

Excerpts from *THE POWER OF A PARTNER*
~ *Creating and Maintaining Healthy Gay and Lesbian Relationships*

From the Introduction, "Finding the Courage to Love":

It is a very courageous act to love another, for loving requires vulnerability, an openness to the joys as well as the hurts. As adults, it's not always easy for us to allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Experience has often taught us to be guarded. And yet we're born with the capacity to love fully and unconditionally with an open, natural curiosity and, perhaps most importantly, an innate ability to be vulnerable. We enter this world with an energy and aliveness and resiliency that, over the years of pain and pleasure, through the hard knocks as well as the joys, will either increase or diminish. It's all part of the natural process of growth, of being in relationship with the other people also walking this planet. Courage, joy, hurt - they are all part of being human. And it is precisely when we develop the courage to feel the joy, to feel the hurt, and to make ourselves vulnerable to others that true internal transformation occurs.

From Chapter 1, "Love, Lust and Healthy Relationships":

The first step toward making healthy relationship choices is to not buy into negative messages about our ability to create and maintain loving, lasting, rewarding relationships. We can have whatever kind of relationships we desire, all of which are valid, and no one has the right to judge them, whether or not they are socially, legally, or religiously sanctioned. Just as each individual is unique, the kind of relationship each person desires is also specific and unique, whether it is lust-filled, love-filled, both, or neither.

From Chapter 10, "My Best Friend's Wedding, Funeral, and Bar Mitzvah":

There's an intimate connection between a person's self-esteem and the kinds of friendships he or she has. The effects of nurturing, supportive friendships can be both subtle and obvious, and they contribute positively to a sense of self-worth. Likewise, when a person has no supportive relationships in his life, the effects can be quietly insidious or overtly damaging. This holds true not only for friendships but also for relationships with significant others and family members.

Think for a moment about someone from your inner circle of friendships. How do you feel when you are with this person? Can you imagine life without him or her? What makes them worthy of your inner circle? What qualities do they possess, and why are these qualities important to you?

From Chapter 15, "Moving On: Healing After a Breakup or Death":

We oftentimes judge ourselves unfairly: We feel guilty if we feel relief or happiness after a loss. We think we're not sad enough, not depressed enough. Or we feel guilty about feeling angry at someone who left us. It's OK to feel fear. It's OK to feel numb or shut down. It's OK to feel anything. Feelings are feelings, and they are earned and justified. It is simply unhealthy - and unhelpful to your grieving process - to judge your feelings based on other's preconceived notions (or your own harsh condemnation) of which feelings are appropriate for grief. They all are!

