

***FROM
THE FRYING PAN
TO
THE JACUZZI***



***GOURMET RECIPES FOR A
GOURMET RELATIONSHIP***

Revised Edition

Vernon R. Bradley

From The Frying Pan To The Jacuzzi
Gourmet Recipes For A Gourmet Relationship Revised Edition

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I must make special mention of Virginia Satir. I was lucky to not only attend her workshops but to be an active participant. She is one of my Giants and continues to mentor my work.

Similarly, there is John Bradshaw, who has been instrumental in my integration as a man, father, husband, therapist, and teacher. I was also lucky to have participated in his workshops and small group intensives.

And another one of my Giants is Robert Johnson, a brilliant storyteller and therapist, who literally embodies the spiritual mysteries of Jungian thought. His humility is his gift to me. I will always treasure having lunch with him at the annual gathering of the Redwood Men’s Center at Camp Gualala.

Then there are Folks, whose workshops I have attended or whose “works” have had a profound impact on my thinking and the way I live my daily life. Their wisdom lives in my soul. To name only a few: Julia Cameron, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Wayne Dyer, Daniel Siegle, Mary Hartzell, Esther Perel, David Kessler, Alberta Villoldo, and Dom Miguel Ruiz.

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There are three special men in my life who have walked the road with me and supported me: Jack, Dan, and Bruce. One extra special man is my son, David, who continues to encourage me and have faith in me. I am very proud of his own journey and the

distance he has traveled.

At the time of the first edition, there were two significant women in my life: Roberta and Dianna. Roberta and I were married for almost twenty-seven years. No longer physically here, she makes her presence known when I most need it and least expect it.

Dianna and I were together for thirteen years, ten of those years married. Our relationship was marked by both intense conflict and intense joy. Some of our most intense arguments ironically occurred in the Jacuzzi! The intensity of our conflict, which was so similar to the intensity of the conflict of the couples in my practice, became the inspiration for this book. I learned a great deal from Dianna and am grateful for our relationship. I am also grateful that we were able let go of our relationship and part amicably.

And yes, there is a very special woman in my life at this time. Recently, I realized that I never went to kindergarten, so it is safe for me to say that in our relationship, I have been learning everything I was supposed to learn in kindergarten particularly that experience of looking into your face and seeing there, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I am loved. I am grateful to you for inviting us to journey together, and I am grateful that, amidst all my fears and reservations, I said yes after saying no. It's one of those miracles some folks call a "God thing."

Last, but not least, THANKS TO ALL YOU COUPLES who have honored me by inviting me into your relationships and trusting me to support your healing and growing.

Thank you, ALL, including God.

INTRODUCTION

I was inspired to write this book while camping on the beach almost ten years ago. I was lying on my back on a large queen-size air mattress staring upward at the scattered clouds through the netted opening at the top of the tent. I was thinking about the differences in couples who were coming to therapy at that time compared to the couples who came to therapy when I first started my practice in 1982.

And what was that difference in couples? The couples I was seeing now in my practice really wanted to stay together. The last thing they wanted to hear from me or anyone else was that their relationship was hopeless or doomed. I could almost say that they were committed to staying together no matter the cost in pain. It's not that they were masochistic or outright stupid. But they seemed to be coming to an awareness that there was something pretty awesome about their relationship. They were beginning to see that the conflict in their relationship was hardly the whole enchilada and certainly not a good reason for either one of them to abandon ship.

I noticed that what was both holding couples together, as well as triggering intense conflict, was a desire and a determination to live in a relationship that could be described as equal and reciprocal. Traditional roles, traditional expectations, and or traditional norms no longer fit for the majority of couples.

Some of my colleagues in the field question whether or not there can be equality in any relationship. And I admit, it's a good question. But whether or not it is possible, it is still profound that this is what many couples are wanting and struggling to create, an equal and reciprocal relationship. It means to me that our notions and beliefs about freedom, equality, and democracy are really trickling their way down into the nitty gritty of our lives.

Unfortunately, there are no models for equality and reciprocity in marriage or partnership in the various media for couples to follow, and sadly, no direction for living an equal and reciprocal relationship from our pulpits.

From The Frying Pan To The Jacuzzi takes on the challenge of providing couples with very concrete recipes, if you will, to at

least come very close to creating an equal and reciprocal relationship. The ingredients for the recipes are found in some twenty-one “knowings” or “awarenesses.” For example, “Know that we can engage without fighting or going to war!”

In Chapter Eighteen of *Excuses Begone*, Wayne Dyer describes a “knowing” as a sacred space where, when aligned with God, we can discover all the answers we will ever need.

I refer to these “knowings” as delicious pieces of fruit that we can pick from the Tree of Knowledge and eat, or better, devour. Thus the on-going “bon appetit!” greeting throughout the pages of the book. Each “knowing” unfolds, in its own chapter, into simple (not easy) and doable exercises or recipes. And because this book invites all of us, myself included, to really reach and stretch beyond the ordinary, they are truly “gourmet” recipes, and the resultant relationship is truly a gourmet relationship.

In Chapter Two, I refer to our commitment to our relationships as our personal contribution to the war on terror! It’s meant to make us laugh, but at the same time, I’m serious! I really believe that each change we, as couples, make in our relationships, no matter how small, has an impact on the big ol’ world out there, sort of like the butterfly effect.

The biggest change in this revised edition is the editorial tone. I have shifted from less *I* and *You* to more *We*. I often use *ourself* which some of you may question, thinking it should be ourselves. But the editorial *we* used throughout the book is considered singular, and thus *ourself*!

I hope this change makes the read more inviting, and more motivating for us to shift gears in our relationships. Yes, shifting gears so we can move beyond just hanging in there no matter what. Shifting gears so we can heal and bring a sense of wholeness to our relationships. Shifting gears so we can become less self centered and more responsive to our partner’s needs.

If anyone wants to write or email me to give feedback, hey, please do. I will welcome it with open arms, the negative as well as the positive. Postal and email addresses are on the copyright page.

Bon Appetit!

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Chapter One

Bon Appetit!

WELCOME TO THE JACUZZI

Yes, welcome to the Jacuzzi! Oh my! How could I? How could I make such a disastrous mistake in the very first sentence of this book? I really apologize. I just forgot. I forgot that many of us aren't even in the Jacuzzi yet. We dream about it, but we're not there yet. Or we're in and out, and not sure how to stay. And some of us have no clue what being in the Jacuzzi means let alone being in the frying pan. Maybe we're still just thinking about being in a relationship or just beginning to consider an engagement. Of course, we will have no clue. It's all wonder-filled right now. Please don't take offense. I don't mean to imply anything about anyone's intelligence or maturity. It's simply about experiencing certain kinds of relationships. I think they are most often referred to as INTIMATE relationships. Not INMATE relationships. But yes, sometimes intimate relationships can feel very much like imprisonment!

Intimacy and Imprisonment

Why would such a wonderful experience like intimacy feel like imprisonment? A very good question. It's not a simple answer. But for whatever reason, intimate (not inmate)

relationships, at some point, trigger a lot of OLD STUFF. Whatever we experienced in those primordial relationships, for better or for worse, it all gets triggered when we engage in an intimate relationship.

I know, primordial sounds like something that occurred billions of years ago, and perhaps we're still in our teens! Wow! Wouldn't that be awesome? We're seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and we're reading this book! So how could a young person, a non-dinosaur, experience a primordial relationship? Well, primordial relationships are the relationships we had and perhaps still have with....yes, with...this isn't a blame game....really it isn't....with....well, you know, with MOM AND DAD! Yes, everything that ever happened or did not happen in our relationship with Mom and Dad sets that stage for our intimate relationships.

What Frying Pan?

I know, some of us are still wondering "What frying pan?" So maybe it's good that some of us don't relate yet to being in the frying pan with our Prince Charming or Sleeping Beauty. And just maybe, just maybe, through some miracle of the universe, some critical mass event, just maybe, some of us who are new couples just might avoid ever being in the frying pan. But I doubt it! Us old timers (dinosaurs) are so familiar with the frying pan, it's like we're two eggs cooking away! Can we see that picture, two eggs, sunny-side up, cooking away?

Basically being in the frying pan is, well, I think we all know. It's like being in the dog house or simply BEING IN TROUBLE. And later on, we will talk about being all "growed-up" and not being able to get into trouble any more! Yes, that's right! Can't get into trouble anymore. It's one of the perks of being all "growed-up."

Something Happens

An intimate relationship starts out all “cool” and all “hot” at the same time. But then something happens, and in the Chapters of this book, we’ll be talking about what it is that happens. Something does happen. The relationship is no longer fun. Worse, the relationship becomes painful. Painfully hot and painfully not the “hot” of when we first fell in love. We’re in the frying pan!

Attempts To Make The Pain Go Away

And once in that sizzling hot frying pan, we become desperate to make the pain go away. We have an affair, file for divorce, separate without divorcing, or we turn to any number of addictions. Some folks outright kill themselves and some kill each other. I think all of that is known as jumping from the frying pan to the fire.

I have always believed that there is a way for us folks who like relationships to keep the HOT and the SIZZLE without the BURN! Yes, the JACUZZI is the answer, where our relationship can bubble, soothe, heal, entice and be STEAMY!

This book is about making the big leap, the leap from the frying pan to the Jacuzzi. And it is amazing to me that most folks are really interested in making that leap. They want more than just out of the frying pan.

That’s why so many of us, including myself, search for the right weekend getaway, the right workshop, the right therapist, the right jewelry, the right flowers, the right bottle of champagne. All of these “rights” can be important ingredients, but they’re not the Jacuzzi.

And if some of us are not in the frying pan yet, then maybe the information in this book can prepare us for the frying pan and show us ahead of time how to leap from the frying pan to the Jacuzzi. I don’t think we can avoid the frying pan all

together.

One might think that relationships begin in the Jacuzzi, but I don't think so. I think the Jacuzzi is something we create over time, like old wine skins.

Therapy

Just a thought or two about therapy. It's one of those funny things. My Father would always say something like "You know what therapy does!" I would shout in shock, "Dad!" "Well, it's true," he would insist. Some of us, like Dad, don't believe in therapy or believe that it leads to divorce. Some of us would just never think of therapy because of the traditional notion of keeping our dirty laundry to ourselves!

There are actually some of us who go to therapy without hesitation. Then there are those of us who come to therapy, but park across the street. If it's my office, the mortuary of all places is across the street! Some of us come to therapy thinking that something is going to occur right there in the therapy office. And lo and behold, sometimes it does. But therapy is beyond the walls of the office. The office may be the place where we get the therapist's support to keep on truckin'. It may be there that we get a refill of suave and an infusion of vision. But therapyShealingSis never ending. We're "in therapy" when we keep talking in the car on the way home from our appointment! We're "in therapy" when we call each other on the phone during the day. We're "in therapy" when we walk in the door at the end of the workday, and we're keenly conscious of either the clouds or the sunshine that we bring in behind us! We're "in therapy" when we decide to sleep closer to the middle rather than balancing on that outer mattress ridge! We're "in therapy" when we decide to read this book together! We're "in therapy," or in

a process of healing, for as long as we keep the desire alive to keep our relationship blossoming and expanding and going to places where no couple has ever ventured before! Hey, a little Star Trek, why not?

Need Therapy?

And it just might be that none of us really NEED therapy. It's something that's out there and available to us. But maybe at rock bottom, we all have resources inside of us that work pretty well when we access them! And my hope is that this book can help us access them!

I Am Writing To All Of Us

I'm predicting that the following pages will be simple to grasp. The suggestions and exercises are perhaps not easy to put into play, but definitely doable. No pain, no gain! And what the heck if we're already in the frying pan?

As I write, I am writing to all of us. Sometimes, I will be writing to those couples who have honored me by seeking my professional support. Other times, I will be writing to someone just looking for an interesting read about relationships or wanting to avoid the pitfalls of relationships. Then there are the "lucky" ones, those of us who have been in and out of the frying pan a thousand times, but have never quite made it to the Jacuzzi. I am writing to us as well. Last but not least, I am writing to those of us who have been out of the frying pan and into the Jacuzzi over and over again, and we're ready to stay—yes IN THE JACUZZI! When all said and written, I am writing to all of us.

Twenty-Five Years

At the time of the first edition, I had been practicing for over twenty-five years. Wow! But if you are reading this book fifty years into the future, I am one hundred and twelve

and practicing for seventy-five years! Is that possible?

Well, during the first twenty-five years of practice, I began to notice a gradual shift in what couples were looking for from their therapy. The pages of this book speak to that shift. There's really no big mystery to it. It's simply that more and more, we, as couples, want to stay together and want our therapy to support that happening. We are no longer looking for a way out, but a way in and a way to stay. We're looking for the Jacuzzi! And I want to support all of us in creating that Jacuzzi.



Chapter Five

Bon Appetit!

KNOW THAT WE ARE ALL GROWED-UP

Yes, yes, I know that is not correct English. Thank you! BUT, we ARE all grewed-up and cannot get into trouble any more! Long-term relationships and partnerships like marriage obviously are for adults, so we at least KNOW that we ARE all grewed-up! That part has got to be true even if we have doubts about not getting into trouble anymore!

When We Were Little

So lets's explore that second part. When we were kids or even teenagers, we did get into trouble, and for some of us, a LOT. Sometimes, we got into trouble for things we didn't even do, or when we thought we were being good! It was often very confusing.

We Live In Fear and Walk On Egg Shells

Sometimes, the punishments dished out for our short falls went far beyond the "crime," so much so that many of us still live our lives in fear of getting into trouble for something! We cannot really pinpoint anything we've done or are doing to get

ourself into trouble. But the fear of getting into trouble hangs over our spirit like a cloud. When we take that cloud of fear into our intimate relationship, we almost instantly become a child in the relationship. And the consequences? We are constantly afraid of what our partner is going to say to us. We live in constant fear of them getting upset or mad at us. We walk on egg shells. Ugh!

Being A Child In The Relationship Gets Us Into Trouble!

There is an unbelievable phenomenon that occurs when we take on the role of a child in the relationship. Sure enough, our partner treats us like a child, and sure enough, we DO get into trouble ALL the time. Our partner is constantly on our case for something, constantly criticizing, and nothing we do is right. Obviously, this becomes unbearable, and we will eventually want OUT of the relationship.

Jack or Jill Would Be Upset

When I suggest to couples ways that they can each stand up for themselves and BE adults in the relationship, the immediate, and I mean IMMEDIATE, response is, “Oh, Jack would get really upset if I said that...did that....Oh, Jill would be really upset if I said that...did that.” Again, given that there is no domestic violence in the relationship, WHO CARES?

Jack or Jill’s being upset is irrelevant when it comes to us being a grown-up in the relationship. If we become absorbed in his or her disapproval or criticism, we will absolutely sustain the illusion that we are just a kid and deserve his or her criticism and anger.

Taking Responsibility

That doesn’t mean that we can’t be sensitive to our partner’s difficulty in dealing with us as a grown-up when we

decide to be one! But it is their “work” to become more conscious of their part in the parent-child relationship we have both “chosen” to create, just as it our responsibility to wrestle with our fear of getting into trouble. Yes, it is time for us to address our fear of getting into trouble. It is time for us to take responsibility for our part in creating a parent-child relationship instead of a husband-wife relationship or partnership.

Mutt and Jeff

Sometimes, the parent-child elements in our relationship are magnified when one of us are physically taller or larger than our partner. It is amazing what happens when I have the smaller partner stand on a chair or stool. Often, that actually brings the two partners together at eye level, sometimes for the first time in their relationship. Sometimes, it puts the smaller partner towering above the taller partner. An immediate fear comes over the face of the taller partner as he (most often) is now looking up at his partner for the very first time.

Beliefs, Culture, and Religion

Even when there is no obvious size differential, there may still be an unconscious agreement that one of us will look up to or down on our partner. This unconscious agreement can be based on our history or our cultural and religious beliefs about marriage. The chair exercise helps, in these situations as well, to bring those unconscious agreements into our consciousness.

FEEL It In Your Body

This simple exercise with the chair or stool really makes the point very quickly and gives each of us a concrete image and experience upon which to redefine our relationship as two

adults. Try it out. By the way, the chair exercise is a good way to FEEL in our body, what it is like to be both UNEQUAL and EQUAL in a relationship.

Mirror Work

So the task at hand is to experience or FEEL as GROWN-UP as we actually are. Another way to really FEEL grown-up is to spend a little bit of time looking in the mirror each morning and saying to ourselves, “I am all grown-up and can’t get into trouble anymore.” We can also walk as straight and as tall as we can everywhere we go, the opposite of walking on egg shells!

Remind Ourselves

When we catch ourselves feeling as if we are about to get into trouble, take note. Then remind ourselves that we can’t get into trouble anymore. Our partner may not understand a particular choice we are making, but if there are no intended purposeful painful consequences to our partner, then it is important to learn how to proceed with our decision. The fact of the matter is we are an adult, and at times we will make decisions that other adults do not understand or agree with.

For example, we may decide to go to the gym several days a week for our health. Our partner may feel angry that we “get” to go to the gym or jealous that we are spending time for ourselves outside the relationship. If, in fact, the two of us have so little time together that our relationship is suffering, we do not want to be flippant and simply say, “Screw you, I’m going to the gym!” But neither do we want to back away from our plan to improve our health out of fear of our partner being upset with us. There is obviously a need for some conversation here to figure out a way to mutually invest more time in the relationship. And it is true that where there is a will, there is always a way!

So one more time. Let's say it out loud together. ***I AM ALL GROWED-UP AND CAN'T GET INTO TROUBLE ANYMORE.*** Now let's say out loud how old we actually are. Let that reality sink in until we feel that grown-up and that mature. And feel proud of our age!

Victim No More

Some of us just won't let go. We're not convinced that we can't get into trouble anymore because **WHAT IF** we really do make a bad decision that has disastrous consequences? Yes, we can make bad choices, and yes, there are **ALWAYS** consequences to every decision we make. People may be very angry and upset with us because of our choices or our behavior. A judge may even sentence us to prison or to death. As a child, we had no control over the process. At times we were victimized when we got into trouble. As an adult, we are no longer a victim. We have the ability to step up to the plate and take responsibility for our decisions and for our behavior. Stepping up to the plate and taking responsibility and being accountable eliminates our getting into trouble the way we got into trouble when we were little. I hope we can see that difference. It's an essential difference. It **IS** the difference between being a kid and being all grown-up. So let's take the challenge. Give up being a little kid.

Another opportunity for a garage sale. It will make a great ad in the personals amidst all those other silly ads!

LITTLE MAN for sale. Legs wobble, looks short. Doesn't know how to walk tall. Easily put down. Great martyr. Can be silent for days on end. Looks up to everyone. Hard worker. Olympic Bronze Medalist for walking on egg shells. Great companion for a borderline. Ask for Jill B. 248-666

GARAGE SALE. Sat morn. Legless manikins, eggs shells, and misc old stuff. Priced to sale, **CHEAP.** 2468 Growing-Up Ln.

LITTLE WOMAN for sale. Tippy toes, compliant, looks up to everyone, a Saint! Bark but no bite. Olympic Gold Medalist for walking on egg shells. Great companion for control freak. Free delivery. Ask for Jack J. 241-4666

Bon Appetit!

SHARING QUESTIONS

1. When are we aware of treating our partner like a kid, and what will we have to give up to stop being the parent in the relationship or to be an adult in the relationship?
2. What will it take or cost for each of us to connect at eye level?
3. Take some time to imagine and talk about how our relationship could be different if we redefined our relationship as two adults instead of either two kids or a parent and a child.
4. Take some time to share with each other what it was like growing up in our respective families of origin. Who got into trouble in our family and who got off scott free? What happened when someone got into trouble?

