

Grant and Christine Wattie are best known for helping couples on the brink of breakdown to rapidly transform their relationship using the innovative approach they developed, The Aroha Rapid Transformation Method. This Method equips individuals and couples with the

essential relational skills they need to lead themselves authentically, love and turn-around their relationships, and choose a life they love.

Grant is a certified professional counsellor with 20 years of experience, trained under world-renowned institutes like Gottman, Imago, and EFT, and Christine is also an experienced certified professional counsellor and leadership consultant, bringing her own valuable expertise and 20 years experience to our work. We've been married for four decades, blessed with three beautiful children and grandchildren. Partners in business and life, we've experienced firsthand the challenges and joys of a long-term relationship and juggling multiple priorities. Our experience has deeply informed our understanding and approach.

In our work with couples, we've seen the many symptoms of troubled relationships; communication breakdown, loss of intimacy, trust issues; and how traditional advice often falls short. Since developing the Aroha Rapid Transformation Method, we have seen remarkable changes in the couples we work with.

For many years now, we've been sharing our paradigm shifting methods that any couple can use to transform their relationship. Both of us are regularly featured speakers and writers, recognised as relationship experts and leading global authorities on marriage and relationships. We're glad you're here and look forward to helping you experience love without limits in your own relationship.

Introduction

Can Relationships Transform?

Imagine glancing across the room and catching your partner's eye. You share a micro-moment, a smile spreads across their face and lights up your world.

Imagine waking up every morning feeling deeply connected to the person snuggled beside you, loving your life together.

And the best part? That this connection isn't fleeting; it's the essence of your relationship.

Later, as you chat together, the conversation flows effortlessly. You listen, truly hearing each other. You laugh, sharing a joke. You touch; a moment present with deep understanding and affection.

This isn't a special occasion or a honeymoon phase. This is your everyday reality. Whether you're newlyweds or together for decades, raising children, running a business, or enjoying retirement, living in a city or the country; this deep, authentic connection is available for you.

What if we told you that the key to this kind of love has been within you all along?

We've crafted an approach that can transform your relationship in just 90 days. It's not about mastering communication techniques or managing conflicts. It's about tapping into something far more powerful - and it all starts with you.

Are you ready to uncover the secret that could breathe new life into your partnership?

An Unexpected Gift in a Crisis

The crisis that became the gift of our own relationship transformation is still vividly etched in our memories.

It was a warm September afternoon in the Belmont hills, but inside our house, the tension was icy cold. Chris sat numb and heartbroken on the couch in the yellow room, vaguely aware of Grant's quiet sobs in the kitchen next door. Silence stretched between us, neither of us having a clue what to do next.

The night before, Chris had chucked some stuff in a bag, Dr Rose had prescribed a stiff drink, followed by tears and a broken restless sleep.

Rose's words, "This doesn't have to be the end," kept playing in Chris' head. Really, she thought? How? Without any words, she prayed silently, wordlessly. Time stood still. Reality seemed far off. She felt totally lost. How long passed she didn't know. Seconds? Minutes? Hours?

The next thing Chris remembered was this huge sense of peace. And Grant's hug that said everything without saying anything. The hug that embraced a seemingly infinite, "I love you", a genuine "I'm sorry", heartfelt "please forgive me", and the grateful momentous "thank you" (Ho'oponopono Hawaiian forgiveness prayer)

Grant said later, "it was at that moment something shifted in my heart. I knew what I wanted again. I wanted our love back. But it felt like we were so far apart, I didn't even know where to start."

Completely exhausted, we hardly said a word. The sting had gone, but we still didn't know how to bridge the chasm between us or even if it was possible.

We racked our brains for help, but it was futile; the advice we got was, "have a beer and drown your sorrows" or "maybe you should leave." Who could we turn to?

You're not Alone

Perhaps this painful situation sounds painfully familiar? If so, you're not alone. The National Opinion Research Center states that sixty percent of people in relationships say they're unhappy. The American Psychological Association studies show around 50% of first marriages end in divorce. For second marriages it's even higher, with approximately 60-67% of second marriages ending in divorce. A 2021 study published in the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships found that only 39% of couples reported being 'very happy' in their relationships¹.

But, here's the good news; just because being unhappy is common doesn't mean it's inevitable - or needs to be permanent.

The Gift

Our big crisis brought a gift. While we both felt emotionally wrung out and hopeless, a tiny voice inside whispered, "You guys really had something special together. This can't be how your story ends. There has to be a better way."

¹ Source: Dyadic Data Analysis of Relationship Quality and Satisfaction. Galovan, A. M., & Schramm, D. G. (2021). Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 38(3), 896-917

That's when we decided to go all-in on our marriage. No more putting work and almost everything else before each other. No more sweeping issues under the carpet. No more settling for mediocrity. We were ready to do whatever it took to bring our broken relationship back to life.

We started by taking a mini break from our business and spending many hours together, talking, reconnecting, and reprioritising the most important things in life.

When we couldn't find anyone we could really talk to, we took a surprising path; we went and studied counselling and eventually sold our business. We also connected with world-leading mentors, read every relationship book we could get our hands on, attended ground-breaking workshops, and more. Three years later as certified relationship counsellors and coaches, we were slowly but surely learning to communicate without having a go at each other, to say what we needed without blaming, to forgive each other's stuff-ups and celebrate each other's wins.

Feeling much happier in our own marriage and now also qualified professionals, we realised we weren't the only ones doing it tough. Everywhere we looked, we saw couples drowning in disconnection and despair. We knew we had to share what we'd learned. We made it our mission to help as many couples as possible rediscover the joy, passion and rock-solid love they deserved.

Fast forward more than 20 years and 20,000 client hours later, and here we are. We've boiled down everything we've learned into the 9 proven principles in this book - the exact same tools that took us from the brink of disaster to the best years of our marriage.

The Good News for You

No matter who you are, where you are, or what challenge you're facing in your relationship right now, we have good news for you. We know what it's like to struggle. And we know what it's like to succeed. We can help you. Will you let us?

This isn't just another relationship book. It's a paradigm shift. We're inviting you to reimagine what's possible in love and partnership. Our approach integrates cutting-edge relationship science, leadership principles, timeless wisdom and proven experience with real relationships including our own, to create a revolutionary framework for lasting love.

Our transformational approach is built on three pillars: **LEAD, LOVE, LIVE** - without limits. Our 9 Principles are integrated into the three Pillars and we'll show you how they work together to create lasting love. This isn't just theory - we'll provide you with concrete, actionable steps you can start implementing today. Unlike traditional methods that can take years, our model is designed to create significant shifts in just 90 days.

Christine and I met while studying Horticulture Science at university, and our shared love of nature has deeply influenced our approach to relationships. Think of your partnership as a living garden. Just as a thriving garden needs the right balance of care, a flourishing relationship requires consistent attention and the right conditions to grow. This nurturing perspective sets our method apart, focusing on creating a strong foundation that allows your love to grow and withstand life's storms.

Our goal is to help you cultivate a relationship so vibrant and resilient that it continually renews itself, bringing joy season after season.

You might be thinking, 'We've tried everything. How is this any different?' We get it. We've been there. But what if the reason previous approaches haven't worked is that they're

missing a crucial piece of the puzzle? What if the key to extraordinary love isn't about fixing what's broken, but about unlocking the potential that's already within you?

Naomi and Jo

As one couple, Naomi and Jo*, put it, "There are honestly no words to thank you enough, how do you thank someone for turning your lives and your children's childhood around?"

* We've changed client names throughout out of respect for the awesome people they are.

*We'll follow Naomi and Jo's journey through the pages of this book so you can see their challenges and breakthroughs along the way.

How to Get the Most from this Book

This book isn't just meant to be read. It's meant to be lived. Each chapter contains practical exercises and real-world examples to help you apply these principles in your own relationship. By the time you finish this book, you'll have a personalised roadmap for transforming your relationship.

We bring a unique Kiwi perspective to this global issue, blending our down-to-earth practicality with insights gained from working with couples around the world. Whether you're in Melbourne or Mexico, Hastings or Hong Kong, Auckland or Albuquerque, Wellington or Washington, the principles in this book are universal. We've seen them work across cultures, ages, and relationship stages.

With over 40 years of marriage and 20 years helping thousands of couples, we've distilled our knowledge into nine proven principles. Whether you're in a crisis or simply want to take your good relationship to great, this book offers practical tools and insights for every stage of partnership. As you begin to apply these principles, you'll notice positive changes not just in your relationship, but in all areas of your life.

So, we'll ask you again: Are you ready to discover what's possible when you love wholeheartedly? Your journey to an extraordinary relationship begins now.

Turn the page, and let's begin.

An Unexpected Beginning

Our journey to writing this book began in an unexpected place - the royal palaces of Malaysia. As portrait photographers from New Zealand, we found ourselves capturing images of kings, sultans, and dignitaries, a world away from our usual subjects. But it was a conversation with our young daughter Rachel that truly changed our trajectory:

'Daddy, why do you and mum go away so much?' she asked, her clear blue eyes innocently questioning. 'To make more money,' Grant asserted. 'Why do we need more money?' she continued. 'To buy a bigger house, a new car,' Grant continued. 'We already have those things,' Rachel said. 'I don't want any of that. I just want you and mum.'

Her words hit like a thunderbolt, shattering our ideas of success and sparking a journey that would transform not just our relationship, but our entire approach to life and love. Rachel's simple wisdom became the catalyst for our journey into understanding the true nature of fulfilling relationships.

At the heart of our philosophy is a radical idea; we are fundamentally relational beings. Our deepest joys, most profound growth, and greatest fulfilment come not from individual achievement, but from the quality of our relationships. This book challenges traditional individualistic approaches to relationships and personal development, offering a new paradigm that recognises our inherent interconnectedness.

We've been married for over 40 years now, and we can honestly say our relationship is stronger and more fulfilling than ever. Not because we're perfect – far from it – but because we've learned how to be happy and grow together through life's challenges.

The Aroha Rapid Transformation Model

We've developed the Aroha Rapid Transformation Model, which is unique in three key ways:

1. We focus on who you're being in your relationship, not just what you're doing.
2. We integrate leadership principles, empowering you to lead positive change in your partnership.
3. We're future-focused, guiding you in co-creating a compelling shared vision rather than dwelling on past hurts.

Part One and Part Two

We've organised this book into two parts: Part One, "Fast-Start Your Relationship Transformation" and Part Two, "Diving Deeper." Our intention is to encourage you to focus on first things first and to dive deeper once the earlier principles are under your belt.

Within each chapter, you'll find useful information tips, practical exercises and real-life examples. Every chapter ends with action steps, ensuring you can immediately apply what you've learned.

Throughout this book, we'll guide you on a journey of transformation. We'll start by addressing foundational principles like taking responsibility and building your relationship bank account. Then we'll move into more advanced concepts like emotional freedom and creating a shared vision. Each chapter builds on the last, creating a comprehensive framework for relationship transformation.

As we explore these 9 principles, we'll follow the journey of Naomi and Jo, a couple who, like many, found themselves disconnected and on the brink of divorce. Their story will illustrate how each principle can be applied in real-life situations.

By engaging with this book and applying its principles, you can expect to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of yourself and your partner
- Learn powerful tools for breaking negative patterns and creating lasting positive ones
- Cultivate greater emotional intimacy and connection
- Reignite passion and playfulness in your relationship
- Build a strong foundation of trust and integrity
- Create a shared vision that inspires and aligns you both
- Develop skills for navigating challenges as a team
- Experience a renewed sense of joy and fulfilment in your partnership

Is this Book for You?

This book is for you if you're ready to transform your relationship, create more friendship and joy, and step into a future filled with unlimited love and possibility. Whether you've been married for one year or fifty, are straight, gay, or non-binary, in your first relationship or your fourth marriage. As long as you're open, resourceful, willing to take action, and committed to positive change then this book is for you.

This journey requires commitment. But we promise you this: if you're willing to do the work, the rewards will far exceed your expectations. Whether you're a busy professional, a stay-at-home parent, or somewhere in between, we've designed these strategies to fit seamlessly into your life.

Like a pohutukawa tree that thrives in harsh coastal conditions, your relationship can flourish even in difficult times. Our no-nonsense approach cuts through the fluff, giving you practical tools to create the love you've always dreamed of. While our perspective is uniquely Kiwi, the principles we share are universal, having been tested and proven effective across cultures and continents.

Remember, creating an extraordinary relationship isn't a one-time event—it's an ongoing practice. This book will give you the tools to make that practice not just effective, but joyful.

Your journey to an extraordinary relationship begins now. Are you ready to join us on the path to love without limits? Let's begin.

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" - Lao Tzu

The First Step: Creating Your Ideal Relationship

Now that you're ready to begin this journey, let's take the first step on this transformational journey. This exercise will help you visualise the relationship you truly desire and identify initial actions to move towards it.

You'll need: 15-20 minutes of uninterrupted time, a quiet space and a pen and paper or journal.

Step 1: Your Current Reality

Imagine your life right now as an island. Draw a circle on the left-hand side of your page to represent this island.

When you look at your life right now, use all of your 5 senses to imagine what it looks, feels, smells, tastes and sounds like? Write these words in the circle.

Note; this is the primary reason most people stay stuck and struggle because they look at their current situation and feel hopeless.

Step 2: Your Ideal Future

Now, imagine there is another island, not too far away where your life is the life of your dreams.

Draw a second circle on the right hand side of the page. Now imagine what life is like on the second island. How are you feeling? What do you see? Who is with you? What do you hear, taste, smell? Write down these words inside the second circle.

Notice the shift in your energy as you focus on what you're creating. This is the first secret to transforming your relationship; rather than focus on the problems in your current situation, imagine a powerful vision of what you do want and focus on creating this.

Research shows that the brain can't tell the difference between a well imagined thought and reality, so be sure to create your vision powerfully. You will be pleasantly surprised at how creatively supportive the world gets when you have locked in a laser focus on your dreams.

Step 3: The Bridge

Now imagine there is a bridge going to another island.

Draw this bridge between the two circles. Imagine yourself walking across the bridge to the other island that represents your journey from where you are to where you want to be.

Step 4: Your First Action

Now ask yourself, are you ready to make the journey from where you are now to where you want to be. Are you ready to get started?

What is your first step?

Write down your first step. Your relationship transformation begins when you laser-focus on your dream, commit to this, and take the first step.

Step 5: Reflect

Take a moment to notice how you feel after completing this exercise. Are you excited? anxious? hopeful? There's no right or wrong way to feel. Simply acknowledge your emotions. Remember, change begins with a single step. By completing this exercise, you've already started your journey towards a more fulfilling relationship.

In the coming chapters, we'll provide you with tools and insights to help you continue building your bridge to an extraordinary partnership. But for now, celebrate this first step.

You're on your way to love without limits!

Chapter 1. Be The Change: Taking 100% Responsibility

Imagine waking up tomorrow with the power to completely transform your relationship. The truth is, you already have that power – it lies in taking 100% responsibility for your part in the partnership.

What do we mean by that you might ask. In the realm of relationships, taking 100% responsibility means recognising that you are the creator of your experience. As Dr Hew Len teaches, you are responsible for your life, including your thoughts, emotions and how you show up in your partnership. This approach invites you to consistently bring your best, most loving self to your relationship, regardless of circumstances.

Remember Gandhi's famous words, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." We've found this applies just as much to our relationships as it does to anything else. Want more kindness in your partnership? Start by being kinder. Craving deeper understanding? Listen more deeply yourself. It's not about waiting for your partner to change - it's about stepping up and demonstrating the love you want to experience. That's how real transformation happens.

Are you a Player or Spectator?

When it comes to relationships, you can either be the player in action responding to the game in the moment, or a spectator reacting to the game from the sidelines. Both have a place in a game of rugby, netball or whatever your favourite sport happens to be. However,

in the game of life and relationships, the secret to transforming your relationship is to show up as the player, being proactive, in the game, and choosing positive action.

This active engagement is crucial because our actions and choices don't exist in a vacuum - they ripple out to affect our partner and the entire dynamic of our relationship.

The Spectator and the Player mindsets are like chalk and cheese, and so are their impact on relationships. Let's take a look.

Spectator Mindset:

- Blame my partner when I'm upset
- Make excuses that I'm powerless to change the situation
- Be defensive that I'm right and my partner is wrong
- Wait powerlessly for my partner to make the first move
- React and focus on my partner's weaknesses

Player Mindset:

- Take ownership of my own thoughts, emotions and behaviour
- Be accountable for my contribution to our relationship challenges
- Take responsibility for my power to speak up in love for our relationship
- Lead by example and invite my partner to join me
- Choose to respond focusing on positive can-do win-win solutions

Taking 100% responsibility is all about recognising that everything happens in your life because it's your life and you are in it. If you weren't born, then nothing happening in your life would occur to you. This perspective acknowledges your power to shape your experiences and relationships.

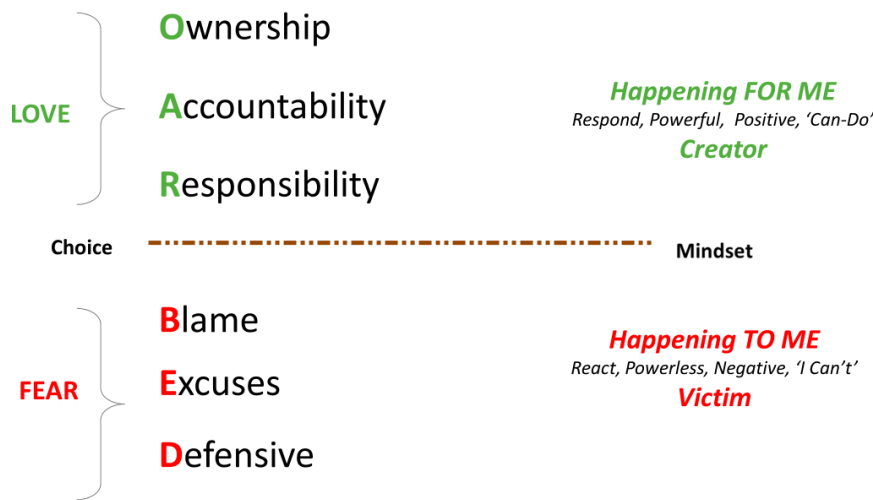
Psychologists call this having an 'internal locus of control'. Research has shown that individuals with an internal locus of control – those who believe they have power over events in their lives – tend to have healthier relationships and greater overall life satisfaction.

The ancient Stoic philosopher Epictetus once said, 'It's not what happens to you, but how you react* to it that matters.' This idea is at the heart of what we call 'above the line' thinking in relationships.

*we prefer the word, "respond" as a more positive language choice than react.

Here's a visual representation of the Above-the-Line or OARBED model. In essence, we can choose to be above the line as the Player, taking 100% responsibility, responding to life as it unfolds, or below the line, reacting as a spectator, a victim stuck in patterns that keep you from constructively moving forward.

Above the Line Thinking



Above the line:

- O - Ownership: Taking responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- A - Accountability: Being answerable for your choices and their outcomes.
- R - Responsibility: Responding to situations proactively rather than reacting.

When you're above the line, you speak from the "I". You might say things like, "I feel frustrated when this happens" and "I'd like to find a solution together."

Below the line:

- B - Blame: Pointing fingers at others or circumstances.
- E - Excuses: Justifying why you can't change or improve.
- D - Deny: Refusing to acknowledge problems or your role in them.

Below the line, you're speaking from a negative "you." You might find yourself saying, "You always do this" or "You never listen to me."

Research backs up the power of staying "above the line". A landmark study by Deci and Ryan in 2000 showed that people with an "internal locus of control" - those who believe they're in the driver's seat of their own lives - tend to have happier relationships and more satisfying lives overall.

We've seen this play out countless times in our work. When couples shift from BED behaviours and "you" statements to OAR thinking and "I" statements, it's like watching a flower bud open in fast-forward. Suddenly, there's more love, more understanding, and a whole lot more satisfaction.

So here's our challenge to you; next time you're feeling stuck, ask yourself - am I operating above or below the line? Am I speaking from "I" or "you"? Choose to pick up your OAR, leave your BED behind, and watch how quickly things can change.

If you show up in your relationship as a spectator, you give up your power. You react to your partner's every move, getting frustrated when they don't meet your expectations. You wait passively for them to make you happy and feel disappointed when they don't. Your well-being hinges on their behaviour. It's a perfect recipe for frustration.

But when you step up to be an active player in your relationship, everything changes. You stop obsessing over what your partner's doing wrong and start focusing on what you can do right. You shift from blaming to accepting, criticism to compassion, from dwelling on the past to being present in the moment, and creating a new future. You ask yourself, "How can I be my best self, no matter what my partner does?"

Naomi and Jo

Let's check in with Naomi and Jo, the couple we're following throughout this book. Jo came to see Grant first, as another professional had advised the couple to divorce and that he needed to see someone independent to untangle his world.

Jo, a highly respected business owner, felt betrayed and alone. His wife, Naomi, a vibrant university professional, had had an affair. Jo shared that he worked hard, met friends afterwards at the rugby club, and gave what was left to his family. Now they were sleeping in separate bedrooms, neither of them could see a way forward; they found themselves at a crossroads.

Talking with Grant, Jo became clear he wanted to find a way back into Naomi's heart and keep his young family together, but he was stuck. He'd tried everything he knew and Naomi wasn't buying it. He didn't have a clue how to get there. And, what's more, could he get past the betrayal? Was it just a pipedream?

Together they discussed Jo becoming his best self, the kind of person Naomi would want to be with. His words wouldn't be enough. He'd need to show her and prove it with action. He needed to take 100% responsibility for his life because he's in it, and to become the best version of himself.

Jo, a guy with loads of integrity, committed and took on the 100% responsibility to show up better. He made some big changes, and a few weeks later, much to their surprise, it was both Jo and Naomi sitting with Chris, discussing their next steps together.

100% Responsibility is a Gamechanger

This is the foundation of strong, healthy relationships - taking 100% responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, and actions. It's a game-changer. When you live like this, you're no longer a victim of your circumstances. You generate your own happiness from within and bring that to your relationship. You take 100% responsibility for yourself and take the first step to become the change you want to see in your partnership.

"Be the change you want to see in the world"- Gandhi

While many professionals start by focussing on the problems in the relationship, we propose a different path. Taking 100% responsibility is choosing to show up as your best self, regardless. Whatever happens, as your best self, you'll be happier. And, putting your best foot forward, 100%, you're setting the context for positive change in your relationship.

Choosing to Lead Yourself

Here's a question for you, are you a leader?

Earlier on in our journey, we bought a leadership franchise from Leadership Management Australasia, developed from the global organisation, Leadership Management International (LMI). For many years, we worked with leaders from diverse backgrounds and industries. Through this experience, we came to strongly agree with LMI founder Paul Meyer's words, "Everyone is a leader. They must at least lead themselves."

As we trained these leaders, one common factor emerged: leadership wasn't just a 'title' like 'manager' that was given. It had to be earned and was strongly linked to how we show up in all areas of life, especially in our relationships.

We discovered that the principles of effective leadership apply just as much to personal relationships as they do to professional ones. When we choose to lead ourselves as active players in our lives, rather than passive spectators, we're also choosing to be more present, engaged, and responsive partners.

For instance, a leader in the workplace takes responsibility for their actions and decisions. In a relationship, this translates to owning our part in conflicts and actively working towards solutions. A good leader communicates clearly and listens actively - skills that are crucial in maintaining a healthy partnership.

We found that couples who applied these leadership principles to their relationships experienced significant improvements. They became more proactive in addressing issues, more empathetic in their interactions, and more committed to their shared goals.

This insight fundamentally shaped our approach to relationship mentoring. We began to see that creating an extraordinary relationship isn't just about love and compatibility - it's about leadership. It's about each partner stepping up to lead themselves, making conscious choices about how they show up in the relationship every day.

When we choose to lead ourselves, we're choosing to be our best selves for our partners. We're choosing to respond rather than react, to listen deeply rather than defend, to take initiative rather than wait passively.

Remember, you are the leader of your own life. As you embrace this role and consistently choose to lead yourself with 100% responsibility, you create the foundation for an extraordinary partnership.

From Dropping the Ball to the 100% Responsibility Solution

Grant vividly recalls the moment he had a wake-up call about his behaviour at home. We thought we had a good relationship and volunteered to go on stage as participants for a relationship communication exercise. Grant says, "I'd been getting annoyed at Chris for constantly reminding me about household chores, but then in this exercise it hit me like a ton of bricks – I was the one dropping the ball, not her."

Grant continues, "In that moment, in front of the watching eyes of hundreds, I committed to take responsibility and find a solution that would work for both of us. Together, we to-and-froed and came up with a simple solution. Chris agreed to jot down the tasks that needed attention on a post-it and leave it on Grant's desk. Grant agreed to do them over the next few days and cross them off when done."

This small shift worked brilliantly and made a world of difference. "Now, we hardly ever clash over household jobs," says Grant. "It's amazing how a bit of personal responsibility and clear communication can transform a relationship."

How to Shift from Stuck Spectator to Choosing 100% Responsibility?

If right now you know you're stuck in the vicious cycle of the spectator victim mindset; blaming, ignoring, judging, making excuses and getting defensive; you might be wondering, how do I start?

This principle of taking 100% responsibility aligns closely with the philosophy of Viktor Frankl, the renowned psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor. Frankl's experiences in Nazi concentration camps led him to develop logotherapy, a form of existential therapy that emphasises the importance of finding meaning in all forms of existence, even the most difficult ones.

In his 1946 book, "Man's Search for Meaning" chronicling his experiences as a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, Frankl writes, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." This powerful insight encapsulates the essence of taking 100% responsibility in relationships.

Frankl's work suggests that even in the most challenging circumstances, we retain the freedom to choose our attitude and response. This idea has profound implications for relationships. When we embrace this responsibility, we shift from being passive victims of our circumstances to active creators of our relationship's reality.

Research inspired by Frankl's work has shown that individuals who embrace this philosophy of personal responsibility tend to have more satisfying relationships and greater overall life satisfaction. They approach challenges as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles.

By applying Frankl's principles to your relationship, you're not just improving your partnership – you're cultivating a mindset of resilience and purpose that can enhance all areas of your life. It's about recognising that while you can't control everything that happens in your relationship, you always have the power to choose your response and find meaning in your experiences together.

This shift from reactivity to responsibility is at the heart of creating an extraordinary relationship. As Frankl might say, it's in this space of choice that we find our capacity for love, growth, and ultimate fulfillment in our partnerships.

Regardless of the situation, partners who learn to pause in the space, give themselves the milliseconds advantage they need to be able to choose a constructive response, to positively influence their own behaviour, and choose to lead as their best self, open the door to growth and freedom with their partner and in all areas of business and life.

Leaders, by definition, go first; they lead the way. As you choose the player mindset and choose to take responsibility for the positive first step, you are being a leader in your relationship.

100% or 50%?

Most couples and even the experienced professionals they hire to help them, get this wrong. They start by working on conflict resolution and taking responsibility for their 50% and their

partner taking their 50%. However, when you're both keeping score and thinking each of you is responsible for 50% then as soon as something goes wrong, most couples point the finger at their partner, blame them and try to change them. This just leads to negativity and the all-too-common downward spiral.

We say take 100% responsibility and lead yourself. Very often this leads to a positive ripple effect in the relationship.

A common myth is that both partners need to be committed to saving a marriage. While this seems to make sense, it is exactly the wrong approach to take. Someone must go first and choose to take 100% responsibility.

Intentions or Actions

'We judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behaviour.' - Stephen Covey

Many people excuse their own negative behaviour saying things like, "I didn't mean to, you made me angry." This is the exact opposite to taking 100% responsibility. It's easy to judge your partner's irritating behaviour, but be sure to take a good look at your own actions, not just your intentions.

You may be familiar with the saying, "First take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your partner's eye."

Actions speak much louder than words. When you choose to act differently, your partner almost always responds differently.

Andy and Emma - Taking 100% Responsibility

Andy and Emma had been married for 16 years, when their relationship hit a rough patch. "We tried marriage counselling in the past," Emma shared, "but it only seemed to make matters worse. We would leave sessions feeling angrier and more frustrated, with nothing resolved, leading to more arguments and the silent treatment."

One day, when they learned about the concept of taking 100% responsibility in their relationship, Andy had a profound realisation. "I recognised that I had been stuck in a spectator mindset, waiting for Emma to make me happy and blaming her when things went wrong," he admitted. "I decided to shift my perspective and adopt a player mindset instead."

Andy started by becoming more aware of his thoughts, feelings, and actions. "Instead of dwelling on the past which I couldn't change, I made the decision to learn from it," he explained. "I learned that I could let go of unhelpful thoughts and self-soothe strong emotional reactions, which led to calmer emotions and more helpful actions, towards a commitment to being the best of myself, becoming the person Emma had originally fallen in love with."

The impact of this change was massive. "Not only did it improve my relationship with Emma, but it also positively affected our children and my work," Andy said. "I've been in the military for 16 years and have attended numerous leadership courses, but I found this approach to be the most effective by far."

Each night, Andy would take a moment to reflect. "I would stop, think about what was going on, make a cup of tea, meditate, and reflect on better ways to show up in my life and marriage," he shared. "This process of self-reflection and personal responsibility was refreshing and transformative."

As Andy continued to focus on being his best self, Emma noticed the changes. "I felt more appreciated, understood, and loved," she said. "Inspired by Andy's example, I too started to take responsibility for my own happiness and contributions to the relationship."

Together, Andy and Emma created a positive cycle of growth and connection. "By each taking 100% responsibility for our own thoughts, feelings, and actions, we were able to transform our marriage from a source of frustration and conflict to a supportive and loving partnership," they concluded.

Their story is a powerful example of how shifting from a spectator to a player mindset, and by each taking full responsibility for their own lives, Andy and Emma not only transformed their relationship but also became an inspiring example for others.

You as Catalyst for Positive Change

Are you willing to take 100% ownership of your life? If your answer is "Yes" then you are stepping into your essential power as a catalyst, with the power to choose, in every moment, what you'll create more of, and how you'll show up in your relationship. It doesn't remove your partner from responsibility. But it means focusing on what you can control - yourself - as the key to transformation.

Of course, you won't always get this right. You'll have moments when you slip into spectator mode and become reactive. That's normal. If you catch yourself falling into a victim mentality, pause and reconnect with your best self to choose your response. Remind yourself, "Who do I need to be right now to respond rather than react?" It could be as simple as taking some deep breaths to calm yourself, an authentic apology, or giving your partner a hug. Remember, you always have a choice in how you respond.

The more you flex your 100% responsibility muscle, the more natural it becomes. As choosing to be above the line becomes your habit, you'll experience firsthand that joyful, happy relationships start with joyful, happy individuals taking ownership and choosing their experience.

This is the foundation of lasting love. Because while you can't control your partner, you can absolutely learn to control yourself. When you do, your entire relationship transforms accordingly. Put it into practice and watch the magic happen.

Who's Right, Who's Wrong, Who Cares?

When your partner is upset, rather than focus on who's right or wrong, become like a great customer service person. If your fridge is broken, a friendly customer service person will listen and help you fix it as quickly and simply as possible. You don't want to hear their complaints. You want a solution.

It is exactly the same when your partner is upset. Rather than react, take a moment to take a breath, get present and really listen. Choose a positive tone and respond with words that will help your partner feel better.

At first glance this approach may appear one-sided, which is why many people get this wrong. However, don't worry, when this becomes your relational "go-to" role your partner will return the favour when you're upset. Over time, with practice, you will shift from being reactive individuals competing with each other to proactive teammates who collaborate and intentionally positively re-shape your relationship.

Practical Tool: STOP for Relationship Repair

It's simple, though not necessarily easy to use STOP when triggered. Just like a traffic light, the key is to notice when you move out of green into amber and catch this quickly before things escalate out of control.

1. **Stop.** Simply STOP. Use an agreed-upon signal like "Stop" or "Pause" to stop the situation escalating. Walk away to create space.
2. **Take** three deep breaths and smile everywhere in your body.
3. **Observe** what's happening in your body sensations. Is your heart racing? Your jaw clenching? Notice where you feel the anger or frustration. Name the emotion. Own your emotions as an indicator of what you care about, rather than making them about your partner. Ask yourself, "What am I really caring about here? What is my need that is not being met?"
4. **Proceed** with kindness and compassion. Choose a positive tone and above-the-line attitude.

As you become more aware of your physical or emotional changes, you'll be able to start to take 100% responsibility to be able to use the 30 millisecond window and catch yourself before the emotions escalate into orange and red and cause havoc for yourself and the relationship.

Sometimes it is super-hard to STOP; STOP anyway. Choose to take 100% responsibility to walk away, go around the block, get a coffee, and if you need to, even sleep on it. Be sure to agree to make time to talk about this again as soon as you're both green.

When you're back at green, make the time to talk things through and repair the upset. There are plenty of communication tools throughout the book to help you.

Focus on your job to take 100% responsibility to repair the upset and to bring your partner back into connection. As you look for solutions, be sure to ask what your partner needs and to listen with empathy.

Our STOP Reset button story

Here's an example from our own relationship. When we are upset, one of us might say something that triggers the other, and before we know it, we're caught in a back-and-forth of reactive responses. I'm sure you've experienced this type of situation in your own relationship.

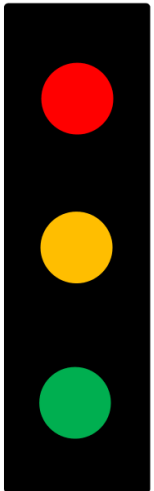
It might start with a small comment about household chores or a forgotten task, and suddenly we're trading jabs, each feeling more defensive and misunderstood with every exchange. The tension builds, and we can feel ourselves getting further from the loving connection we truly want.

However, we've learned that the STOP tool is a powerful circuit-breaker for these moments. As soon as we notice that this is an unproductive exchange, one of us will stop, pause, take a deep breath, and shift gears. With a deliberately soft tone and carefully chosen positive words, we'll say something like:

"Honey, I don't want to argue. I'd rather we have a happy day together."

This simple statement acts as a reset button, reminding us both of what's truly important - our relationship and shared happiness.

Then, we'll ask, "What do you need right now?" This question shifts the focus from blame to understanding, inviting our partner to express their underlying needs or feelings.



We make a conscious effort to listen with empathy, setting aside our own defensive reactions to truly hear and validate our partner's experience. It's about being generous with our attention and understanding, even when it's challenging.

STOP is Simple and Only Takes One

This approach isn't always easy, especially in the heat of the moment. But we've found it to be incredibly effective in de-escalating conflicts and reconnecting with each other. It's a practical way of choosing love over being right, and prioritising our relationship over temporary frustrations.

Remember, it only takes one person to change the dynamic. By being the one to pause, soften your tone, and reach out with empathy, you can transform a potential argument into an opportunity for deeper understanding and connection. This is what it means to take 100% responsibility for the health of your relationship.

Give up being right. It is in your interests to make things better because you live together. Ask yourself, "What kind of day do I want to have? Do I want to spend the rest of the day upset or happy?" Take 100% responsibility to be the proactive player partner. It is good for them, it is good for you, it is good for the kids in the house, it is good for health, it is good for growing more love and connection in your relationship.

If you find it hard to STOP as we do sometimes, here's a tip to remember when you're triggered; breath is your friend. Breathe. Don't react. You're on the same team.

The STOP Relationship Repair Tool is our most simple tool. We add more detail in a later chapter with the STOP Tiger-Turtle Tool.

Action: Taking 100% Responsibility

1. Think of three kind positive actions that the loving partner version of you could take this week. Choose to implement these actions, regardless of how your partner responds. Put them in your diary now.
2. When you're tempted to blame or criticise, pause and ask yourself, "Is this kind? Is this necessary? Is this loving?" Choosing the positive player mindset, ask yourself, "Given this situation, what is my best possible response?"
3. Try the STOP Relationship Repair Tool next time you're both upset. Adopt the customer service 100% responsibility attitude rather than being right. STOP, breathe, walk away, take time out. When calm, focus on repair. With a soft tone, let your partner know you want to make this work. Ask them what they need. Listen.

Remember that developing new habits takes time and practice. If you want to apply just a couple of ideas from this book that will make a massive difference to your relationship, STOP is one of our favourites. Get this right and the next steps will be much easier.

Common Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: My partner isn't taking responsibility for their part.

Solution: Focus on what you can control. By consistently modelling responsibility, you create space for your partner to follow suit. Remember, it only takes one person to change the dynamic.

Challenge: I feel overwhelmed by taking full responsibility.

Solution: Start small. Choose one area of your relationship to practise taking full

responsibility. As you see positive changes, you'll feel empowered to extend this approach to other areas.

Challenge: I'm struggling to let go of blame.

Solution: Practise reframing. Instead of "You always...", try "Can I make a request? or Can we work together to find a solution?"

Reflection Questions:


1. In what areas of your relationship do you tend to play the spectator? How might taking the player role change things?
2. What's one small step you can take today to demonstrate 100% responsibility in your relationship?
3. How might your relationship dynamic shift if both you and your partner embraced 100% responsibility?

By embracing 100% responsibility, you're not just changing your relationship – you're transforming yourself. As you continue to practise this principle, you'll find that it extends beyond your partnership, positively impacting all areas of your life. Remember, the journey to an extraordinary relationship begins with you.

Now that you understand the power of taking 100% responsibility, let's explore how to put that into practice by building your Relationship Bank Account.

Here's to your relationship transformation; not someday, but starting today, one decision, one small action at a time. Our hope is that you find freedom, friendship, love, peace and joy, and everything you truly desire in your partnership together, every moment until your very last breaths.

Life is short and love is infinite. Don't wait for your happiness. When you choose love you have a way forward in any relationship challenge. With the lens of love, you will find new courage and confidence to acknowledge what you want and be who you are, right here and now. Keep listening to your heart and let it guide you to be your beautiful, brave, kind and truest self.

Arohanui (love and blessings) 

Christine and Grant

Email: gmwattie@gmail.com

www.grantwattie.com

Ph: +64 222 407623