




SAY IT AIN'T SO

Ain't No Mountain High Enough 
Lisa Eisenbrey

The Two Ingredients of a Real Love Potion

IF YOUR MIND CRINGES OR YOUR BELLY FLIP-FLOPS WHILE YOU READ THIS, YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

TERRY HOLDS HIS HEAD in his hands, visibly shaken after his confession: He's been with his partner for eight years, engaged for two, and isn't sure he loves her enough to marry her. I ask him if he's shared this with his fiancée and his angst increases. "Telling her would mean it's over. We have a decent relationship, we don't really fight; we've just grown apart."

This is my cue. "Let's talk about love, then—perhaps it will help to see it from another perspective."

These days, I map out interpersonal love with clients like Terry this way: At the top of the chart I write the word *LOVE*. Most people claim to want to experience this sublime state in their intimate relationships. In taking time to ponder what creates this ultimate state, I've noticed that it includes an atmosphere of *nonjudgmental presence*. This might be experienced as spaciousness, deep ease, sweetness, or acceptance. When clients enjoy a mutual exchange of this quality of presence with another, they often describe "*feeling deeply seen or heard*."

So feeling seen and heard in a nonjudgmental atmosphere supports the field of love. These are what I call the “above the line” states of being that most of us want. That’s the bliss of discovering that right person. Yet, in mature relating, there are two “below the line” practices that we must master in order to consistently enter into the field of love over time: *impeccable truth telling and a willingness to be authentically vulnerable*. If your mind cringes or your belly flip-flops while you read that, you’re not alone.

The word *impeccable* is about being “faultless or flawless.” Applied to truth telling, it means speaking without blame, taking full responsibility for our thoughts, feelings, experiences, and actions. *Authenticity* is about being genuine. In the realm of vulnerability, it means not manipulating another or ourselves emotionally.

When it comes to expressing truth and vulnerability, I find most people favor one over the other. There are those who have no trouble ladling their judgments and opinions onto another under the guise of “I’m just telling you my truth.” Meanwhile, the person on the receiving end feels slimed by their projections. These “truth tellers” are far from impeccable and are usually out of touch with their own vulnerability. On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who have no problem accessing their tears and fears, yet clam up when asked to speak authentically about what’s true for them. Tears and incoherence can become a default response. Yet it’s disingenuous to hide your

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This latter tactic is what Terry had been employing in his relationship. But after we examined it together, he could see that *not* sharing his truth was creating a gulf between him and his partner and keeping him from experiencing his own aliveness.

Terry ultimately took responsibility for his thoughts and feelings and courageously revealed to his partner his long-term dissatisfaction with how he had been showing up in the relationship. There was a palpable sense of relief in the room when he did so. His partner, of course, was keenly aware of their limbo state and was grateful to have a forum where they

could clear the air and reconnect. It was a risky path, but they both learned how to share their truth and hold space for each other’s feeling states without taking it so personally. A year later, they had gotten out of limbo and were making wedding plans.

My experience is that we need to express our impeccable truths and authentic

vulnerability in equal measure to create the closeness we desire. I like to remind clients that their greatest truths reside below the neck. The heart knows how to embrace paradox and the body is continually communicating its truth through sensation. Learning to be present, training the mind to track what’s going on in the body, and staying current with our emotional states are the first steps in the journey to love.

— JOY HOSEY

Lessons from a Tight Jaw or a Fluttery Heart

Learning to express vulnerable truths begins with the breath and body. Bring your attention inside and allow your mind to get curious about what’s occurring within and around the body. Notice your breath—is it shallow, fast, or deep? Track sensations—is your jaw tight, your heart fluttery? Is your energy contracted or expanded, heavy or light? Perhaps you see yourself in a strait-jacket or feel as though there’s cotton wrapped around your head. Refrain

from stories or conclusions about what you’re experiencing (for example, “My eyes are tired because I didn’t sleep much last night”). Get creative in describing the sensations you feel.

Get curious about what you are feeling. I invite clients to start by identifying the five core feeling states: anger, sadness, fear, joy, and sexual feelings. Practice identifying which of these your body is experiencing—often it’s a combination.

Now allow a stressful relationship situation to come to mind. Notice how your body responds to this input. Write down (or share aloud with a practice partner) what you’re aware of in and around your body. Then acknowledge your feelings about the situation. Start with the truth of the body, as opposed to the stories of the mind. This not only deepens self-understanding, it opens the door to being seen and heard by another.