

## Awareness Practice: If You're Longing for a Great Love and Want to Create It (or Deepen the Love You Have)

1. As you read my story above, did you note any areas you relate to? If so, write them down. You can use these notes to develop a plan to create more love for yourself.
2. Do you tell any old negative stories about love and relationships in your life? Most people do this without realizing it. If so, list one or more. You can also use parts of stories and sentences that others have told you and that you believed. For example, my father telling me that I was "too smart for marriage" led to my devaluing myself and marriage!
3. Stop repeating the negative story or stories. This sounds obvious, but many people have iconic negative love and relationship stories that get told and retold so often, and always get reactions of sympathy or maybe even shock, which can become negatively reinforcing.

When you tell a negative story, your body experiences the same emotions and hormones as though it just happened, even though it may have happened years ago. You'll be flooded with the same or similar feelings that you felt back then. I used to feel so sad and betrayed every time I told that story about my first boyfriend.

People also sympathize, give extra kinds of attention, commiserate, or relate — saying things like, "Me too! I understand — what a jerk. They're all jerks." People will hear your stories and see you the way you tell them, which in many instances reinforces the ways you don't want to be seen. I found out that my early love betrayal story guaranteed that I'd get sympathy and not be held accountable to live a new kind of love story. I could effectively "hide out" from love by repeating that story.

4. If you have any negative love and relationship stories, see if you can begin to create a new story or stories for yourself. Do this by experimenting with "the facts." For example, my first boyfriend slept with other girls while he was with me. That's a fact. The way I choose to recall the experience now is totally up to me.
5. Practice creating your new story. You can fill in the blanks, but you'll probably want to use a separate sheet of paper.

The fact is \_\_\_\_\_.

My boyfriend slept with other girls while we were together when I was 16.

As a result, \_\_\_\_\_.

I felt hurt, betrayed, and angry. I made choices to never be hurt like that again.

How could I have behaved? \_\_\_\_\_

I could have shared my hurt and anger and gotten some help so that I could feel better.

How might that have shifted things? \_\_\_\_\_

I might not have acted out in the ways that I did, for as many years as I did.

What might I have been doing or thinking that contributed to the situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

I never wanted to hear unpleasant things. After being abused in my family, I developed sensitivities and fears that felt immense.

How could I see the situation differently? \_\_\_\_\_

MICHAEL WAS A SWEET YOUNG BOY WHO TRULY LOVED ME TO THE BEST OF HIS ABILITIES. HE TRIED TO PROTECT ME FROM HIS BEHAVIOR WITH OTHER GIRLS BY KEEPING IT SECRET. HE THOUGHT HE COULD GET AWAY WITH IT AND DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW HURT I WOULD BE. MY HURT WAS OUT OF PROPORTION IN SOME WAYS BECAUSE OF THE ABUSE I HAD EXPERIENCED. MY EXPERIENCE OF HIS BETRAYAL MATCHED HOW BETRAYED I FELT IN MY FAMILY.

How might I tell the story now? \_\_\_\_\_

WHEN I WAS 16, I WAS MADLY IN LOVE WITH A BOY NAMED MICHAEL, WHO TOOK ME ON MOTORCYCLE ADVENTURES, WAS EXTREMELY KIND AND LOVING TO MY BABY BROTHER, AND HAD A BACKPACK DESIGNED FOR ME OUT OF COLORFUL LEATHER. HE WAS MY FIRST LOVER AND MY BEST FRIEND.

RIGHT BEFORE HE GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL, I FOUND OUT THAT HE'D SLEPT WITH OTHER GIRLS, AND IT REALLY HURT. I WENT OFF TRACK FOR A WHILE, RECOVERING FROM WHAT HAPPENED. SOME YEARS LATER, WE WERE ABLE TO BECOME FRIENDS, AND I INTRODUCED HIM TO HIS WIFE, AND THEY HAD A DAUGHTER TOGETHER. BY THEN I'D BEEN ABLE TO TAKE 100 PERCENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY LIFE AND BEHAVIOR, TOTALLY FORGIVEN MICHAEL, AND MOVED ON COMPLETELY FROM THAT EXPERIENCE. WHEN HE DIED, WE WERE FRIENDS AND I HAD NO REGRETS.

**SAYING IT OUT LOUD  
IS POWER-FULL**

6. Tell your new story to someone.
7. Tell AND SHARE THE STORIES YOU WANT TO LIVE. THIS DOESN'T MEAN IGNORING OR DENYING THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED OR HOW THEY AFFECTED YOU — DO YOUR INNER FEELINGS CARE SYSTEM ABOUT THEM IF NEEDED (SEE CHAPTER 8). IT MEANS MOVING ON AND BEING WILLING TO LIVE THE LOVE STORY YOU WANT TO BE IN.
8. Act "AS IF" WITH YOUR STORIES — TELLING A VERSION THAT MOST PLEASES YOU. YOUR STORIES CAN SUPPORT YOUR HAVING THE LOVE YOU WANT. YOU CAN DESCRIBE SOMEONE GIVING YOU THE APOLOGY YOU WISH YOU

COULD HAVE. YOU CAN TELL A STORY THAT GIVES YOU CLOSURE. YOUR BODY DOESN'T KNOW OR CARE IF IT'S "TRUE." IT ONLY KNOWS HOW YOU FEEL. THE IDEA IS TO WRITE SOMETHING THAT FEELS GENUINELY POSSIBLE. STRETCH JUST A BIT BEYOND WHERE YOU USUALLY GO. IF YOU GO TOO FAR, IT WILL START TO FEEL PHONY — THAT'S OKAY, JUST TAKE IT BACK A LITTLE UNTIL IT FEELS POSSIBLE AGAIN.

FOR EXAMPLE, HERE'S MY NEW ACTING AS-IF — WHAT I WISHED COULD HAVE HAPPENED WITH MICHAEL, STARTING RIGHT BEFORE HIS GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL:



My endearing first love, Michael,  
and me

HE SHARED THAT WHILE HE LOVED ME, HE DIDN'T WANT TO BE MONOGAMOUS ANYMORE, AND ASKED IF WE COULD ATTEND COUNSELING TOGETHER SO I COULD FULLY UNDERSTAND HIS NEW PERSPECTIVE. WE FOUND A FABULOUS THERAPIST, AND AFTER MY INITIAL UPSET, SEPARATED SO LOVINGLY, I NEVER FELT ABANDONED OR BETRAYED. HE AND I BECAME THE DEEPEST AND DEAREST FRIENDS AND REMAINED SO FOR MANY YEARS. WHILE HE WAS ILL AND BEFORE HE DIED, WE RENEWED OUR DEEP LOVE FOR EACH OTHER AND BASKED IN THE GLOW OF THAT LOVE.

If you want more practice in changing your stories, go to:

[SucculentWildLove.com/MyStory](http://SucculentWildLove.com/MyStory)