



INTEGRAL LIFEWORK RELATIONSHIP MATRIX

By T. Collins Logan

The following four quadrants provide ways to evaluate existing relationships and understand the dynamics of new relationships as they are formed. The premise is simple: there are many different levels of attraction, connection and involvement, and the more two people agree upon which particular combinations are desirable in their relationship, the more that relationship can flourish. If a transparent, mutual understanding of what specific combinations apply is absent from a romance or friendship, we will either tend to be disappointed and frustrated with our experiences, or inadvertently disappoint and frustrate others.

<p>Level of Commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Profound – There has never been a question about this being a lifelong and mutually committed relationship, with the highest level of personal engagement B. Pronounced – One of our closest and most important relationships, with a high level of personal engagement C. Moderate – Bonds that facilitate personal health, status or success, like work relationships, doctor-patient relationships, or family members who aren't emotionally close to us; generally low to moderate engagement D. Mild – Vague, lukewarm commitment to social expectations, such as conforming to laws or traditions; nearly as likely to be circumvented as engaged E. Dysfunctional – Obsessive, addictive, codependent or compulsive engagement that is more destructive than constructive 	<p>Type of Affinity or Attraction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spirit – An inexpressible but deep attraction that shares common ground in spiritual experience and a sense of spiritual connection 2. Heart – Sharing mutually important values, goals and attitudes, including spiritual ones, that indicate a felt emotional connection or attraction 3. Mind – Intellectual affinity; thinking alike, sharing similar tastes, or understanding each other's thought process with surprising ease, indicating a stimulating intellectual connection or attraction 4. Body – Enjoying how someone looks or moves, the sound of their voice, their smell, etc., indicating a physical attraction 5. Sex – Sexual attraction
<p>Circle of Intimacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Devotional – Worshipful connection that has no boundaries, is not attached to outcomes, naturally and perpetually shares all experience, and nurtures inexhaustibly II. Soul Friend – Deep trust, openness and honesty, with frequent synchronistic and supportive shared experiences, and porous boundaries that are few in number and frequently need not be communicated because they are intuitively understood III. Companionship – A comfortable closeness, frankness, mutual trust and support, and a desire for shared experience with few, often porous boundaries for interaction that sometimes must be clearly communicated IV. Compassionate – An unconditional acceptance of others with a desire to relieve suffering and promote growth, while maintaining less porous boundaries that often must be clearly communicated V. Convenience – Sharing common, cooperative goals for a limited duration, with the most, generally role-based and non-porous boundaries for interaction that are socially defined and tacitly understood 	<p>Scope of Acknowledgement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public – Everyone knows b. Immediate Community – Only our closest friends know c. Private – I.e. "just us;" we only acknowledge it between ourselves d. Self – We know, but we haven't shared with anyone else, even the other person with whom we feel a connection e. Unknown – A relationship is beginning to take shape, but we haven't yet consciously acknowledged it to ourselves

Consider the many flavors of emotion and intention represented in the matrix, and reflect on past relationships that have been challenging in some way. Is there a correlation between the type of connection you anticipated and what you actually experienced? Would the relationship have been more harmonious if either of you had been willing to accept what the other offered in each quadrant, without confining expectations to a preconceived ideal? In seeking out new friendships, have you been clear in your communication regarding the levels of connection you are willing to offer and receive? Taking all four quadrants into consideration, what dynamics exist in your current relationships, and how might you navigate them differently?

Clearly, these definitions apply to all types of interpersonal exchanges, and there are thousands of potential combinations. For instance, one or more levels of Affinity or Attraction may apply; for example, we might share both a “Mind” and “Heart” connection with the same person. Or the Level of Intimacy or Level of Commitment may shift over time. It then becomes that much more complicated when one person feels multiple levels of Affinity or Attraction, or more involved Levels of Intimacy or Commitment, while the object of their affection isn’t able to reciprocate in kind. When two people have dissimilar understandings of what attracts them, what level of social acknowledgement exists, or what kind of intimacy is expected, the potential for disappointment, frustration and/or conflict can be high. Likewise, when there is a clear understanding and communication about these issues, our relationships tend to be much more satisfying.

EXERCISE

Print out a sufficient number of copies of the *Relationship Matrix* for each person to have their own, and invite one or more of your closest relationships to evaluate each area while you do the same. Be honest and considerate in your assessments – perhaps spending a day or two contemplating it – then sit down together and compare your ratings in each quadrant. Be prepared for surprises. You may find your connection affirmed in new ways, or you may find areas of difference that require more discussion. It is, in fact, very likely that any such differences have caused tension in the past, and that working through the matrix together will offer new avenues to harmony and healing.