

A chapter from the book, *Create the Life You Want*

By Raymond Gerson

It's not too late to find Your True Love

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Most people dream of having a great love relationship. I'm certainly no exception— that's why divorce from my first wife was so painful. Divorce shatters your dream of having a lasting relationship. For many years after, I doubted I would ever remarry; I questioned whether I was even suited for marriage. I thought, "Maybe I'm just not the type of person who *can* be a good husband." I spent time in self-reflection, reading books about relationships, and attending seminars about relationships. I learned a lot, but it would be 13 years before I would meet anyone who awakened romantic love in me. I waited a long time before I had an opportunity to apply what I had learned about relationships (and to find out whether I could be a good husband).

Bonnie and I fell in love when we were both 63 years old. We were married five months later. Our love relationship was a big surprise to both of us. Bonnie didn't have a clue that I was romantically interested in her until I kissed her on our second date. She reacted with surprise and said, "This seems silly at our age."

We kissed again, and she remarked, "Oh, there is chemistry!" and "I'd better leave now." Bonnie got up and went home.

I thought to myself, "Women are still a mystery to me." She phoned me an

hour later and asked, “What are you expecting from me and this relationship?” I liked her candor. Her question led to a long conversation, and we realized we definitely wanted to see more of each other. We discovered romance isn’t only for the young. Older couples—young at heart—can have a great romantic life.

In many ways Bonnie and I seemed to be an unlikely match for marriage. I had lived alone all my adult life except for one year, while Bonnie had been married most of hers. My schedule makes it difficult to spend enough time with a partner (I get up at 4 A.M. for meditation and go to bed by 10 P.M.). Bonnie had three divorces in her past, and her last marriage (of 20 years) had ended with her husband's suicide. She was flexible; I could be rigid.

Actually, Bonnie and I first met more than 25 years before our romantic relationship began. We were part of the same meditation group. Over the years, I had seen her occasionally. She was married during these years, we didn’t know each other well, and neither of us ever thought of the other as a potential partner for a relationship. We didn’t have a clue that we would feel a powerful attraction for each other in the future. Little did I realize the person I was looking for was someone I already knew! How did our romance begin? A friend of mine sent an e-mail saying that Bonnie was ill and needed a ride to the doctor and some company. I also learned at this time that her husband had committed suicide 18 months earlier. My friend asked if I would help Bonnie out; I agreed.

Bonnie wasn’t looking for another relationship. I was actively looking; I’d tried dating services and dance classes. I had met some interesting women but not

anyone who seemed like a good match for me. Still, our relationship wouldn't have happened if we hadn't both been ready in certain vital ways.

For my part, I had done some preparatory work on myself. I had finally realized just searching for the right partner wasn't enough. I needed to attract the right partner by becoming more like the person I desired. I don't mean I wanted a clone, but someone who shared similar values, goals, qualities, and interests. It dawned on me that inner work—some positive changes within myself—might be the key to attracting a good match. The right partner would come into my life if I became the right person for her.

I began to practice the following steps:

1. I became a better friend to myself. I started treating myself the way I would like to be treated. This prepared me to become Bonnie's best friend.
2. I accepted my own imperfect humanness with compassion, enabling me to accept imperfections in others, to be less judgmental. I began to have more realistic expectations of others.
3. I gave myself permission to love myself and to experience more joy in life, thereby increasing my capacity to give and receive love.
4. I became grateful for all the good things in my life, which changed my mindset from *scarcity* consciousness to one of *abundance*. My cup was full to overflowing.
5. I became more authentic—more honest with myself and others. I stopped being afraid to reveal who I am, with shortcomings. This characteristic

appealed to Bonnie, and we discovered a strong connection because of her own authenticity.

6. I held a positive expectation in my mind that I would meet the right woman. I imagined myself holding the love of my life in my arms, often doing this at night before falling to sleep. (There is power in visualizing a desired outcome as if it is happening now. Research has demonstrated that our brains react similarly to actual and imagined experiences. The subconscious mind can then help transform the imagined experience into reality.)
7. Later, I added the following prayer, “Lord, if you want me to spend the rest of my life alone, please help me to be happy in your will. However, if it is your will that I have an appropriate partner, then please select her for me because I am unable to find her.”

I said this prayer only once, and then I surrendered the outcome to God. My relationship with Bonnie started two weeks later. Dreams can come true!

Bonnie and I both feel that life was preparing us for each other. Both of us had experienced significant personal growth in the year before our relationship began. Grieving over her husband's suicide, Bonnie had found a greater capacity to give and receive love. She had much love and no one to share it with. I was going through some positive changes in my outlook on life. I had been hard on myself for many years, but had learned to have more love, compassion, acceptance, and friendship for myself and others. Our growth proved to be excellent preparation for our relationship.

Who would have thought a woman with several failed marriages and a lifelong bachelor would be successful in a relationship? Wed in February 2005, we expected married life to require adjustments—especially for me. What has been surprising to both of us is that the transition has been so easy, natural, and joyful. Humor adds flavor to marriage. Before we married, I had lived alone for 13 years in a small 320-square-foot cottage in a large city. After marriage, I moved to a large home in a small country town with a wife, two dogs, and two cats. Tiger, our indoor cat, has added to the adventure of marriage, contrasted with living alone. Tiger likes to pounce on my chest at night while I'm sleeping, often walking across my rib cage or lying across my throat, his hair tickling the inside of my nose. Learning to sleep with another person and a cat has been a major adjustment, but it's been a lot of laughs, too.

There are so many humorous situations that married life can bring. Shortly after we got married, Bonnie gave me my first “honey-do” chore—a shopping trip to the grocery store. I was proud that she trusted me to find everything on her list, even on my first trip to this supermarket. One item appeared to be “Suzan,” and I thought Bonnie had said it was a special French brand of sugar. I asked a stocker for help, and he was puzzled. We ran all over the store looking for this mysterious product without success. Even the store manager had never heard of a product called “Suzan.”

Since I would be going home without one item, I decided to buy some flowers, hoping they would keep me in good standing with my new bride. As a

last-ditch effort, I showed the list to the lady who sold flowers. She said, “I see pecans, raisins, and oatmeal. It’s obvious to me, your wife is planning to make oatmeal cookies. This word isn’t *Suzan*, it’s *sugar*.”

Bonnie and I had many laughs over this incident, and she still trusts me with “honey-do” lists. We’ve discovered that maintaining a sense of humor is one of the keys to our relationship. If such an unlikely pair as Bonnie and I can find love and happiness in our sixties, there’s hope for everyone! Actually, we know four other couples in their fifties who recently fell in love. It’s not too late to find true love. It may be right around the corner!

Summary of lessons learned:

1. It’s not too late to find true love. Don’t give up hope. Keep your heart open to finding a relationship.
2. An outer search for a partner is usually not enough by itself. Inner work and growth can be the best preparation for attracting a compatible partner.
3. Self-love increases your capacity to love another. When you accept your imperfections with compassion, you’ll be able to do the same for others.
4. Visualizing a desired outcome as if it is happening now, combined with leaving the results to God, can produce powerful results.

Questions to ponder and discuss:

1. How can I become a better friend to myself?
2. What are some of my imperfections, and how can I accept them nonjudgmentally, with compassion?

3. How can I stay hopeful about finding a great relationship while at the same time letting go of the results of my efforts?
4. What qualities do I seek in a significant other? How can I develop more of these qualities in myself?

In the next chapter I explain the strategy I used to identify and overcome the inner resistance that made my dream of attracting a soul mate come true.