

## **Our Relationship Stories**

This is the written version of the online interactive tool “My Relationship Story”. In the online version you need to choose from a limited number of choices, but the written version gives you more opportunity to tailor your responses to your exact experience.

We’ve included some suggestions about how you might share what you write with your partner.

Please note that this is provided as an education program, which is based on the theory and process of Imago. This exercise is intended to help provide you with information that you may be helpful to you in gaining understanding of your relationships, however it is not a form of therapy.

### **Instructions:**

Think about those early days together as a couple. What did you do? How did you feel? Although relationships transition, these experiences are clues to your deep longings inside. Romantic love is about the sense of possibility. It is, as Robert Browning wrote, “the energy of life.”

**Step 1:** On W1, describe some of the qualities, traits and behaviors that attracted you most about your partner when you first began dating. What do you remember telling your friends or thinking to yourself about him/her? These may be aspects that you no longer find so attractive but did at the beginning of your relationship. (See example below.)

**Step 2:** Circle the 2-3 aspects that you loved the most or found most attractive.

**Step 3:** Take turns reading to each other your entire list.

*See the example on the next page*

*Example:*

<b>When we first met, I was attracted to/I loved...</b>
...how you were athletic and caring about your body. I remember cheering you on at your baseball games.
...your <u>intelligence</u> ! You had opinions on all kinds of different topics and expressed your ideas so well. And you cared about mine!
...your closeness with your family. I admired how you got together with your family every Sunday for dinner.
...your sensuality and <u>sexuality</u> ! You oozed it! And I remember that first, long kiss!
I loved that you were so connected to your emotions. You were so vivacious!

### W1: **Attraction & Romance**

<b>When we first met, I was attracted to/I loved... (A)</b>

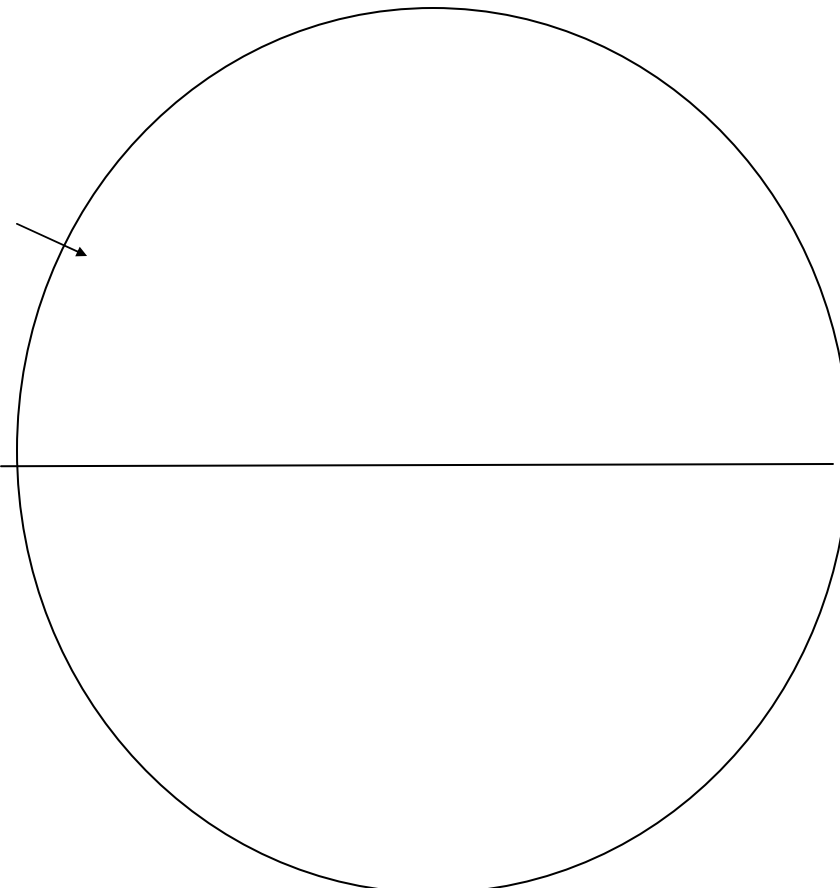
## W2: Discover My Imago

### Instructions:

Step 1: Thinking as a young child, on the top half of the circle on W2, write a list of the positive characteristics of your early caregivers (i.e., the people who raised you and most influenced you) as you remember them from childhood. (*E.g., loving, consistent, attentive, affectionate, funny, available*) Circle the three best traits.

Step 2: Below the line, list the negative characteristics of each of your early caregivers as you remember them from childhood. (*E.g. angry, critical, depressed, abusive, withholding*). Circle the three worst traits.

Step 3: Complete the sentences at the bottom.



**Positive Traits (C)**

**Negative Traits (B)**

What I **wanted and needed most** as a child and didn't get was **(D)**

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(*E.g. attention, love, support, time, information, nurturing.*)

### W3: **Positive Childhood Memories**

Write down three **positive Childhood Memories** and the corresponding feeling (see examples below).

<p><b>Positive Childhood Memories</b></p>	<p><b>(E) Feeling</b> <i>(E.g., happy, free, safe, competent, excited)</i></p>
<p><i>Christmas mornings</i></p>	<p><i>Excited</i></p>
<p><i>When I hit a home run that won the game</i></p>	<p><i>Proud</i></p>
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

### W4: Childhood Frustrations

List the **three recurring frustrations** you had as a child and the corresponding feeling (see examples below).

<p><b>Childhood Frustrations</b></p>	<p><b>(F) Feeling</b> <i>(E.g., unimportant, invisible, sad, scared, angry)</i></p>
<p><i>Didn't get enough attention from my older brother</i></p>	<p><i>Unimportant</i></p>
<p><i>Father often away traveling on business</i></p>	<p><i>Sad</i></p>
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

## W5: My Lost Self

Rate on a scale of 0 to 5 the degree to which you got the following messages, either spoken or unspoken, from your family and others around you in childhood (e.g. school, church, friends).

0 = I don't think I got this message much, if at all.

5 = I got this message loud and clear!

Circle the two Self aspects with the lowest ratings.

Rating (Self aspect) <b>G</b>	<b>Messages</b> (or similar messages spoken or unspoken)
<i>(core being)</i>	It's great that you are alive and that you are you! You are fabulous!
<i>(thinking)</i>	All of your thoughts and ideas are valued. We love the way you think and solve problems!
<i>(sensing)</i>	It's okay to be a fully sensual, sexual human being, to enjoy the experience of all your senses: touch, sound, smells, taste, sight.
<i>(feeling)</i>	Your feelings are valued. It's okay to express when you're mad, scared, glad and sad!
<i>(acting)</i>	It's good to move all your muscles: to run and dance, sing and yell, be active, jump, bounce, tumble, wrestle, cheer, and take initiative.

## W6: My Relationship Story

### **Instructions:**

**Step 1:** On W7, fill in the blanks using the items indicated in the parenthesis from the previous Worksheets (W1-W5).

**Step 2:** Sender: Read the statements to your partner.

Receiver (listening partner): Listen with curiosity. When your partner has finished reading his/her story, you may want to ask questions to deepen your understanding. (For example, ask about his/her positive memories and frustrations from childhood.)

**Step 3:** Receiver: "Thank you for sharing that with me."  
Sender: "Thank you for listening."

## W7: *My relationships story*

I tend to be drawn to a person whom I sometimes experience as (items circled in B, W2)

\_\_\_\_\_

I try to get this person to be (items circled in C, W2)

\_\_\_\_\_

so that I can get (D, W2)

\_\_\_\_\_

and feel (E, W3) \_\_\_\_\_

I wish this person would give me (repeat D from above)

\_\_\_\_\_

so that I can feel (repeat E from above)

\_\_\_\_\_.

When I don't get what I want, I feel (F, W4)

\_\_\_\_\_.

My relationship with this person offers a new opportunity to experience healing for these feelings (repeat F from above)

\_\_\_\_\_

I also tend to be drawn to a person who is (items circled in A, W1)

\_\_\_\_\_ and is well- developed in the areas of

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ aspects circled in G, W5).

Although these aspects are initially attractive, they often become a source of conflict. My relationship with my partner however, offers an opportunity for me to discover these aspects in myself. This person, with whom I fall in love and with whom I will eventually experience conflict, is my Imago counterpart.