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# The Feel the Fear Guide to Lasting Love

Susan Jeffers

## **About the Author**

Susan Jeffers, Ph.D. is the internationally renowned author of many books including the best-selling *Feel the Fear And Do It Anyway*, *Feel the Fear And Beyond* and the award-winning *Embracing Uncertainty*. Her books, which have been published in over 100 countries and translated into 35 languages, have helped millions of people overcome their fear, heal their relationships and move forward in life. She is a well-known public speaker and media personality. Susan lives with her husband in Los Angeles. Her popular website is [www.susanjeffers.com](http://www.susanjeffers.com).

## **Other books by Susan Jeffers, Ph.D.**

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*Dare to Connect*: reaching out in romance, friendship and the workplace\*

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*End the Struggle and Dance with Life*: how to build yourself up when the world gets you down\*

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# **THE FEEL THE FEAR GUI TO LASTING LOVE**

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To my wonderful husband, Mark Shelmerdine

He fills my life with joy  
and continues to teach me  
so much about love.

He clearly is the inspiration  
behind this book.



# **Contents**

## **Acknowledgments**

**Introduction:** The Journey Begins

## **Part 1: The Basics**

- 1 What Does *Real* Love *Really* Look Like?
- 2 How Fear Subtly Destroys Love
- 3 It Only Takes One
- 4 Finding Your Loving Power
- 5 Out of Neediness and Into Love

## **Part 2: The Essence**

- 6 The Secrets of Loving Communication
- 7 Loving the Differences
- 8 When Life Interferes with Love
- 9 To Trust and Be Trusted
- 10 The Key to Never-ending Sex
- 11 The Sound of Love

## **Part 3: Freedom to Be . . . You and Me**

- 12 Love on a Shifting Carpet
- 13 We Owe It to Ourselves . . . We Owe It to Each Other

**Conclusion:** Guess What I Finally Found!

**Addendum:** Take Another Look

## **Endnotes**

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## **Introduction**

### **The Journey Begins**

*All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.*

Galileo Galilei

**M**uch of my life's work has been about teaching people how to push through fear in order to move forward in life. It now feels wonderful to be able to show you how we can all push through fear in order to find a beautiful love . . . and to make it last. This book is for you whether . . .

- You are not in a relationship and are wondering what you are doing wrong.
- You are in a lacklustre relationship and are looking for ways to create more closeness and caring.
- You are thinking of ending your relationship and are wondering if there is a way to save it.
- You are in a happy relationship and are looking for ways to make it even better.
- You are counselling couples and are looking for new insights.

Whatever your situation, my greatest desire in writing *The Feel the Fear Guide to Lasting Love* is to offer you my thoughts on the meaning of love in its highest sense and to show you how to incorporate the essence of this kind of love into your daily interactions with your present or future mate.

Although most of us desire a healthy relationship, it is surprising how many of us don't really understand the nature of real love. We say we love people in our lives, yet often we don't act very lovingly. It would be comical, if it weren't so sad, how many people hurt others – and are deeply hurt by others – in the name of love. This lack of understanding about the meaning of love is reflected in the high rate of divorce and the large number of people who are asking with a deep yearning in their hearts, 'Why is love so hard?'

Over the years I have come to be known as an expert on love, but it is important for you to know that it took me a while to gain the understanding I now have. While I have a number of university degrees, most of my meaningful knowledge about 'real' love came from personal experience. My first marriage of 16 years ended in divorce. And then there were the 12 years of dating before I married again.

Looking back, what a great training ground all those years turned out to be, especially the 12 years in-between my marriages! During that time, I had relationships of varying lengths with numerous men, much to the chagrin of my mother. Of course, my mother never did understand that it was through all these relationships that, s-l-o-w-l-y but surely, I learned the secrets of loving and being loved. Little by little, I whittled away what didn't look like love and ultimately the true picture of love emerged. It was a beautiful sight to behold.

As a result of those important years of learning, my second marriage of 19 years (as I write this) is wonderful. My daughter, Leslie, who was born during my first marriage, came to my present husband Mark and me on her wedding day and said, 'Thank you for showing me what love looks like.' I cannot imagine a greater tribute to our marriage than that.

You may be thinking that the success of my second marriage simply has to do with the differences between the

two men I married. While it is true that my first and second husbands are very different, their differences do not necessarily explain the demise of my first marriage and the success of my second. What does explain it?

It is ME that is totally different in my second marriage from the person that I was in my first marriage. *And it is in this difference that I was able to find the secrets of a healthy relationship.*

Yes, it was me that had to learn how to love before I could create a healthy relationship. I was a slow learner, but with the benefit of my experience, I trust you will learn much faster than I did! And learning how to love is what this book is all about.

The process looks like this: first, you have to discover the bad habits that destroy love. Then you have to break these destructive habits and replace them with the good habits that keep love alive and thriving. Little by little, the good replaces the bad and an entirely different (and beautiful!) picture of love emerges. As you read . . .

*You will learn* that one of the primary causes of any problem in a relationship, or the lack of one, is fear. As you push through the fear, it becomes much easier to find your way to love.

*You will learn* that sometimes, because of your habitual ways of acting in your relationship, you cannot see the obvious: you cannot see how your own thoughts and behaviour contribute to any unhappiness you are experiencing.

*You will learn* that it's okay to have problems in a relationship; everyone does. 'Life happens', and your

relationship offers you much opportunity to learn how to 'dance on a shifting carpet'.

*You will learn* that no matter what is happening in your relationship, you can learn from it all; therefore, it's all 'good' – even the problems. Your relationship, or lack of one, is truly the best workshop going!

*You will learn* that if your partner does not want to work on the relationship, *you can work on it alone* . . . very productively and very happily. In the end, you are doing the work for yourself, as a pathway to becoming a more loving person.

*You will learn* how to make your relationship extra-special by including those elements that keep love alive and thriving. The simplest acts of caring can make all the difference in the world.

*You will learn* when it's time to leave a relationship and when it's worth taking another look.

*You will learn* that you are more powerful and loving than you ever could have imagined. And once you get in touch with all the power and love you hold inside, your relationship will reap the benefits. And if you are not in a relationship, getting in touch with your inner power and love will help you draw a beautiful person into your life.

What I present within these pages is an ideal way of being in love. Because we are all human, we won't always get it right. Certainly I have my lapses! But as we begin including in our lives more and more components of a beautiful love, we begin to understand the joy, satisfaction, peace and caring that real love can bring.

As you master the techniques in this book, you will notice an additional benefit. Not only will your relationship with

your mate improve but *all* of your relationships will improve. When you learn how to open your heart to love, it is felt by everyone around you. That's just the way it is. Also, as you move forward, *the speed of your learning will increase*. That's very good news! Love lessons seem to build upon themselves in an exponential manner. Faster and faster, you embrace the meaning and actions of love.

Here are a few suggestions for reaping the benefits of this book:

- I have included many exercises (Love Lessons) that can help your relationship thrive. I suggest you read through the book in its entirety and note those exercises that seem to draw you to them. That is your place to begin. Some of these exercises will work very effectively for you, some will not. We are all different human beings with different needs and preferences.
- Don't feel overwhelmed by the exercises. Remember that this is a step-by-step journey. You don't have to do it all at once. In fact, it is impossible to do it all at once! But, as you have just learned, the learning does get faster and faster as you proceed.
- You will notice that I use the terms 'mate', 'lover', and 'partner' interchangeably to refer to the person you love, whether you are married or not, whether you are in a male/female or same-sex relationship or whether you are in a new or long-term relationship. All the principles apply no matter what form your relationship takes. It's all about love.
- Since both men and women will be reading this book, you will see 'he/she' as it relates to your mate. Obviously, if your mate is male, read it as 'he' and if your mate is female, read it as 'she'.



- Don't be put off by my use of the word 'power' throughout the book. By power, I don't mean control over others; I mean control over our own actions and reactions, which is a very good thing. Without that power, we are run by fear and a sense of neediness. Not good for a relationship! You can see why 'power' and 'love' definitely go together. Without a sense of power, it is very difficult to love and be loved.
- You will hear the stories of a number of people, including myself, and their relationship with love. Remember that the stories are there just to illustrate the principles. *It is these principles that you need to take into your being and apply in your everyday life.*
- You will find references to some of my other books where relevant. Yes, I would love you to read my other books. More importantly, I want you to know where you can go to expand your knowledge about the particular point that is referenced.
- You may not agree with everything you read. Not to worry. As I always suggest, *take what works for you and let the rest go.*

I've structured the book as follows:

**Part 1: The Basics** gives you a picture of what real love looks like. In addition, I provide a simple and very effective tool for helping you to move in the right direction. Very importantly, this part of the book also explains how fear often stops us from loving and being loved and how we can push through the fear.

**Part 2: The Essence** gives you the many parts of the Grand Design of a beautiful love. You will see that when

all of these parts are put together, the simplicity and beauty of love stands before your eyes . . . and within your heart.

***Part 3: Freedom to Be . . . You and Me*** will provide you with many valuable insights as to how the men's and women's movements affect our relationships today. Understanding and adapting to these life-changing aspects of recent history will save you a lot of unhappiness indeed.

***Conclusion: Guess What I Finally Found!*** gives you a healthy new spin on a very old and outdated yearning that lies deep within our hearts.

***Addendum: Take Another Look*** helps you determine if it's definitely time to leave a relationship or if it's worth taking another look.

I suggest that you consider your first reading of this book as the beginning of a wonderful journey. Even if you have a great relationship, there is always more to learn. There is so much information contained within for you to embrace. As a result, you will want to read the book over and over again. And when you've milked as much as you can out of it, refer back to it often. Many of you have told me that you keep *Feel the Fear And Do It Anyway* by your bedside so you can refer to it frequently. I hope you now will be keeping *two* books by your bedside to refer to frequently!

Remember that no matter what the state of your relationship at the present time, it offers you an incredible opportunity for learning and growing. It is definitely worth all the effort you put into it. Why?

A loving relationship feels sublime and brings you great joy; it makes life sweeter and easier. You delight in your

ability to give to your mate; you feel abundant as you take in the love that he/she gives to you. Just sharing the journey with someone you love . . . it doesn't get any better than that.

Yes, it's definitely worth all the effort you put into it.

# PART 1

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## **THE BASICS**

# 1

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**What Does *Real* Love  
*Really* Look Like?**

*Imagine how much easier it would be for us to learn how to love if we began with a shared definition.*

Bell Hooks<sup>1</sup>

**L**ove, mysterious love! You must admit I'm very brave attempting to explain something that people have been trying to explain for thousands of years, but I decided to feel the fear and explain it anyway! You would have thought that after all this time we would have figured it out. But about real love most of us are in the dark. And even if we are in a great relationship, there always seems to be so much more to learn.

One of the reasons real love seems so hard to understand is this: we in Western society have constantly been fed misleading pictures of what real love actually looks like. Let me remind you of what is considered the greatest love story ever told, *Romeo and Juliet*, the tale of two dysfunctional 14-year-olds who would rather kill themselves than obey their parents! How this story became the model of 'the greatest love story', I will never know.

And then there are the fairy tales that omit so many essential truths about love. If you have children, I'll wager you felt it your duty to read them the classics *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Snow White* and the like – just as your parents once read them to you. Hmm. Think about it: fairy tales always focus on some version of our hero and heroine falling madly in love, walking off into the distance and supposedly living happily after. But do they live happily after? Maybe they do; maybe they don't.

This doesn't stop young people today from hoping. For example, the news recently featured a lovely charity in the US called Becca's Closet.<sup>2</sup> Among other services, it provides dresses for young women who can't afford them so that

they can attend their graduation ball with their classmates. As one young woman was modelling her beautiful new dress, she exclaimed, 'I feel just like Cinderella.' I thought to myself, 'Some things never change!'

One of my favourite Broadway musicals is *Into the Woods*.<sup>3</sup> One of the major characters in this delightful play is Cinderella and, true to the story, she gets to marry her prince. But the play dares to take us into the future, where we learn that, alas, the Prince has a roving eye and the relationship ends. What a blow! What happened to living happily ever after? Certainly whatever magic it was that brought them together soon disappeared. But all is not lost, as Cinderella learns a very good lesson. She will have to look at love in a much more eyes-wide-open manner the next time around. Could this be our new version of a happy ending?

And then there are the multitude of stories we hear about 'love at first sight'. Let's look at it logically: *how can you love someone when you don't even know them?* That 'stranger across a crowded room' could be someone you should *definitely* avoid. And we can't forget the misleading concept of 'falling in love'? Don't we realize that when we fall, we can get hurt? As Dr Phillip McGraw humorously points out:

We describe the start of new romance as 'falling' in love. '*Fall: verb, to go from high to lower ground, usually in an out-of-control fashion.*' Hmm, it's also a word we use to describe times when we've been suckered, as in, 'I was so stupid to fall for that!'<sup>4</sup>

Yes, it seems we are stupid to fall for that – which can be explained by the mysterious fact that love at first sight can feel so good – *while it lasts*. I remember it well: I was walking down the street one day in New York. The freshness of spring was in the air and all was well. It was during the

period between my marriages and I was feeling particularly free and happy. At some point, I noticed an extremely handsome man walking in my direction. He was hard to miss. Our eyes connected and . . . WOW! All my passionate urges came to the fore. We maintained eye contact until we passed each other by. I smiled, took a deep breath and said to myself, 'WHAT was that?' I had walked only a few steps further when I felt someone tap me on the shoulder. I turned around. And there we were, face to face. At that very moment, it happened: we 'fell in love'. And thus began one of the most passionate and crazy six months of my life.

But, alas, as time went by, whatever created this passionate and crazy attraction wore off. The spell was broken. And as always happens when the spell is broken, we woke up to reality. Our humanness was revealed to each of us, and since neither of us understood the process of creating real love, we were soon embroiled in constant bouts of judgment, anger, annoyance and other such love-destroying emotions. The situation worsened until I reached the point where I no longer wanted him in my life. I remember the relief I felt when I asked him to leave my flat and never contact me again. As the door shut behind him, I once again smiled, took a deep breath and said to myself, 'WHAT was that?' A very good question, indeed.

Over the years, I have come to call this kind of love 'enchanted love'. Indeed, enchantment can be defined as a spell that comes over us. And that's exactly what seems to happen when we experience love at first sight. It is mystical, exciting, passionate and delicious . . . BUT it is not real love. I don't have a clue as to why enchanted love occurs. It is amazingly irrational. What is most confusing is the fact that so many couples who are caught in its spell are definitely *not* good candidates for a long-term relationship.

Interestingly, a number of sources report that the spell that seems to come over us when we are in the throes of enchanted love is actually caused by a peptide called PEA



(phenoethylamine) that is created within the body. (How unromantic is that!) Some attribute it to a neurotransmitter called dopamine, which is also created within the body. Both of these 'love potions' somehow create amazing feelings of passion, energy, joy and all good things. Hmm. Maybe the love potion theory is true; maybe it isn't. Even if it is true, I haven't seen any explanation as to why these potions suddenly pop up in your body when you gaze into the eyes of a complete stranger. Definitely, more research is necessary!

It is also reported that these love potions *always* wear off, usually in six months to two years, which is just as well. Enchanted love is a destructive kind of love in that it is all-consuming and messes up other areas of our lives. We ignore our friends, our jobs, our plans, our beliefs and other of those things that contribute to the richness of our lives. (Does this sound familiar?) As George Bernard Shaw once said of such a love: 'I can't imagine anyone wanting such a debilitating emotion to last forever.'

I agree. I have often joked that when you see that proverbial stranger across a crowded room you should turn around and run the other way. In reality, it is certainly possible to turn enchanted love into real love. I've seen it happen many times. It requires that we first allow the spell of enchanted love to wear off. As reality sets in, we can see more clearly and then decide if we want to move forward with the relationship – or end it. If we choose to go forward, it is then that the journey to real love truly can begin. In such a way, enchanted love can ultimately become real love, but, for obvious reasons, it is not wise to get married when under the spell of enchanted love. It may all fall apart when the enchantment wears off.

It is also important to point out that real love doesn't require an initial period of enchantment. In fact, some of the best examples of real love are between two people who