

Blind Spots, Raw Spots, and the Beauty of Grace



"Love", a sculpture by Alexander Milov at Burning Man



To Be Loved

Tim Keller

To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial.

To be known and not loved is our greatest fear.

But to be fully known and truly loved is,
well, a lot like being loved by God.

It is what we need more than anything.

It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.

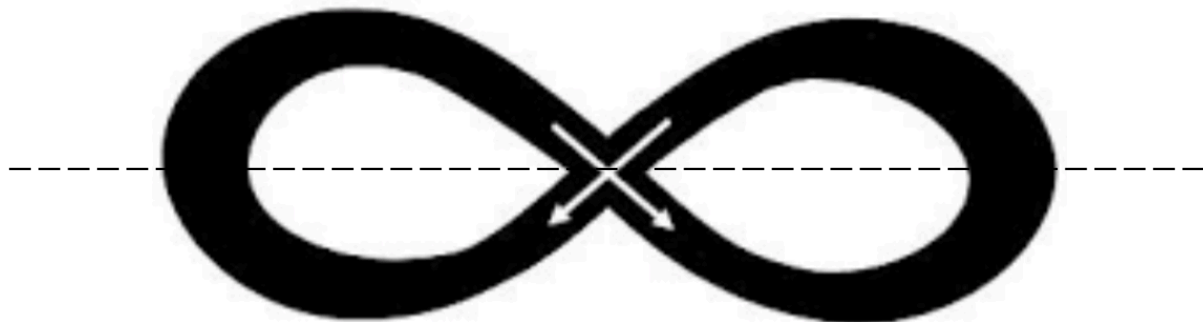
Beginning to Understand Our Negative Cycle

Action tendencies:

Action tendencies:

Feelings/emotional cues:

Feelings/emotional cues:



Perception of words/actions (Narrative):

Perception of words/actions (Narrative):

Attachment longings:

Attachment longings:

20 Questions to Help Identify Raw Spots

- 1- What did your mom or your dad have to say about their bodies? About other people's bodies? About your body?
- 2- What were some of the mantras, credos or repeated sayings in your home?
- 3- What was normalized that you did not realize wasn't true of other people's home life until adulthood?
- 4- Were there any vows you made when you were young? (e.g. I am never going to let my kids see me doing _____. I don't want my home life to ever be like ____.)
- 5- Do you have a strong inner critic? Are you constantly second-guessing yourself? What is that inner critic telling you? Where might that message come from?
- 6- How did your family manage conflict? Did arguments feel unsafe? Was the handling of conflict ever modeled in a healthy way?
- 7- Did you feel like you were walking on eggshells, or it was important for you to act happy or keep the peace?
- 8- What was your experience of money as a child? Did you worry about having enough? Did you feel like you were able to ask for what you needed?
- 9- Did your parents' love feel conditional? How did they respond when you made a mistake?
- 10- Do you remember your parents ever apologizing to each other, or to you?
- 11- Was there a secret in your family that no one ever really talked about?
- 12- Did something happen to you that you were not welcomed to talk about?
- 13- Did you feel like it was okay to feel sad? To feel angry? To express frustration?
- 14- When you were hurt or sad, who was there to comfort you?
- 15- Is it hard to say 'no' or to set realistic boundaries?
- 16- Do you have a history of unhealthy relationships?
- 17- Is it hard to trust people? Or do you trust people too easily? (people who may not actually be safe or trustworthy)
- 18- Did the people who were supposed to love you hurt you instead?
- 19- Are you typically more aware of who you think you should be, or who you really are?
- 20- Do you get overwhelmed easily when things feel hard?

Imago Exercise

This exercise is designed to help explore some threads throughout our lives that may help us better recognize and understand our attachment longings. Insight into these threads can be significant in the process of healing and growth in our relationships.

The concept of imago as an image of familiar love suggests that our early relationships teach us something about love and about ourselves. Through these early experiences, we develop a sense of an identity related to love, such as what love is and what we need to do in order to experience love from others and feel safe.

In our early relationships, we start to develop a sense of self-worth based on how we are treated by important people in our lives. We start to develop attachment patterns and begin to gain a sense of how we think we should be treated by others. These attachment patterns are carried into our love relationships as adults.

*INDIVIDUALLY, carve out some time to reflect upon and complete Side 1 of the exercise. Then flip the paper over to reflect upon and complete Side 2.

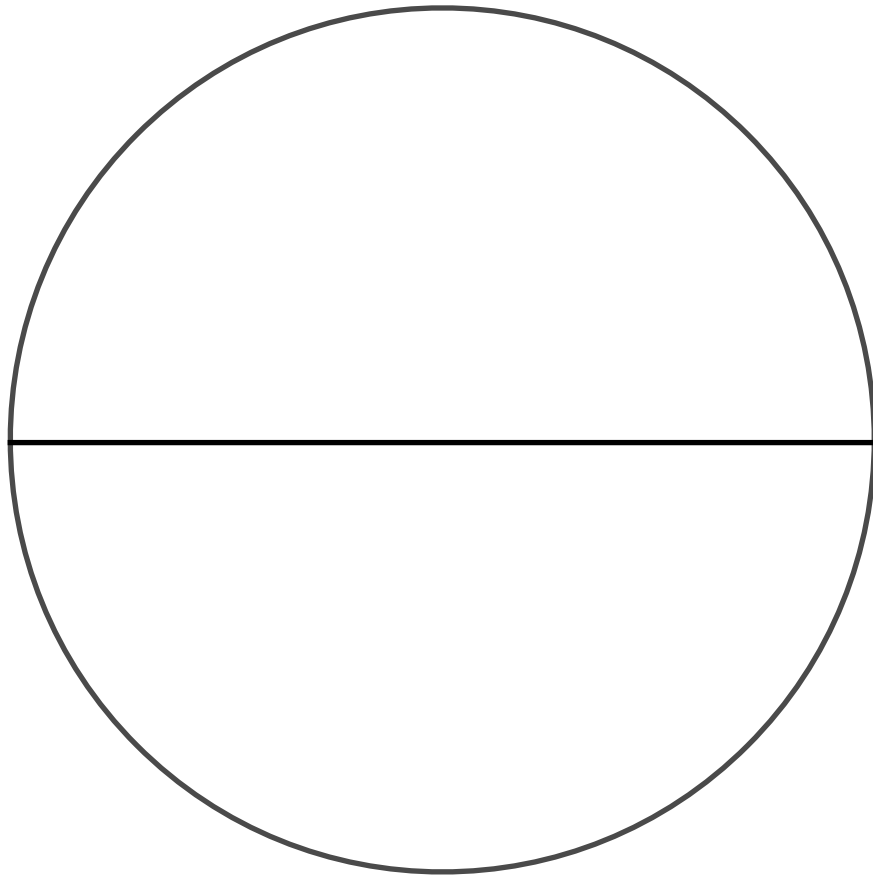
*After filling out both sides, take time to reflect on the following:

What did you notice about correlations between what you experienced in your childhood and expectations in your marriage?

How might what you longed for, but did not experience, as a child shape what you most long for in your marriage?

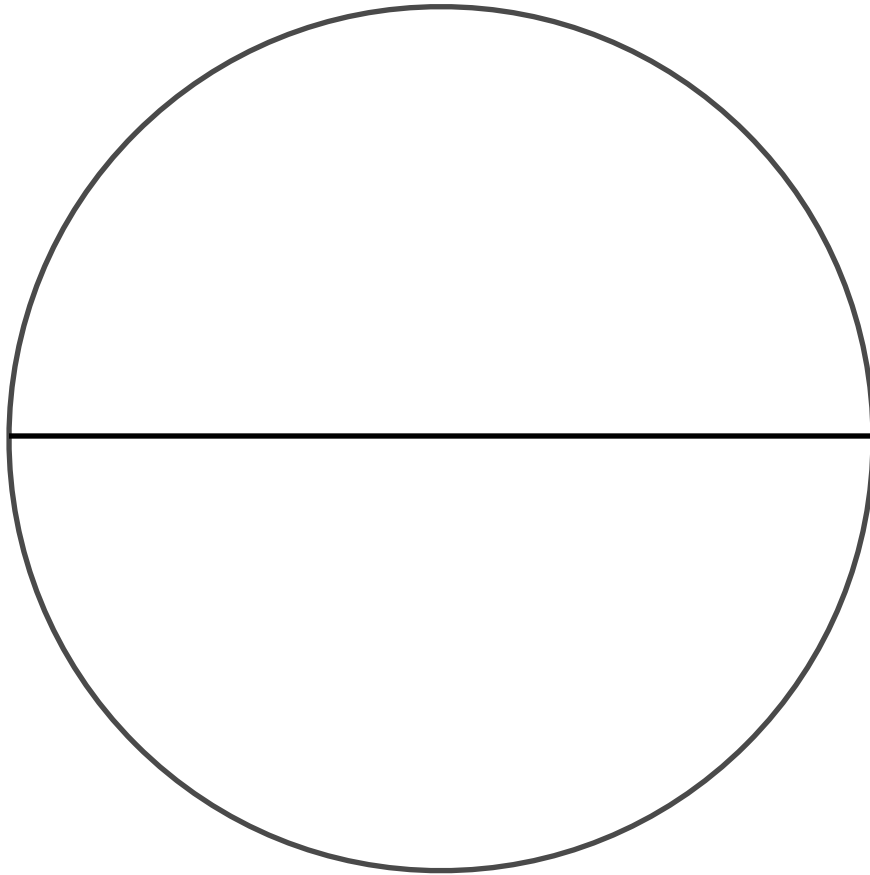
Any insights into raw spots that show up in your marriage and where they may come from?

*Take time to share with your partner any insights that you may have gained about yourself through this exercise. Share freely about the positive traits of the other, but be wise about sharing any of the negative traits of the other. The purpose of this exercise is to cultivate insight, healing and growth.



- A. In top half of circle, list the positive character traits of the people who were most significant in your life as a child.
- B. In the bottom half of the circle, list the negative character traits of the people who were most significant in your life as a child.
- C. Circle the character traits that affected you the most.
- D. Answer this question: What I wanted most as a child and did not get was

- E. Now answer this question: As a child I had these negative feelings over and over again:



- A. In top half of circle, list the positive character traits of your partner.
- B. In the bottom half of the circle, list the negative characteristics of your partner.
- C. Circle the character traits that affect you the most.
- D. Answer this question: What I enjoy most about my partner is:

- E. Now answer this question: What I want from my partner and don't get is:

Shared Meaning Questionnaire

Adapted from Eight Dates by John and Julie Gottman

This exercise is designed to help get a sense of how well you and your partner create a sense of shared meaning in your lives together, AND to better understand the values that are shaping your perceptions as you interact with one another. Answer the following True or False questions. If a question does not apply to you (a question involving family or children when you don't have children, or a question involving living together if you don't live together), simply skip it, modify it to your particular situation, or keep it in mind for future discussion.

Please remember that the point is not to agree, but to be learning yourself and to be learning your partner, to better understand what is meaningful, or not, to each of you, and to cultivate rituals of connection in your relationship.

-We see eye to eye about rituals for family dinnertime in our home.

T F

-Holiday meals (like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter) are very special and happy times for us (or not!).

T F

-End-of-the-workday reunions in our home are generally special times.

T F

-We see eye to eye about the role of TV in our home.

T F

-Bedtime is generally a good time for being close.

T F

-During the weekends we do things that we enjoy and value, both together and separately.

T F

-We have similar intentions and desires about hospitality in our home (hosting friends, parties, groups, etc).

T F

-We both value, or both dislike, special celebrations (like birthdays, anniversaries, family reunions).

T F

-When i get sick, I feel taken care of and loved by my partner.

T F

-I really look forward to and enjoy our vacations and the travel we do together.

T F

-Spending our morning time together is special to us.

T F

-When we do errands together, we generally have a good time.

T F

-We have unique and specific ways of becoming renewed and refreshed together when we are burned out or fatigued.

T F

-We have similar desires in how we worship and pray together.

T F

-We have agreed upon how household chores and responsibilities are distributed in our home...the distribution of labor is feeling appropriate and fair to both of us.

T F

-We are like-minded in how we spend, save, and give our money and other resources.

T F

After answering the questions above, especially if you had very few “True” answers, please create your own rituals of connection by discussing the following questions.

-When we eat dinner together, how can we make our dinnertime special for us? What is the meaning of dinnertime? What was dinnertime like in each of our families growing up?

-How should we part at the beginning of each day? What was this like in our families growing up? What should our reunions be like?

-What should getting ready for bed be like for us? What was it like in our families growing up?

-What do weekends mean for each of us? What were they like in our families growing up? How can we make them more meaningful?

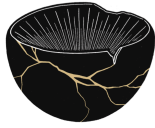
-What were vacations like in our families growing up? How do we want our vacations to feel?

-Pick a special holiday. What is the true meaning of this holiday to us? How should it be celebrated this year? How was it celebrated in each of our families growing up?

-How do we each get refreshed and renewed? What makes these rituals meaningful for us?

-What rituals do we have when someone is sick? What was it like in our families growing up? What would we like it to be in our family?

-What feels most important to us in how we spend, save, or invest our money and other resources? How was money managed in our homes growing up? What do we want to be doing differently? What values do we want to prioritize in our family?



We appreciate your participation in this Grace Group.

Grace Groups: Living by God's grace is a paradigm shift for all of us and as a big shift, it involves study, practice, community, and the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us. All Grace Groups will this common thread: learning to live by grace in a wide variety of life. You can find this and more resources on our website: allsoulsseattle.org/resources

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It is the smallest of all seeds,
but when it has grown it is
larger than all the other garden
plants and becomes a tree, so
that birds of the air come and
make nests in its branches.

Matthew 13:32