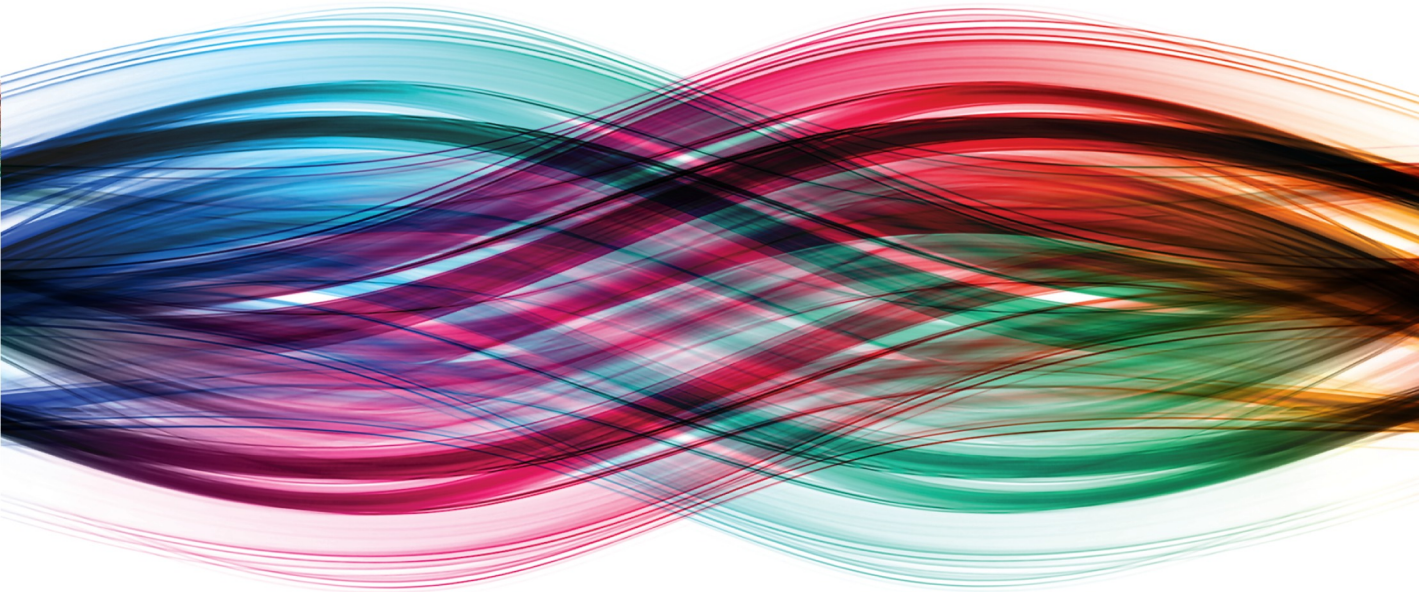


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The *New York Times* Bestseller

the ENERGIES *of* LOVE

INVISIBLE KEYS TO
A FULFILLING PARTNERSHIP



*Transcending the Limits
of Your Relationship*

DONNA EDEN & DAVID FEINSTEIN

bestselling authors of *Energy Medicine*

FOREWORD BY JEAN HOUSTON, Ph.D.



7

Recurring Patterns, Triggers, and Other Inconveniences

Reprogramming Responses That Hurt Your Relationship

*Love is everything it's cracked up to be. . . .
It really is worth fighting for, worth being brave for,
risking everything for. And the trouble is, if you
don't risk anything, you risk even more.*

—ERICA JONG¹

JEREMY WAS THIRTY-SIX WHEN HE MARRIED MELISSA. HE WAS EAGER TO HELP RAISE her sons, ages seven and nine. He had gotten to know them quite well during the year prior to the marriage; he had brought them to baseball games, zoos, parks, and other local attractions, and he had participated in their hobbies. The boys liked their stepdad and the attention he was giving them, and the new family was blossoming within an atmosphere of affection and promise. Melissa's ex-husband, Steve, the boys' biological father, had not been particularly eager to spend time with his sons during the marriage, but he also loved them. He had moved to another town several hours away after the divorce but had been reliable in taking the boys for the afternoon every other Sunday.

During his courtship with Melissa, Jeremy had never met Steve. But now that Jeremy had moved in with the family, the twice-monthly visits became a fixture in his life. He was civil enough toward his new wife's ex, but he avoided having much contact with him when the boys were being picked up or dropped off. During the first Christmas vacation after the marriage, Steve arranged to take the boys for a



week, and the three of them flew to Orlando for a Disney marathon. The boys were so excited about it that they seemed to talk of little else for the week before and the week after the trip. When Steve came for the next Sunday visitation, Jeremy could hardly look at him. He began to criticize Steve's parenting style to Melissa, point out his culpability in the divorce, and generally paint an ugly picture of the man who had fathered her children. At first Melissa acknowledged the truth in some of the observations, but over time Jeremy became increasingly vehement in his criticisms. This grew into a loaded theme in their interactions on the weekends that Steve would be arriving, and Jeremy began questioning the boys about their visits with their father, as if looking for more fodder for his rants. He was eventually unable to hide from the boys his disdain toward their father.

Jeremy's jealousy toward Steve continued to escalate, and the acrimony was seeping into other areas of the family. As Steve's visits approached, tension would descend on the household. The boys were confused. Melissa began to judge Jeremy harshly. She had more than once called him a "spoiled brat." This was the state of things when they scheduled a couple counseling session with David. Jeremy knew at some level that his reactions were not rational, but this knowledge could not compete with the strength of his emotions. When Jeremy was triggered, Steve was an evil man sabotaging all of Jeremy's fine efforts with the boys and the family, and there was no other reality to consider.

After hearing both of their renditions of the problem, David spoke to the part of Jeremy that knew his reactions to Steve were extreme. David explained that when intense emotions are triggered, they are very real, whether rational or irrational. He suggested tapping to take the edge off the intensity of Jeremy's responses to Steve. Neither Jeremy nor Melissa had any experience with energy psychology, but the couple who referred them had worked with David and described the method, so they were game for anything that could help, however strange it might look. While Jeremy was not open to considering that his assessment of Steve might be wrong, he was interested in feeling less consumed by his reactions.

They proceeded, following essentially the same steps you learned as the Basic Recipe in the previous chapter. The scene that Jeremy chose for his subjective units of distress (SUD) rating was from the previous Sunday, watching as Steve's car pulled into the driveway. It was a 10 on the zero-to-ten scale. After four rounds of tapping, it had gone down to a 7, but even after further tapping it seemed to be stuck there. David asked, "How do you know it is a seven?" Jeremy said that he felt pressure in

his chest and a tightness in his throat. David asked him to explore the feelings in his throat. Jeremy said it was almost as if he were trying to hold back tears. David asked if he could recall one of the first times he had that feeling. Jeremy immediately recalled being ten when his parents brought a foster boy into the family. It was to be a temporary arrangement until a permanent placement could be found, a favor for a relative of the boy, but it changed everything for Jeremy.

As an only child, Jeremy had enjoyed his parents' full attention and affection. Suddenly that was history. The foster boy had many problems, both of Jeremy's parents held full-time jobs, and the limited time and resources they had available shifted from Jeremy to the new boy. Jeremy, at ten, did not have words or concepts that could help him come to grips with the loss. He felt emotionally abandoned by both of his parents, he could not fathom why they had brought this troublesome person into their home, and he hated the foster boy. He began starting fights and creating acrimony wherever he could. This strategy seemed to eventually work. After about a year, the agency found a permanent placement for the boy and Jeremy never saw him again. All of this was buried in the recesses of Jeremy's psyche. He hadn't thought about it for years, and no other circumstance in his adult life had triggered his unprocessed feelings around that chapter from his childhood. He had never thought to mention it to Melissa, but the parallels between the foster boy and the situation with Steve became immediately obvious to all three of us.

We tapped on every aspect of the memory we could identify, staying with each until it was down to a zero: Jeremy's loss of his parents' attention; his many times having held back his tears when he felt lonely and abandoned; his confusion and puzzlement about what he had done wrong to deserve having all the attention withdrawn from him; the invasion into his family; his hatred for the new boy; the fights they had; his being punished for starting them and feeling like a bad boy after ten years of being a good boy; and even his confusion when the new boy suddenly disappeared.

Fortunately, each round of tapping takes only a couple of minutes, so all of this was accomplished within that first session (David generally schedules two hours for initial sessions with couples). Jeremy was by then able to talk lucidly and calmly about the foster boy and the boy's invasion into his young life. And he could reflect on how Steve's visits with the boys were bringing up feelings that traced to his experiences with the foster boy. He was entertaining the possibility that his sense of

Steve purposefully trying to destroy the family Jeremy was building had something to do with this earlier scenario. Focusing again on watching Steve's car pulling into the driveway, Jeremy gave it a SUD rating of 3. A couple more rounds of tapping and it was down to a zero. We then briefly focused on Melissa's horror and sense of betrayal about Jeremy's shift over the recent months from an apparently ideal stepfather to an angry, jealous, irrational force in her home. Witnessing Jeremy's work had already put all of this into a welcome new light, and by the end of the session, she was able to review the strange course of their young marriage with no emotional charge.

On a follow-up session two weeks later, the issue had vanished. Jeremy was not triggered by Steve's next visit, the strong relationship Jeremy had established with the boys and with Melissa was back on track, and David had lost customers who could have easily spent a year or two in counseling. Such are the risks a therapist takes when bringing an energy approach into the consulting room.

Can You Try This at Home?

How effectively you can use the techniques taught here to change patterns that really matter to you and to your relationship depends on many factors, but we can tell you that innumerable individuals and couples have gained strong benefits from using energy psychology techniques on a self-help basis. If they don't work, then you will have wasted a bit of time and effort and perhaps gotten frustrated—but you will know you gave it your best shot and it may help you determine that professional assistance is warranted to optimize what you have together. If they do work, you have not only solved the problem at hand, but you have also been building tools for navigating through whatever emotional challenges you may face in the future.

Chapter 6 presented basic energy psychology procedures that can bring about deep

emotional life, including “baggage” from earlier relationships or from an earlier time in your current relationship; and (7) establishing a strong mental vision of how you want yourself or your relationship to change and rewiring your brain to support that vision.

In this chapter, we will describe how energy psychology can be applied in each of these areas. We wanted an example to illustrate each topic. While we could have drawn from couples we’ve worked with, we decided to keep it alive and at our own personal edges. The following describes our personal use of the techniques you are learning, conducted specifically with this chapter in mind. The commentary instructs you on how to work with the theme being explored, and it also includes fresh discussion of the dilemmas in working with one’s partner as they emerged for us during our little experiment. David’s bullying issue was a theme in the previous chapter. In this chapter, we turn the spotlight on Donna.

The theme you will see Donna focusing on throughout the remainder of this chapter traces to a core decision she made early in her childhood that she would not cause trouble for anyone. Her sister and her brother required a great deal of attention from their parents, and Donna took on the family role of being the one who wasn’t a source of difficulty. It is not like she had never before been aware of this issue or worked on it. Rather, as we evolve and reach higher levels of consciousness, certain basic themes may reemerge to be resolved in new ways. We are each a work in progress.

Personal development has, in fact, sometimes been likened to an upward spiral where you revisit the same issues, again and again, but because it is an *upward* spiral, you meet them from a higher vantage point, a new level of personal evolution.² The more effectively you deal with the issue during the current round of the spiral, the more the issue becomes a source of experience and wisdom rather than limitation, at least until its number is up again on your life’s journey. Donna’s theme of not causing trouble had gone through several rounds of the spiral during her life, and it seemed to be up again, just in time for the writing of this chapter.

I. Moving through Emotional Intensity without Escalating

The first step of the Pact (chapter 3) is to STOP your discussion the moment the emotional intensity between you is beginning to escalate. Tapping on the points

shown in Figure 6-3 gives you a preventive tool that may keep it from escalating beyond the first emotional bumps. Our close colleague and friend Dawson Church gives this advice to couples:

The moment you feel a rise in emotional intensity with someone you love, immediately start tapping. [This] instantly tells your body that there's no need to go into the fight/flight/freeze response, that the current situation is not a threat to your physical survival, and that you're not traveling along the same dysfunctional neurological highway you've constructed in the past.³

Dawson is suggesting that you both tap while continuing the discussion. He explains that for many couples, well-traveled pathways in the brain are so deeply established that the couple gets “sucked into the same old lose-lose situation”⁴ even when they know they are going to crash if they travel along that path. Tapping intervenes at the level of your brain chemistry. It signals safety, slows emotional reactivity, and allows you to take a breath and, in that moment, to look at your partner through fresh eyes and actively listen rather than just react in old ways.

The first time we tried this with this chapter in mind, it worked beautifully. Donna was in a situation where, due to unforeseen circumstances, she had to change some plans without consulting with David. She knew this had caused “trouble” (inconvenience) for him, and she was already on edge when they talked about what had occurred. Part of her “no trouble” pattern was that when she did cause “trouble,” she expected the other person to be hurt, angry, or upset. Besides this anticipation in itself having a self-fulfilling quality, it was so rare that Donna did inconvenience the people closest to her that they tended to feel surprised and hurt if she didn't meet their expectations. So, as she began the conversation with David, she already felt upset that he was (presumably) irritated, as if there could never be any room for her to make her own decisions when they might inconvenience someone else. This of course has the effect of bringing out a defensive emotional response in the partner.

Hearing the tone in Donna's voice, David said, “Whoa! This is the moment we've been waiting for. I'm going to start tapping [on the points shown in Figure 6-3], and I hope you will too.” David was indeed a bit put out by the inconvenience of the change in plans, but he hadn't gone into the reaction Donna was anticipating. Her essentially accusing him of having gone there did not, at least this time, hook him. He of course doesn't know what would have happened if he weren't tapping, but he

later reflected that listening while tapping seemed to help him receive Donna's emotional charge without taking it personally. As Donna tapped while explaining the circumstances, as well as when listening to David's response, she recognized that he was taking her in deeply and understood what occurred, and we were both quickly done with it.

The next time we entered a situation that had an emotional charge and used this "tap while you talk, tap while you listen" method, however, we found that there is a strong caveat. It made things much worse! An effect of tapping while telling a story is that it helps you go more deeply into the story, uncovering emotions to which you did not have access. If the incident you are tapping on touches into a theme that has a great deal of unresolved emotion, you may simply escalate the situation, uncovering layer after layer without resolving a thing before the next unresolved emotion or memory has surfaced. Then the next, and then the next. If you find that continuing the conversation while tapping is escalating the negative emotions or starting to spin out of control, it is time to change strategies. Immediately!

Here is how that played out for us. One of the dynamics in Donna's theme of causing no one any trouble is that her needs, desires, and preferences are not always made obvious, so she often feels dismissed by David, the one who is closest to her. At the time of this writing (we are at this moment no further along in writing the chapter than you are in reading it), there is some heated disagreement between the two of us about this. How much is it the issue that David actually dismisses what Donna has conveyed to him and how much is it that Donna feels dismissed though she never really expressed her thoughts or needs? When David presents his side of this particular argument, Donna of course feels dismissed even further. We can't wait to see how this one gets resolved! Anyway, we have been planning a teaching tour in Europe to correspond with the release of one of our books. Donna felt that David had put the plans into motion without having adequately gone over the details with her, and she was upset about it. When she received the actual itinerary, she was hit particularly hard. The conversation began something like this:

DONNA: "This wasn't my plan. This isn't what I want to do. I thought I was so clear about what I wanted. I thought you heard me" (voice escalating).

DAVID: "Another opportunity for tapping, I see" (as he starts to tap).

DONNA (now tapping as well): "I feel so betrayed. You didn't hear me at all. You sold me out here! I feel invisible and dismissed. It's just like when . . ."

This led to an intensifying list of unpleasant incidents, each of which we remember quite differently, and we were both getting hooked. David finally said, with due sarcasm about the process we were planning to write about: “Isn’t this going well! What was it that we were trying to demonstrate? That we can be as petty as the next couple?” We both agreed it was time to shift out of the nosedive. So we invoked our standby, the Pact (chapter 3), and got beyond the acrimony. Feeling tuned in again to our collaborative alliance, we made a date to return to the issue using the Basic Recipe rather than random tapping.

So the caveat for the “tap while you talk” technique is this: If you both start tapping at the moment one of you feels an emotional bump and the emotional charge seems to be escalating rather than de-escalating, shift to your Pact—Stop, Tap, Attune, Resolve (STAR).

Often enough, however, simply adding tapping to the discussion will keep you calm, centered, and supportive of one another, rather than allow you to be taken over by your emotions.

2. Shifting the Way You Respond to Behaviors in Your Partner That Had Been Triggers for Anger, Hurt, or Resentment

Beyond not escalating an argument, you can use tapping to shift the patterns that trigger emotional upset between you. After using our Pact to clear the air, we returned to the travel arrangements that had originally hooked us.

To get her SUD rating, Donna brought to mind the moment she read the itinerary, how dismissed she immediately felt, and how she then felt like she was talking to a blank wall when she told David about her feelings. Playing this scene as a movie in her mind, she gave a rating of 8 to the emotional intensity at the most distressful moment. Looking for a Reminder Phrase (p. 195)—a few words that capture the scene—Donna thought of a number of phrases: “I’m invisible to you”; “I get discounted when I talk to you”; “I’ve been betrayed”; “I’m uncared for by you.” She then reflected: “*Uncared for* is the wrong word. I know you care for me. What I felt at that moment is ‘I’m making trouble for you. That’s all you can think of. You’ve already made your plan.’ So what I want doesn’t matter.” She settled on “I still can’t cause trouble for you despite your having betrayed me” as her initial Reminder Phrase.

A difference between a professionally guided session and a self-guided session

involves lesser or greater reliance on the Reminder Phrase. In this situation, David is assisting Donna as her husband, but he also brings his professional background and skills in formulating the wordings. Chapter 6 instructed you to keep coming back to the initial Reminder Phrase, adjusting it later as additional aspects (p. 203) of the problem revealed themselves. In the following transcription of our session, you will see that David did not stay with the initial Reminder Phrase but immediately addressed various aspects of the situation. The advantages of this as a teaching tool are that you get to see how flexible the technique is and are given a model of its effective use. The disadvantage would be if you, as a beginner, feel you need to be equally adept at formulating advanced wordings. You don't. Staying with the initial Reminder Phrase and gradually adjusting it as new aspects reveal themselves can be very effective. Always remember that this is more about shifting the energies than anything else, and the tapping is doing that for you.

We did begin with the initial Reminder Phrase in formulating the Acceptance Statement: "Even though I still can't cause trouble for you despite your having betrayed me, I deeply love and accept myself" (stated three times, along with the physical techniques described on p. 198). Then we started the tapping, with our iPad recording it all.

David would offer the phrase that Donna would use as she tapped (she would tap on a point for as long as it took to say the phrase and then go to the next point and phrase, following the sequence of points shown in Figure 6-3). David tapped along with Donna and repeated the phrase with her. That is the format we used throughout the session, and we suggest you experiment with it as well if one of you is guiding the other's work. David suggested the wording except for phrases where the transcript indicates that Donna initiated it. Some phrases were repeated several times while tapping different points and only the first use of the phrase is in the transcript:

I still can't cause trouble for you despite your having betrayed me.

You betrayed me.

We talked about the itinerary, but you ignored me.

I feel betrayed.

Now I'm stuck because I can't make trouble for these people. They've put their time and effort into making this itinerary [wording initiated by Donna].

They will be hurt if I make trouble here.

They will feel deserted, let down, like there is no net beneath them.
 They will feel as if I don't care about them.
 I could have made trouble, but instead I will be hurt. I didn't speak up. I just
 had to swallow how betrayed I felt [Donna's wording].
 I had to swallow how I let *myself* down because I couldn't let *them* down.
 I let myself down again because I couldn't let them down.

At this point, we did the Integration Sequence (p. 200). Then back to tapping:

Feeling betrayed.
 I can't make trouble.
 I have to go along.
 They will probably never trust anyone again if I back out of this [Donna's
 wording].
 People's lives will be destroyed if I make trouble [laughter—overstating an
 underlying assumption can bring humor and lightness while continuing to
 address a heavy issue].
 They won't survive.
 Feeling so trapped.
 I'm always trapped.
 This time I expected David to make sure I wasn't trapped [Donna's wording].
 I expected David to take care of me.
 David didn't take care of me.
 Now I have to move forward with that same old upset with myself that I have
 let myself down [Donna's wording].

At this point, David asked Donna to take a deep breath and go back to the scene with the itinerary and give it a SUD rating. She said it was a 4½, down from an 8. He asked her how she knew there was remaining distress. She said, "I still have pain in my heart, though I'm more calm. But even though I'm not as upset, there is still this very painful, kinesthetic wound." This provided the wording for the next Acceptance Statement: "Even though I still have this pain in my heart, I deeply love and accept myself" (repeated, along with the physical procedures). The last time, rather than "I deeply love and accept myself," David had Donna substitute a more specific positive affirmation (see "The Choices Method," pp. 211–212), which was,

“I choose to recognize that I am changing this right now—a four and a half is very different from an eight.” Then another round of tapping:

This wound in my heart.

This pain in my heart.

This pain in my heart from all the times I couldn’t make trouble.

Nobody ever saw me. I would protect everyone else from having to face trouble, but nobody protected me [Donna’s wording].

They were so happy I wasn’t trouble [Donna’s wording].

What a relief that Donna isn’t trouble.

Nobody saw me.

And that’s what it felt like when I spoke to David about the itinerary [Donna’s wording].

He doesn’t hear me, he doesn’t know me. He doesn’t care. It’s okay with him that I’m going to be sacrificed [Donna’s wording; David at this moment is glad he is also tapping and staying relatively centered].

It’s okay with him if I’m sacrificed for the good of the organization. He didn’t step in and rescue me. So I’m just left holding the bag again [Donna’s wording].

I’m worried by how much I’m pushing myself. And I’m scared. I feel alone in that fear [Donna’s wording].

Nobody is going to worry about me. And it’s even worse if I’m trouble [Donna’s wording].

They just ignore my needs. If I don’t make trouble, nobody ever knows I have a need [Donna’s wording].

They don’t see me if I don’t make trouble. Nobody sees me whether I make trouble or I don’t make trouble [Donna’s wording].

If I don’t make trouble, I’m invisible. If I make trouble, they want me gone.

What a disappointment she turned out to be [Donna’s wording].

If I make trouble, they want me gone. If I make trouble, there are awful consequences. If I don’t make trouble, I’m invisible. My needs don’t get met [Donna’s wording].

I want to do this right this time. It’s time to do it right. It’s time to shift this energy [Donna’s wording].

It’s time to shift the energy that keeps me trapped in this pattern.

And I can do it differently. And I have [referring to a recent positive interaction with David where Donna had shown her anger. At this point, when much of the charge has been removed, the person is able to consider experiences that counter a deep, long-standing belief].

Yes, I have had some real successful moments. I've been trouble, and I've been loved anyway [Donna's wording].

I've had some successful moments where I've been trouble and I've been loved anyway [David asks Donna to describe one].

Even though you were quick to judge me yesterday, when I told you my side of the story, you switched on a dime. That was love [Donna's wording].

When I felt sick on our last trip, you were there one hundred percent. I was causing you a lot of trouble, and you didn't make me feel guilty.

At this point, Donna went back to the itinerary scene and rated it at a 3. We had skipped the Integration Sequence, but we did it here, bringing the rating down slightly, to 2½. David suggested that the next Acceptance Statement be: "Even though it's still two and a half, I feel power welling up in me." Donna snapped back: "No, I don't feel power. I feel like I will really be betrayed if I let this go. I will never be safe again if I let this go because you will never see yourself. I'm scared to make this go down to zero. I'm scared to make this go away. I'll never be safe then. You'll just go on in your own merry way treating me in the same way. If I let this go, then I'll really be betrayed. I might gain something by getting over being unable to be trouble, but I'm scared that if I get over this, you'll say, 'See, it was your fault all the time,' and you will just keep dismissing me."

This is a point that could derail the process. If David defended himself, *that* would have been a betrayal since Donna was laying herself wide open and had now hit on a psychological reversal (p. 209). While her hope was to no longer feel distress about the situation, she believed David would ignore his side of the problem if she succeeded. If you are guiding your partner in a tapping session, you need to be deeply committed to putting your side of the story aside for the time being so you are taking in and even being an advocate for your partner's reality. David demonstrated that he was doing this by suggesting this Acceptance Statement: "Even though I'm scared that if I get over this I will be even more invisible to David, I deeply accept this dilemma." This worked for Donna, so we proceeded with another round

of tapping, this time looking for ways to affirm Donna's power in the situation (note, this was not likely to have been effective before most of the emotional charge had been neutralized):

I'm scared that if I change, David will stay stuck [formulating statements such as this also brought David into deeper empathy for Donna's dilemma].

I don't trust David to do his part.

David won't admit that he discounts me, and if I resolve my part of the issue, he'll never own his part of it.

This is about my power [David now shifts to what he feels is the self-limiting piece in Donna's position].

This is about my being able to say my truth.

This is about my being able to say my truth in a way that no one could ignore.

Not even David.

Even though I'm scared of getting over this completely, I'm getting to be a force to be reckoned with [Donna says, "No, I'm not! Not yet"].

You were yesterday [referring to the earlier incident].

Okay, I'm getting to be a force to be reckoned with [Donna's wording].

Even though I'm scared to get over this, I don't need this anymore [Donna's wording].

I will stay with my power. I will speak my truth. I will speak my truth even if it causes trouble [Donna's wording].

That's what this is about.

Yes, I will speak my truth even if it causes trouble [Donna's wording].

Even though I'm scared to get over this, I will speak my truth. Even if it causes trouble for David, or for the organization, I will speak my truth [Donna's wording].

That's the solution here.

I can speak my truth.

Whatever people's reaction is, that's their issue.

I know I'm basically kind and fair.

I have nothing to be ashamed or guilty about.

I was clear [referring to the situation from the day before.]

I was clear. I was glad for David's reaction.

At this point, Donna's SUD rating had gone down to 1½. When asked how she knows there is still residue, Donna said: "When I look at the scene, I can still feel stress. It is nothing like it was, but I can still feel stress." Going deeper into her feelings, she said, "I still don't believe this will make our marriage stronger because you will get smug and never *get* what you do. You will never get it. I know my part, but I want you to look at yourself. If I get over this issue, you will feel forgiven and I will be forgotten." Again, positioning himself as Donna's guide and advocate and checking his own defensiveness, David suggested this Acceptance Statement: "Even though I want David to look at himself, I don't need to wait for him" and then these tapping statements:

I am becoming such a force that I can't be ignored.
 I will be trouble.
 I will be trouble if I have to.
 Even though I'd like David to "get it," I'm not throwing away my trouble card [Donna is laughing as she repeats this].
 Even though I'd like David to "get it," I'm not throwing away my trouble card.
 This is giving me permission to use my trouble card.
 I claim my trouble card.
 I can use it freely.
 No guilt.
 No shame.
 No overcompassion.
 I know I'm fair and good.
 I can pull out that card any time the situation calls for it.
 I can be trouble.
 Yea!
 Okay, I'm pulling out the card [Donna laughing].
 I can be trouble.
 You can evolve or not evolve, but I'm pulling out my trouble card whenever
 I want [Donna laughing].
 Get used to it, David.
 I'm pulling it out whenever I want.
 You're actually very brave to be leading me through this, David [Donna
 laughs as she repeats David's self-flattering statement].
 I can be trouble on my own terms [Donna is laughing].

Returning to the itinerary scene, Donna said, with delight in her voice, “It doesn’t have a charge anymore!” Throughout the week, numerous instances came up with David and with others where Donna found herself speaking up even when she knew that what she was saying was different from what the person wanted to hear.

Reflecting on the above transcript, notice how only the initial rounds of tapping focused on Donna’s feelings of betrayal and being trapped that were associated with the theme of not being able to cause trouble for anyone. After the first shift in Donna’s SUD rating, the focus went to the sensations in her heart and chest. Only after all this was reduced did David’s suggested wordings begin to focus on evidence that countered her beliefs regarding not causing trouble (such as when she caused “trouble” by being sick and was nonetheless fully supported). This led to a fear that if she overcame her part of the pattern, David would still persist with his part and continue to dismiss her. This was addressed by embracing her power in the situation, recognizing that she can evolve even if David doesn’t, that she can speak her truth and be a force to be reckoned with no matter what David does or doesn’t do.

But Donna also knew there was more. She’d not gone into the childhood events that created the “no trouble” pattern or healed the emotional wounds that trace to them. Conveniently, these are the next two interrelated topics we wanted to illustrate.

3. Tracing Emotional Challenges That Play Themselves Out Again and Again in Your Relationship to Formative Childhood Experiences

Tying the “can’t make trouble” theme back to an early memory, Donna recalled a family outing when she was about four. They had gone to a forested area in the mountains. Donna had wandered off and become lost. As it grew dark, she was unable to find her way back. With no one having found her either, she was coming to terms with her belief that they had all gone home without her. This seemed natural to her. “Of course they wouldn’t wait for me. I could imagine Mama saying in the front seat of the car, ‘We loved Donna so much. Wasn’t she wonderful! It is so sad that we have to leave her, but what are we going to do? It’s getting dark and we have to go.’ And I understood completely.”

Asked to describe what it is like now to think back on that little girl who understood this completely, she reported feeling “really sad.” She reflected that “even though I comforted myself by saying I knew my Mama loved me, I also believed Mama’s love would fade into the background if I made trouble. And, in this case, it

would be trouble for the family to have to look for me.” Donna gave her feelings of sadness about this an 8 on the zero-to-ten SUD scale.

4. Healing These Lingering Emotional Wounds

The Acceptance Statement Donna used while massaging her Central Meridian points was, “Even though I couldn’t make trouble, I deeply love and accept myself.” Here were the words she used, sometimes suggested by David, but more often now provided by Donna:

Can’t make them have to look for me.
 I can’t be the cause of making them uncomfortable.
 It’s dark after all. They’ve got to go home.
 I understand.
 Of course I’ll be left here in the dark.
 I’ll be left here in the dark.
 I hope the wolves will find me and raise me.
 But I don’t see the wolves yet.
 I can’t find the wolves.
 I really don’t know where I am.
 I wonder what’s going to happen to me.
 I knew they had to abandon me because now I was trouble.
 I broke the rules.
 I became trouble.
 I didn’t hold up my part of the bargain.
 And now I’m all alone.
 I’m only four.
 I’m out in the wilderness.
 The best I can hope for is that the wolves will now raise me.
 I had my fantasy world. That made it less awful.
 But deep down I knew they had to leave me because I had caused trouble.
 My brother and sister caused enough trouble. I wasn’t going to create more.
 Mama had just come home from the hospital, and I wasn’t going to create
 trouble for her.
 But I got lost.

And I would have been trouble if they hadn't gone on home.
But I see Daddy coming around a winding bend on the side of the mountain.
Daddy looked for me. Wow!
He saw me and he started laughing.
His arms opened wide running toward me.
It's making me cry [crying].
I was so surprised!
They fooled me.
I was shocked that they would look for me.
Daddy found me!
Even though I was trouble, they looked for me.
I got back in the car and found out that Mama never said that.
She never said, ". . . it's getting dark, so we have to leave."
They never left.
They stayed for me.
Registering this very deeply now.
I was able to be trouble when I was four.
I got one chance.
Maybe it was okay to be trouble.
Of course, I got over that [laughter at David's lampoon].
It didn't change the contract.
I still had these rules that I couldn't cause trouble.
I couldn't be trouble.
There was already enough trouble.
I'm not gonna be trouble.
I'm gonna make it SO easy for them to have me around.
They won't ever be sorry I'm there.
I won't have any needs [crying].
I'll just make it easy for them.
They'll never know what my needs are.
They'll never know if I get sick or unhappy.
That was my basic rule.
In all my relationships, no one would ever regret that I was around because I
 didn't make trouble.
I didn't make trouble.

It was okay for them to make trouble. They hadn't grown to the place where they didn't have to make trouble.

But I had.

Whatever people needed to make their lives easier, I would do for them.

They were vulnerable, so I didn't make trouble.

The SUD rating at this point on Donna's sadness in realizing what it really meant for that little girl that they were not coming back for her had gone down from an 8 to a 5. The next Acceptance Statement was, "Even though she didn't realize that she was loved enough to be able to make trouble and to be inconvenient, I feel so much compassion and love for that little girl and feel such sympathy for her." The next round of tapping included these wordings:

My role in life was to be easy for them.

If I added to the trouble, Mama would get sick again.

If I added to the trouble, Daddy would get all stressed.

They have so much to handle!

I can't make more. I just can't make trouble.

So I don't experience my needs.

I go into fantasy.

The wolves were going to raise me.

Fantasy worked.

I got very good at not causing trouble.

I was happy.

Real happy!

So it worked.

It didn't work all my life, but it worked in my family.

They appreciated it without realizing.

It was okay for me to not be seen.

I had a really wonderful fantasy life.

I came out smelling like a rose.

I didn't cause trouble.

We were both surprised by the next SUD rating: "It's up to a 9! I guess because I'm having to feel it. I've never felt it." Sometimes coming out of denial is its own

stressor. Donna observed, “I’ve always kind of laughed about it, how cute that was, but now I just feel sad.” This is not unusual for feelings that have been buried in order to support a coping style, and it is not the time to become discouraged or give up. On the contrary, you know you are on the trail of emotionally significant material. The next Acceptance Statement put what had occurred into a constructive context: “Even though I’m really in it and feeling it deeply now, I choose to know that this is how I will heal.” Wordings in the next round of tapping included:

That poor little girl.
She was only four.
I had to carry the burden of the family.
And not complain.
And not be trouble for anyone.
I was only four.
It’s really sad when I think about it.
But thank God for my rich imagination.
Thank God for my spirit feeding me so well.
Even though it’s really sad, I came out of it really well.
Ignorance is bliss.
Denial really served me well.
There’s a deep realization here.
It is very healing.
Even though I’m getting in touch with a lot of things, there’s a healing going on.
Even though it’s sad, I welcome this awareness.
That poor little girl wasn’t really so poor.
She had so much going for her that she was able to take this burden within
her family.
And she pulled it off.
She came out of it fairly unscathed.
Of course her relationship skills sucked [laughter at another playful dig from
David].
But beyond that, she came out of it pretty whole.
So while I’m feeling compassion for her, I’m also feeling some awe for her.
How richly resourced she was.
What a blessing.

She did so well carrying that burden for her family.
She did so well carrying everyone's sadness and being the witness!
She did so well. She did her job well.

This brief round, examining the larger context of the situation with compassion for her four-year-old self, quickly brought Donna's SUD rating down from a 9 to a 2. However, her focus now went to other situations from later in her life that had the same theme. She focused on one of them from her first marriage. She had a miscarriage and got an infection while in the hospital. But she signed herself out against doctor's orders, left the hospital, and stayed with a girlfriend so that she wouldn't cause a financial burden for her husband. When she did see him, although she was in deep grief, she gave no indication that she had signed herself out of the hospital against medical advice and was silently pleased about having spared him any inconvenience or expense. The Acceptance Statement she used for this new aspect of the theme was, "Even though I had that terrible loss that I didn't let him feel, I deeply love and accept myself." She continued, tapping, using these wordings:

That pattern of not being trouble, which was so adaptive in my childhood,
caused me to choose a partner who had no tolerance for trouble.
It was a perfect match [laughter].
He couldn't tolerate trouble. I could hide all my needs.
So it played out, again and again and again, throughout that whole marriage.
I couldn't show my needs. I couldn't be trouble. And the pattern just got deeper
and deeper.
I couldn't be trouble.
The only thing I could do was to finally leave.
We were like pieces of a puzzle locked together.
He could not tolerate trouble. I couldn't be trouble. That was our bond.
So even though I'm feeling really sad, I'm seeing the pattern.
Even though I'm feeling really sad, I'm having a really empowering insight.
Even though I'm feeling really sad, I choose to recognize that I've come a long
way on this.

By this point, her SUD rating on her sadness for the little girl was down to zero, but it was still a 4 for the young woman in the hospital. In exploring what was keep-

ing it at a 4, Donna realized she had a lot of shame about not speaking up. Her next Acceptance Statement was, “Even though I feel ashamed that I was willing to risk my life rather than inconvenience my husband, I deeply love and accept myself.” Wordings during the tapping included:

Feeling ashamed that I checked myself out of the hospital so I wouldn’t cause trouble for my husband.

I wouldn’t cause trouble.

Remembering that it was heroic when I was four to carry the family burden.

That four-year-old girl wanted to make everyone in the family happy.

She was able to muster the spirit to carry the family burden.

She played out what she learned when she was four to keep her mother healthy.

She just didn’t update the program.

She just kept playing out her family role.

And she found the right partner to do it with.

I was doing what I learned.

It’s really hard to see my part in his cruelty.

As her judgment toward the woman in the hospital receded, she was left with humiliation about having been such a doormat. See how the “layers of the onion” unfold? You simply work with whatever emerges. After resolving the humiliation, a few other incidents with the same theme, also from her adult life, were able to be resolved quite readily. The resolution of each specific issue builds on all that had been emotionally resolved before it. Complex as this sounds, the recording shows that the session lasted only forty-seven minutes. Nonetheless, Donna was exhausted. Exhausted but feeling triumphant!

5. Transform the Patterns That Grew Out of Early Emotional Wounds

Even after significant emotional healing, as illustrated in the above transcript, the patterns that become embedded in one’s lifestyle or relationships do not automatically shift. But they are ripe at that point for an intervention that does shift them. The theme that Donna wanted to change involved the way she would still hold back from exerting her will if it was going to disappoint or inconvenience someone. This

often came up with David in work situations. Couples who work together face a unique set of challenges, and we are not exempt.

Donna selected a situation involving our organization where it was going to be difficult to get what she wanted, and she imagined herself expressing her intentions clearly and with strong resolve. Called the Outcome Projection Procedure,⁵ this technique is designed for establishing a new behavior or emotional response. It begins with envisioning a hoped-for outcome rather than a symptom or troubling situation. It also uses a zero-to-ten rating, but it rates the believability of the *hoped-for outcome*, with zero being that it is impossible and 10 being that it absolutely could happen. Except for these differences, it applies the same Basic Recipe you have been learning.

Because David is the CEO of our organization, he periodically finds himself standing with the other key administrators in enforcing a policy with which Donna disagrees, sometimes vehemently. This is not a recipe for family harmony. Donna not only feels outnumbered and powerless, she feels betrayed that her husband is siding with the others instead of her, even though the work they are promoting, Eden Energy Medicine, is her formulation and is in her name. David, on the other hand, feels compelled by considerations that are not even on Donna's radar (state statutes, HR regulations, budgetary concerns, etc.) to keep the operation healthy and running smoothly, so when he digs in, he believes it is ultimately for Donna's good even if she doesn't recognize it.

In Donna's hoped-for outcome, she saw herself standing firm against David and two of our top administrators in asking for an exception to standard procedures that would be quite troublesome for them to implement. It was a theme they had wrestled with innumerable times over the years. The job of David and our administrators is to build a structure that can accommodate the hundreds of people who are involved with the organization as teachers and practitioners and the tens of thousands they serve. But as things played out, people learned that if they wanted to be an exception to a rule, the way to get around the administration was to figure out how to get Donna's ear and plead their case. Her heart would open and she would go to bat for them. This was driving the administration crazy, including her loyal husband, and she eventually became much more discerning about such requests. However, sometimes a case was so compelling that she would open another round of conflict with the people she'd been working with for years in order to advocate for someone she hardly knew.

In the situation that was the focus of the session, a student who had studied with

Donna long ago wanted to get credit toward completing our certification program for courses taken years earlier. Our administration had allowed this during the first couple of years of our program, but as the program evolved and became more sophisticated, we recognized that training from a decade earlier was not equivalent to what we are teaching now. A firm rule was eventually made that giving credit for our early courses could no longer be done. Donna had agreed to this rule, but now she was faced with a person who so represented what she liked in an energy medicine practitioner that she decided to buck the system once more. Our administration is committed to maintaining high standards, and the complex and laborious job of evaluating whether the person had mastered the myriad of principles and procedures that certification represents was going to fall on their laps. Donna felt scared to request the exception, and her aversion to making trouble for others did not make this any easier. She visualized herself presenting the request with confidence and without guilt. On the zero-to-ten scale, with 10 being that it was totally believable that she could do this successfully, she gave it a rating of 4. It was somewhat plausible to her that she could make the request with confidence, but it did not feel very likely.

Her Acceptance Statement was, “Even though I’m not very confident that I can pull this off, I deeply love and accept myself.” On her tapping points, she also imagined herself in the situation presenting the request effortlessly as she tapped and used phrases including:

Feeling sure of myself and grounded.
This is the right thing to do.
And it *will* inconvenience them.
And I choose to have this happen.
This is for the greater good.
I’m so sorry it will inconvenience them.
One more time they’re going to see me as wishy-washy.
And as a pushover to anyone who brings their problem to me.
But I’m serving a higher truth.
That’s how it is.
And I’m going to make it their truth.
I’m sure of myself on this.
I’m using good judgment!

Here she did the Integration Sequence and then returned to the tapping:

I can do this.
It's correct that I do this.
It's right. It's smart. It's ethical.
Even if it makes me feel guilty.
Even if it makes me feel like I'm being unreasonable.
Even if it makes me feel like it's not fair that I am causing them so much extra work.
I see myself being so positive that they come over to my side.
I see them willingly go through the trouble!
I'm exuding the rightness of this.
I don't have to cower and be afraid to talk with them.
I see them coming over to my side.

After all of this, Donna went back into the vision of successfully bringing her request to David and the two others and rated its believability: "It's still a four; maybe it's gone up just a bit, to a four and a half. It's so hard not to feel guilty, and that's where I get caught." Her next Acceptance Statement was, "Even though I feel guilty about it, I deeply accept what I am trying to do." Phrases she used in the next round of tapping included:

Exuding the rightness of what I am doing.
Feeling so confident and positive.
Feeling so confident and positive that my guilt just dissolves.
Even they are surprised that I'm not apologizing, saying, "I'm so sorry that I'm making trouble!"
This is the higher road.
I'm exuding the rightness of what I'm doing, and it's contagious.
There they are, experiencing me in a new way.
I love standing there just doing what I'm feeling deep down. No apologies.
No guilt.

After this round, her believability level that she could stand in front of the three administrators and gracefully hold her position had gone up to a 7. She reported, "I

feel much more confident and empowered and excited about not apologizing. I still don't feel like I can pull it off, but I'm feeling confidence." For her next Acceptance Statement, David suggested, "Even though I still don't believe I can pull this off, I choose to recognize that I can approach this with new confidence." After trying this, Donna said, "But it gets complicated because my husband is standing there with them, and I want him to choose me over the business." So the Acceptance Statement became, "Even though it feels like David is siding with them against me, I choose to know that if I stand firm and feel positive and exude that positive feeling, I am moving toward a positive outcome." She then returned to the vision of standing in this positive space in front of the others and tapped using statements that included:

No guilt.

I'm seeing myself being very effective.

I'm standing so firm that all four of us are harmonizing.

I'm one of them! They've never seen me as one of them.

I have some power here.

I have some positive power here.

I'm standing up for what is right.

I'm moving the organization in a positive direction.

I'm seeing myself do this.

I'm seeing myself being very effective.

Her believability score had now gone up "from a shaky seven to a very solid eight—feels like a big jump." She reported, "I'm believing the vision that I'm one of them. It isn't me *against* them or them *against* me. We're together as long as I stand firm; I don't have to grovel and cry." Even though additional rounds of tapping are not usually necessary once the believability score reaches 8—the vision will usually translate into the person's life quite readily—Donna didn't want to stop there. She explained, "I think the most important thing I've gotten is that I have finally resigned myself to the idea that the needs of the administration trump what I think is important for the program. You guys run the show, and I don't, and that's all there is to it. Because my name is on the program, you'll sometimes go along with what I want, but you guys represent the business side of things and feel it's your job to convince me I'm wrong. When I stood in that place of holding firm, then it became very different. That's what I want to keep feeling. So I want to take this all the way."

Donna's next Acceptance Statement was, "Even though they haven't respected my opinion on these administrative decisions, I'm taking a stance that they will respect." Returning to the tapping, her statements included:

My perspective matters.
I don't have to grovel.
It feels really, really good to hold my space.
I am taking a stand.
I have my voice. I have my truth.
I am respecting my truth, my stance, my equality with them, and my harmony with them. This feels so positive!
I'm taking this stance.
I am really pulling this off.
I am holding firm.
They know it and I know it.
Even though I'm not an administrator, I carry the spirit of the organization.
I carry the name of the organization. My spirit must be heard. My values must be heard.
I own that and I carry that.

Donna then commented, "What is making it hard for me to get above eight is that I am still looking at you, David. That group is a block of people. You are my husband, yet you will be part of the block against me. I'm looking at you, and I'm hungering for you not to dismiss me." This led to the Acceptance Statement, "Even though David is with the other administrators facing me and it feels like a betrayal and a dismissal, regardless of what David does, I'm standing firm. Regardless of what David does, I'm standing firm." Tapping statements included:

I am exuding the truth of this situation.
I've found my voice.
I am standing tall and firm.
And if David doesn't get it, it's his loss.
If he can't connect with me here, it's his loss.
Because I'm exuding the truth of the situation, I see him coming over to my side.

We're all equals here.
And we all respect one another.

At this point Donna rated the believability of the scene and it was a tad over 9. She reflected that while it seemed very plausible, "It also feels too good to be true. I'm going to have to really practice getting to that state. It's not my default. But I love having done this." Over the next few days, she did raise the issue, she was met with strong resistance, she did hold firm, and over the course of about a week she moved the administrative team to the point where they, with some enthusiasm, took on the challenge of creating a special arrangement for the student in question.

6. Complete Any Other "Unfinished Business" in Your Emotional Life, Including "Baggage" from Earlier Relationships or from an Earlier Time in Your Current Relationship

In the sessions described above, you have seen how a conflict with David was a springboard for Donna to use tapping to:

- resolve the immediate issue
- identify how her side of the conflict was part of a broader theme that traced to her childhood
- heal some of the emotional wounds that kept that theme active in her life
- build a new and more effective way of responding in current situations that call forth the same theme

We will now allow Donna to return from this naked display of her emotional conflicts, necessary when being used as a demonstration case, to the relative privacy of being an author.

Unhealed emotional wounds from an earlier time in your current relationship or from a previous relationship may be an invisible force that is keeping your marriage from moving forward. This chapter opened by describing the way Jeremy and Melissa's marriage took a downhill turn involving Jeremy's irrational anger and jealousy toward Melissa's ex-husband. After Jeremy completed his work, Melissa was the next one to be on the hot seat. The progression, or should we say regression, from their initial marital happiness to the tense, volatile atmosphere in the home had

been a nightmare for Melissa. Her first marriage had gone through a similar trajectory and she was questioning whether she was capable of sustaining a satisfying marriage.

The last third of the two-hour initial session focused on her shock about what had occurred with Jeremy and her concern that this was simply what happens for her in a marriage. Watching the transformation in Jeremy during the first part of the session was certainly reassuring. But she had still gone through the nightmarish experience of having what seemed so good become so bad. Acceptance Statements such as “Even though I was shocked by Jeremy’s jealousy and wondered if the marriage was over . . .” and “Even though I was deeply wounded by the disaster of my first marriage . . .” led to tapping rounds that worked through the emotional residue of both experiences and oriented her to a recognition that the pattern did not have to repeat itself. At the two-week follow-up session, Melissa and Jeremy both reported that their intimacy was stronger than it had ever been. This is not to suggest that single-session “cures” are typical for most marital problems, but it does illustrate how isolated issues that are interfering in a relationship can readily be resolved.

In any case, it is good to know that painful experiences from earlier relationships or from an earlier time in your current relationship can be processed so that old wounds don’t continue to fester or limit the possibilities for your future together. While such wounds are a source of vulnerability if they are not adequately addressed, they can become a source of greater strength and resilience after being processed and healed. Energy psychology is a powerful tool for healing them. In situations where abuse, betrayal, affairs, the death of a partner, or other severe shocks were involved, the assistance of a counselor who is adept in energy psychology can be invaluable and the payoff immense.

7. Establish a Strong Mental Vision of How You Want Yourself or Your Relationship to Change and Rewire Your Brain to Support that Vision

Matt and Jessica had met twenty-two years earlier and married after four years of a stormy courtship. It was the first marriage for each of them. Matt, who was largely an introvert and a loner, was uneasy about committing himself to Jessica. The one context where a more exuberant side of him would come out was in the pursuit of a new woman, and he agreed to Jessica’s pleas that they marry, but only under Matt’s condition that they have an “open relationship.” Open relationships, involving sex-

ual dalliances outside the marriage, were in style when they met in the late 1960s, and Jessica reluctantly agreed, feeling sure in her heart that Matt would settle down and focus solely on her. He did, but it took another decade during which she suffered immeasurable anguish.

THE BACKGROUND

Matt was a workaholic. Before he met Jessica, his pattern was to work intensively for sixty to seventy hours per week and then, every month or so, to take off for three or four days with whomever he was dating at the time for a wild fling. His stored passion from the weeks of intense work would release in a euphoric orgy of sex, food, wine, deep conversation, and other intimate pleasures. Then back to work, with the woman usually wondering why he disappeared after one of the most intensely intimate encounters she'd ever had.

Early in their relationship, this met Jessica's needs quite nicely. They didn't see one another as often as she would have liked between their odysseys, but the intense times together were so fulfilling that they held her over during the times between. About six months after Matt and Jessica started dating, Jessica's roommate moved, so Jessica needed to find a new roommate or give up her apartment. Instead, she persuaded Matt to let her move in with him. His terms were stern but clear. He could still see other women, though he wouldn't bring them to their home. His uncertainty about committing to her was playing out in this ambivalent arrangement. Jessica was happy for the chance to get to see Matt every day and capitulated to his demand. Over time, however, the long weekends were increasingly with other women while the duller routines of daily life were shared with her. Matt started to blame Jessica for not being much fun anymore. All this got old very quickly, and when Matt would return from his trysts, Jessica would be furious, they would fight and then eventually make up, and things would seem smooth until the next time. Meanwhile, about two years into the relationship now, Matt was growing more deeply bonded to Jessica despite the other women and the emotionally heated battles he would periodically have with her. On her side, Jessica believed that they had a "soul connection" and that if they got married, the public/spiritual ritual would seal their deeper bond.

It didn't. After the marriage, the push-pull of Matt becoming closer and then undoing the growing intimacy by going off with another woman did not change. As a result, once their daughter was born, parenting and special projects became Jes-

sica's primary areas of focus, with Matt's cordial but marginal involvement. While Matt's intense, brief affairs became less frequent over the years, Jessica reached a point where she told Matt she would leave him if he had another one. He felt she was renegeing on the agreement that got him to marry her in the first place and defiantly made a point of being away at an undisclosed location the following weekend. Jessica had taken their daughter and moved out before he returned home. The only place she was willing to continue to see Matt was in the office of a therapist.

Matt was very confused. He had grown to love Jessica far more deeply than he had ever loved anyone before, but his trysts were the place he would truly feel free, excited, fully alive. Over time, however, even his excursions into new romance were losing their thrill. It was also harder to keep them from getting complicated—in part because the eighties didn't support the sexual freedom of the sixties—but also in part because as he evolved, he wasn't able to be intimate with new women without engaging them at a deeper level. He wasn't able to compartmentalize so wantonly. So by now, he was more ready to hear Jessica's complaints and to consider changing their arrangement. As he registered the amount of pain he had caused Jessica, his whole take on what he was up to shifted. In the past, he had been able to discount her pain since he was only doing what they had agreed on. As he let himself feel how deeply he was hurting this woman whom he had come to love, he found himself agreeing to stop seeing other women. True to his word, Matt didn't have another fling from that day on.

ENTERING THERAPY TWENTY-TWO YEARS INTO THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Fast-forward eight years. Matt and Jessica are again seeking couple counseling. Matt had been the innocent victim of a gunshot during a robbery. He saw the gun point at him, felt the bullet enter his chest, and lay in his own blood, conscious but sure his life was ending. As it turned out, the bullet had entered and exited his body without damaging any organs. After prompt, competent medical attention, he was soon out of the hospital and back into his usual routines. But one thing was plaguing him: "I've just had my life spared. A bit to any side and I could well be dead. But I'm not. I'm alive and well. Why am I not feeling more joy?" Indeed, he was still the same serious, somber, digital kind of guy he had been before his encounter with mortality.

While he and Jessica had been carrying out a very amiable relationship after Jessica had moved back in more than two decades earlier, it had little passion. They rarely made love. Matt was more fully committed to his work than ever, and he was

just too busy for much intimate time. His brush with death had brought into stark relief how gray his life had become since he stopped having his affairs. It was as if encountering a new woman had provided the context that brought out his passion, intense joy, and ability to have fun. Without that, he wasn't able to find anything else that stimulated his spirit in that same delicious way. His marriage was comfortable and meant the world to him, but over the years he watched with quiet desperation the withering of his more spirited side.

After Matt's recovery from the gunshot wound, he and Jessica had some of the most penetrating discussions of their relationship. Not only did Matt not feel joy about having survived, he realized that he rarely felt fully alive anymore. He no longer blamed this on Jessica, but he recognized that he had slowly closed his heart over the years. He joked about how the bullet had entered his chest "but fortunately there was nothing there." Jessica was a spirited woman, but she had taken her fervor elsewhere—their daughter, other family, a project with orphaned infants—after years of trying to engage Matt at a more passionate level. Matt's recognition and sadness about how much he had closed himself was welcome news for her, and this led to their decision to once more seek therapy. A friend referred them to David.

They came into therapy with Matt's concerns as the primary focus and with Jessica there to support him. After a thorough history and several "cleanup" sessions where tapping was used to address unresolved issues from their marriage as well as from their childhoods, Matt and Jessica were feeling the closest to one another they had since the charm of their earliest days together. But Matt didn't want to stop there. He wanted to recover the spirit he had once relegated to his trysts and had then lost altogether.

In a poignant session that started with a focus on how lost Matt felt in regard to moving forward with more joy, Jessica recognized at a deeper level than she ever had before the sacrifice Matt had made by stopping his flings. Their focus, going back to the previous therapy, had always been on her pain and his betrayal and blundering insensitivity. Matt had done a great deal to help Jessica heal back then, and he had been faithful now for the past eight years. In this particular session, Jessica had a reverie of appreciation and was able to feed Matt tapping statements such as "I turned away from freedom"; "I exchanged fun and excitement to stop hurting Jessica"; "I gave up my passion, just like my dad"; "I closed the door on the most direct route I had to joy." Besides helping Matt begin to deal with the emptiness he felt, Jessica's empathy for him had a profound effect. They were in this together, Matt's

lingering guilt about his flings stopped blocking his creativity about the situation, and he was more motivated than ever to bring his spirited side into their marriage.

While Matt pleaded for our understanding that “there are some limits to the degree to which a man can change his personality,” he spoke poignantly about how deeply he longed for a more joyful disposition. David was able to help him identify numerous influences in his life that reinforced his somber side and others that crushed his more joyful and spirited side. After some discussion of these influences, tapping was used to address and change the ways his somber side was being reinforced and his joyful side inhibited.

ESTABLISHING A MENTAL IMAGE OF THE CHANGE

By this point in their work together, David felt that a way of supporting the type of global change Matt was hoping for was to have him create a vivid vision that symbolized his life with that change already having occurred and then to “tap it in.” Matt and Jessica’s long story is being presented in this section on the seventh way couples can use acupoint tapping to illustrate the approach Matt used at this juncture. It began with a simple instruction that you may want to experiment with as well:

Relax deeply. Feel how life will be once the inner change you hope for has been achieved. Allow a vision that symbolizes this change to emerge. Write it down or share it with your partner.

Again, the word *vision* is used very loosely. You may see images, but it may instead be a word description or simply an understanding. Your vision may be concrete or more symbolic. It could, for instance, be a mental picture of yourself tending a rose garden or it could be a deer running through a meadow. It might be highly detailed or a mere glimpse of a distant scene.

If you are working the exercises as you read the book, choose a personal goal that is important to you and construct a mental image of how your life will be when it is in place. If you are focusing on your relationship, you might, for instance, see yourself and your partner in ecstasy or having just triumphed together during a challenging task. Play with this image. Refine it until it is a vision you are strongly drawn to pursue. If nothing emerges that stirs you, wait until a goal that really matters is up for you. Matt had long recognized that one of the reasons his spirit gets squeezed out of him was the pace he was keeping. The image that came to him was a calendar. His first thought was, “Hey, I can find something more inspiring than a calendar! How about leaning against a redwood and listening to the wind in an old-

growth forest? Or seeing myself with Jessica climbing the Eiffel Tower?” But his mind kept returning to the damn calendar, so we decided to go with it.

After settling on an image, he began to examine it. Matt’s life was structured so that his vision would have to somehow accommodate his complex career as a software engineer. As an independent contractor, he was always trying to find a balance among the needs of the various clients who had come to rely on him, and he was always feeling stretched. The work was, nonetheless, deeply satisfying and it kept him at his creative edge. But he saw that he had to carve out more time if he was going to give his desire to reawaken his passion any chance of succeeding. He approached the problem like a software engineer trying to make a program more elegant. He saw some routines he could easily cut out and other passion-limiting patterns that would be more challenging to shift. He also knew how readily new projects come in when there is space, so he wanted to envision a new pace, not just a few responsibilities taken off the list.

What better symbol for thinking about this, actually, than a calendar, the very image that had been pursuing him! A one-month wall calendar came into his mind and he had a flash of how he could structure his time very differently. Longer breaks, days off, more sleep, more dedicated time for intimacy and inner work—while obvious—could have substantial impact on his quality of life. While he didn’t exactly map it out to the level of “at 8:15 A.M. I’ll do this, and then at 9:00, I’ll do that,” he did have an image of a month and how his time was laid out and he envisioned restructuring it so there was more space, more intimate time, and more sacred time. He wanted to go deeper with Jessica and to share his more joyful side with her. The revised calendar became the symbol of his commitment to have that unfold.

A RATING OF BELIEVABILITY

The next step is to give a rating of how believable the vision is to you. On a scale of zero to ten, how possible does it seem to you? Matt’s initial rating was 2, not very likely at all that the calendar was going to support the changes he longed to see. That’s how steeped we get in lifelong patterns, but that inertia is exactly what this technique addresses.

PSYCHOLOGICAL REVERSALS

Any heartfelt goal for personal change is meeting some kind of resistance or the change would already have occurred. Some of that resistance may take the form of

a psychological reversal, an internal objection or doubt about achieving the goal (p. 209). As Matt tried to embrace the vision of a calendar that supported greater passion in his life, two internal objections immediately occurred to him. The first was that he had made similar resolutions before, but little had changed. As you saw in the previous chapter, a way of addressing such psychological reversals is to begin with an Acceptance Statement in the form of: “Even though” and then briefly describe the old pattern [while rubbing on chest sore spots] and then stating a new and affirming choice [placing both hands over the Heart Chakra]. The wording Matt used to address the first psychological reversal was, “Even though I think this is going to be another disappointment, I choose to recognize that I’m more motivated than I’ve ever been before.” The other concern grew out of his recognition that life can’t just be planned out like a calendar on a wall. Situations inevitably come up to disrupt the plans. His Acceptance Statement for this was, “Even though disruptions will occur, I choose to flow with them and then get back into this new rhythm.”

THE TAPPING

Matt’s tapping (same points as shown in Figure 6-3) at first used statements that addressed his doubts, such as “I can never pull this off” and “I have so much responsibility!” As the tapping neutralized Matt’s charge regarding these thoughts, he noticed that the calendar he had seen actually had many empty spaces where rest and renewal could be possible. Beyond sleep, there were sixteen hours every day that were in his control. That eased him, and he tapped in this awareness along with a recognition of how much better his life could be if he carved out more time for intimacy and reflection. Then he tapped on increasing his confidence that he could indeed pull it off and a sense that this new rhythm was his new natural. This part of the work was relatively complex. It involved a review of Matt’s entire lifestyle and extended over several weeks, with homework between sessions to incorporate some of the changes in his time management that had been tapped on during the sessions.

A NEW VISION EMERGES

By the time the believability of the new, kinder calendar was up to a 5, Matt’s internal picture of the calendar changed. Rather than the entire calendar appearing to him, it was as if he had zeroed in on a single day. What then emerged within that day was a picture of him and Jessica holding hands with intense joy on each of their faces. This became the image for the next round of tapping. There had been no

room for it in the old calendar, but after clearing space, this was what his psyche presented.

Tapping on this image was certainly more appealing to him than tapping on the calendar, but the believability rating got stuck at around 6. Two issues that received attention at that point included Matt's intense self-judgment about anything he attempted and the ways his expectations kept him from appreciating what was already good in his life. He tapped on these, as well as seeing Jessica through more appreciative eyes, finding opportunities for affectionate mini-encounters, and making more time for intimacy to occur. Believability was up to a 9 by the end of the session. Phrases he tapped on at home were simple reminders, such as "Even though I'm afraid it's no longer possible, my spirit wants to have more passion." While Matt's energetic structure lent itself more to gradual change than dramatic breakthroughs, over the next several months, he and Jessica reported having more fun with one another than they'd had since their early days.

YOUR TURN

This mental image technique is usually used after the obstacles to reaching your goal have been addressed, which is why we presented it in the context of Matt and Jessica's much longer story. In other words, you would generally identify and work through hindrances and negative emotions about your goal before rating the believability about an image of the goal having already been achieved. Still, it is a powerful technique and certainly does not have to be preceded by twenty-two years of life changes to be effective. You can start with your goal, turn it into a vision, and work backward if other issues emerge that need to be addressed before the goal can be attained. If the believability does not increase, the obstacles usually reveal themselves when reflecting on what is keeping the believability from increasing, and they can be worked on one at a time.

So when you have a clear goal, translate it into a vision or image as instructed above, give its believability a zero-to-ten rating (with 10 being completely believable), identify and address any psychological reversals, and hold the vision while tapping, using the basic protocol taught in the previous chapter (tapping with statements about the goal, Integration Sequence, more tapping, new rating, next round of tapping). Always be prepared to adjust the routine as new developments emerge, such as when Matt's vision morphed from a calendar to a vision of sharing a moment of joy with Jessica.

On to Part 3

In this chapter you have learned seven ways in which acupoint tapping combined with phrases related to your challenges and goals can be used to strengthen your relationship. We are aware that while some readers will be able to put this into immediate use, others will find the technique a little too strange or cumbersome or that there is so much confusion in their relationship that it is hard to know where to start. At a minimum, we hope you will sense that it is possible to identify forces within yourself and in your relationship that may need to be transformed for the two of you to grow into greater intimacy and happiness and that it is possible to transform them. While you may sometimes want a skilled practitioner to help you use these techniques to navigate through difficult territory, acupoint tapping is always available to make things better in the moment, and it can often facilitate changes in long-standing patterns.⁶

Part 2, “The Learned Aspects of Love,” has focused on habits of thought and patterns of behavior that you can change. We opened by exploring the way early experiences with your caregivers set the patterns that reverberate into your adult relationships. The attachment style you bring into a relationship may be more or less secure or insecure, and while that is a product of your past, there is much you can do to craft a future supported by increasingly secure attachment. Skills laid down in childhood for soothing yourself, managing your emotions, and living with the ebbs and flows of intimacy are essential for secure attachment, and they become more refined and robust as your partnership matures. You can cultivate each of these skills, and also address many other aspects of your relationship and your personal evolution, by using techniques from energy psychology. Energy psychology works primarily at the individual level, even when it is focusing on relationship issues. You tap your own acupoints. Now you are about to enter the book’s final section: Part 3, “The Mutually Created Aspects of Love,” where it is your shared journey itself that brings you into ever deeper levels of intimacy.