a new road map.

I'm mindful that these may not be pleasant words to hear. Most of us want to hear we're doing all the right things we need to be doing. We don't want to hear what we're doing is wrong. I assure you this book is hopeful, and chapter by chapter, we'll learn how to make course corrections to end up where we intended—with a love life worthy of our dreams.

First, we must admit it when we're lost, that we're following a faulty road map, that we need map correcting and course correcting. Staying on our present course won't lead to a healthy, fulfilling love life.

Hard Times—How Did We Get Here?

It's easy to think feelings of love will last or at least prevail when hard times come. But feelings are fickle.

How do we end up so off course? By following the only internal road map we know. We begin our search for love and connection with only a vague sense of direction, right and wrong, good and bad, inherited from our parents and they from theirs.

We think the way we do because we've essentially been programmed to think this way. Our road map, passed down from generation to

generation, is largely unexamined. My parents didn't have a clear map to share with me. They knew only what they knew, unaware their map may not have been the right one for me.

Prior to marriage, I knew little about love. I was told I needed to love and be committed to my wife—period. That was the verbal instruction I received. That instruction, however, conflicted with much of what I saw. I watched my dad become exasperated with my mother, slam kitchen cupboards, and storm out of rooms. I watched him fight and then take flight. I don't remember him ever sitting down with my mother, or her with him, to discuss what was happening. I didn't see him apologize or take ownership for his bad behavior. It's no surprise I adopted some of these traits. This became my road map.

Children adopt what they see, so it's no surprise I thought love meant hiding my true feelings, becoming exasperated when things didn't go my way, and then withdrawing into pouting if the situation escalated.

Add to this training the influence of television on my road map. I was raised with a heavy dose of sitcoms, serials, and movies as my models for life. Men were supposed to act a certain way, and women were to act another. Little of it was healthy, and none, as I recall, was based on anything remotely connected to what we have subsequently learned about healthy love.

My road map for love was designed by my upbringing, not fully chosen by me. Adopted but not reviewed. Accepted but not critiqued.

Like me, you probably inherited your road map. And I suspect that, like me, you haven't reviewed your map, questioned what you've been taught, or really inspected what you're doing. Is it any wonder when the map isn't working? Our beliefs need to be questioned, our thinking needs to be inspected, and our maps need to be updated.

Where Do We Want to Go?

If the map of love given us by television and now the internet and social media doesn't show us where we want to go, where *do* we want to go? Rather than talking about the romantic love we hear about in

popular love songs, or feel heady about when reading a love poem, or giggle over as we watch a romantic comedy, or engage in a romantic beach read, I'm suggesting a new route.

A healthy marriage relationship is a stable, secure attachment to one person—your lover. This healthy relationship is relatively free from conflict. Problems are resolved and repairs are made quickly. A love relationship is about enjoying another person and being enjoyed. In this relationship, free from excessive conflict and pain, you retain many of those wonderful feelings that brought you together in the first place. Here, you fully appreciate and enjoy the person who lives life with you.

Does this love life appeal to you? It is available to you, but it's likely that you must change course to access it. To find out, you must become clear about where you are and how you got there.

Over the next several chapters, our work takes us through a series of course corrections. In this ongoing journey, you'll learn more about yourself and how you function—both the good and the bad. You'll learn more about your mate, exploring more and more of who this person is. This deepening connection, filled with joy as well as sorrow, will make both you and your spouse better people.

Can this journey include romantic, loving feelings? Absolutely. It must. But you'll add necessary skills to build on those feelings. As you learn to love well, then, you will likely be loved well in return.

Distorted Road Maps and Faulty GPS

Let's back up and consider in more depth how we get off course. Where did we take wrong turns? How has our map been faulty?

As I suggested, your parents modeled a road map for love. It may have been much like mine with many critical issues never discussed. It's been said that *learning is more caught than taught*. Our learning comes from what we see and experience more than from intentional lessons taught by our parents.

Too often, by the time we've reached adulthood and married, we've traveled far from our desired destination of a healthy, robust love life. We've likely learned and practiced many bad behaviors. We've likely

been disappointed in love. It's not that our choice of mate was wrong but rather that we were ill-equipped to navigate the challenges of a marriage relationship. It's not that those exciting initial feelings were to be distrusted but rather that we lacked the skills necessary to maintain those wonderful feelings. If both you and your mate are disappointed because of unmet expectations but have lacked the skills to discuss and manage those expectations, you have likely struggled.

Let's consider some of the ways our road maps may have taken us off course.

Living in a closed system: If our parents conveyed *what happens in this family stays in this family*, they endorsed a closed system. In such a system, we don't seek new thinking and learning or review our road map because we've either been firmly told not to or we've not been instructed on the importance of openness. Staying closed is a sure way to stay stuck.

My father's anger issues, for example, were never discussed. We never sought family counseling. We never sought the counsel of a pastor. My grandfather's drinking problems were only vaguely alluded to. My mother's passive-aggression remained in the background of our family life as well. We were a closed family system, following the only map we had.

Living with marriage or family problems *as if they are normal* keeps us stuck and lost, and this attitude creates a barrier to new learning. We never learn to ask others for help or to review our outdated maps with us. We need input from other people for an open, healthy marriage and family system as well as for the new opportunities for growth that stem from that input.

Do you live in a closed marriage or family system? What problematic patterns of behaving have never been reviewed or updated? Are you open to hearing new information about how you're relating to others and how you might improve?

Trusting only ourselves: Related to the concept of a closed system, many people have learned to trust only themselves. This, of course, reinforces their narrow beliefs and stops them from growing. But to grow and change, we need to hear constructive criticism. We need someone who will look at our road map for love and challenge us.

Your mate—a “helpmate”—is a primary source of growth for you. I cannot emphasize enough the power and importance of listening and learning from your spouse. No one knows you like this one other person. Turning a deaf ear to their counsel keeps you terribly stuck. Listening to their wisdom allows you to learn from them, helping you correct your erroneous road map.

Needing to be right: Early on, many of us learned to point blame or dismiss others, insisting we’re in the right. Perhaps we saw it modeled, listening to our parents as they squabbled. (We might have even learned that one way to get out of trouble, albeit temporarily, was to blame or dismiss others.)

The need to be right reinforces the faulty belief that our road map is accurate. Filled with pride, we resist any critical feedback. We tell ourselves what we’re doing is working when that is anything but true. We focus on the ways our mate is limited in love rather than on how *we* need to change.

Recently, a man I was counseling scolded me for challenging him to grow in his marriage.

“I know what I’m doing,” he said. “It’s my wife who needs to change. Why are you being so hard on me?”

“Your wife is doing her work,” I said, “but I’m not sure you’re doing what you need to do.”

“You’re harder on me than you are on her.”

“No,” I said, firm. “When I confront your wife, she takes my feedback and applies it to her life. I don’t see you doing that.”

He squirmed for a few moments, then stared at me.

Can you hear the rigidity in his words and feel his resistance to change? Can you see how his attitude shifts the focus from him to his mate, keeping him completely misguided and off course? Can you imagine the impact this has on his marriage?

“Her work doesn’t look exactly like your work because she’s working on herself,” I continued. “You can’t see it, and in fact, it’s not your business to know about it. Your job is to focus on the ways you love or don’t love and how *you* need to grow.”

Many people I work with are resistant to developing new road maps.

Attached to the maps they have, they dismiss my input and the input of others. Their need to be right supersedes the possibility for change. But sometimes we must focus on our work alone and leave our mate's work to them. In doing so, both partners are likely to grow stronger.

Believing feelings don't matter: Another way we get off course is by disregarding our feelings even though they're a primary way we sense something is amiss. Every map has points of orientation, helping us discern north, south, east, and west. Feelings are our internal points of orientation. Distrusting and denying feelings are two sure ways to maintain an outdated road map. Feelings matter. They're an integral aspect of who you are, and they tell you what you need in life.

Our feelings are like sensors sounding alarms. When feeling loneliness, for example, we're alerted to our need for connection. Feelings of sadness alert us to our need for comfort.

It's critical to spend time understanding what you feel and what your feelings are telling you. They will bring you to your truth and help you reorient yourself to the world. They'll help you understand your core values and what must happen for you to obtain what you need. They'll help you correct that two-degree distortion.

Acknowledging your feelings and sharing them with your mate is an important source of connection. For this to happen, though, your relationship must be a safe place where any and every feeling has breathing room.

Weaving a Story Around Our Road Map

As a marriage counselor, I'm sometimes amazed at how attached people are to the road map they're following. Many times I can't seem to offer enough guidance for them to even consider altering their direction. Can you relate? Have you ever been so attached to a certain direction that no matter how much advice you received to the contrary, you were determined to follow your flawed path?

Repeatedly reinforced in our minds, a faulty road map takes on a life of its own. Our direction, believed and justified, becomes firmer and firmer. We rationalize our path, disregarding information that

suggests we're on the wrong road, and then we focus on the minuscule bits of information that reinforce our position. We're attached to our road map, and nothing can pull us away from it.

No wonder many of us remain lost in our love life. No wonder our life doesn't work. We're not open to course corrections.

Think again about the previous examples of directions some parents unknowingly give their children: *your system is closed, you can trust only yourself, you're always right, your feelings don't matter*. If you adopt "truths" like these without inspecting and reviewing them, your road map could be even more than two degrees off. Your road map is the story you rehearse and live out, time and again. Can you see how these degree distortions have a profound impact on you over time?

We need to step back and decline to trust everything we've been told and are telling ourselves. We really don't know it all. What we're doing isn't working. If it were, we would have no need for teachers to guide us into a new life. But for teachers to teach, they must have a student, and right now, that student is you. Trusting others to guide you and offer new insights can have a dramatic impact on your life.

Can you see how critical an accurate road map is to your emotional development and a healthy love life? Can you see that the stories you tell yourself influence your road map?

Living with Illusions and Delusions

Scott Peck was one of the first people I recall willing to confront the idea that we don't tell ourselves the truth. This was not a popular notion when he penned the words in his 1978 book, *The Road Less Traveled*, and perhaps it's no more popular now. We've all heard and read much press about the wisdom of trusting ourselves.

Peck writes about how many people would rather live with their own deception than face the pain of changing course. We are capable, he says, of telling ourselves incredible lies so we can cling to the lives we've meticulously created.

How is it possible to be completely lost and at the same time tell ourselves we know where we are and where we're going? The answer has

to do with living with illusions and delusions. Faulty road maps are full of the distorted, outdated thinking we believe. Not only do we believe these faulty road maps, but we justify the directions we take.

This deluded thinking leads to further unclear thinking. Remember two-degree distortions. Distorted thinking, rehearsed and reinforced again and again, leads to a faulty road map. This leads to us getting lost relationally and meeting dead ends.

Hannah is typical of many people who come to me for counseling. Now forty-five and newly divorced, she always believed she knew her way. She'd lied to herself for years about her love life, telling herself it wasn't that bad. But it was.

Hannah is a successful real estate broker, known for being savvy and perhaps a bit cutthroat. She's been married twice, both troubled relationships. She's now disillusioned about love, doubting her ability to attract healthy love, and she came to see me to examine her life and consider changing her direction.

"I feel really discouraged," she said. "After my first divorce, I told myself I would be more careful and not make the same mistakes. But my second marriage failed too. I don't think I was the easiest person to live with."

"You can see things now that you couldn't see then?" I asked.

"Oh yes. I'm watching the guys my daughter is dating and the way she treats them, and I see myself. She's making the same mistakes I made, and I'm afraid for her. I'm afraid for me too."

"What have you learned from those experiences?"

"I learned that I have a temper. I'm controlling. I think I drown out my sadness by working all the time. Am I angrier than I think? I have too many moods and pick the wrong kinds of men. Beyond that, I don't have a clue."

"You're thinking about your life, Hannah," I said. "And that's good. The answers will come if you look closely at your life."

"Two failed marriages and some broken relationships after that. There's a trail of hurt behind me and probably ahead of me if I don't stop and figure this out. I don't really know what I'm doing wrong."

Though guarding her emotions, Hannah was clearly—and

understandably—unhappy. She'd been married for twelve years the first time and the second time for seven. She had relationship experience but didn't seem to be learning from it. What were her faulty thinking patterns? What did she need to change? What did she need to do to course correct and become successful in love?

This woman didn't come to counseling until her mid-forties. Why didn't she seek help earlier, in her twenties, thirties, or early forties? The reason isn't surprising. Hannah didn't seek help because she believed she had the correct road map for living and loving. She believed she knew enough to make her own way. She avoided teachers who might have helped her. She made all the mistakes you read about earlier in this chapter—living a closed life, distrusting others, not owning her mistakes, and ignoring her feelings. She believed in her own beliefs, and she was convinced she could figure things out herself.

She was wrong.

Hannah is not alone. She's like others who believed they knew what they were doing. They trusted the roads they chose, refusing to stop and reconsider their direction. They believed the feeling of love was enough to hold a marriage together. As we've said, it isn't. Love is not enough, and we must be open to reviewing our outdated maps and vigorously seeking course corrections. Those struggling to "find love" are often missing critical information along the way.

Getting Our Road Maps Straight

If Hannah is to have a new life filled with life and love, she must change. She can't just keep to her current course and expect her life to be different. It doesn't work that way. If we want our lives to change, we must change.

Specifically, Hannah must critically review her erroneous beliefs—her illusions and delusions—and make changes. She must explore how the beliefs she's lived by and the road map she's used to guide her are wrong. But she will never make those changes as long as she believes she has the right path before her despite her failures.

It's not too late for Hannah. She has the opportunity to change her

life as well as offer fresh perspectives for her daughter. She can teach her daughter to question her decisions and direction.

It's not too late for you, either.

Questioning and doubting our road map isn't easy work, but we all must reach a point where we're willing to admit we don't know what we're doing. We must admit that what we're doing isn't working and that we need teachers—possibly several of them.

As the saying goes, if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got. You probably know the corollary to this: If you do what you've always done and expect different results, you're crazy.

Well, you're probably not crazy, but if you're struggling in love, you are no doubt living with illusions and even delusions. Are you ready to take the huge step of admitting your road map is outdated—faulty—and needs revision? Getting our road maps straight means understanding we need help and guidance from those willing to speak into our lives.

Hannah made a critical decision to come to counseling. This is a huge move for someone accustomed to running their own life. It's not easy for anyone to admit they don't know what they need to know. She took a big step in admitting her life wasn't working and that she was responsible for that. Even more critical was her attitude.

"It's not easy for me to be here," she said. "I never ask for help. I'm not even sure I believe in it. But what I'm doing is definitely not working."

She paused and looked at me, then went on.

"But I don't know what I don't know. In my business, consultants come in all the time to tell us what we don't know. I'd like to think I'm open enough to apply the same concept to my personal life and learn from you."

I appreciated Hannah's attitude of humility. She was now teachable and open to new learning. Scripture has much to say about the power of humility. First Peter 5:6 tells us, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). Written just after Peter said God opposes the proud in verse 5, this admonition indicates humility is a powerful tool for growth. Pride, instead, keeps us hopelessly stuck.

Hannah and I considered an appropriate path for her. We agreed

that her road map needed updating. We agreed to explore her attitudes and behavior regarding relationships and love.

Love Is Not “Out There”

One of the first critical insights for Hannah was the need for a shift in her attitude. She believed that if she was open to the love “out there,” then love would *just happen* for her. But the truth is love is not “out there,” and it doesn’t just magically happen.

Many people approach love as if it just happens. Why would they think anything different? Love does just happen, right? But while the act of falling in love does happen, sustaining a long-term, loving relationship is anything but a passive process. This was news for Hannah. She had approached her love life as if she had all the tools she needed for love (wrong) and that if she kept doing what she knew to do, her love life would just fall into place (also wrong).

Love, at least alive and dynamic love, doesn’t happen spontaneously like we see in the movies. We can’t expect love to just come along. And we don’t *find* love as much as we *create* love. Then we build on that love, day after day. We work at it just as we work at anything important to us. We focus on it, dedicate ourselves to it, and nurture it.

This was a powerful shift in focus for Hannah.

What Change Requires of Us

The importance of Hannah seeking counseling was not so much that she believed I had all the answers but that she was ready to doubt herself and become a seeker.

Consider that the cost of change requires following this step. Being open to change means accepting the fact that your life will be disrupted with change. When we admit we’re lost and going in the wrong direction, we have a sense of instability. *What do I do now? If I’m lost, where am I? Where do I need to go? What changes must I make?*

Change first requires the willingness to admit we’re misguided. Directionless. Confused by faulty GPS. *If the direction I’m traveling*

doesn't bring the results I want, what am I to do? Can you sense the temporary confusion?

As you approach change, you must also look into parts of yourself that resist the change process. This is a hard truth. We've spent a lot of energy meticulously creating the exact lives we have, so we cling to them even as we also complain about them. That's the truth of the matter. It's true for me, and it's true for you.

I can't count how many people have come to counseling with me, vowing they want to change, only to drop out when the going got tough. Then they no doubt drift back to their previous ways of coping with their problems rather than doing the work to solve them. I anticipate that temptation to quit and even prepare counselees for it so they can steel themselves against it.

Change is difficult. It requires us to admit we've been denying our negative tendencies passed down from generation to generation as well as our tendency to lie to ourselves. It requires us to admit we're stuck and need help.

And so like Hannah, all of us must doubt ourselves. We don't know as much as we think we know. Our relationship GPS could be faulty, and if so, we're likely headed for some dead ends. We've developed patterns of interacting and loving that have led us off course. A bright light must be shed on our behavior and attitudes, and a strong dose of humility must enter our lives, leading us to the change we need.

Being Filled with Love

What is the change we desperately need? We've already discussed how not having a fulfilling love life can result from outdated road maps or faulty GPS. Your work is to doubt yourself and humbly review how you've been living and loving, probably with a skilled teacher or counselor. It's about taking an honest look at how far off your relational map has been.

Remember, a healthy love life is not only about *doing* things differently, as important as that is, but about *being* different. It's about changing from the inside out, not from the outside in. Our actions must

match our intentions. It's about being humble and open to learning how we can be healthy, wholesome individuals capable of attracting another healthy, wholesome person into our life. When we are filled with love, we will attract love.

Imagine how people will respond to you if you're filled with hate, fear, or greed. What if you're reactive and angry when things don't go your way? Who will choose to be near you? Probably only someone with similar traits. Imagine inviting a person into your life and then revealing to them how much hurt, pain, and fear you harbor in the secret corners of your life.

Our work in this book is about helping you inspect the secret corners of your life and cleaning them out, then updating your road map and journeying into being more loving.

What's Love Got to Do with It?

As we close this chapter, I ask again, what's love got to do with it? If we're talking about the feeling of love, then something, to be sure. We need the heart palpitations to move forward in a relationship. But these palpitations won't carry us far enough. When our relationship isn't working, then we must have more than that feeling of love so we can navigate. We need a new road map and new directions. We need a course correction.

And for that course correction, we must let go of the false notions of romance we've all seen and experienced. We must face the fact that it takes far more than a feeling to take us to where we want to be: in a stable, connected, life-giving, and loving relationship.

It's time for straight truth about what does and does not make relationships work. Let's find that truth so you can make good choices for your relationship and still have the possibility of the love life of your dreams.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With more than 30 years of counseling experience, **David Hawkins**, PhD, has a special interest in helping individuals and couples strengthen their relationships. Dr. Hawkins's books, including *When Pleasing Others Is Hurting You*, *Dealing with the CrazyMakers in Your Life, In Sickness and in Health*, and *When Loving Him Is Hurting You* have more than 500,000 copies in print.