

CHAPTER ONE

What Is an Evolutionary Relationship?



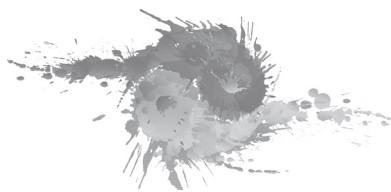
*There are vast realms of consciousness still undreamed of –
vast ranges of experience, like the humming of unseen harps ...
a marvelous rich world of contact and sheer fluid beauty
and fearless face-to-face awareness of now-naked life.*

~ D.H. Lawrence, Terra Incognita

One winter evening, I fell in love at New York's Carnegie Hall. I was sitting in the front row, applauding with almost three thousand others as the virtuoso cellist Yo Yo Ma took to the stage, accompanied by the great vocalist Bobby McFerrin. I knew the collaboration between these two musical giants would be something unique, but I could not have anticipated the experience I would have that night.

From the outset, the love and respect that these two performers had for each other was palpable. It seemed to bounce back and forth between them, flowing like the music itself, weaving a field of irrepressible joy that rippled out from the stage. At one point, a draft caught the set list that lay on the floor and it fluttered off the stage and fell at my feet. I bent forward

to pick it up and hand it to them, and as I did so, they playfully drew me into their field, as though my outstretched hand holding the piece of paper was another instrument joining in the spontaneous harmony they were creating. I felt lifted up on a wave of creativity and ecstasy that compares to the experience of falling in love. Indeed, it seemed as though the whole auditorium was falling in love, not with any particular person but with the joyful energy that was pulsing amongst us. With each new burst of musical brilliance, the performers inspired and uplifted each other, and with each wave of applause and laughter, the audience embraced them, until it felt like there was no longer a stage separating us, but simply one unbroken field of love and happiness delighting in itself. *This is what's possible for human beings* — I thought — *how human relatedness can be.*



There are seven billion people living on planet Earth, and by 2050, there will be more than nine billion. Our sheer numbers and our communication technologies are bringing us ever-closer, connecting each one of us to a web of relatedness like nothing the world has seen before. Thirty-nine percent of humanity has access to the internet, and by some estimates, more than ninety percent have mobile phones. The mass uprisings of the Arab Spring were made possible by tools like Twitter, allowing vast numbers of people to communicate and self-organize. Using our social networks, we're constantly coming up with innovative ways to coexist and share resources in our ever-more-crowded world — from the “city bikes” that recently appeared outside my New York City apartment, to the rise of “couch surfing” websites like Air BnB, to car-sharing schemes and so on. We truly are living in an age of interconnectedness.

Interestingly, there is a parallel trend that's been noticed by some spiritual teachers and luminaries with whom I've worked. They have observed that around the turn of the Millennium, as internet use became more widespread and the “world wide web” of connectivity intensified,

spiritual awakening became available more naturally to individuals and collectives as well. Experiences like the one I had at Carnegie Hall were occurring among groups of spiritual practitioners, often spontaneously, sometimes consciously generated. Mystics of old described visions of a Global Awakening, where the multitude of connections between us would “light up,” with love and creativity. For example, Sufi mystic Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee writes:

A web of light has been created around the world to help us make this transition. Through this web the invisible is already becoming visible, the signs of God already revealing themselves in a new way. In the energy of divine oneness the opposites have already come together. But love needs us to bring this potential into manifestation, to make it part of the fabric of daily life. Without our participation the potential will ebb into a fading promise of something that might have happened.¹

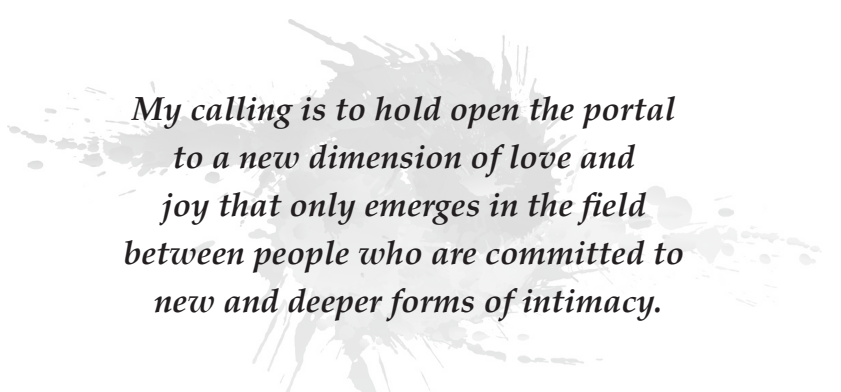
And he expands on the implications of this idea:

If that light can be brought into consciousness, then it can travel through the web of connections, awakening centers of consciousness within all of humanity. Humanity will have access to the wisdom, power, and love that it needs to take the next step in its spiritual evolution: to learn to function in oneness, as a dynamic, interrelated whole. Without this awakening, patterns of energy-flow around the planet will remain dormant, or function on a lower level, and once again humanity will have missed an opportunity.²

Many contemporary thinkers hearken back to the early 20th Century visionary Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who had written about the “Noosphere” — the network of collective human thought that envelops the planet just like the biosphere — which he believed would intensify and complexify as evolution continued. We now are seeing evidence of what he foretold. Terms like “collective consciousness,” “co-intelligence,” and “synergy” are becoming more common. Even some progressive business

leaders have started experimenting with ways to ignite the collective intelligence and creativity of their teams.

By the 1990's, I started to feel restless. I'd been working as a teacher while studying intensively, immersed in two spiritual paths and reading the work of great masters and psychological visionaries. Essentially, I felt unsettled working on my own and with other people's *individual* spiritual development. Something else was awakening and wanted to express itself through me — a slow burning fire that had been sparked back in those years with Peter. It had been more than a decade since Peter's death, and I wanted to rekindle the heightened shared consciousness I had shared with him, the level of awareness that can emerge in the field between people. I felt a calling to work with people who had come to the same realization regarding their personal spiritual development. So I began to work with others who were ready to awaken *collectively*.



*My calling is to hold open the portal
to a new dimension of love and
joy that only emerges in the field
between people who are committed to
new and deeper forms of intimacy.*

Today, the need for deeper and more authentic forms of relating is urgent. Paradoxically, despite our ever-increasing connectedness and glimpses into our collective potentials, many of us feel more isolated than ever before. According to a recent survey, thirty-five percent of Americans over age forty-five are “chronically lonely.”³ Young people grow up online with hundreds of virtual friends, but as a recent *New York Times* story put it, technology allows them to “end up hiding from one another, even as [they] are constantly connected to one another.” The author, MIT Professor Sherry Turkle, laments that we have left behind the “rich, messy, and demanding” world of human relationships for a “cleaned-up” world

of technology-enabled connection.⁴ Similarly, a recent cover story in *The Atlantic* entitled “Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?,” echoes Turkle’s concerns, concluding that our “web of connections ha[s] grown broader but shallower.”⁵

The internet — an infrastructure of connection — is here and growing, but we need to now balance it with the “inner net” — a new kind of relatedness that has the power to burst the bubble of lonely, alienated individuality that so many of us live in, along with the power to ignite an awakened field of consciousness within which groups of people may coexist and prosper. The moment has come for us to pursue what the mystics describe. By turning our attention toward collective forms of development and awakening, we may light up the pathways between us with more vibrant energy, love, and creativity. We must learn to unite in a much deeper and more profound way if we are to successfully navigate the challenges presented by our globalizing world. In sum, we are capable of creating and enjoying a more interconnected and fulfilled reality.

A New Frontier

It’s been my observation over four decades of teaching that even the most highly developed and spiritually enlightened human beings don’t necessarily know how to have deep, intimate, and transformative relationships. Often, we spend years developing ourselves, yet still feel frustrated with our relationships, intuitively knowing that more should be transpiring when we come together with others. We sense that something beautiful is possible between human beings, yet too often we find ourselves struggling and compromising in order to just “get along.”

Moreover, we tend to assume that highly evolved individuals spontaneously attain highly evolved relationships. But for the most part, this is not the case. Just because two musicians are virtuosos doesn’t mean they will be able to spontaneously and harmoniously play together, like Bobby McFerrin and Yo Yo Ma did that night. The same goes for the spiritual giants among us, and I know a story that perfectly illustrates this point.

One of my friends had the privilege of being invited to a special gathering of some of the world’s most revered spiritual teachers, including

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Deepak Chopra. My friend was humbled and honored to be in the presence of so many radiant and luminous souls, spiritual leaders who inspire thousands, if not millions around the world. One might assume that getting a group of people together of that caliber would ensure a powerful emergence of something new, and that the meeting would have a transformational impact of some kind on the world. Nevertheless, my friend was disappointed by the gathering. Speakers took turns expounding their own wisdom (and some were deeply inspiring), but no new way of being together collectively occurred. Nothing new was created out of being together. It was like a group of great soloists playing one after the other, but never becoming an orchestra.

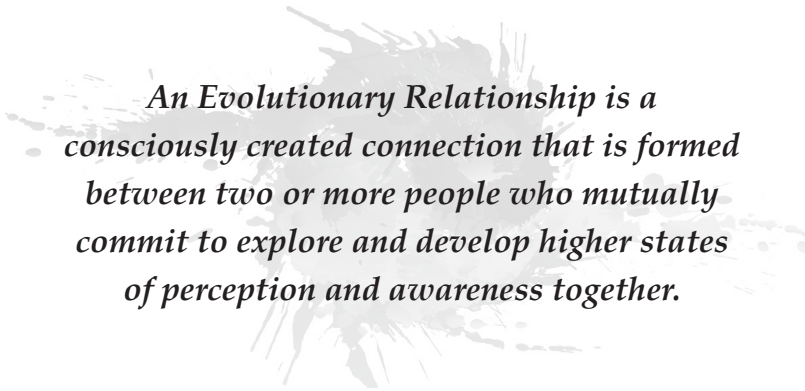
My friend's story has stayed with me because it demonstrates so clearly that individual spiritual development does not automatically translate into an awakened way of being together or collective transformation. It's not due to the fault or failing of individuals; it's simply that the space between us is not awake yet. That space represents a different dimension of awakening and that's where our focus needs to be. Our individual awakening is not enough, nor will it allow us to move into humanity's next era of connectedness — an era that must be founded on the reality of unity.

Consequently, it is critical that we begin to learn new ways of relating, that we begin to pay attention to the space between us and what can be birthed by a heightened connectivity. If our most enlightened leaders don't naturally find new ways to relate to each other in a manner that brings forth enhanced connections, love, and creativity, then what chance does our congress, businesses, or our families have to bring forth a new domain of relatedness?

Personally, I am convinced that if we wish to move to the next stage of our spiritual and cultural evolution — what I call the “WEvolution” — those of us who are fortunate enough to devote significant time and energy to our personal growth must now learn to relate to each other in a dramatically new way. To clarify: I am not simply referring to a relationship where love, acceptance, and freedom from judgment exist — the virtuous ideals modeled for us by our wisest spiritual teachers. Rather, I mean a unique form of relationship which fosters an interpenetrating depth and which calls forth each person's true potential within a fertile, co-creative field.

I've often compared this deeper form of relating to the moment when single-cell life forms divided to become multi-cellular organism. Then, DNA was exchanged through reproduction and creativity was completely unleashed, resulting in even grander combinations of life. Similarly, when humans come together in an Evolutionary Relationship, they cross the divide of separation, witness new potentials, and attain a new quality of consciousness that only may be shared with others.

In this type of relationship, we are inspired, touched, moved, excited, and creatively ignited by each other on a daily, if not momentary basis — just as those two great musicians were made greater by their mutual love and respect. A whole new frontier of human development opens up when we turn our attention toward the space between us — the “vast realms of consciousness still undreamed of,” according to D.H. Lawrence. This new dimension of relatedness — whether it emerges with a spouse, a lover, a colleague, close friend, or family member — becomes nothing less than a dynamic engine for mutual evolution and global creativity.



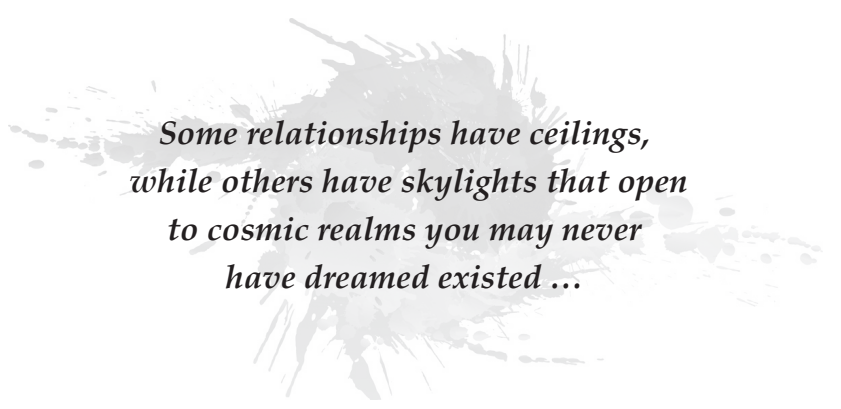
***An Evolutionary Relationship is a
consciously created connection that is formed
between two or more people who mutually
commit to explore and develop higher states
of perception and awareness together.***

Since first glimpsing these potentials in my relationship with Peter more than two decades ago, I've dedicated myself to understanding this dynamic, interpreting it, and translating it so that others can consciously create what I've come to call an “Evolutionary Relationship.” An Evolutionary Relationship is a consciously created connection that is formed around an explicit mutual commitment to developing higher potentials, individually and together.

An Evolutionary Relationship doesn't just benefit the individuals involved — it becomes a vehicle for bringing new potentials alive at the

leading edge of human evolution. This kind of relating allows us to move into a more fluid, interdependent, and interconnected consciousness, where each person's essential uniqueness and the experience of unity can co-exist. This mutually awakened state is so dramatically different from conventional connections that it represents a paradigm shift. Therefore, such relationships are inherently *evolutionary*— opening a door to the next stage of our collective human development.

I have had the unique privilege to work with thousands of men and women over the years, and I've witnessed a vast spectrum of human relationships, from the most basic, primitive, utilitarian kinds of connection, to the indescribably refined, exquisite experiences of unity. As a result, I've come to understand that not every relationship has the potential to be an evolutionary one. That doesn't mean that the relationships you have are not beautiful and valuable, but it's important to know the difference. Each relationship has innate potentials. We can't choose what those potentials are, but we can open ourselves to discover what is possible and then fully activate that particular relationship. It's like blending colors: If you have red and blue, you have the potential to make purple, but if you try to make green you will experience frustration. However, you can blend red and blue to make a deep purple — the most magnificent purple possible.



*Some relationships have ceilings,
while others have skylights that open
to cosmic realms you may never
have dreamed existed ...*

Sometimes when we experience disappointment in a relationship, it's not because we're with the wrong person but because we don't know how to recognize or reach the relationship's potential or how to activate that potentiality together. Regrettably, some relationships do have a limited or

specific ceiling, while others have skylights that open to cosmic realms you may never have dreamed existed. This later type of relationship is what we will focus on in this book — the kind I found with Peter. These Evolutionary Relationships are vehicles for mutual spiritual awakening.

Understanding Human Relationships

Since first tasting this new kind of relatedness, I've been convinced, intuitively, that it represents something more than a powerful experience for just two individuals. I believe it is intimately connected to the next stage of our evolution as a culture and as a species. This belief has led me to study the work of many developmental psychologists, evolutionary theorists, and social scientists, scholars who seek to understand how the potentials I glimpsed might fit into their maps of human and cultural development.

While every map or model has limitations, I've found that by studying and contemplating the distinctions between different levels and stages of human consciousness, the experience of relationship has become more advanced, more potent. For this reason, let's take a moment to reflect on a few of the thought-leaders whose work has been illuminating for me and for many others. My hope is that a brief review of seminal studies conducted by acknowledged philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists will help us place the relationship potentials in the context of our larger human journey.

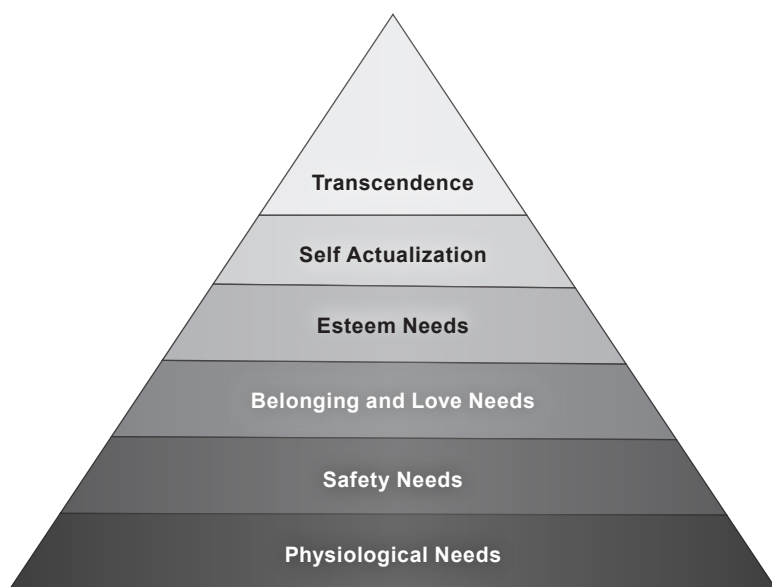
The early 20th Century psychologist Abraham Maslow created a very useful and widely cited model for understanding human needs. While you may have encountered Maslow's model — called the "Hierarchy of Needs" — you may not have considered how it sheds light on our relationships. I've found it to be very helpful in this regard.

Maslow's model represented human needs as a pyramid: Our most basic survival needs are at the bottom; followed by safety needs; then the need for love, affection and belonging; thereafter the need for self-esteem; and finally the need for self-actualization. Late in his life, Maslow added one more level at the peak of the pyramid — the need for self-transcendence.

The great insight of Maslow's model is the assertion that lower-level "deficiency" needs generally must be fulfilled before the individual can become concerned with higher level "being" needs. According to Maslow, "A hungry man may willingly surrender his need for self-respect in order to stay alive, but once he can feed, shelter, and clothe himself, he becomes likely to seek higher needs."⁶ This same lower-to-higher level need satiation pattern arises within a human relationships lens.

So let's take a closer look at Maslow's model and how it translates into human relationships. If we exist at a survival level — concerned about food, water, shelter, and self-defense — our relationships will reflect those fundamental needs. We will come together with others to help each other survive, and what we will share is the everyday business of fulfilling our most basic needs.

Sadly, many millions of people around the world are living at this survival level today, either due to a scarcity of resources or because of a disaster that has reduced their living conditions to basic survival. Yet, all relationships have to successfully meet this base standard of care in order for us to have the freedom to achieve the next stage of connectedness. Often, we don't realize just how much of our energy is focused on the "logistics" of life — our homes, food, clothing, procreation, and sleep — and these core needs limit the potential of our relationships.



The second level of needs, according to Maslow, is safety, which includes security, order, and stability. Once we handle the basics of survival, we begin to be concerned with securing the skills and resources needed to establish a safe and protected haven. It's fairly easy to see this level of needs playing out in relationships, where we also need to feel physically and emotionally safe. Boundaries, stability, a sense of order, and agreements that keep us safe and create a degree of trust are important for our relationships at this developmental stage. Indeed, trust is crucial for safety. Similarly, if trust and safety are lost in a relationship, the relationship slides backward to the survival level and once again is reduced to logistics.

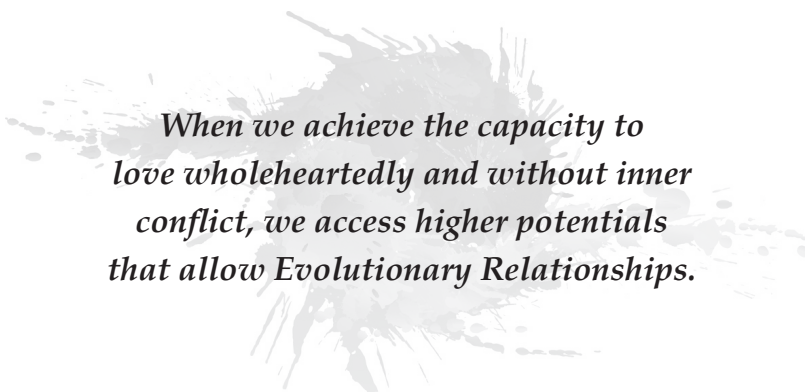
However, once a safe foundation is established, our energy is free to move onto the next level of desires — love, affection, and belonging. At this stage, we want to feel accepted by others and be part of a family or group. This is when new questions arise: *Do you like me? Do you want me? Do you love me? Am I lovable and desirable?* Belonging is important, and we start to be more focused on sharing common interests, goals, beliefs, political views, and favorite activities. These objectives are less relevant when we're preoccupied with survival and safety, but once we're feeling secure, we have time and energy to pursue interests and goals that create a stronger sense of belonging and give rise to heightened intimacy.

The next level of longing in Maslow's model is esteem. Esteem needs include feeling valued and respected by others. Consequently, in relationships organized around esteem needs, we want to be seen, acknowledged, and appreciated. We want our gifts and talents to be affirmed, our contributions to the world respected, and our gifts and talents affirmed. At this stage, we are naturally drawn to others who have skills and abilities that reflect their own self-esteem and feelings of worthiness. In relationships at this level, we assume additional obligations and play out certain roles. We work together and help each other with resources and connections to create a more complex, successful, and networked life. It's quite different than the utilitarian function of survival or safety-based relationships. Then, once our self-esteem needs are met, we discover new needs surfacing. Having power, prestige, status, respect, achievement, and our value affirmed no longer compels us. Now, we're awakening to the next level of needs, which Maslow called self-actualization.

For an individual, self-actualization marks a new stage of existence. No longer are we concerned with what Maslow defined as “deficiency” needs (i.e., needs inspired by the lack of something). Instead, the desire for self-actualization comes from a sense of fullness, after all of our lower-level needs are satiated and we are free to start asking: *What am I here to contribute? How can I express my true purpose?* Maslow described self-actualization needs as “man’s desire for self-fulfillment, namely the tendency for him to become actually what he is potentially: to become everything one is capable of being.” Expanding on this sentiment, Maslow continues, “A musician *must* make music, an artist *must* paint, a poet *must* write if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be.” [Emphasis added]⁷ Similarly, in relationships at this level, we are less concerned with what we can *get*, and more focused on what we are able to *give*. We want to share, to express and contribute, to commit ourselves to developing and maximizing our potentials. Mastery and abundance are naturally present at this level.

Conversely, at the lower levels, despite how much we may care for others, there still is a subtle (or not-so-subtle) neediness within us. Only at the self-actualization level the force of love release and relieve us from self-concern and the potential I call an Evolutionary Relationship can begin to come into being. Self-actualization gives us the true autonomy required to open and give ourselves more deeply to each other, to risk venturing into unknown territories of intimacy and creativity.

Lastly, the highest level of needs — which Maslow added toward the end of his life and which still is absent from many versions of his model in common use today — is the longing for self-transcendence. Maslow discovered that some people who reach the self-actualization level seek what he called “peak experiences,” which he defined as profound and life-changing moments of love, bliss, unity, or divine understanding. For these “transcenders,” as Maslow termed them, peak experiences connect them to something greater than themselves and become an overriding objective. In a landmark 1969 article, “Theory Z,” Maslow speculated on the qualities of such people, observing that they are more likely to be interested in a “cause beyond their own skin,”⁸ and more apt to be innovators, discoverers, and seekers of new approaches in all disciplines.



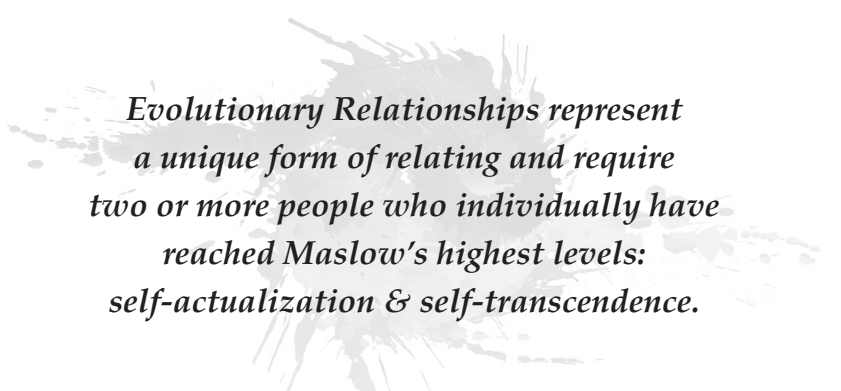
*When we achieve the capacity to
love wholeheartedly and without inner
conflict, we access higher potentials
that allow Evolutionary Relationships.*

Self-transcendence is the desire to experience, unite with, and serve that which is beyond the individual self. It is at this stage of development that evolutionary relating can flower. Maslow hinted at this when he noted a quality he called “post-ambivalence,” which he described as “total wholehearted and unconflicted love, acceptance, ... rather than the more usual mixture of love and hate that passes for ‘love’ or friendship or sexuality or authority or power, etc.”⁹ It is this capacity to be able to love wholeheartedly and without inner conflict that releases the higher potential in Evolutionary Relationships. Such a deep embrace of relatedness only occurs when individuals mature beyond all lower-level deficiency needs and establish a ground of being that incorporates self-confidence, self-acceptance, and true self-actualization.

As human beings, we have needs at every level of Maslow’s pyramid, so it’s important that we have relationships that fulfill us at each level. Therefore, this is not a matter of some relationships being “better” than others, since all of them are important. Just as Maslow’s pyramid is smaller at the top, the number of relationships at the highest level naturally will be the smaller too. Yet, because Evolutionary Relationships are so intensely transformative, having even one such connection will change your life irrevocably.

In truth, Evolutionary Relationships are rare and only become possible at higher stages of development — stages that only a small percentage of human beings have reached. Many of us are familiar with the research

which maps the stages of childhood development, but few people know that pioneering researchers also have mapped the stages through which adults progress. And while some people object to the very idea of such stages, concerned that it promotes elitism or discrimination, those who study evolution argue that this simply is how development occurs — in stages. Understanding the stages through which adult humans progress provides important insight into how we can continue to evolve, both in order to actualize our own potential and to meet the needs of our complex evolving world.



***Evolutionary Relationships represent
a unique form of relating and require
two or more people who individually have
reached Maslow's highest levels:
self-actualization & self-transcendence.***

One of the most respected researchers in the field of adult development is Harvard psychologist Robert Kegan, whose work also provides context for Evolutionary Relationships. In his book *The Evolving Self*, Kegan observes that most human beings progress through a series of five stages of increasing mental complexity and social maturity, which he terms “orders of mind.” The first two orders — which most people pass through during childhood — are called the “impulsive mind” and the “instrumental mind.” In both these stages, the child is largely self-absorbed.

Next, humans move into adolescence and early adulthood, at which time we develop what Kegan calls the “socialized mind.” At this stage of our development, we are heavily influenced by the culture around us, by social norms and expectations. Then, most of us progress to what he calls “self-authoring mind,” which Kegan defines as a stage of greater autonomy guided by our inner authority. We now are self-directing and self-defining. If you are the type of person who values independence and resists being overly influenced by others, then you have reached this “self-authoring” stage.

Kegan's research illuminates yet a fifth and further level of development beyond self-authoring, which he calls the "self-transforming mind." Kegan eloquently describes the experience of subjectivity that the self-transforming Mind is capable of experiencing — the "interpenetrability of self-systems" and "the interpenetration of self and other."¹⁰ Likewise, Rob McNamara, who is a Professor of developmental psychology, discusses the self-transforming mind at length in his book *The Elegant Self*. McNamara writes that at this level of development, "We find a self that can discover its truth and identity in response to and in relationship with an ongoing interpenetrating experiential flux This larger intimacy informs a self that is more flexible, dynamic, responsive, and open to a broader, ongoing information flow."¹¹

People at this level of development can handle more intense and intimate experiences and they are more naturally attuned to what I will call the "space between." Here, boundaries become less defined and awareness arises from the flow and flux of relatedness. There is a perception of one's distinctiveness, but simultaneously there is an attunement to the interpenetrating experiential flow of connectedness with others.

In sum, most of the qualities Kegan ascribes to the "self-transforming" level of consciousness are resonant with my theory on Evolutionary Relationships. I believe this points to the possibility that this new kind of relatedness is an integral component of the next step in our collective evolutionary journey. It does not negate our independence or individuality, which was achieved during an earlier, critical stage of the journey. However, in order to attain a more advanced level of selfhood, we must be willing to grow even more ...

It is important to note that adult development is *not* a guaranteed path. Indeed, research shows that most adults will remain at the socialized and self-authoring levels of development their entire lives. Therefore, those of us who have reached higher levels of emotional, psychological, and spiritual development need to commit to discovering and consciously developing the next level of human consciousness. Remember: Evolutionary Relationships are rare, and if you've been fortunate enough to experience this blissful and creative connectedness, then you know how precious and important the self-transcending level of relatedness is for yourself and for the world.

The Energy of Love

Love is expressed by humans at all levels of development. However, what my observation and research suggests is that Evolutionary Relationships fully emerge only when human beings progress beyond “deficiency” needs in Maslow’s hierarchy and enter the realm of the “self-transforming” mind in Kegan’s model. Consequently, when a person expresses love from a higher state of consciousness (i.e., beyond neediness and lack), that love manifests differently. Similarly, when individuals no longer bother to conform to “socialized” norms or worry over “self-authoring” individualism, they are free to meet each other in an entirely different manner, and the relationship they form no longer is about two separate people trying to meet each other across the “space between.” Instead they experience being intimately inside of a shared experience, inhabiting the same world.

When this level of exploration occurs, you still feel your own distinctness and particularity — in fact, you feel more intimate with your own depths than ever before. But you also feel the other person from inside *their* experience. It may sound strange, but the separation disappears; somehow you are inside each other and feel connected to something that is bigger than both of you, as though your connection with each other is a portal to all of existence. The energy of this vast sharing starts to flow through you and between you, carrying you forward with its own momentum. You feel a yearning that seems to come from the heart of the cosmos — a longing to be related to and express your love for each other and for life itself.

Love is much more than an emotion. It is an evolutionary force that drives the entire cosmos in a never-ending, unfolding process. “Love is the most universal, the most tremendous and the most mystical of cosmic forces,” wrote Teilhard de Chardin. “Love is a sacred reserve of energy; it is like the blood of spiritual evolution.”¹² Yes, love strives — through human beings — to form higher connections. As Chardin beautifully put it, “Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come to being.”¹³ I love this description, as it speaks deeply to my own experience. When we surrender to the force of love and discover this higher level of relatedness, we feel radiant and connected not just to another person but to all of existence. We also feel that the universe is becoming more whole through our unity with each other.

From a spiritual perspective, we can view the evolution of the cosmos as being driven by the forces of love and creativity. While you won't find this perspective in any scientific text, scientists concede that matter and consciousness display an unmistakable tendency toward innovation and more complex forms of life. Furthermore, many respected philosophers, theologians, and mystics have described this underlying force, drive, and impulse in the same way. For example, early 20th Century French philosopher and Nobel laureate Henri Bergson wrote about the *elan vital* (vital impulse), which he defined as "an internal push that has carried life, by more and more complex forms, to higher and higher destinies."¹⁴

Modern theosophists agree and they posit a new theory of God — no longer an old man in the sky, but the driving force behind evolution. Contemporary spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen calls it "the evolutionary impulse," while A.H. Almaas uses the term "optimizing force." I use both of these terms interchangeably, captivated by the notion that this evolutionary impulse also has the characteristic of moving humanity toward higher and greater expressions of relatedness. Cohen offers a mystical explanation of this cosmic dance in his book *Evolutionary Enlightenment*:

[R]elatedness is the whole point of the manifest world. The universe was created so that relationship could occur. ... Before the big bang, in that empty ground, there was only unbroken Oneness. But that One chose to become the many, and in the birth of the many, relatedness became the very fabric of the emerging universe. Indeed, one way to understand the evolutionary impulse is as a desire for perfect relatedness — an overwhelming urge to make manifest its ultimate nature as seamless unity in the realm of multiplicity. ... That's why you feel drawn to others — because the evolutionary impulse is drawn to itself.¹⁵

I find the above passage a resonant explanation for the powerful longing I've experienced. But you don't have to venture into such metaphysical realms to understand that the evolution of life tends toward relatedness. Scientists, too, have been following this evolutionary thread. Over the past few decades, researchers have discovered how critical inter-relationships are to the evolutionary process. In 1967, Biologist Lynn Margulis shocked

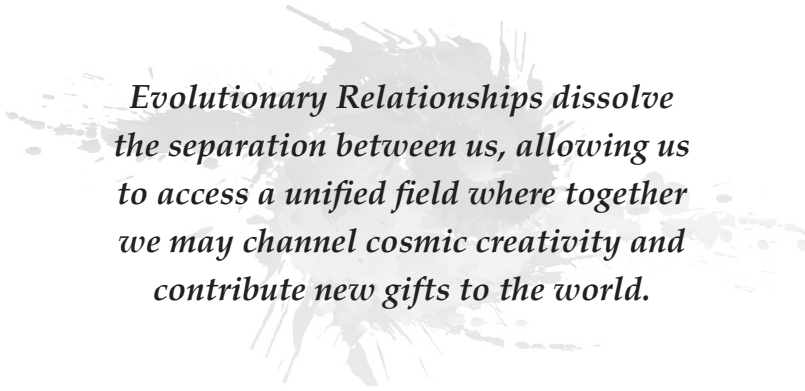
the scientific establishment when she published a landmark paper proposing that cooperation, not competition, was the major driver for evolutionary advancement. Margulis was not studying humans or even the animal kingdom; she was probing the microcosmic realm of bacteria. Since that time, others have expanded on her research and observed the same principles at work in all forms of life. My good friend Carter Phipps describes this scientific trend in his book *Evolutionaries*:

*This new wave of science looks at the evolutionary process from stem to stern and sees marvelous example after marvelous example of cooperation and sociality in the service of evolution. ... The evolutionary advantage goes to those most capable of good teamwork and most willing to engage in the kind of cooperation that turns a collective of individuals into something more than the sum of its parts.*¹⁶

Thus, whether we're dealing with bacteria coming together to form the first cell, cells coming together to form organs, or living creatures coming together in cooperative cultures, the desire to unite appears to be intrinsic to the evolutionary process. Moreover, scientists like Margulis, Elisabet Sahtouris, and others are describing in biological terms the same process that Chardin was describing when he wrote that the "fragments of the world" seek each other out. Scholar and theologian Beatrice Bruteau sums up Chardin's vision eloquently:

*In Teilhard's view, all of evolution has progressed by a series of creative unions. More complex and more conscious beings are formed by the union of less complex and less conscious elements with one another. Subatomic particles unite to form atoms, atoms unite to form molecules, molecules unite to form cells, and cells unite to form organisms. This same pattern of creating something new, something more complex and more conscious, by the union of the less complex and less conscious recurs at each of these levels. It is because we can look back and see the pattern, see it recurring, that Teilhard believes we can legitimately extrapolate and project the pattern into the future, looking forward to another creative union in which we will be the uniting elements.*¹⁷

Together, we can create a channel for the evolutionary impulse to work its magic at a new level of complexity and consciousness. When relating to others in this way, we feel a new energy activated or awakened within us and between us — a volcanic surge of love and intentionality that bubbles up and erupt as we let it express itself through our Evolutionary Relationship. The vulnerability and beauty of such intimacy is quite delicate, often sensuous, and at times almost unbearable. There is a cosmic creativity in this kind of love, a unique power that is released when we become consciously close and transparent, when we feel the other as our self.



Evolutionary Relationships dissolve the separation between us, allowing us to access a unified field where together we may channel cosmic creativity and contribute new gifts to the world.

Historically, there are examples of people experiencing heightened consciousness and peak experiences through the ancient *tantra* tradition (i.e., divine sexual union), which still is practiced today. However, an Evolutionary Relationship does not require a sexual partner, even though that is one powerful form of its expression. What is distinct in this work is that you can experience an Evolutionary Relationship with a friend with whom you have a deep spiritual alignment and want to create or work together. It even can happen with someone you've just met, provided you're both committed to the same kind of potentials in the relationship.

Recently, during one of my workshops, I saw a beautiful example of two people developing an Evolutionary Relationship. Students were randomly paired-up and asked to work on exercises that would activate higher potentials. One woman, Sharon, was paired with Tim, a man she didn't know very well. As they began the work together, she was shocked to experience a powerful intimacy and connection with this virtual stranger.

“It was refreshing to experience that depth of intimacy without a marriage certificate!” she told me afterward. Tim also remarked on the closeness they experienced. “I told her, ‘I think I love you,’” he remembered, “and she said, ‘that’s inevitable.’” The kind of love that Sharon and Tim experienced had nothing to do with romantic attachment. Nevertheless, Tim said, “It made me a little uncomfortable at first. Even though there was nothing romantic or sexual happening, it almost felt wrong to be so intimate with someone else’s wife.” Later, he met Sharon’s husband, who joined a subsequent workshop, and Tim was amazed to have a similar experience with Sharon’s husband!

By practicing these principles, another man who attended one of my workshops experienced such closeness with strangers that he was able to identify the “gap” — that which was lacking in his relationship with his wife. He was so excited during the final session because he couldn’t wait to get home and share what he had discovered with her.

I have shared profound Evolutionary Relationships with a number of people with whom I work at the Evolutionary Collective. The journey together is awakening new potentials in all of us, and we constantly are amazed by its power, beauty, and capacity to activate these potentials for the many others who work with us. When we approach each other in the ways that you will learn in this book, the potentials that emerge between us as human beings are rich and full and surprisingly powerful. I call these friends and colleagues my “multiple beloveds.” As we explore the space between us, we “fall in love” — collectively — and we discover new depths of connection. That love is latent in all relationships, just waiting to be activated.

In the chapters that follow, I will be sharing the practices and disciplines that I’ve developed which will allow you to begin developing your capacity to create Evolutionary Relationships. This may mean that you take an already meaningful relationship and expand that relationship with an increased potential for mutual awakening. It may mean that you attract someone new into your life who is ready for this kind of relating. And while there may be only one or two relationships in your life that are truly evolutionary, the Mutual Awakening Practice contained in Chapter 3 of this book will affect all of your other relationships as well. Your heightened sensitivity, intuition, empathy, and love will naturally impact everyone with

whom you connect.

The time has come to affirm what your heart is seeking ... longing for ... ready for. Do you feel the mystery calling you? If you have the courage to explore mutual awakening, you will be amazed at the degree of intimacy, vulnerability, beauty, and connection that is possible with another person. I invite you to join me inside the surging, emerging evolutionary impulse and discover where it can take us, together.

CONTEMPLATION: What Are Your Relationships Based On?

Take a moment to consider one or two of the most significant relationships in your life, then ask yourself: *What are these relationships really organized around?* Without any judgment, just observe whether and how these relationships meet: (i) your survival needs; (ii) your safety needs; (iii) your need for belonging, love, and care; and (iv) your need for esteem. Are there aspects of any of those needs that aren't being addressed? Are any of your relationships meeting the higher needs for self-actualization and self-transcendence? Here are some questions that will help you shed light on your relationships:

- ⌘ What roles do you play?
- ⌘ What roles does the other person play?
- ⌘ What expectations do you have of the relationship?
- ⌘ What do you want and need from the other?
- ⌘ What does the other want and need from you?
- ⌘ How do you think the other sees you?
- ⌘ How do you see the other?
- ⌘ Who are you in his/her eyes?
- ⌘ Who is he/she for you?
- ⌘ What do you see as the full potential of this relationship?

(continued on next page)

When answering these questions, you probably will find that many of your relationships are organized around the lower level needs in Maslow's hierarchy — the "deficiency" needs. This may include your family, certain friends, and perhaps an ex-husband, wife, or lover. In such relationships, we tend to unconsciously fall into particular roles.

For example, one person may represent authority and the other rebellion, or one person may act weak and helpless so the other person can take the role of the caregiver or white knight. Especially in co-dependent relationships, there is little intention to grow, develop, or create anything more out of the connection and we remain unconscious of what else might be shared. As mentioned earlier, relationships have a nature and purpose all their own. However, when we become more conscious of what is transpiring in our relationships, we sow the seeds of greater development.

On the other hand, you may observe that some of your relationships are organized around self-actualization needs — the people with whom you share common interests and passions. These might include close friends, lovers, or colleagues at work. In this kind of relationship, you enjoy richer interactions, deeper sharing, and stronger support. Additionally, your way of relating is more conscious and therefore more satisfying, nurturing, and fruitful.

If you're lucky, there may be some relationships in your life that are organized around what Maslow called self-transcendence. In such relationships, people commit to growing and evolving together and creating something larger and more significant than either person's individual needs. In fact, you may feel that you have some greater destiny with each other! So there's a totally different level of dedication and interaction that can transform both of your lives. This is what I would call an Evolutionary Relationship. It's a higher order of relating that activates and supports both of your highest potentials, brings you into a different state of consciousness, and contributes to the greater good of humanity. ☞

Notes

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- 17 Beatrice Bruteau, "A Song that Goes On Singing," interview by Amy Edelstein and Ellen Daly, *What Is Enlightenment?* Spring/Summer 2002, p. 55.