



Clarion Review

Family & Relationships

Eight Pathways of Healing Love: Your Journey of Transformation

Philip R. Belzunce

Lalei E. Gutierrez

Bella-Tierra International

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Four Stars (out of Five)

A focus on couples, rather than individuals, sets this guidebook apart from the majority of self-help titles available today. Philip Belzunce and Lalei Gutierrez draw on decades of experience in couples counseling to offer a wide array of tools to help heal relationships. In *Eight Pathways of Healing Love: Your Journey of Transformation*, this long-married pair piece together insights, examples, and exercises to show others how to increase genuine intimacy in their relationships.

Belzunce and Gutierrez understand that even the most dedicated and motivated spouses sometimes need help after the initial romantic glow fades away. This first book in their planned Pathways of Healing Love series is meant for both partners to read and work through, sometimes separately, sometimes together. The exercises provide a path to deep introspection as well as respectful sharing and discovery of each other's underlying motivations.

Appealing to a wide range of learning styles, the authors include practical exercises and creative prompts. One chapter may ask the reader to rate his or her connection style on a five-point scale and the next offer open-ended creative writing suggestions that encourage the reader to explore a past trauma and the way he or she reacted to it. Between exercises, readers sit in on therapy sessions and listen to couples practicing new communication skills that bring individual discoveries to light.

Organized topically, chapters cover themes like "Affirmation and Awakening," "Development and Discovery," and "Gratitude and Grace." Some sections repeat earlier points, and the topics become less distinct with each successive chapter. For instance, the idea that people unintentionally use previously learned survival and coping behaviors in new relationships comes up repeatedly and receives thorough treatment each time. For the few who read straight through the book, the repetition can be tedious, but it does allow readers to work

deeply on one section at a time without missing pertinent information. Indeed, the book offers so many ways to engage in the relationship-development process—physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually—that most readers will spend significant amounts of time concentrating on a single section.

The flow of topics is natural, leading from personal discoveries to a final section on the “Higher Purpose of Love,” an idea that permeates every aspect of the authors’ work. *Eight Pathways of Healing Love* grounds its advice in the belief that every relationship serves a higher purpose. Some readers will appreciate this spiritual aspect, while others might concentrate on the practical advice. In either case, the multidimensional approach makes this a book that readers will return to at different times in their lives and relationships.

Sheila M. Trask