



Discernment In Relationships

A 10-Step Study Guide for Self Examination, Healing & Achieving Relational Success

Alexis Forteza

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"You are never too broken to become the best version of yourself."

~Alexis

This book is dedicated to every woman who receives this. You are never alone in your struggles and your mistakes do not define your worth. May the love I used to create this book spread into every area of your life. My broken pieces that I thought were useless were meant to help you.

~Alexis

Course Syllabus

Introduction: The Importance of Discerning Relationships

Lesson 1: Self-Evaluation

Lesson 2: Defining Boundaries

Lesson 3: Self-Trust

Lesson 4: Red Flags

Lesson 5: Social Media 101

Lesson 6: Generational Patterns

Lesson 7: Speak Up!

Lesson 8: Realistic Standards

Lesson 9: Potential Trap

Lesson 10: Fix Your Perspective

Closing Thoughts



Checklist

Lesson 1: Self-Evaluation

- Reading
- Exercises

Lesson 2: Defining Boundaries

- Reading
- Exercises

Lesson 3: Self-Trust

- Reading
- Exercises

Lesson 4: Red Flags

- Reading
- Exercises

Lesson 5: Social Media 101

- Reading
- Exercises

Lesson 6: Generational Patterns

- Reading
- Exercises

Lesson 7: Speak Up!

- Reading
- Exercises

Lesson 8: Realistic Standards

- Reading
- Exercises

Checklist

Lesson 9: Fix Your Perspective

Reading

Exercises

Lesson 10: Potential Trap

Reading

Exercises

Notes:

Welcome!

Importance of Discernment

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Any human being that is alive, and has breath in their lungs, needs relationships in order to prosper, and quite arguably, to survive. Discernment in relationships is not strictly confined to romantic relationships, but rather needed for all relationships that you will come across in your lifetime. This includes your friendships, family members, coworkers, even down to the people in your favorite spin class. No matter the environment you are in, where there are people around, there is potential for relationship.

Discernment is a word used quite often in the Christian realm. To make discernment very easy to understand, it simply means the ability to evaluate circumstances beyond the surface level; to further understand the meaning of events beyond what the eye initially notices.

Some might argue that certain people have more discernment than others. While some do indeed have a gift of discernment, it is a skill that can be taught, and refined, with practice and an open mind. The sole purpose of creating this program was for me to give you solid tips that can be used in any relationship, either before or during, the life of the relationship. One of the biggest ways to sabotage your growth as a person is to allow the pain of your past hinder your willingness to create new relationships. I want to remind you that the tools we will discuss in this course, will allow you to look at relationships in a whole new way, and understand the purpose of the ones that hurt you. So, grab your pens and lets get started!

Lesson 1:
Self-Evaluation

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Where you are currently?

This is the first and most important question to ask yourself before you get into a new relationship, and even during periods of sorting out your current ones. Knowing where you are in life, what you need versus what you want, and knowing the areas that you need to work on in yourself, are the biggest tools to success in all of your relationships. Increased self-awareness is the byproduct of self-evaluation.

I love to give real life examples along with my teachings, so to give you a better understanding of why this is so crucial to your success in relationships, let's look at an activity that many have experienced at least once in their lifetime: going to the doctors office.

More times than not, we go to the doctors when we aren't feeling well. Some of us overachievers will go even when we feel good, just to be extra sure that nothing is brewing under the surface. But, nonetheless, you go to someone who can help you evaluate, and diagnose the symptoms you are having. The more detail you can give to the doctor, the more accurate their diagnoses, and plans for treatment will be.

This requires one major thing: *the patient needs to be honest and open about what is really going on in the inside.* The less you share with the doctor, the less likely you will get the right diagnosis and treatment for the issues you are having. This requires the patient to self-evaluate themselves so that when they seek treatment, the information given can be honest and accurate. Honesty is the best policy, even for ourselves.

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Now, let's revert this back to relationships; if you do not take the time to self-evaluate where you are in life, the *symptoms* that keep persisting in your relationships will be harder to treat. Without proper self-evaluation, you might be missing the key reason as to why a relationship is not getting better, despite your lengthy efforts. The worst thing to have to deal with in relationships is to want things to get better, but only treating the symptoms, rather than the infection; the person.

The number one factor I have learned throughout all of my relationships is the absence, or presence, of peace. If whoever I consider very close in my life disrupts my peace, which causes me to have unwanted symptoms of stress, anxiety, avoidance, and possibly secluding me from other relationships, than I know where the infection needs to be examined.

On the next few pages, I want you to reflect on where you are currently. This exercise requires one thing: transparency. Be honest with yourself about what you want, desire, and *need* going forward, and currently in all of your relationships. With the right symptoms jotted down, the better the diagnoses will be, and the more effective the treatment will be as well.



Reflection Questions:

2). What are your needs, wants, and deep desires for your relationships? (Friends, family, romantic, and associates)

<u>Friendships</u>		
<u>Wants</u>	<u>Needs</u>	<u>Desires</u>

*Note: Desires differ than wants in this respect: desires are qualities you would like to have, but are not an end all be all quality that if not present, it can simply mean their placement needs to be shifted rather than the entire relationship needing to end.

Family.

Wants

Needs

Desires

**Note: Desires differ than wants in this respect: desires are qualities you would like to have, but are not an end all be all quality that if not present, it can simply mean their placement needs to be shifted rather than the entire relationship needing to end.*

Romantic

Wants

Needs

Desires

**Note: Desires differ than wants in this respect: desires are qualities you would like to have, but are not an end all be all quality that if not present, it can simply mean their placement needs to be shifted rather than the entire relationship needing to end.*

Associates

Wants

Needs

Desires

**Note: Desires differ than wants in this respect: desires are qualities you would like to have, but are not an end all be all quality that if not present, it can simply mean their placement needs to be shifted rather than the entire relationship needing to end.*

Reflection Questions:

3). What areas am I strong at, weak at, and need improvement in relationally?

Name:

Strengths

Weaknesses

Need
Improvement

Name:

Strengths

Weaknesses

Need
Improvement

Reflection Questions:

4). Where would you like to be? Now that you have reflected on where you are, and broken down your needs for each category, take this time to set goals for yourself on where you would like to be for each category below:

Personal Growth:

Personal Growth:

Career/Financially:

Romantic Life:

Family:

Friendships:

Spiritually:

Lesson 2:
Defining Boundaries

Everyone Needs Boundaries

After thorough self-evaluation, the need to create boundaries is another crucial step in properly discerning, and having success in your relationships. Now, I must warn you; there is such a thing as "healthy" and "unhealthy" boundaries. One stems from acknowledging and knowing one's self worth, and the other stems from fear of reliving past pain. It is vital to know the emotional and mental space you create your boundaries from.

Contrary to popular belief, boundaries are needed in every relationship, regardless of depth, and are true signs of self-love. The creation of boundaries also allows you to learn to trust yourself in every relational setting. Often times, when we experience painful relationships, we begin to lose trust in ourselves indicating that somewhere along the line we don't believe we can make good decisions. When we blame ourselves for our past, we can over analyze every person, and relationship thereafter, which can cause unwanted strain and stress to both parties.

One of my favorite sayings comes from Iyanla Vanzant, who is a world renowned Spiritual Life Coach. It states: "**If you knew better, you would've done better.**" Don't allow your past to dictate the level of trust you can have for yourself. We all make mistakes. There isn't one human being I know who has never made a relational mistake. The beauty however, is that these mistakes can allow you to understand the importance of boundaries because no matter what relationship level someone may be in, everyone needs to have boundaries.

The exercises for setting boundaries will allow you time to think about what healthy boundaries you need, and what boundaries you claimed were "healthy", but are actually defense mechanisms you are using to avoid unwanted pain. Love, in the deepest sense, requires vulnerability. Disappointment will sometimes happen. But, with proper boundaries in place, you will be able to control what level of pain turns into simply a mismatched relational positioning

Defining "healthy" boundaries

Having boundaries is a necessary step in your relational health. But, having healthy boundaries is the more crucial need of all success for your current, and future relationships. On the next few pages, I want you to jot down, per category, healthy boundaries you need for each.

Healthy boundaries include, but are not limited to: not allowing others to dump all of their problems on you, set times for calling/texts, attending certain gatherings with certain individuals, gossipless conversations, etc.

Friendships

Family.

Romantic

Associates

Acknowledging & Eliminating "unhealthy" boundaries

This exercise will not require you to breakdown unhealthy boundaries per category, simply because if unhealthy boundaries are practiced, they indeed show up in every relational category. The intensity might differ, but overall the presence of them is throughout.

Unhealthy boundaries can include letting everyone know your business, people pleasing, letting others direct your life and/or choices, isolating yourself to avoid conflict, falling in love with potential, etc.

Once you have jotted down these items, I want you to turn an unhealthy boundary into a healthy boundary, and if you can't do so, this is when elimination must take place.

Unhealthy Boundaries

Unhealthy Boundaries cont.

New Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries to Elimiate

Lesson 3.
Self-Trust

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Trust is the foundation of life

Trust is the foundation of life. I truly believe, for the human race, the concept of trust is the building block for love. When you can fully trust, you can love fully. Whenever there is a lack of love, there is also a lack of trust. Allowing us to develop trust with our Creator, when done with intent, can truly transform how we begin to trust ourselves. Implementing my own spiritual practices in my healing journey allowed me to reconcile the lack of trust I had in myself, in connection to my past, as the building blocks to regain a new understanding that trust, can in fact, be rebuilt.

The major point I want to drive home with this lesson is this: *you can't look forward to your future while still wearing the goggles of your past.* What happened in the past, happened. We simply can not get that time back. However, what you can do is look at your past and ask yourself these questions:

Why did I not trust myself to leave when I should've?

Why did I not trust myself to speak up when I should've?

Why did I not trust myself when I saw red flags, yet knowingly ignored them?

Why did I not trust myself to choose me, regardless of the comfort of having someone by my side?

These are all questions I asked myself. You know what I came to realize? I didn't trust myself because I believed that somewhere inside of me, I was lacking something that someone else claimed to be providing. The lack of self, more accurately, the *distorted* view of self, caused me to not trust myself.

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The next few exercises are going to require some deep soul searching. Spend more than a day on them if you need too.

My goal is for you to understand that after all of the illusions of yourself you did have, once stripped away, reveal to you that you indeed have all of the answers inside of you. You just need to trust yourself.

As you begin to peel back the layers of lies you might've acquired throughout your life, you will hopefully see that many of the thoughts that run through your mind were indeed created by others, and not yourself. It's time for you to make your own thoughts about yourself, because you are enough, and you can trust yourself to never allow others to take advantage of you again.



Lesson 4.
Red Flags

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Have you ignored red flags?

Ah, the good ole red flags in relationships. If you are a human, walking and breathing on this earth, I can almost 100% guarantee that you have indeed ignored red flags within a relationship. I have! But, this is how life works: the red flags we ignore in the beginning, are the reasons why a relationship becomes toxic, and ultimately comes crashing down into a pile of nothing.

I want to stress the importance of acknowledging red flags can indeed save you from so much unnecessary pain, and wasted time. Who likes to waste time on anything, let alone a relationship? No one! That is why the core root of why we ignore red flags is simple: there is some truth about ourselves, or the person we love, we simply do not want to face.

While doing my own healing work, one of the major questions I had to really ask myself was why did I ignore such an obvious red flag? The flags I ignored literally had "**Danger Zone**", and "**Caution! Damage will occur past this point**" and I *still* insisted on staying in the relationships. Why? Because I didn't want to face the truth. My excuses sounded something like: "*I don't want to be alone*", to "*But they have potential*", to my oh so favorite, "*I invested way to much time into this. I refuse to give up!*"

Let me tell you a little secret: no relationship is worth you suffering by sticking around for someone's potential. Another little secret is this: being alone is not the same as feeling "lonely", nor is it miserable. You make your season into what it is. You can be in a relationship and still feel *lonely*. That to me is by far the worst. Why? Because if you have a living breathing human next to you, and still feel lonely, then the truth is you two are not truly together.

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The key to not ignoring red flags in future relationships relies not only on the steps previous to this one, but it also relies on your perspective of how you view them.

When you notice something alarming in the beginning of relationships, instead of looking at it as "Ugh, this is another dud", take on the posture of gratitude. Why? Because you will be able to appreciate seeing the red flags, and you now have all of the power to make the right decision, without having to stick around any longer than you need too.

Being grateful, in a sense, that you can spot red flags early, is indeed such a win for you. Yes, of course the natural reaction might be disappointment because naturally you want to hope people are who they say they are. But, life doesn't always work out like that. And that is okay! Being able to accept what is in front of you, will not only save you precious time, but it will also allow you to trust yourself even more, and it will allow you to master your relationships. It's a win-win situation!

The exercises for this lesson will include a declaration to yourself to never ignore red flags again, no matter how much potential someone may have, along with jotting down the red flags you ignored in all of your relationships that didn't play out as planned.

You got this!

Red Flag Declaration

I _____, declare from this day forward, that I will no longer ignore red flags in my relationships. I forgive myself for the times, in my past, that I did ignore the red flags that ultimately caused me unnecessary pain, and heart ache. That was not an act of self-love; that was an act of self-sabotage as I dishonored who I was as a woman.

I declare on this day that acknowledgment of red flags is indeed a blessing. The sooner I can recognize and accept what I see before me, the sooner I will realize that I have the power within to protect my heart, and trust myself to make decisions for my life.

I declare on this day that I will no longer turn a blind eye to what people show me of who they truly are. As important as it is to have grace towards others, it is also equally important to protect myself, and accept where others are in their lives. The most loving thing I can do for them is to hope that one day they become the best person they can be, for themselves.

From this day forward I will keep this promise to myself, in all relationships, that ignoring red flags is no longer acceptable for my future self. I will set forth the example, in every relationship, as to what it means to embody self love, authenticity, and truth. I will also make a promise to myself that if I ever break this promise, and listen to the voice of my past, that I will always have this declaration near me.

Keeping this promise is the greatest thing I can do for my future self.

Love,

Lesson 5:
Social Media 101

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Social media 101

Now you know no relationship workbook can go without discussing social media. It's a part of our daily lives, which is why it is important to discuss. The more knowledge you have about how to handle life, and the people in it, the better off you can be in dealing with it all.

Social media is an aspect in relationships, mainly romantic, that if not handled with maturity, can and will ruin a relationship. The most asked question I get is: *Does social media ruin relationships?* The answer is no, it doesn't. Social media has SO many positive aspects, and can truly be a space that births creativity and a positive influence. However, the people using social media, in ways they shouldn't, is what ruins relationships.

Time and time again people want to have their cake and to eat it too. Meaning, a person wants the benefits of being in a committed relationship, but when they feel like they just aren't in the mood for that burden, a person will leave the door cracked open just in case a better option comes along. Those side relationships might not always blossom into a full blown committed relationship, but it makes a person take what they want from one person, then when they're satisfied, they go back to the relationship, where it's all warm and fuzzy; that is until the other person finds about their double life.

The number one question both people need to ask themselves is simple: *Are you truly ready to be in a committed relationship?* Which includes your social media being committed to the relationship as well.

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Now, let me get one point straight here; I am not implying that both parties social media profiles need to be committed in the sense that you two must ALWAYS post gushy posts about each other every other day. That actually exposes the artificial nature of the relationship, which many do not understand. What I mean by such is that if the person of the opposite sex glances at your profile(s), which are essentially your online resumes to the world, will they know you are in a relationship, to some extent? Take a look at your socials. What does it say about you? Are you a party girl? A church girl? A wanna be influencer? Perhaps a woman ready to settle down? Whatever the case may be, somewhere in the mix of you and your partners posts, followings, and followers, it must reflect the right *tone* to outsiders.

Another tip I will provide for you is this: before getting into any new relationship, do your research! Time and time again a person will leave obvious clues on who they might be by who they follow, who comments on their posts, and also how they respond to others as well. Ladies, if the man you are interested in has a significant amount of females he is following, I can almost guarantee they are all **not** his cousins. While realistically most men won't follow all men because most women don't just follow women, the "type" of person they follow is indeed worth discerning if it is a red flag or not.

The purpose of this lesson is to make you realize that no, social media in of itself will not cause you trouble in relationships; but the person behind that handle, behind those pictures, depending on where their head and heart is, and their maturity level, that can indeed induce issues in the long run.

Like I've mentioned before: trust yourself, trust your instincts, and do your research. An actor can only play a role for so long. All masks must be taken off at some point.

Lesson 6:
Generational Patterns

Time to be the chain breaker!

Characteristics like height, skin complexion, hair color, hair texture, and certain medical diseases can indeed be passed down from one generation to the next. You know what else can be passed down genetically; emotional and mental patterns. Yes, there is such a thing as generational patterns, or pathologies. You see, often times we like to blame the way we get angry, or talk back to others, and even our own toxic behaviors on this:

"Well, my mother/father/aunt/uncle was like this, so that's just who I am. I was born this way."

This type of response is why many think that certain toxic patterns they either get caught in, or do to others, is simply just how they were born. While yes, you might've been exposed to certain ways to respond to emotional and mental stresses from those who raised you, however you have to become aware that at some point and time, these practices must be broken. There must be someone willing to create new psychological patterns within your blood line. If not the curse, or pattern, will keep showing up in everyone that has your DNA composition.

So, how does one break generational curses? First and foremost I will tell you one fact: it will be difficult. If the task were easy, then every single family would never have any health problems, or mental and emotional outburst. It's going to be a challenge because a lot of times, the task will require you to separate yourself from your family. I can attest to this because in order for me, a Latin woman, to break years and years of curses, I had to get away from the infection site. This doesn't mean I don't love my family, but I knew the longer I stayed in the environment that kept breeding such bad patterns, the longer I was going to stay in the old patterns and eventually not break the cycles. And guess who would be left to pick up my issues, along with the rest of my families issues? My kids. I knew, as a woman who desires to be a mother and wife, I would feel guilty leaving my offspring to fix the things I knew I had the chance to break.

The exercises that accompany this section will indeed be an eye opening experience. I want you to know this one fact: *you have the capability to break the chains.*

The key to this is knowing that you don't have to rush to break them all at once. Identifying them is the first step, and there will undoubtedly be some that are harder than others. Start with the easier ones first. In my case, I started with how I took care of my body. The easiest generational pattern I tackled was my physical health. I started going to the gym and began eating a cleaner diet. From there I learned the importance of developing discipline, just from trying to get fit. From there, I gained mental and emotional "muscles" to tackle the harder patterns that lied ahead of me.

I do want to warn you on another aspect on your journey to being the chain breaker in your family: *people from your past may not be able to accept the NEW version of you; and that includes family*

I dealt with this as well. I wanted my family there to cheer me on and see the great things I was doing for myself. However, my success was not met with the joy and excitement I was hoping for from them and you know what, it is ok. Your journey is YOUR journey, not theirs. One day they might see the changes you're making and view it as great, but there is that risk of them never understanding. Keep going. Don't stop because certain people aren't cheering you on. You know the *why* behind it all.

So, on your journey to breaking generational patterns just know that this will allow you to be more self-aware of who you are, which will translate in the success of every single relationship thereafter. The most important relationship to build, besides the one you have with God, is the one you have with yourself.

You. Got. This.

Reflection Questions:

1). Identify YOUR toxic patterns: Ask yourself and jot down the current patterns you see within yourself. It could stem from canceling others before hearing their side of the story, responding in rage before listening, allowing others to use you, etc.

My Unhealthy Traits/Habits:

Reflection Questions:

2). Identify your FAMILY patterns: take this time to think about what patterns you see within your family. When doing this exercise, do not take your habits/traits into account. This is strictly focused on what patterns you observe with those that you call family.

My Families Unhealthy Traits/Habits:

Reflection Questions:

3). In this step, I want you to analyze the two list and circle the traits that show up in both your list and your families list. Once you have identified those traits, write them below. As your write them, be cognizant of the order you write them. The order should reflect the degree of difficulty of breaking the pattern. This list can always be edited, but having this as a base will keep you accountable in the hard times.

Generational Patterns To Break:

Generational Patterns To Break:

Lesson 7:
Speak Up!

Use your voice!

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Having a voice, and more importantly, being confident in your voice, is a necessary aspect of relationships. Often times, I caught myself knowing I needed to speak up about certain situations in my relationships, but somehow I found myself becoming silent when it came to actually speaking up. As a result of me not speaking up, certain behaviors, and treatments, I was experiencing began to repeat themselves. The repetition of those unloving behaviors from others led me to be the punching bag in ALL of my relationships.

I want to warn you of this: do NOT become everyone's emotional punching bag! When you are in your relationships, the other parties will always feel like it's "ok" to throw their mess on you, to throw their toxic treatment on you, etc. If the other person feels that this is a behavior you're willing to accept from them, they will indeed keep doing it simply because you haven't voiced to them to stop doing it; even if that means walking out to prove your point.

If you have found yourself becoming silent in times where you really needed to speak up, I need you to know it begins with you trusting yourself. As described in Lesson 3, the fear of what might come after you speak your truth is all a lie. There is nothing to fear when you stand up for what is right. Not standing up for yourself, over and over, will result in your relationships becoming parasitic. Is that really what you want in your relationships going forward? I hope not.

Using your voice will also allow you to learn how to communicate with others. Now yes, the reality of the fact is not everyone you converse with WILL react great. That is just a part of life when dealing with humans. But, pushing yourself and making sure you're voice is heard, will bring success in every relationship you have from here on out.

Lesson 8:
Realistic Standards

What kind of car do they drive?

Standards are needed if you want to receive what you desire. However, the catch in terms of relationships is this: **they need to be realistic.**

Being a life coach has exposed me to many, and I mean MANY, clients describing how unhappy they are in the relationships they are currently in, or the type of person they keep attracting. As I can empathize with each and every person's situation, it poses me to ask the obvious: **If you're so unhappy, then why don't you just leave?**

This question produces a gut wrenching silence, followed by this common answer: "I am not sure".

One of the purposes of this workbook was to allow each person to have a better understanding of themselves, on an internal level, which in turn will allow a person to have the strength to walk away from less than desirable relationships, and ultimately, knowing your worth. Knowing your worth directly translates into your standards. Standards might sound similar to boundaries, however, standards tend to cater to one's "ego", while boundaries caters to one's soul. Similar but different.

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The number one question I need you to ponder on is this: **What are your standards?** Often times I see both men, and women, have exceptionally high standards for another human being, as if they themselves to do not have flaws. When I see this happening this is a clear indication that something within that person setting those standards is afraid of commitment, and is trying to satisfy their ego, which is one fire you don't want to play with.

As I mentioned before, it's important to have standards in all of your relationships. However, are the standards you're setting for others concealing your fear of a real connection? And do you, the person demanding such standards, bring them yourself?

A great example I will use is when I hear women demand a man to be a certain height, make a certain salary, drive a certain car, wear certain brand names, etc. While having a well kept man is not the issue here, it's the numerous details that ultimately make it virtually impossible to find in a person, off first glance. I also warn women, and men, that the standards that you keep setting for the opposite sex, when presented to you, are you able to handle the "burden" that might come along with such specific qualities? We all want a good looking partner, who turns heads, who makes us look "good", but the more appeal a person has to the masses, the greater the amount of discipline it will require IF that person feeds off such recognition.

Now, I want to make one thing clear: I am not implying to lower your standards to keep yourself "safe" from harm. Honestly, any man or woman, who have unhealed hearts, possesses the ability to be unfaithful. Now, whether they are successful or not, is where the real test lies. But more importantly, the maturity level of each person is crucial. Standards allow you to see if indeed, the person you desire have the same desires as you. If they don't, then you need to reevaluate your standards. To my ladies, I need to stress this: IF you desire someone who is out of your league just so you can receive an "upgrade" in any sort, some men will use that as a way to control you. How so? Well, if they make more money than you, if every major financial obligation is in their name, etc. they can indeed use that "upgrade" you wanted, as a trap. Be aware of these instances.

With that being said, the exercises for this lesson will, yet again, require soul searching. My hope for you is that you see that your standards might need some tweaking.

Remember: do NOT go into this thinking that downgrading is the key. No. The key is *quality*. What qualities can you NOT live without? And what qualities have you been labeling as "required", when in all actuality, it was formed from your ego thinking you weren't valuable if your desired partner did not have those qualities?

Reflection Questions:

1). Take this moment to think about the current standards you have, mainly in your romantic relationships. The focus for this lesson will be in this category, but if you feel the need to practice this in the remaining categories, you can as well.

Current Standards For Romantic Relationships:

Current Standards For Romantic Relationships:

Reflection Questions:

2). Now that you've written down your current standards, ask yourself in this step, do I bring all, or most, of these qualities to myself?

What Do I Bring To The Table:



What Do I Bring To The Table:

Reflection Questions:

3). In this step I want to you analyze the two list you made. Do they match each other? If they do not, take this moment to dig deep, be honest with yourself, and ask: Are my standards for my partner too high because I am fearful of commitment? Or am I trying to satisfy a false image of myself to satisfy my ego?

Are My Standards Fair?

Lesson 9:
Potential Trap

But, they have a good heart...

I purposely left this lesson towards the end, due to the severity of this topic. This particular topic kept me in an 8 year back and forth relationship that, in a nut shell, left me questioning my existence on this planet.

Being able to see the good in others is a very good quality to have, and if you are someone like this, please do not change this about yourself. However, there is a fine, and I mean super fine line to seeing the good in others versus ignoring what is in front of you. I, and many more men and women, will stick around in relationships that are serving them no purpose simply because they constantly remind themselves of the potential they "see" within a particular person.

Again, with deep soul searching, I was able to understand why people hold on to potential, rather than look at the reality. One, it feels better to live in your own image of someone because the "better" we create an image of someone, the more we stay in our little fantasizes. But even deeper than that, potential works it's way into our minds so much so that when we just ever so slightly peek over the lens of potential, we fear what reality really looks like. That, right there is a trap.

Let's be honest for a second; have you been guilty of uttering the word *potential* as the means to stick around with certain people? Just to make you feel better, I am raising BOTH hands. I have first hand experience in this, and quite honestly, if it were possible I'd had a PhD in the subject.

Let me be loud and clear: STOP USING POTENTIAL TO MASK THE TRUTH!

The more you keep lying to yourself, which essentially is what we are doing when we only focus on someone's potential, the deeper the cut we are making into our souls. And the harsh truth to it all: no matter how much you want to brush reality under the rug, you will be met with reality at some point.

The main point I want to drive home is this: just accept where people are in their lives by what they DO, and not by what they SAY. Look at the facts and stop consulting your feelings. Yes, you might feel sad for seeing them for who they are, but that is temporary. Feeling drained, and unhappy WHILE being someone is, to me, worse than temporary disappointment.

The exercise(s) that go along with this lesson rely on your willingness to see the truth, while ripping off the goggles of "potential". You might be sad, disappointed, maybe even mad at yourself for ignoring the signs. But, I can 100% say that this will bless you beyond what you even realize; and most importantly; forgive yourself for not acknowledging the people in your life as for who they are.

Lesson 10:
Fix Your Perspective

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Is it time for some new glasses?

Perspective is how you view the world around you, the people in it, and yourself. When we are first born into this world, our innocence takes over our view of the world. Everything and everyone around us is indeed, good.

This innocence is quickly taken out of view the minute we experience hardships, heartbreaks, betrayal, and pain of any kind. If you have read Scripture before, it stresses the importance of having "child-like faith" because at that level, trust is at it's highest need. However, life has many ways to obliterate our trust not only in God, but in people.

I left this lesson for last on purpose, but as you've worked through all of the previous lessons, you should've gained an insight as to how true healing comes from within; your soul. Life will never have moments without some degree of disappointment or hurt. The world is not set up for such kindness. However, how we view each of these circumstances, and our ability to see the lessons hidden within, is where the key to healing lies.

After my numerous betrayals from friends and family, and a failed 8 year relationship, I can happily say even though I did not want to go through those things, nor did I deserve it, it grew me into the exact woman I was supposed to be; and that is to help others. Somewhere hidden in those moments of hurt, after all events have been fully processed by the brain, you can really see the lesson within, and know that without those events happening, you would not be where you are today.

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As noted before, my favorite Spiritual Life Coach Iyanla Vanzant always says:

"Each and every person in your life is a divine character that molds and grows your spirit into exactly what it was supposed to be."

This statement changed my life when I read it because it's so true. We each have a story to tell; a story of over coming something that tried to take us out. No matter how big, or small, your battle was, if you conquered it, then you have a story to tell, and a whole new perspective to gain.

The importance of perspective in regards to relationships is that it will allow you to learn from your past, see people for who they are, but also to become courageous and love like you've never been hurt. You must not, and I repeat, must not bring your damaged view of the world to a new beginning. You could miss out on a blessing if you do not clean up your vision of life, and yourself.

The exercises for this lesson will require more self-reflection. As you can see, all throughout this workbook, self-reflection was the main ingredient in really understanding relationships. You can't understand, let alone heal, while jumping from one relationship to another. That is avoiding the healing.

So, as this is the last lesson to practice, look at your pain, disappointments, hurt, trials, etc. as a divine set-up for you to become the person you were supposed to become all along. Someone, somewhere, is counting on your recovery story.

You Made It!

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You made it to the end! Pat yourself on the back! The steps you just took are not only some of your first, but you can always revisit this workbook for reminders, and to keep yourself accountable. Relationships, no matter what category they fall in, will be challenging. Why? Well simply because human beings are complex creatures. There are a lot of layers to us that can get in the way of us loving one another.

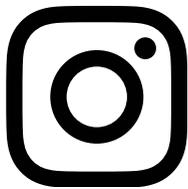
My biggest hope is that this 10-step study guide helped you realize that one, you can be healed, and two, no matter what mistakes you made in the past, the fact that you are still living and breathing is proof that YOU have a story to tell, and most importantly, a purpose on this earth.

During the heat of the moment, we might feel like we don't have a reason to be here because we keep getting hurt in relationships. It can feel like the more you give, the more you get hurt. But, take it from me, a woman who spent more than half of her current life getting less than what she deserved in her relationships, and when she hit rock bottom, the only place she could look was up. That is where I, Alexis Forteza, received the strength to dust myself off, fix the parts of me I could fix, and look at life, and people, in a whole new way. Not everyone you meet needs to have all of you. But, what is important is knowing who you are, what your worth is, who created you, and being the light that others need.

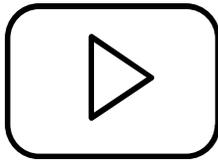
Until next time we meet again, I will leave you with my words of wisdom:

"You Are Never Too Broken To Be The Best Version Of Yourself"

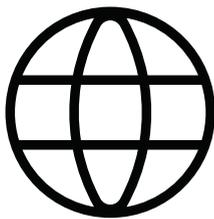
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