

YOUR 8th CHAKRA LIFE

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Your 8th Chakra Life™

Creating Thriving Relationships with the Chakras

Harville Hendrix, PhD

Anodea: Greetings, everyone. This is Anodea Judith with The Chakra Initiation Program. I am very excited to bring you this bonus call with Harville Hendrix. This is a bonus for all the people taking this course.

Harville, I would like to introduce. Harville is a Clinical Pastoral Counselor who is known internationally for his work with couples. They wrote best-selling books. He and his wife, Helen LaKelly Hunt are responsible for co-creating the Imago Relationship Therapy and we will get in a little bit later as to what that is, devoted to the concept of "conscious partnership," something we really need in the world at this time. They've written nine books on intimate relationships and parenting.

Harville holds a Ph.D. in Psychology and Theology from the University of Chicago, honorary doctorate and two distinguished service awards. He has been on Oprah, it looks like 17 times including one of her top 20 shows that won her an Emmy Award for the most socially redemptive. He has been referred to by Oprah as the "marriage whisperer" and is a member of the Redbook Marriage Institute.

But mostly they are known for their dynamite workshops and best-selling books, Getting the Love You Want, Keeping the Love You Find, Creating the Love that Heals, Receiving Love, and I think you have a brand new one out, Making Marriage Simple.

Harville: Yes, we do.

Anodea: Is that right, Harville?

Harville: Yes, we do.

Anodea: Yeah, that sounds great. And they raised six children and divide their time between New York – here, it says "New Mexico" but I guess you're in Dallas right now.

Harville: Yeah, right. We shifted from New Mexico to Dallas.

Anodea: Oh, okay.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: Well, I'm just delighted that you took time. I remember meeting you at Hollyhock up in British Columbia many years ago when I was teaching a workshop and so were you. I wished I could go to your workshop but, because I was teaching, I couldn't so we had lunch and I said, "So, Harville, if you were to distill down what you're trying to give people in this workshop," because I can't attend, "into one insight, what would that be?" And I remember it and I have quoted you many times. You said, "Realize that you're in relationship with someone who is different than you are." I have used that in my counseling and I've used that in my own relationship so thank you for that.

Harville: Yes, you're welcome. Yeah, I remember that now. You asked if I recalled our meeting but I now recall it. So, yes. And I would still stay with that. There is another phrase we use is "Your partner is not you, get it?"

Anodea: Ah, yes. Your partner is not you. And I have a friend who says men know that women are different from them and they like it that way but women think men should be just like we are and there is something wrong with them when they are not.

Harville: Oh, well, I think that's really lovely. I think I feel that that is not a gender bias. Men just don't speak up as much about their discomfort with gender difference.

Anodea: Oh, okay. Okay. And that's true in general I think about speaking up in relationships sometimes.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: Before we dive in to the chakras, and I have many questions there, since Imago Therapy is something that you and Helen created and has become a training for many therapists and is essential in your books, if you could just define for our listeners a little bit what Imago Therapy is and how it differs from other couples therapies.

Harville: Sure. Basically, Imago is a couples therapy meaning that it was developed purely out of working with couples rather than out of working with individuals so that it's a relational model of therapy that posits that relationship is primary and in fact the individual is a function of relationships and therefore, in some sense, is secondary.

So, it's a couples therapy although we have discovered that the relational principles that work with couples work with any relationship – significant or work relationships or even between friends. We've even used them with people that we don't know, we have just met because of the basic human nature of the need to connect. So that's basically what Imago is. It was a couples therapy.

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Now, Imago is evolving into a relational education emphasis in which we have discovered that the work we do with couples in the clinic and our offices, the principles there can be extracted and used in educational forms in other ecosystems like schools, churches, communities and so forth. We are working now to extend the Imago principles from the clinic into the public domain.

Anodea: Oh, that's wonderful because everything arises out of relationship and everything occurs within relationship. I think we have this mistaken notion that we should just automatically know how to do relationship, that we are born knowing how. I think it's a skill that we learn.

Harville: Absolutely, and I think that's the idea of almost a blank slate about relationships would be an accurate way to talk as we come into the world not knowing how to be in relationships but come in the world with that as our primary need and primary objective. Babies, when they are born, are now designated by developmental psychologists as social beings, that they don't evolve and develop. They don't fill up their brain cavity with brain cells so it's only about three-fourths full when we are born and the rest of those cells don't develop unless the child has stimulating interaction in an environment.

If that interaction is coherent, that is safe and kind and loving, the brain then becomes organized. And if that interaction is negative and ineffectual, unpredicted, that the brain doesn't organize. It makes a lot of cells but the cells are not organized so you have a chaotic brain or unorganized brain.

That relationship is what we are. It's not something we do or something we have. It's what we are, and to manage that then determines how we experience ourselves individually. It's no longer a kind of do you want a relationship? The question is you are in one no matter what you think is how are you going to manage that interaction will determine how you experience yourself as a human being.

Anodea: And the consciousness that you bring to that relationship.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: This brings us right into the chakras, and in our course right now we have just finished the first chakra the first month of the course and we are about to go into second. In the first chakra, we dealt a lot with our birth experience and the bonding that occurs in the first year of life and how that gives a sense of safety and ground. As you say, it wires it right into the brain and nervous system.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: I have been doing coaching calls individually with people in the course and so many have had birth issues and bonding issues that were present to them in the first chakra. This, of course, affects their ability to maintain relationship and the bonding and the patterns that they have in an adult relationship. Why don't we start there with the first chakra? I also see in relationship for chakra is sharing the home, sharing finances, sharing territory, being safe and just basic physical, emotional safety, and let me hear you rap about this.

Harville: Yeah, and as I start to do that, my love has just walked into the room and will want to join us. The question is the first chakra has to do with the impact of birth on ourselves and on our relationships and so it's been sort of thrown to us to comment on that. So since I'm on kind of a roll, Helen, I give you the chance to plug in.

The first thing that we would say about that based on our own experience but mainly on research since we don't do early childhood interactions, we deal with what we call the consequences of early childhood interactions which show up in marriages, that the birth experience is extremely critical. But the thing that's exciting and interesting and almost sort of shall we say daunting is that there is now some research that's gotten hardly any press that the moment of conception impacts our later relational capacities.

What they mean by that is that if the moment of conception, the mother is anxious because there may be stress in the relationship or it may be an unwelcome sexual experience or anything that could cause anxiety from just a bad relationship and to a difficult sexual experience, that the moment of conception, if the mother is anxious, influences the baby's neurochemistry because whatever chemicals are in the mother's bloodstream immediately begin to be a part of the baby's experience.

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There's a book called *Origins* that talks about that. The book has not made it to the New York Times Best Seller List. It is a credible book but it has very little experience. But it's a way of saying that prenatal experience now pushed all the way back to conception, and all the way forward through birth and the first year of life are formative for how we experience ourselves in the world.

Since our primary experiences and relationships that it influences how we will experience relationships, function in relationships and the challenges we'll have in relationships as we move through infancy, childhood, adolescence and into adulthood and into our marriages.

Anodea: Well, that makes perfect sense and what I would say about that is that one of the issues when a child is born or perhaps even in the womb is safety. We are born as these helpless, little, completely dependent beings and our caretakers have to meet our physical needs or we don't survive.

A sense of safety in the world is really in trust. Erikson said trust versus mistrust is really essential. And then when you come into a relationship, a person's sense of safety is equally important –

Harville: Absolutely.

Anodea: -- in order to open up.

Harville: Absolutely.

Anodea: So how do you establish safety for couples?

Harville: Yeah. First of all, I just want to underline the word "safety" four or five times because if its relationship is not faith, not much is going to happen in that relationship except what we would call defended or protective interactions. Without safety, you can't be vulnerable. Therefore, you can't be genuine and authentic because no safety means you're scared. And if you're scared, you're going to protect yourself and if you're protecting yourself, you are not actually connecting. You may be relating but you are not connecting and therefore, the interaction is difficult.

So the question is how do you create safety? Given that that's fundamental both for the child's mature development and for a happy marriage, it's a core issue for us.

Anodea: Yeah. So what do you do to help couples create that fundamental in their ground especially if they didn't have it growing up?

Harville: Well, what we discovered over the years and as Helen and I worked on our own marriage and with couples is that the most dangerous place for couples and for most people is in conversations. When we came to that conclusion, it was like, darn, shouldn't it be something more complicated than that? That conversation itself is the place where most negativity is exchanged that erodes safety.

So what we have done over the years is develop a way that couples can have safe conversation, that they can move from dangerous to safe conversation. And that movement requires that the conversation have a structure. It's sort of like learning a game, a skill. You have to develop the skill to have this conversation. The first part of the skill is that you have to learn to listen, and listening is amplified if you mirror back what you're hearing in short or long bites. Deep listening means that you are mirroring accurately.

Once your partner who's talking experiences that you're actually listening and mirroring without distracting, deflecting, or inserting your own ideas, if you had a GSR instrument tied up to their wrist, you would see that there would be a decrease in skin intensity. There'll be relaxation.

What happens as you continue to mirror accurately, you then move into a second thing called "validation" in which you say something to your partner like, "That makes sense," instead of "That was a stupid thing to say" or "I don't agree with that." You say, "That makes sense" because everybody makes sense. We don't all see the same sense but everybody makes sense. Everybody has basically a logical mind. And then you move from --

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Anodea: Since you can see it from their point of view, right?

Harville: Yes. I can see --

Anodea: "I can see how you might feel that way" or "I can see how you might interpret the situation that way," or "I can see how that might be for you."

Harville: Right, and that it's okay for you to have that difference. Just an inane little comment is that Helen and I have very different interpretations of the meaning of "cold." For me, when I'm comfortable, Helen is nearly freezing so clearly this is a small indication that we have different receptors not only for cold but for everything that comes into our neural system. Therefore, we will think about everything differently and it makes sense that Helen would want a sweater when we do this or we'd want the temperature up when we go into the hotel room.

All of that makes sense because -- and she lives in her world and her world has its own architecture. I live in my world and my world has its own architecture. Those two worlds will never ever be the same. They will always be different and so it is required that we be able --

Anodea: Why should they be the same, right?

Harville: I'm sorry?

Anodea: We don't even want them to be the same. By the way, let's bring Helen in and have her say a few words just to presence her on the call.

Harville: Well, she just stepped back out for a minute so let's get her back in when she comes back.

Anodea: Okay. But the point I was making is that we shouldn't even want our relationships to be the same because if they were, there wouldn't be much juice between the people, right?

Harville: Yeah, and so an interesting paradox there is that what we found is that most people object to difference and they do want sameness. They don't know what you just said is that if you had sameness, you would have no juice. It's the difference that creates the tension that makes the relationship exciting.

Anodea: Yes.

Harville: So it's the conflict and the rejection of difference that makes difference painful. It's really exciting if you move from rejection to curiosity and say, "Oh, let me walk in your world. Let me look at your flowers. Let me understand how that is for you and what you're experiencing and share that with me." Then you get another world.

But if you say, "Oh, your world is very boring," or plain or wrong or whatever, then of course that means that you want your partner to not have their world. You reject their world. You just want it to be like your world. The only good world is my world. That of course means that you are alone. You're ultimately alone when you do that.

Once you do validation and you see each other's world make sense, then what we ask couples to do is practice empathy. Empathy is just say, "I can imagine when that you might be feeling glad, sad, mad, or scared," some feeling, some core feeling. And it's that experience that creates the safety that I am listened to, I am heard accurately, I am not judged, I am in fact seen to make sense and that my feelings make sense. Now I feel safe and I can become even more vulnerable.

When that becomes mutual, that is, you switch in the conversation and it becomes mutual, then what happens is you move from just relating to being connected, and that's the juice that makes life flow. We're all in relationships but not many of us are connecting. And when you are connecting, then we are actually back now I think into that original state of being that we had when we were little before something happened in the parent-child relationship to rupture that original connection.

Anodea: And that's really what we are seeking in relationship.

Harville: Yes. Exactly.

Anodea: We are seeking that, and then the nervous system goes ah.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: Something relaxes and we can actually be more present.

Harville: Yes, be more present. We have thought for a long time that what human beings wanted was the experience of being whole. We have changed that because if relationships are foundational, wholeness is a function of the relationship and therefore what we say human beings really desire the most is a restoration of that original experience of connection. That contributes to wholeness. You don't get the wholeness to then go to connection. You move to connection and that facilitates wholeness.

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Anodea: Yeah, you don't get to wholeness all by yourself.

Harville: Not all by yourself.

Anodea: Yeah, yeah. And then after the empathy, there is another step, isn't there?

Harville: Well, no, after the empathy, then you switch partners. Just mirroring, validating, and empathizing and then you switch so that those people get to send and receive then to have that experience of safety.

Anodea: And it's very important when someone is listening and mirroring and validating that they are not giving their point of view at that moment, right? That they are not disagreeing and say, "Well, it wasn't that way for me." They are just listening and they are holding back that to be just really open to receive their partner.

Harville: That's why you need to switch so that both worlds can be given language and can be talked about and mirrored, validated, and empathized with. Now, one of the additional things that we have found adds to safety, which is this primary thing, this came over many years of refinement, we were talking one day – Helen and I – we do pillow talk and we co-created this theory of what is the ultimate outcome of Imago couples therapy? If a couple finishes therapy, really finishes it, what would they have?

We talked about ourselves, we started asking couples and we've talked to now probably a thousand or so couples about the question, and what's come up is

the word "safety" came up first and "connecting" comes up second, and then a feeling of joyful alignment comes up third. So if you have an optimal relationship, it feels safe, connected, and joyful.

So then we asked the question what do you have to do in order to sustain that? To not only get there but to sustain it? The first thing was, of course, dialog as a safe conversation. Learn how to have safe conversations. The second thing that came as the logic of the theory and the logic of the therapy is that in order to have reliable, predictable safety, you have to make a great sacrifice. This sacrifice is negativity or the common practice that most couples have – partners have in relationships of putting each other down in minor and major ways, like to put down is, "What? You can't mean that? Where did you get that idea?" That's a putdown all the way to murder. A putdown can be gentle and it can be also very violent.

What we now are introducing to increase the valence of safety is the Zero Negativity Challenge in which we invite every couple to take a zero-negativity pledge which means that they will practice zero negativity -- that is, not putting each other down -- and add to their interactions. Instead of the negativity, add curiosity about what it is that's going on with you when you feel uncomfortable with me and vice versa. So instead of complaining, you go to curiosity. So then you find this other world the person lives in and that that's what's happening. It's that the worlds are not in sync.

The third thing we found is that couples, in removing negativity, have to add something substantial. What they have to add in addition to curiosity is what we call "relationship care" and that is appreciations on a daily basis, caring behaviors, increased excitement and fun. It's those things we call the nutrients of the relationship.

So zero negativity means taking the weeds out which is the criticisms and putdowns. The nutrients are caring behaviors, appreciations and fun and surprises and a whole range of anything that's a positive interaction. The regulator, the way all of this is regulated, is by the way you talk which is the safe conversation.

So we now say that the optimal way to be in a great relationship is practice safe conversations, practice zero negativity and practice relational nurturing and you will have the relationship of your dreams. But if you take any one of those triad out, you will have an okay to negative relationship. That's the ultimate response to the question of how do you create and sustain safety.

Anodea: Beautiful, beautiful. And practicing this can be done in any relationship. Often, people think, "Oh, I'm with the wrong partner. I need to change partners." But

you have to practice this no matter who you are with. It's not about who the partner is. It's about what you bring.

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Harville: Absolutely. Absolutely. If you bring to any relationship and curiosity about that person, if you bring to that curiosity when they share with you that you then mirror and validate and be empathic with them, that person is going to feel inside a blood chemistry change from cortisol to endorphins. They're going to have a sense of well-being and they'll have a neurophysiological basis for the experience of connecting with you.

Anodea: Yes, yes. And they'll want to connect because it feels good. But let's get on with the chakras because we have only a half hour left and I do want to get them all in because it's part of the topic of this.

We talked about safety and the first chakra and the early bonding. When we come to second chakra, what I tell people as we move from self to other, we move from sameness to difference. And second chakra is polarity and the energy that moves between polarities. Of course, it's also emotions and sexuality. Sexuality is a big deal in every relationship. Especially really what we touched on already is glorying in the differences, saying wow.

I see how often couples will be vastly different, even polarized, like even in my own relationship, I tend to be a yes girl and my partner tends to say no first and then he'll get around to yes and I'll say yes and wished I had said no later. We can recognize that, oh, I can learn from him. He's different. He's on the other side. Let me see what that looks like. Maybe I can learn something and maybe he can learn from me to say yes a little more.

Harville: Yeah.

Anodea: So speak about differences and the juice and the polarity and touch on sexuality if we can do that in the next five minutes.

Harville: Yeah. Well, I think that the on-ramp to that is that in fact all people in intimate partnerships are in a partnership if it's committed through romantic love. That was the on-ramp with romantic love. They're in this committed relationship.

They are in a relationship with an incompatible person, that the nature of nature brings opposites together. This is true all across nature like the double helix of the fact that our brains are structured up and down and right and left, the binary numbers and all of that. You can just go into all kinds of stuff.

The other thing is that differences built into nature, once I was mulling on that and I was looking outside, there was this tree. I estimated that there were probably 500,000 leaves on that tree, and not a single leaf on that tree is the same.

Anodea: Right. Just like snowflakes.

Harville: And snowflakes. And I thought, you know, God doesn't know how to make a copy or God refuses to make a copy. Only human beings make copies, and we have to have a machine that will do that. Difference is the nature of nature and so get over it. It's never going to be any different from that.

So the response to difference that we use and practice, as I've mentioned earlier, is curiosity. Curiosity meaning showing interest in your partner's world, knowing that it is different. It does two things and one is it relaxes the partner's defenses when you show interest in their difference.

Not only does it relax their defenses but you get to walk across the bridge into another world and get to see what another human being is like inside their own minds. That immediately enriches you because now you have your world enriched by the integration of your partner's world. If you think about that with every human being and curiosity becomes the on-ramp to conversations with everyone, it becomes an amazing experience and amazingly powerful conversations.

If you move that as a sort of normal interactive thing about being curious into sexuality, one of the obvious things you are going to find is the kind of difference in responsiveness that you talked about between you and your partner. You're going to find also in sexuality that – and I remember myself going through my own morphing out of how come you're not experiencing sex the way I experience it to experiencing the radical difference in the sexual interest and sexual frequency needs or sexual intensity, sexual response.

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It's almost like a tennis match where things are moving back and forth and if you don't try to win but simply try to play a game of volleying, that the difference itself becomes a part of the excitement of the match. The glory in difference is not only necessary for the relationship, but it's an acknowledgement about the way nature is set up. Therefore, we live in congruence with reality when we glory in difference.

Anodea: Beautiful, beautiful. Yeah, so the second chakra is the element, water. I often call it "swimming in the waters of difference" and that's an expansion of consciousness.

Harville: Yeah.

Anodea: You expand your consciousness more by being with someone different than someone who is the same.

Harville: Yes. Absolutely. And just the interest itself, like, "Oh, wow, you see it that way." And if you go from "Say more" instead of "So what?" then you move into an expansion of your own consciousness. In fact, that's the only way you can expand it is by – consciousness means knowing with. Conscious means "to know with" and the only way you can expand knowing with is by allowing others in.

Anodea: Exactly. Yup. Beautiful. All right. Let's go to third chakra which is often called the power chakra. Certainly, lots of couples have power struggles. In fact, I would say probably every relationship gets some area where they have a power struggle. It seems as though our own power to determine our own self is important and we're in relationship, like you say, with someone different and sometimes what one wants and the other one wants isn't the same. And so there's a power struggle who gets their way.

Harville: Yeah.

Anodea: I also talk about excessive and deficient chakras. Often, in a couple, what I see is that one person is very confident in their power and one person tends to defer more.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: They'd be more deficient. And then the one that defers tends to get resentful after a while. So let's see what you have to say about power struggles.

Harville: Well, another aphorism that we have created around power struggles is that conflict is growth trying to happen.

Anodea: Uh-hmm.

Harville: In a power struggle, even if it's negative, something is trying to be born because there is an objection. If there is a struggle of differences, an objection to things being the way they are. So something new is trying to be born and usually what's trying to be born in a power struggle is that one or both people is trying to experience and express some aspect of themselves that the relationship is not allowing full expression. It may be indeed that somebody be reliable about time, it may be that each of you have different schedule or you want to have more influence on where your child goes to college, but something is trying to be born in a struggle.

What's important is to understand that conflict is trying to happen and move it from conflict to creative tension so that the tension of difference then can give birth to a third reality that's different from either reality that's being held by the two partners. If they'll hold the difference and tension and not go into judgment and criticism, that tension itself is sort of like a sexual experience. It'll give birth to a new child, to a new idea, to a new possibility that could not happen if you had said, "Well, let's do it your way," or "Let's do it your way."

Anodea: Exactly.

Harville: In the personality issues that you talked about, we talk about that same polarity as the difference between a turtle and a hailstorm. The turtle kind of hunkers down and it doesn't speak up and it doesn't initiate very much stuff and goes along and then resents it later. For the hailstorm, it's coming on strong, saying what they want and not knowing that that turtle is diving into their hole because they're being hailed on and the turtle doesn't know that they're being hailed on because they are diving into their hole.

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What happens with creative tension is that both people have to regulate their energy. The turtle, the deferrer in your terms, has to show up and have a preference, and the person with the preference all the time has to back off a little bit than have a little ambivalence.

That preference and ambivalence then produces ultimately a better outcome and that can become really exciting because it's sort of like brainstorming with nobody putting anybody else's ideas down. When that tension of the brainstorming and it goes free without judgment, something new will be born that will give birth to a new quality in the relationship into new options.

Anodea: Wonderful. I love Jung's quote that maturity is the ability to hold the tension of opposites.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: And Jung talked a lot about the transcendent function coming out of that, not denying either end of a conflict but coming into that third reality that gets born.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: Well, beautiful. So let's go to the heart of it now, the fourth chakra. This is why we go into relationship, right? I mean, we may feel this sexual attraction at first but lasting relationship, it's really the heart of it is the heart.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: What do you see is the heart of it? What people are seeking for in the heart chakra level?

Harville: Well, I think I'll go back to the things earlier and putting it in our language that the heart is connecting, the experience of connecting. I know that many people feel that love is the heart. Helen and I think that love is a choice and that connecting is – love is a choice about what we do with each other. That is, love is – I like the phrase that I assign unconditional and absolute value to Helen's welfare and commitment to her thriving.

That love is a constant and is not mitigated or diminished by us being in conflict or having a difference or even having a spat. The love is the constant, but connecting is an inconstant. Connecting requires safety. The heart is that experience of being with another person with no judgment occurring so that there is a resonance moving back and forth between us as we move back and forth. It's sort of like a good sexual experience but this is non-sexual interaction.

That is the heart of being. That is the nature of nature. When we are in that connecting mode, then it is so exotic because we are now experiencing being itself. Being is connecting and when we are connecting, we are experiencing being which means our own nature is now resonating with another nature without interruption or without rupture. To us, that is the heart of relationship and the heart of life. Love is when we assign an absolute value to the welfare of the person with whom we are having that experience.

Anodea: It's beautiful. And I think that it's insides connecting to insides like my interior –

Harville: Ooh, I love that. Yeah.

Anodea: -- being able to connect to my partner's interior experience. When that happens, it's not outsides connecting so much. It's not just, "What did you do today?" It's the internal experience and that's where the empathy part of your dialog is so essential. We want to be empathized with. We want someone to know how it is inside here.

Harville: Uh-huh. Yeah, yeah. And we want somebody to know how it is inside and we also want to experience that part of you being shared with me, that authentic and genuine part of you being shared so then you are not sharing your defenses but you are sharing your vulnerability. That's when the connecting occurs. I want that from you and you want that from me, and when we are doing that, we are in what could be called intimacy, Into-Me-See. We are experiencing resonance.

We're experiencing – what are some other words that go with that? Resonance and oscillation.

Anodea: Closeness.

Harville: Intimate closeness.

[0:40:02]

Anodea: Closeness, bonding.

Harville: Everything that makes us human and everything that makes us want to be alive. And when that goes away, life goes sort of black and white. That's the color.

Anodea: Yeah, and that is the heart of it and that is what is the sustaining power of relationship, right? And it takes a while to get there. It's not something that happens instantly. It's something that deepens over years if you have these connecting experiences with your partner.

Harville: Absolutely. It's coming to terms with this challenge of otherness or difference, that I'm actually –

Anodea: So what would say, Harville, to someone in a relationship that was afraid to share their vulnerability? Even if they have an understanding partner that doesn't interrupt and listens and things like that but they are just, from their own conditioning, very afraid to show their vulnerability?

Harville: Well, I would want to know what the fantasy is about what would happen if they shared it.

Anodea: Uh-huh, uh-huh. What the fear is.

Harville: What the fear is. And I can imagine that someone might say, well, my fantasy if I shared my vulnerability, I would be...

In some ways, they will be put down, that sometimes they'll be laughed at, scorned, hurt, judged.

Anodea: Judged, rejected. Yeah.

Harville: Rejected. All of that sort of stuff. The paradox here is that when you ask that question and a person starts sharing, all of those things that prevent them from sharing they are paradoxically sharing. If in that sharing with you of all their fears about sharing, they are being very vulnerable, you then don't actualize any of

their fantasies of being put down, they then will have a positive experience which they can then own and build on.

Anodea: Right.

Harville: So it's not like you can teach them anything. You have to be with them in such a way that they experience the opposite of their fear.

Anodea: Yeah, that's the basis of therapy, that you transfer onto your therapist the different experience than you have with your parents and gradually you heal your conditioning.

Harville: Yeah, and I think with couples that what the benefit of relational education or couples therapy depending on which resource you have access to and use, that couples can be helped to understand how using the dialog process helps them with that experience of transcending their fears. Because adopting the structured process prevents you from making a comment about what your partner is saying. It requires that you mirror them, that you validate them and be empathic with them and then afterwards accept what they are saying as belonging to them and that you have no right to judge it. So we have to –

Anodea: Which is communication, our fifth chakra. It's our next chakra so we may as well name that, that you have spoken of a lot but this is – communication is essential for all the rest to come on line.

Harville: Yes. Yes, communication. Then Judith, we can go back to communication, but it has to be safe because you can communicate by exchanging how many tacks are on the wall or how much money is in your wallet but that's an exchange of information. But even that exchange can be done in such a way that it creates anxiety.

Any exchange of information has to be done that creates safety and what that means is usually tone of voice, eye contact or the way you look in your eye, the way you hold your body, either toward the person or away from them or at an angle. You can do anything non-verbally but neurophysically to create safety or danger. So communication, in order to be safe, has to include in it the no judgment, even in the exchange of prosaic information or the exchange of vulnerable information.

Anodea: Uh-huh, uh-huh. People often confuse – and I know in business they talk about communication for action or communication for intimacy. Communication for action is like, "Oh, I need this report done by tomorrow. Can you get it on my desk?" And communication for intimacy is a whole different ball game and it's really the process you have talked about that is bringing the resonance.

I see resonance as a factor of fifth chakra too. It's like when things are in harmony, when they are resonating back and forth, they're in a field together, that this communication process you are talking about develops that resonance which is a moving into something deeper.

[0:45:15]

Harville: Yeah.

Anodea: And from that we can easily go to sixth chakra which is seeing.

Harville: Which is what?

Anodea: Seeing.

Harville: Seeing.

Anodea: Vision.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: Seeing with an S and vision and seeing each other accurately and seeing each other – I like to say couples need to reflect the light that they see back and forth. It's like that's the appreciation. Oh, I see the divine in you. I see how hard you work to do that task. And I see how beautifully you are showing up. You know, to see eye to eye but to see each other in the highest light.

Harville: There was a movie and I'm having a blank on the movie now. I think it's called Pandora which is this huge movie about another world that we humans went to and began to interfere with the primitive – not primitive but native population. One of the characters in this movie in the native population interacting with one of us who was there trying to take their planet, but this man and this woman in the other population conveyed that all of the people in that population, when they met you, whether friend or a member of the family, a tribe would say, "I see you."

Anodea: Oh, yeah. You're talking about the movie, Avatar.

Harville: Avatar! Avatar.

Anodea: And the planet was Pandora, yes.

Harville: Pandora. Yes. And I remember when I saw that, I thought, "Oh, my goodness. How powerful that is. I see you."

Anodea: Uh-huh.

Harville: And it is the case I think could be made that that is the yearning of every human heart, is to be seen.

Anodea: Uh-huh.

Harville: Seen and not judged. I always throw that in.

Anodea: Seen and accepted.

Harville: You're not –

Anodea: Yeah, seen and accepted.

Harville: Yeah, because you are not seen if you're judged.

Anodea: No.

Harville: If you're judged, I want to see something else other than you so I'm judging you and saying change a part of you or change you or go away or something. But I want to be seen and to not be judged, to be seen as I am for what I am and for that to be okay but to be noticed. The yearning for visibility is deeply rooted I think in the human psyche and is also an adaptation to the fact that children who lose that experience of being seen by their parents very early –

We have five grandchildren and every time we go to their house -- and these grandchildren, I must say, have great parents. In fact, their parents who are our children are doing better at parenting than we did with them when they were kids.

Anodea: As it should be.

Harville: As it should be. They should build upon the succeeding generations. But when you walk in the room, every child, especially the younger ones, but every child still says something like, "Come see," or "Look at me. Look at the dress I am wearing. Look at the shoes I have on. Oh, look at the tooth that just came out. Look at my hair."

Anodea: "Look at me do a somersault."

Harville: Yeah, "Look at me do a somersault." It's look at me, see me, and somehow that seems to give them reality. If they are seen and you respond to that with acceptance and appreciation, then my being is confirmed. I think that is really, really deep in the psyche because to be seen is to be, and to not be seen is to not

be which means that it raises possibility of not being and behind that of death. You know, if I'm not seen, I'm not.

Anodea: Yeah.

Harville: And behind that is a great terror so that to really look. And also, here's the paradoxical reciprocal value of that. When you really look – this is talking about consciousness again – your own consciousness expands because you get something else in your stuffy old brain that wasn't there before.

Anodea: Yes, and to see the beauty in that and appreciate it is you are enhanced by that.

Harville: Yes, absolutely. Whatever you look at and adore becomes a part of your own psyche.

Anodea: Yeah, yeah.

Harville: And, you know, there is now neurophysiological research for that. It's called the mirror neuron research.

Anodea: Of course.

Harville: That is the discovery that we have neurons that actually allow us to intuit, see -- I think it's where intuition comes from -- what's going on inside someone else and to be empathic with them.

[0:50:07]

But the piece about it that doesn't get much comment is that when we do respond to another person and see something inside them and we give them something like acceptance and appreciation and adoration or whatever, we also get it because our own mirror neurons receive what we are sending out, that it comes from a part of the brain that is connected to a part of the brain that is not object-related but simply self-related.

That part of the brain receives what goes through the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is what is outer related, that that other part of the brain below the prefrontal cortex is self-related so it receives messages from the prefrontal cortex. So when I say, "I see you" or "I adore you" or "I appreciate you," that part of me experiences the same output I am putting out.

Anodea: Beautiful. Beautiful.

Harville: So I feel better when I am giving than when I am not giving because I am receiving when I give.

Anodea: Yeah. Beautiful. Beautifully put. And this is a spiritual practice because as Rick Hanson says, the brain tends to be wired to seize upon what's wrong.

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: And that's the easiest thing for the brain to do. It's like you get all As on your report card and one B and the parent says, "What's with the B?"

Harville: Yes.

Anodea: And we do this in relationship. We can have most of it right and then somebody does something wrong and they get pounced on. We have to train ourselves to not go with the brain's natural tendency to seize upon what's wrong.

Harville: Exactly. And Rick says that it's – and he and the whole area of brain science, Dan Siegel also says a lot about this, about the brain has a natural negativity bias.

Anodea: Exactly.

Harville: And that that's rooted in millions of years of having to have that bias in order not to be lunch.

Anodea: Uh-huh.

Harville: So you can anticipate that if you hear snap in the forest that somebody is approaching you to have dinner or sex. They are probably looking for lunch so that that's there but it's still activated in our contemporary lives and so we have to regulate that.

John Gottman says that for everybody -- you may know his five-to-one ratio but for every negative, you need to repair it with five positives. I found that John is generally right about that but I have also found that some people need 20.

Anodea: Yes. Yeah. Yup, and that's something to remember any time that you're leveling anything that is negative or that slips out and you break your negativity. Your Zero Negativity Challenge is that it needs to be repaired --

Harville: Yes. Exactly.

Anodea: -- with positivity. Okay, we have one more chakra which is the seventh chakra -- consciousness itself, our spiritual perspective, our connection to something larger, even larger than the relationship. The relationship occurs within a larger community. People may have different spiritual frameworks but this is about connecting to that vast consciousness beyond and bringing that feeling in.

Harville: Yeah. Boy, that gets where we're almost beyond language because they're talking about that which is the origin of language which is consciousness so it's sort of hard for consciousness to reflect on itself. But aside from all that esoterica, what seems to be the case is that consciousness of the larger dimension is only possible through the experience of connecting with others, that if we are not connected and not connecting locally, we cannot connect cosmically or globally or spiritually.

Somehow the bridge to the larger world is through the local world so that the idea of a spirituality that is not interactive with other people is we are thinking it's probably a false assumption, that you can't go around the relationships to get to the larger dimension. You can only get to that through your relationship and that in some sense, when you are connecting and not judging and feeling that sense of safety and joy, you are in the larger world and that those dimensions begin to show up and the color of the world begins to become the – the world again becomes more colorful, less black and white. More colorful because the experience of another is in fact the beginning of the experience of the whole.

[0:55:09]

Anodea: Exactly, exactly.

Harville: According to the quantum physics, the theory of non-locality or whatever happens locally happens cosmically, when we are having a local experience, we are also having a cosmic experience and we are also impacting cosmos and open to it impacting us. It's an amazing concept, that the door to God is not direct. It is mediated through a love between others and that when love between others is actualized, then God or the divine or the larger dimensions are then accessible.

Anodea: Yes, and most of it, spiritual pathways talk about dissolving the ego and the boundaries to experience this union with something larger. I see relationship as the crucible that trains us in that. We have our first experience of that in a good sexual encounter where we dissolve our boundaries and we have a transcendent experience that might be momentary.

In the longer relationships, especially in the heart chakra, as we experience that bonding and resonance in that pure being state, that we have another -- or even just falling in love, another experience of getting beyond ourselves and merging with something else or maybe merging in something quite – having that connection. Both of these prepare us for that seventh chakra, opening to be connected with everything and seeing that it is all connected.

Harville: Yeah, and I don't like the word "merged" either because that in some sense makes us lose the uniqueness of the fact that we are an aspect of the whole.

Anodea: Exactly.

Harville: I like "participation," that we belong to. We participate in and are one with but not merged to it with the whole.

Anodea: Yeah, I agree. The way I describe it is it's like an orchestra. An orchestra is playing one concerto but you definitely want the oboes and the cellos and the flutes to be playing different tunes.

Harville: That's what makes it beautiful. Yeah.

Anodea: Yeah.

Harville: And I love your speaking about sexuality as the door and romantic love being one of the I think transient moments of original connection in which babies, before they get scared and defended are one with the all not only with the parent but they are experiencing them all there. Helen and I, with regard to sexuality, often say, well, we make love all the time and sometimes we have sex.

Anodea: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. It's not just limited to our bodies in bed but it's a constant exchange of energy.

Harville: Yeah.

Anodea: And making love, actually making it, creating it.

Harville: Making love. That is, we create love all the time and sometimes we express it physically.

Anodea: Yes. Wonderful, wonderful. Well, we are coming to the end of our hour and this has been so great, and we did manage to get all the chakras in. Do you have any last wise words to leave our listeners with?

Harville: Actually, the wise words that I would say is what Helen and I have learned in our 32 years of marriage which is that the best thing we ever did for ourselves was to take the zero-negativity pledge and removing putdowns. Now, we don't succeed all the time but we both know that we intend to succeed. And knowing that we can count on that has created such an I think experience of wanting safety that we feel being in connection most of the time and therefore the joy of being alive and with each other most of the time.

We say this because for the first 15 years of our marriage, we were not in a good relationship and it was arriving at the conclusion that negativity of all forms had to go. So we started with ourselves and then we have now moved to zero

negativity about anything. That is, even about bad news reporters, that we don't go into, "Look at that. Gosh, what a stupid comment that was."

It's sort of like secondhand smoke. If I'm fussing about something I'm hearing on the news and Helen's present, her brain still hears negativity and begins to generate result. So we have decided that we are going to zero negativity, period, and living in that space has been one of the most amazing contributions to us having the relationship of our dreams that we can't imagine way beyond. We can't imagine a relationship -- We imagined it but we couldn't imagine we could have it, the relationship of our dreams, and the zero negativity is the indispensable thing for safety and connection and joy.

[1:00:24]

I would challenge anybody listening to take the pledge. Zero negativity. No putdowns. And what we use as a calendar to monitor ourselves, each day we put a smiley face when we succeed and a frowny face if we don't. And if we have a frowny face, we do a repair process which is we go curious and talk about it.

Anodea: Beautiful, beautiful. Well, you are living examples and your work has touched so many and your wisdom is wonderful. I am sure that all the people on this course will benefit tremendously from this. I just thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy life. Thank Helen too. I don't know whether she came in toward the end but thank you, Harville, and I hope that I get to take one of your workshops in full one time.

Harville: Okay. Hope so too. Thank you for checking again and hope to see you down the path.

Anodea: Okay. Thank you. Bye-bye.

Harville: Bye-bye.

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