

THOMAS M. JONES

Love Games

The hidden rules of relationship

Everything
that you were never told
about love.





Love Games is a user-friendly manual for the healing, maintenance and creation of love relationships. Through thirty-five years of working in the field of couples counseling and psychotherapy, Thomas M Jones has created a refreshing new paradigm for love, through the use of excerpts from actual sessions and revealing insights and analogies. This book is an unerring guide to success: finding the love that you are in or calling forth new love in your life.

Love Games: The Hidden Rules of Relationship

by Thomas M. Jones

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THE HIDDEN RULES OF RELATIONSHIP

LOVE GAMES:
THE HIDDEN RULES
OF RELATIONSHIP

Thomas M Jones

LOVE GAMES

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Dedication

For Kathleen, Timothy and Michael, my family and friends, and all of my colleagues at the Paradox Space: you have all inspired me and taught me with patience and love.

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“Consider the following. We humans are social beings. We come into the world as the result of others’ actions. We survive here in dependence on others. Whether we like it or not, there is hardly a moment of our lives when we do not benefit from others’ activities. For this reason it is hardly surprising that most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others.”

—His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

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CHAPTER FIVE: HOW WE RELATE

Every atom, every molecule and every living thing lives in relationship. We interact, boundlessly seeking the proper valence. The quality of our human relationships depends on this balance and connection. The more varied and broad these connections, the more powerfully we bond. In medicine, tissue match measures compatibility in the donor and recipient of an organ. To extend the analogy, a four-tissue match is a connection on four critical levels at once. The four basic planes in which we pair bond:

- >Physical
- >Emotional
- >Intellectual
- >Spiritual

PHYSICAL:

Like poles on a magnet, our physical attractors compel us toward each other. At first blush, biology is king and everything else takes a back seat. We feel a spark and we assign meaning to this chemistry. It's magical! If it "ain't got that swing, it don't mean a thing". Without physical attraction the relationship goes nowhere. It is easy to mistake this set of sensations for love, but it is not love; it is the possibility of love.

In the Buddhist tradition, attraction occurs when we have met someone with a lesson to teach us. We are drawn to our lessons, and the gravitational pull of attraction will compel us to learn. The physical is the beginning of the equation for love.

EMOTIONAL:

Excitement, joy and nervousness, are emotional responses to a potential mate. The amount of emotion this meeting evokes can be an indicator for the potential of the relationship. When I was a teenager I worked as a checker at the A&P supermarket. One certain girl would get on my checkout line with her pretty blonde hair and

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demure look, and I became completely tongue-tied and red-faced. She evoked plenty of emotion. I can still feel a blush coming on when I see her standing in line.

You've heard these phrases: "I'm miserable with her but I'd be more miserable without her!" and "He gets under my skin!" All are examples of an emotional response. We assign meaning to these responses and create a story to explain the emotions. In truth, this emotional response can be the beginning of a real connection.

INTELLECTUAL:

Perhaps you are at a cocktail party and you overhear a handsome man with dark hair saying "Why isn't it obvious to the politicians of the world that we must inevitably go green? We are using up the resources of this planet! Aren't there any forward thinking world leaders?" You construct a wonderful story about who he is that gives this moment meaning and you fall a little in love.

We come together because we think alike. We see the world in similar ways and share viewpoints. If you like the same candidate I do, it may be reason for us to connect. When we agree about global warming or the conflict in the Middle East the mind-sync is compelling in its way. The magic of chemistry causes us to find common ground and ideas, regardless of whether they exist. The Dalai Lama made a point: pick someone you can talk to, because that's all you will have left at the end of the day.

SPIRITUAL:

We feel intimacy when we have similar spiritual beliefs. A shared philosophy can form a real bond between us, making us feel safe and cozy. We occupy the universe together: same ethos, same Eros. Spiritual connection can often include the belief that fate has brought us together. In the language of karma: "I feel as though I've known her all of my life." Creating meaningful connection can be difficult without this spiritual underpinning. It is challenging for one partner to believe when the other does not.

These are just some of the elements that come together as we relate, and each is a strand that can lead to a whole relationship. Each

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path has its own progression and intersects with other threads of connection. These are not the only ways to connect, but recognizable ways that we do hook up. Each is a different way of relating, and each develops differently, but without these essential connections, the points at which we meet, we stay separate and apart.

Wherever love does begin, we fill in the missing dimensions. Our emotions grow as we connect physically; we exchange ideas and ideologies. These lines need to be cultivated, fed and nurtured. As we broaden and deepen our relationships we give them strength and sustainability.

Where did you initially connect? Perhaps you spent the night on the phone, talking 'til the wee hours. Maybe you were so physically wrapped up in each other that you didn't come up for air. Sooner or later the relationship will migrate to other planes or it won't survive, but each connection gives us the opportunity to broaden our connection.

RECONNECT

If you and your partner have drifted, connection will take rebuilding. If you've gotten away from the physical, for instance, go slow. Try some mutual massage or a deliberate attempt at physical attention. Touch your partner. Affection is an easy way back to physical connection when you use patience and ease.

To reconnect on an intellectual level, strike up a conversation about a topic he's interested in. Look toward his hobbies or passions. Perhaps he has an interest in vitamins and how they affect healing. Do some reading about it and share what you've read. Do not get discouraged; this is a process of developing communication skills. Keep trying and you will get results.

Any dialogue that alludes to how we show up in the world is rooted on the spiritual plane. Discussions about life lessons and what we are learning, our purpose in life, our mutual destinies, all of these feed the big picture conversations of the spiritual plane.

What moves you or your partner emotionally? What does she care about passionately? Think back on a time when he or she was excited or agitated over something. When you can answer the

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question, “What is my partner passionate about?” you have the key to their emotions. Find ways to share what you feel as well. The emotional connection is the most accessible to reestablish, and the most powerful. A good “feeling” conversation can instantly connect you.

Building a relationship means laying the foundation for how we relate. Rebuilding is much the same. Take an honest assessment: see what is good in your communication and what needs repair. Whether building or reconnecting, you can weave thread upon thread to create a strong fabric that will sustain your partnership.

EXERCISE ONE:

Choose a relationship that you would like to deepen or improve. It can be a love relationship, friendship, or even a business relationship. You could focus on a sibling, a parent or your child. From the four planes of relationship, (emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual) pick an area and start a discussion. Deepen that aspect of your relationship and notice how it changes.

Here are some examples.

Emotional: Share your passion about a movie or a world event.

Physical: Challenge a friend to a racquetball game; hug your mother-in-law.

Spiritual: Discuss a life lesson with your partner. Discuss meaning and purpose in your life and theirs.

Intellectual: Share a book you love with someone important. Start a discussion about it.

EXERCISE TWO:

1. Have a “feeling discussion” with the following rules: Each participant fills in the statement “I feel...” with what they are feeling in the moment or about a chosen topic. In this exercise, there is no judgment, no right or wrong and no attempt to fix anything. Simply observe.

2. When one partner has finished sharing the listener must then “empathize” and reflect with the sharer, by using the following

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phrase: "I heard you say..." Find comparisons and similar situations that you have been in, and recap what your partner has said.

3. When the first person is done, switch partners. Let this lead to a discussion.

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CHAPTER SIX: STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP

FREEZE-FRAME!

Jackson Browne talks about a moment in time when “your perfect lover looks like a perfect fool.” Suddenly, you see him or her in a way that you hadn’t before. The music stops, the lights go up and the scales fall from your eyes. The magic is gone.

In a flash, you start to circle the drain in an inexorable spiral of expectation/disappointment. You are still in love with your concept, but no longer in love with the person you’ve chosen.

WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Picture a rocket headed into space. As we see the plumes of smoke and fire, we observe parts of the chassis falling away. In order to achieve escape velocity and reach deep space, the rocket fires in stages. One after another, the boosters fall away as this projectile sweeps through space at five miles a second. Though each stage is discarded in turn, all are indispensable in reaching the charted speed and destination. Love is a gradual unfolding of necessary stages:

Identification: (You and me against the world!)

Attraction gives us liftoff. Our needs to love and belong are fulfilled. This sequence is filled with possibility and hope, and dreams for the future. This is the candy wrapper instead of the candy inside. It is eye-catching, but it’s not the ultimate goods. We marvel at our sameness. “We both love sushi and Tuscany!” Every aspect of each other is great, and we abandon parts of ourselves that don’t seem to fit in the relationship. We collapse into identification with an “us.”

What we see in Identification is the potential of that person and the partnership. Life takes us to the top of the mountain to show us the view, and then it brings us back down with the message, “earn it.” Stage one gives us a vision and a mandate. This phase can last anywhere from two weeks to six months. No one seeks counseling in this stage.

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Differentiation: (There's an us, but I am me!)

We flex our muscles in this stage and seek to exercise power. We see our differences, often in stark contrast. The struggles of our past emerge in this present relationship. We fight for our boundaries and our freedom.

One of the challenges of this stage (and all of them) is that couples are rarely on the same schedule. I can still be in the romance of the first stage while you've moved on to your need for freedom. This can lead to feelings of betrayal and loss. Often about power and autonomy, this phase defines who I am in this partnership and how I go forward. "I need my space" replaces "I need you."

In this stage we see the dynamics of power. There is the adventure of discovering our partner. When we give power away, we must take it back. Differentiation provides the opportunity to take care of us in the relationship and our lives. Without hostility or blame we discover where "I" end and "you" begin. There can be great conflict in this stage. The magic is gone, the pain of self has returned and the promise seems to be broken, but we can embrace this disillusionment. Stage two offers us independence. Though a time of necessary disillusionment, this stage can be read as the beginning of the end.

Assimilation: (I accept there's an "us" in my life.)

Assuming we survive two stages, we move forward. A state of truce, this third phase is marked by a deceptive quiet. Whereas, fighting and conflict usually indicate stage two, stage three can almost feel like resignation. Our focus is no longer on the relationship itself, but on whom I am in the world and how this partnership fits into that world. Though it can look like the magic is gone, the real bones of a sustaining partnership are being created here. We stop trying to change our partner, and realistic communication begins. How we build will define the quality of this partnership, but we build based on choice rather than need. It is a stage that is constantly misread, and can lead to misunderstanding

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and conflict. The seeming inactivity can seem like disinterest, but it is absolutely necessary in the formation of a healthy partnership.

Assimilation brings truce, and a foundation. While the first two stages could take two years, or six months, this period is not determined by length but by content. This is a time to assess the union. By now we have reconnected with the world and again look inward at the partnership. Communication shows up in this stage. Now we need to know what we can create. We gain objectivity in this stage.

Integration: (This “us” can be more than just “me”.)

In this stage couples consider a future together. Having explored enough of who we are in the world and lived with the reality of each other, we know that we can build together. A willingness to commit shows up in this stage and a return to the relationship occurs. Intimacy is again sought after and even a renewed blush of romance show up as we consider new ventures and possibilities together. Power and freedom, choice and commitment come together in this stage. Big external moves might occur at this time.

The timeline of this stage can begin from one year, onward. We have explored the previous stages and are ready to build. The wariness is gone and with it that sense of separateness. There is a real acceptance in this stage and a growing sense of contentment. We have a union that is not based on dependency but on choice. We embrace what we have held at arm’s length for so long. This brings joy, and the will to move forward. This stage can take the form of long-term commitment, moving in or getting engaged. We are ready to formalize our union and declare it to the world. Communication and awareness are key tools for this stage.

Creation: (“We” can build better than “I”!)

In this stage we have put together a durable partnership and we are willing to take on an enterprise together. Whether this implies having kids or co-partnering in business, the relationship is strong enough to sustain joint participation in the world. The danger in this stage is that we can lose each other in the mix, but we feel strength in

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the relationship that supports creating in the world. It is a stage of real partnership.

Like alloyed metal, this synthesis of concept and reality makes us stronger. We build businesses, buy houses and have babies in this stage. Creation gives us participation and validity in the world. We affirm each other and ourselves with what we create. It is an exciting stage that can sustain for the life of the relationship.

CONFLICTING STAGES

The breakdown is obvious for the couple in the next excerpt. They've clearly migrated from the romantic identification stage to the contentious differentiation stage and beyond. Small wonder; none of us can compare to the idealized version of ourselves. Because of their expectations, each is deeply disappointed in this relationship. Both feel betrayed by a partner who hasn't lived up to the fantasy. The tacit agreement has broken down.

Let's listen in:

KAREN: Wait a second, here. I'm being made to look like this indulgent little brat that lost her toys and is having a temper tantrum. You used to love everything I did.

MARTIN: I don't know who you are anymore! I can't trust you. You're ridiculous.

T: Enough attacking; aren't you both just angry? What do you think you promised him? What were you bringing to the mix?

K: (laughs) I promised to be beautiful and sexy; and to make him look good in the world.

T: You think you're kidding, right?

K: Yes, I don't know what my message was. We were crazy about each other. We literally couldn't take our hands off of each other. You know, we were both in other relationships when we first met. Maybe I was supposed to give him something he didn't have in his life.

T: Yes, maybe all of that and more. You did provide warmth and comfort, even a touch of the exotic. And he provided stability and dependability.

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M: We were unbeatable. When I met Karen my life came together. I think my whole life made more sense. She knew how to be on my side. Now she's like my enemy.

K: Wow, did we screw up! Is this unfixable?

T: This had to break down, but it's supposed to break down to create something new. Somewhere along the line you have to look at what you need. I don't think you know who you are to each other. In a way it doesn't matter how this relationship started; your needs change. You have to recognize that change and find a way to communicate. Stop blaming! This is a no-fault situation. You haven't failed each other. You two are entering a different stage of this relationship. Now, it's our job to be smart enough to see where each of you is stuck and try to connect with each other.

K: Yes!

These two have a few wild cards to deal with. To begin, they've built a relationship while still being in their old partnerships; the new relationship is built on deception. There is distrust here. Also, the initial flush of excitement is no longer there.

What stage is this couple in? Karen seems stuck between stage one and stage two, Identification and Differentiation. She wants to feel the way she used to, and she expects Martin to react the way he did early on. Martin is somewhere in stage three, Assimilation. He wants stability and commitment and he isn't paying attention to what Karen needs. Only communication will put them into the same stage.

T: What do you think about all of this, Martin? What do you need?

M: She knows! I just want to feel good again. (Laughs)

T: that's the whole point! She doesn't know. She can't know until you tell her.

M: I need to know that she still believes in us. That she wants to build a life together. I need to know that I'm more important than her friends, more important than "hanging out."

T: Can you give him that? Do you want to build this, Karen?

K: of course I do, but I have needs too.

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T: What are your needs?

K: Acceptance. Respect. Respect is huge! I feel like I can build anything with him if I get that. I need him to stop trivializing me and my life.

T: That's a start. What about you, Martin? Can you give her what she's asking for?

M: I can give her those things. I just felt like she was leaving me behind and taking me for granted. That hurts. As long as I know she wants a future with me, I'll give her the world.

This was a beginning. Through communication they jump-started the process and found their way together to assimilation, a place of allowance and acceptance. They now continue the dialogue that they should have started years ago. Martin can feel the safety and trust of partnership and Karen can receive the validation that she needs. It is a dramatically different world for them now that they are meeting each other's needs.

Real love can only show up after disillusionment. We must get through the fantasy before we can begin to love. After the disappointment in love we can ask the question, "What do we need from each other?"

This couples' patterns, psychology and lessons bonded deeply, but their knowledge of each other had not progressed accordingly. Only after the breakdown could they begin to create a workable relationship.

WHICH STAGE ARE WE IN?

We may ultimately find ourselves in five separate relationships with the same person, because each stage implies such different qualities. At first, love is the most stimulating fantasy ever, and then, suddenly, it is an intrusion. Partnering allows us to connect emotionally, but it can evolve to a place where we can't get what we need. We feel the need to connect with the world instead. We don't grow in lockstep with one another, but we are constantly growing, either together or apart. If we don't acknowledge this truth, we will feel tricked and betrayed.

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In the model of *conscious loving* there is an unfolding of our potential through observation and communication. There is purpose to every conflict. We expect change. Disappointment and sadness may show up, but they are signals that work needs to be done.

START AN INQUIRY

Live in the questions: What does each of us need? Is this partnership addressing our interests? How does the world experience us as a couple? Does the world like what it sees? Do they know more than we do about our own dynamics? How are we changing and how have we changed? What do we need to change?

The couple in the excerpt made a huge discovery: they learned that they don't yet know each other, and what each needs. Knowledge is power and they are now able to address their issues.

EXERCISE ONE:

1. Write down the stage of relationship you think you are in.
2. Determine what stage your partner is in and why.
3. Decide what stage you think your relationship should be in and what needs to change to get there.
4. Start a dialogue with your partner about the stage you are each in, without judgment. Have a "feeling" discussion about it.

EXERCISE TWO:

1. Start an inquiry: discuss your mutual patterns and origins, in order to shed light on your relationship.
2. Only discuss for five minutes! Try your best to stay objective; if the discussion gets heated, put it aside for another time.



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