



10 Tips for Moving Out of Relationship Pain

Helping singles and couples **BREAK** painful patterns of relating to **CREATE** loving, healthy and life affirming relationships!

by Clinton Power
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About “10 Tips for Moving Out of Relationship Pain”

Congratulations!

Through downloading this report, you are taking the first step in beginning to move out of relationship pain. I know it's not easy for some people to reach out for support or help, so if that seems like you, know that you are taking a pro-active attitude towards creating the type of relationship you want.

I have been privileged to work with many singles and couples that have struggled with relationship issues for close to a decade. What I have learned in that time is no two people or couples are the same. However there are familiar patterns and cycles that can occur between singles and couples that stop them from having the fulfilling relationships that they long for.

In this report, I describe some of the initial strategies and concepts that I use when working with singles and couples to assist them in breaking these painful patterns of relating. These tips can help you form and maintain a relationship that is loving, respectful, enduring and life affirming.

In addition to this report, you will also be receiving my monthly newsletter where I present the latest information, up to date research, creative ideas and strategies about what makes relationships successful and satisfying.

Remember that to make your relationships work takes time, patience, compassion and understanding. Most importantly, the tips described in this report take practice, and lots of it! Practice, practice and practice until new habits and ways of being start to feel more natural. Don't be hard on yourself if you find that changes are not occurring immediately in your relationship.



You might find that you reach an impasse where you are struggling to move forward in your relationship issues or in your intimate relationship. This may be because there are patterns and forces that are out of your awareness that are keeping you stuck. You may need to reach out for professional support to assist you in moving through a difficult period. I encourage you to seek out the help of a professional counsellor, whether you are a single or a couple, so that you may begin to create the type of relationship you have always wanted.

Please send me your feedback about this report or share your success stories with me through my email at clinton@clintonpower.com.au

I wish you all the best for creating a loving relationship!

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10 Tips for Moving Out of Relationship Pain

1. Straight Talk

In this hectic world it is so easy to forget to sit down with your partner and just communicate. One of the fundamentals of being in a relationship is that you need to set aside time to talk to your partner. I hear you saying “What do you mean? I talk to my partner all the time!” Well, what I am referring to is *straight talk*. *Straight talk* is not about who is taking the kids to sport or when is the dog due for a vaccination or how much did the handyman quote for the fence repair. *Straight talk* is talking about issues of substance and meaning to you and your partner. Talk about meaningful things, like your dreams, hopes and aspirations for the future. Tell your partner how much he/she means to you or thank them for that little thing they did this morning, which helped you get out the door on time. Talk about your feelings and how you are affecting each other. That also means you need to share the positive and the less than positive in a straightforward and respectful fashion.

Research has shown that most conflict between couples arises from issues that could have been discussed before they became issues, but they were avoided or ignored.

2. Welcome Conflict as an Opportunity for Growth

It is a common misperception that conflict is bad for relationships. Of course, some conflict is destructive, particularly conflict that may turn into abuse, violence or is constantly unresolved. This type of conflict can significantly impact the health and well-being of individuals and couples. However, I encourage you to consider conflict as an opportunity to grow. When there is conflict in the relationship, the message may be “we are not understanding each other right now and our needs are not being met”. The



opportunity that presents itself at this point is to begin to understand the other's perspective. Use conflict as a signal that something is not working between you and needs to be attended to. All relationships experience conflict at one time or another and the goal is to manage, not eliminate conflict.

If you find that you get too heated when trying to work through the issue, take time out, go for a walk, focus on your breathing, and agree to meet again at another time to work through the issues. **When you are able to manage conflict the message you are giving each other is 'I value you and am willing to invest time and energy into understanding your perspective.'**

3. Create Opportunities for Shared Meaning

One of the ingredients for a successful and long lasting relationship is to create opportunities for shared meaning with your partner. What this means is to have interests or activities that you can do together. You may also establish rituals together that have meaning for the two of you, such as attending a regular sporting event or subscribing to a concert or drama series. Even through these small, regular activities, you are celebrating your relationship and enjoying each other's company. You are also creating shared experiences together that will be lasting memories of enjoyable and happy times that you shared together.

If you are a couple that is regularly fighting it is important that you set side at least one time each week for pleasurable contact. This is a time when you enjoy each other's company without bringing up any unresolved issues, new business or housekeeping matters. Many couples make this a weekly habit and call it 'date night'. As the name suggests, it is an opportunity to reconnect with each other without the stresses and issues of everyday life getting in the way.



4. Practice Gratitude

Practicing gratitude means to celebrate and be thankful for all the positive aspects of your relationship. This includes appreciating the small everyday things that you get from being in relationship with your partner. You might want to say thank you to your partner for making you a coffee or lunch in the morning, or share your appreciation when you are enjoying your partner's company. Or perhaps you simply want to be quietly thankful for the health and well-being of your partner and your relationship.

Research has shown that individuals that practice gratitude are happier and more fulfilled than those who don't. Couples that are appreciative of one another tend to have longer and more successful relationships. This starts with the small everyday events that contribute to a lifetime of shared experiences.

5. $1 + 1 = 1 = \text{none}$

One of the most common and destructive fallacies about relationships and in particular, long term ones, is the idea that 2 individuals should merge to become one person. The main problem is that when you fuse with another person you lose your sense of self. Hence, 1 person + 1 person = 1 merged person = no person! This model of relationships implies that couples should have similar tastes, the same friends, change their habits and likes to fit in with their partner and generally start to 'fuse' with their significant other and become similar in all aspects. There are significant problems with this model, as evidenced by the divorce rate in the general population, which is close to 50% and even higher for second marriages. A person merging with another to become one enmeshed person, signals

potential disaster for the relationship and generally ends in separation to regain the lost sense of self.

What I encourage is not total independence or fusion, but rather inter-dependence. So that there are times when you lean on your partner and they lean on you. There are also times when you seek solace and alone time and you are open to and encouraging when your partner wants or needs to spend time apart from you. Maintaining relationships and activities that were part of your life before you entered the relationship, even when they are dramatically different from your partner, can pay big dividends in the success of your current relationship. **Welcome difference in your relationship. Think of difference as an exciting point where you can meet and begin to be curious and interested in someone else very different from you!**

6. Three R's are better than 2

The most common negative communication pattern in couples is what I call the **2 R's: Receive - React**. That is, one partner sends a message, the other partner **receives** the message and responds quickly in a **reactive** or defensive way. In turn, this partner upon receiving the reactive message reacts back. As you can imagine, it is very hard to be heard when each of you are so busy reacting to the other!

To break this **receive-react** pattern, you need to slow down the interactions. One of the best ways to do this is to reflect on the message you are receiving before you respond. Think of this as the 3 R's. **Receive – Reflect – Respond**. As you reflect on the message your partner is sharing with you, this can give you breathing space to slow down the interaction. Consider your feelings, thoughts and be aware of your body. Notice all your senses, what do you see, smell, feel, and hear and what sensations in your body are you aware of? As you notice your thoughts,

are they familiar? Do you feel loving, or angry or defensive? In using your awareness to reflect on the message and all aspects of what is going on for you, there is a much higher chance of you feeling connected with your partner and thus responding in a non-reactive manner. It also means there is less chance that the discussion will escalate to the point where you are arguing and not being heard by the other.

Communicating in this way will help you manage more of your differences and your relationship will then be more rewarding.

7. Do you turn towards, turn away, or turn against?

Dr John Gottman, professor of psychology at the University of Washington has researched couples for close to 40 years. Dr. Gottman has developed a methodology that predicts with 90% percent accuracy which newlywed couples will remain married and which will divorce four to six years later. This research also applies to same-sex couples.

One of the important aspects of this research has been noting the behaviours of successful couples. Dr Gottman has concluded that individuals in relationships are constantly making emotional bids for connection with one another. **He has noticed that couples that 'turn towards' one another in everyday interactions report higher relationship satisfaction and are less likely to separate. Couples that 'turn away' or 'turn against' are much less happy in their relationships and less likely to stay together.**

You might be asking, 'what does turning towards, away and against mean?' Here is a simple example to help you understand this. Let's say if your partner shares something about their day with you i.e. they are making a bid for connection, and you respond with interest, then you are 'turning towards'. Lets take the same scenario at a different time and you don't respond, ignore or walk away, then you are 'turning away'. Perhaps

another time, you think your partner is interrupting you and you respond angrily, then you are 'turning against.'

I think the really important aspect of this research, is that it shows how the simple everyday experiences, exchanges and interactions with our partners can make a significant difference to the longevity and satisfaction of any relationship.

8. Use Rituals of Connection

Another of the habits of successful couples described by William Doherty in his book "The Intentional Family" is the use of rituals as a way to 'turn towards' your partner and significant others. Rituals by their very nature tend to be regular and consistent and are a way of having dependable contact with the people that are important in your life. Of course, you may think of all the big events like birthdays, Christmas, Easter and other special days that often have rituals associated with them. However, rituals can also be part of everyday life. A ritual might include sitting down to dinner together to discuss the days events, without the television on. It may be as simple as having a kiss or hug everyday before you leave for work, or making Friday nights family night, when the whole family has dinner together.

The question next is what are the rituals you want to establish in your life and your relationships. Rituals of connection need to be planned and questions like, When will it happen? Where will it happen? How often? Who will initiate it? How will it develop? and How will it end? can be helpful in creating more meaningful rituals in your relationships.



9. Are you listening or just waiting to talk?

Talking is a disease in our culture. Most people have a point of view, an opinion, or some advice to offer you. When was the last time that you truly listened to your partner or someone close to you? What I am talking about is that profound deep listening where you really take in what the person is communicating to you. Can you put yourself in their shoes? Can you deeply connect with the message they are relaying to you? Can you empathically feel the place where this message is coming from? If you can, then you don't need to read this, but if you're like the majority of people, you are probably just waiting for the other to stop speaking so you can share your point of view.

See what happens next time if you slow yourself down and begin to deeply listen to the messages you are receiving. Instead of formulating your clever response, see if you can remain curious and interested in what they are saying. Follow your curiosity and ask questions, reflect back what you are hearing and let the other know that you really get what they are saying.

Next time you are talking with your partner, take a moment and check in with yourself. Are you listening or just waiting to talk?

10. Develop a language for your emotional world

One of the most important ingredients for a successful relationship is to be able to find a voice for your emotional world. One of the ways we connect deeply with other people is through our emotions. It is vital that you begin to develop a language to be able to express your deepest needs, feelings and longings. One of the best ways to develop this is with the people that are closest to you in your life. They can provide the safety for you to develop this essential skill.

If this feels foreign to you, start with small steps. **Practise disclosing your feelings towards your partner in those everyday moments.** Share how you feel when you see them at the end of the day or after some time apart. Practise sharing your vulnerabilities, struggles and difficulties with those that you trust. Also, when you are feeling distressed in your relationship, ask yourself, 'What is my emotional need right now?' When you reflect on this, it can help you become clearer about what is going on for you and what you may want to request of your partner. When you take an emotional risk in your relationship, such as sharing a need or vulnerability, it can feel scary at first. However, you may be surprised by the response you get and the support that is available to you from those you love the most.

Conclusion

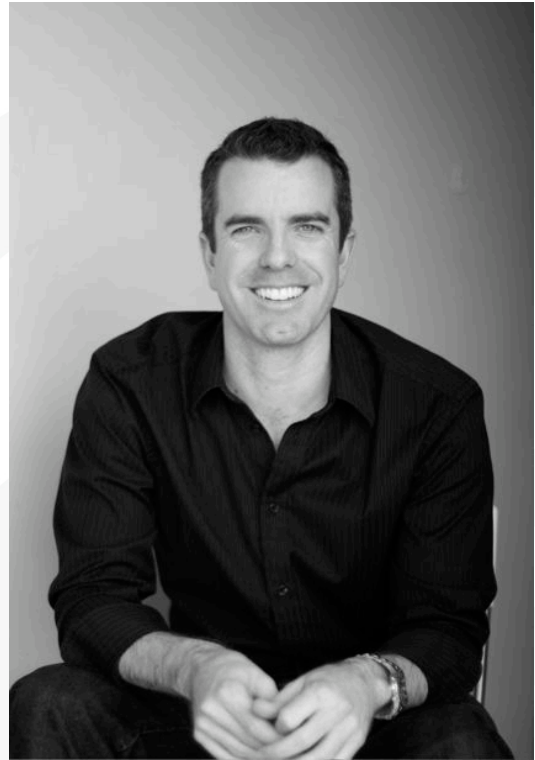
I hope you have found these tips helpful in your journey to create the loving relationship you have always desired. Remember to be patient and kind to yourself and your partner if you struggle with these new behaviours.

If you find that you are not making progress in your relationship issues, I encourage you to seek the support of a professional relationship counsellor who is trained specifically in helping singles and couples create the relationships they want.

About the Author

Clinton Power is a counsellor, psychotherapist and registered Gestalt therapist, who is passionate about assisting singles and couples in breaking painful patterns of relating so that they may create relationships that are respectful, loving and life affirming.

Clinton is a clinical member of the Australian Counselling Association, Gestalt Australia and New Zealand and the Psychotherapists and Counsellors Federation of Australia. He is a Gestalt practitioner who works in a way that focuses on deepening the experience of being in relationship. In his work, Clinton has a particular interest in the potential for relationship to heal past wounds and traumas.



Clinton offers relationship counselling for individuals and couples in the Sydney CBD and metropolitan areas. For more information on Clinton's clinical practice, or to book an appointment online, please visit his website at www.clintonpower.com.au

If you wish to contact Clinton for relationship counselling services, call for a FREE, 10 minute, no obligation telephone consultation at 0412 241 410. Clinton can also be reached by email at clinton@clintonpower.com.au

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