



Courtesy of Jill Wellington

Peace Treaty for Couples

By Eric Ehrke, LCSW, LMFT

When committed lovers fight, there are two simultaneous events occurring within each partner. Each believes they have a valid concern that they are trying to express. Secondly their method of communication is often distorted by old emotional allergies and a conviction that the other person is in illusion and lacks necessary wisdom. They're usually accurate but their strategy to achieve a peaceful resolution is flawed in the following way. Most combatants focus on their own point of view and the other's distortion while arguing.

Students of conflict have noticed whenever force is used to attain peace enlightenment suffers. The wisest leaders lead by example. They understand that they need to demonstrate listening skills before others would listen to them with their heart and soul. Understanding oneself through self-reflection and self-responsibility is equally ineffective for a country at war or an angry lover. The following perspectives will provide a constructive healing method to resolve conflict and deepen your relationship for yourself and your partner.

Everyone one of us has aspects of ourselves hidden from others as we adapted to a world that didn't support our deepest sensitive desires. Our strong emotional reactions alert us to a problem with one of our deeper needs. Anger is an activating emotion designed to protect. It's positively intended to address a positive desire but usually is driven by our fears. Fears frequently arise to alert us of a perceived threat to something we value. Grief is the emotion we feel after loss and sadness occurs when our needs aren't met.



Courtesy of Andrew Poynton

Since the pain of having our deep desires denied or neglected is so great, people hide or bury them to survive and avoid abandonment. These hidden needs, instincts or traits always remain present in our unconscious mind and relationships will always bring them to the surface. Most people struggle to understand their deeper motivational behavior and wonder why their beloved turned into one of their parents. The same anger, sadness or fear that we felt growing up manifests with our partner. It's wise to consider an opportunity to evolve and grow is at hand when conflict arrives.

Love deeply touches our heart and soul. When we open to love, the deepest part of our psyche knows that when we acknowledge and heal our illusions, we will experience even deeper love and joy. This is the reason our unresolved issues around self-love pop up to be healed in an intimate relationship. We pick partners that will present the best opportunity for our illusions to be mirrored back to us. It is as if our soul recognizes a worthy partner that will be invested in us enough to challenge us to grow into our full potential.

Romantic couples and authors mistakenly think our partner completes us or provides the missing qualities that makes us whole. This concept is very compelling and enduring but is flawed in the following way. Our personality often looks at a partner's positive qualities and hopes it can obtain those qualities we lack from them. Since the only way one can strengthen a quality in themselves is by facing and healing their own illusions, they often find the very quality that they initially admired in their partner turns into frustration in time.

Picture below courtesy of PIRO4D

Partners always mirror each other's issue back and forth to one another so that each can grow. People are usually convinced that their partner is the sole source of their discomfort. Although partners do push buttons, our buttons were in place long before we met them. Most of us loose



touch with our unresolved issues and illusionary beliefs that limit growth.

There is an old axiom that basically states, “Whatever you judge, you attract.” Another one states, “Whatever aggravates you most about another is a reflection of one’s own disowned issue.” When you take the time to find the underlying origins that relate to your current activation a wonderful series of events unfold. You can heal your illusion, stop fighting and strengthen bonds with your beloved.

The universe will always provide mirrors so we can see our reflection. This is how anger, conflict and emotional reactivity become opportunities for growth. In effect, *a crisis* provides a path to discover our deeper want, need or desire when we look past the saboteur, we determine is blocking our way. Blaming our beloved for triggering unpleasant emotions prevents us from discovering the *opportunity* that manifested to reflect our own issue. Our challenge is to seize the moment and discover what’s behind your frustration. Then express your valid concerns in an appropriate manner so that your partner can hear them to undo the problems of the past that created your problems in the first place. Love and joy will explode for both of you when this is accomplished.

When partners have the courage to self-reflect, heal past wounds, and stop projecting their problems onto their beloved, a powerful surge of love, compassion and wisdom ignites. This often stimulates your lover to follow your lead and resolve their own mirrored material. When we take the time to heal and meet our deepest needs, the process of truly loving ourselves unfolds. When we love ourselves enough to do this, your beloved will love you more and a positive cycle of love, self-responsibility and joy will mutually explode.



Courtesy of Sabine Kroschel

The following guidelines are suggested rules for the Peace Treaty.

1. Set an agreed upon time when both of you can devote your undivided attention to this exercise.

2. Whoever has the strongest emotion goes first. Lovers always activate each other one way or another. If your partner has a strong emotional reaction around the original presenting issue, they could do the Peace Treaty after you're done.

3. It works best when the receiver empathically listens with an open heart. Its OK to ask clarifying information to clarify points but don't interject your perspective unless asked. It's the receiver's responsibility to look at how their actions triggered their partner's emotional allergy. The receiver should do the Peace Treaty after their partner. This technique does not work well when a partner consistently refuses to look at himself or herself.

4. Process and release any strong emotions prior to doing the Peace Treaty if you need to. We discover our deeper emotional needs, wants and desires through the waves of our emotions. The important consideration to understand is that these are your emotions and that all relationships teach us about yourself.

This is not the time to dump your negative emotions like *a hot potato* on your partner. You might feel some temporary relief but your partner won't. Sometimes couples agree to compassionately listen while one partner blows off steam to help them prepare to do the exercise. They both need to agree to not *hit each other below the belt*. Remember the Buddha's wisdom on this topic that effectively said, "You don't have a relationship when you can remain happy while your partner suffers." Partners need to take the time afterwards to explore their needs and history around this issue through the Peace Treaty's perspective.

5. Meditation is a good way to explore the questions of the Peace Treaty prior to discussing it with your partner. Of course, compassionate couples that feel psychologically safe with one another could mutually explore their mirrors together. Supporting your beloved this way is rewarding but frequently couples find this highly sensitive material *too hot* and prefer solitary reflection.

Tips for finding the deeper needs, wants and desires.

Sometimes it is difficult to find your deeper need or see how the mirroring process works in your relationship. It is important to remember that anger is an activating emotion designed to protect us *but does not heal*. There is always a core emotion that activated your anger that has the capacity to heal. The following method can help you discover the deeper truth underneath your emotions through meditation and centering breath.

Find a safe place with no possibility for interruptions.

Relax your mind and hold the intention to find truth behind the conflict. Unity is always a worthwhile internal and external goal. Aspire towards an outcome for the highest good for every party. Your personality will have complaints so center your breathing and seek the subtle voice of your most loving aspect that's nurturing, gentle and infinitely wise. This non-judgmental inner voice within all of us has a loving perspective because it sees

the forest from the trees. Set the intention to find all the answers to the questions of the Peace Treaty no matter how painful the truth may be.

Here is an example for illustration. Let's say you feel discounted or don't feel your partner listens to you. Breathe into your anger, feelings of abandonment or sadness. Remember a time when you felt ignored or invisible and feel how it felt in your body. Connect to your emotions with the intention for truth for the highest good while you explore the questions within the Peace Treaty. Wait and listen for subtle ideas and impressions that come to you. Breathe into the feelings and impressions and allow yourself to go deeply into the experience with each breath. Take time and let your intentions percolate. All the answers you need are inside.

When an idea or perspective comes to you, notice if you have a physical reaction in your body or get an intuitive hit to confirm its truth. This may take the form of an emotion; body sensation or a knowing as you access the collective wisdom your pure intention brings to you. Sometimes our mind retrieves some possibility that doesn't resonate within the body. Information that's not confirmed experientially shouldn't be accepted since the body accesses truth better than the intellect. Everyone won't sense these things initially but practice does help improve perceptions.

Now let's return to the example when you feel invisible around others and your partner. You may remember that your parents didn't respond to your emotional needs and struggled to nurture. You may remember you never felt loved or accepted for the way you were in your family of origin. Children often treat themselves the same way others treated them throughout their life if they haven't healed this issue themselves. You may discover that you never learned how to listen to yourself, nurture your own needs and may have struggled with addictions that numb your invisibility issue.

Then the story could go like this.

A child is born to a family where the parents do not listen or respond empathetically to the child's needs. Children are so innocent they believe that everything that happens to them is love at first. All the good and bad is hardwired into their being as love and begin to treat themselves the same way. They copy their parent's example and fail to listen to his or her own needs well. In my book, *The Promise of Wholeness*, this process is called a Primary Love Template.¹ Addictions are nature's way to ignore



Courtesy of CDD20

¹ Eric Ehrke, *The Promise of Wholeness*, (Rowman and Littlefield Press, 2019), pp34-38.

one's true emotions. An adult who has not healed his or her own issue will usually pick a partner who has a similar "listening and abandonment" issues.

Lovers treat each other the same way they treat themselves. They struggle to listen to each other once the honeymoon phase of their relationship wears off. Addictions come in like a friend to help them numb off their pain, ignore their true emotions and reproduce their family pattern. They won't listen to their beloved because they don't know how and are deeply hurt when old wounds are activated.

When their beloved activates their pain about feeling invisible all the unexpressed anger, pain, and abandonment feelings from a lifetime of being ignored will surface. When partners unconsciously mirror these issues to one another without relief, it causes chronic conflict until resolution occurs.

The Peace Treaty is a tool to help a couple or individual move from repetitive, unresolved conflict cycles to love, peace and harmony through self-responsibility. When two people own their emotional material a sense of love, cooperation and gentleness returns to the relationship. When one loves oneself to pursue their shadow and bring the light of day to your deeper needs, you can truly learn to meet your needs and let your partner know what you truly need. In this way everyone wins.



Courtesy of Gerd Altmann

PEACE TREATY STEPS

1. **Share your strong feelings that activated you with your partner.**
 - The receiver listens with an open heart without comment.
2. **Ask yourself the following questions.**

- How did you feel when during those events?
- How do you interpret what your partner's behavior?
- Why did this bother you so much?
- Who treated you in a similar way in the past this way?

3. Find the deeper need, want, or desire.

- What is the deeper positive need, want or desire that's underneath your strong feelings?
- What unmet or discounted need, want or desire in the past is being activated now?

4. Look into the mirror.

- What is your history with these same needs, wants and desires? Do you neglect yourself the same way that you experience others doing to you?
- Do you sabotage yourself around these issues or have unconsciousness beliefs that you don't deserve to have these needs, wants and desires met?
- What level of frustration or struggle do you have with yourself around these issues?

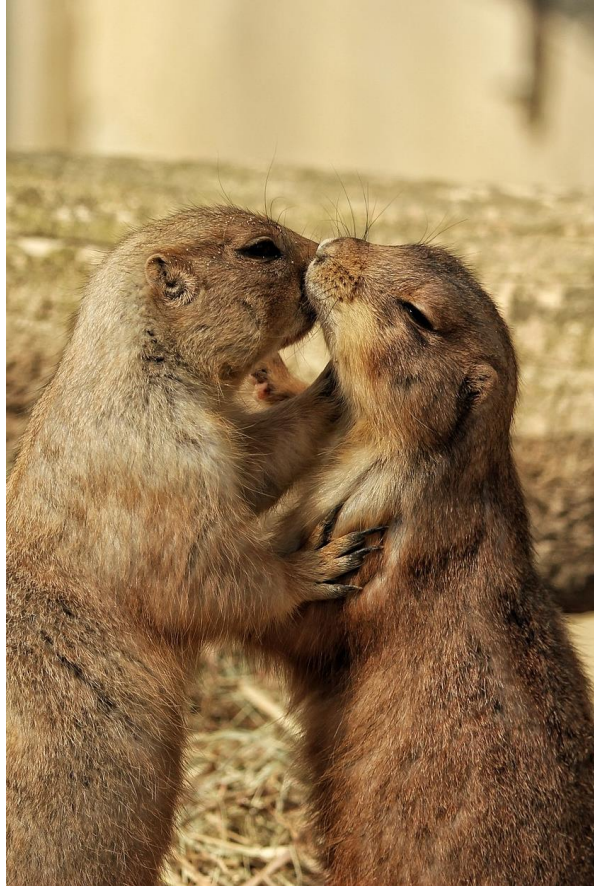
5. Discuss the impact your behavior and emotional reactivity as had on your partner.

- How have you been unskillful with your partner around this issue now and in the past?
- Describe the price you've paid for your lack of compassion towards yourself around this issue.
- Describe the price your relationship has paid while your deeper needs, wants and desires were not addressed.

6. Plan of Action

- Discuss what you have learned about this issue.
- Offer a plan as to how you intend to deal with this issue in the future.
- Ask your partner if they could help you with your issue.
- Allow time for a joint discussion when both partners have completed the Peace Treaty to discuss a plan where they can support each other so everyone's needs, wants and desires are honored.

7. Share appreciations with one another.



Courtesy of Lolame

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