



## New Book's Approach to Healthy Relationships May Be Surprising

Psychotherapist's guide to modern relationships encourages an individual's spiritual growth

In *20 Ways to Lose Your Lover* (Balboa Press), psychotherapist and spiritual teacher Stephanie Goldman Meis examines the complexities of romantic relationships and other interpersonal connections. With charming illustrations and a novel format—flip the book Manga-style and find a second, *20 Ways to Keep Your Lover*—the book takes a holistic approach to relationship dynamics by examining what works and what doesn't and offering real solutions to move beyond impasses. "I think different people get motivated to learn and grow in different ways," Goldman Meis says. "Basically, some people get activated by fear of what may befall them, while others move forward by being uplifted and inspired. As a psychotherapist, I was addressing the book to both approaches."

So, what is a healthy relationship? From Goldman Meis's perspective, it means "taking care of yourself, being accountable for your actions, being open to growth and learning, and seeing the other person with compassion as a tender child who has grown up."

Achieving this is easier said than done. It requires autonomous growth, or what Goldman Meis calls "Personal Spiritual Healing." In other words, "a path of getting more in touch with your true self, loving and taking care of yourself, and exploring and resolving your wounds," she says. "That is the ideal place to come from when you relate to others: with love, generosity, honesty, and patience."

Everyone can get stuck in unhelpful or destructive cycles, often those we've learned to mirror since childhood. But Goldman Meis insists that we need not

resign ourselves to a familiar playbook. "Self-awareness and clearing of old patterns are the keys!" she says. "And this is where the spiritual work comes in. Old, ingrained patterns truly can be released when clients use slowed breathing to go deep into the subconscious."

Sometimes, self-care can mean ending a relationship that isn't allowing for positive growth. "Our partners are our teachers and healers," Goldman Meis says. "This, for me, is the definition of soulmate. We are attracted to them because they have traits that remind us of our families of origin—maybe unresolved and painful issues, maybe communication patterns that our parents had." Without deep personal introspection, it can be unclear whether a relationship is meant to last. "Sometimes it just doesn't work," she says. "Sometimes we have a little further to go. Each person needs to sit

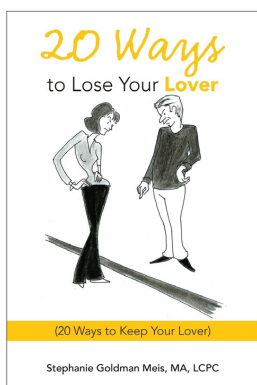
with her/his own heart, after trying all that she/he can do to make it work, to know if it is time to move on." She emphasizes that abuse in a relationship is another matter. Abuse of any kind is never acceptable.

While relationships have always been complicated, in some ways, social media has made it harder than ever to truly connect. "We are not taught how to really be there for ourselves," Goldman Meis says. "This creates a sense of loneliness that we replicate in the world around us." In her practice, she observes individuals grappling with these challenges. "I see mental illness issues, especially when people get stuck at a young immature age, as being symptoms of an inability to be there for ourselves like nurturing parents," she says. "I see that a loving inner voice and loyal treatment of our inner child makes us mentally/emotionally healthy. This inner

safety and security leads to connection with others."

Goldman Meis believes that the solutions are there already; it's just a matter of accessing them. "I'm not talking about hypnosis," she says. "We have a treasure trove of answers within our bodies if we only take time and calmly ask for information. I also use energy to clear patterns with people that may be hand-me-downs from other generations, even hundreds of years old."

Along with the astute advice, *20 Ways to Lose Your Lover* also offers actionable steps for readers to take to improve their relationships. These come in the form of a series of exercises, which Goldman Meis bases on her studies in Buddhism, Jewish mysticism, and psychology.



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— Stephanie Goldman Meis

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She encourages readers to both absorb the material independently and share it with others. "The book is a model for the light and humorous tone that makes relationships work," she says. She envisions couples and friends alike sitting down with *20 Ways to Lose Your Lover*, bonding over the ideas, and sharing laughter over the illustrations. With this gem of a book, Goldman Meis sees a path toward greater understanding and communication across all relationships. "Imagine a world," she says, "where everyone related to others with calm, clarity, compassion, and love!"