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HOW

WE

LOVE

Discover Your Love Style,
Enhance Your Marriage

MILAN & KAY YERKOVICH

"The authors have translated the complexity of how we love
into a highly readable and clearly written book."

—HARVILLE HENDRIX, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Getting the Love You Want*

Praise for
How We Love

“*How We Love* has the capacity to change not only your marriage but every relationship that’s important in your life.”

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“The authors have translated the complexity of how we love into a highly readable and clearly written book. Couples will easily be able to identify their love styles and how to transform them into genuine love. I recommend it to all couples.”

—HARVILLE HENDRIX, PhD, therapist and educator with over twenty-five years of experience, cofounder and president of the Institute for Imago Relationship Therapy, and author of *New York Times* bestseller *Getting the Love You Want*

“On a daily basis our team at Focus on the Family hears from couples struggling to navigate conflict in a way that strengthens their relationship and increases intimacy. Milan and Kay Yerkovich have dissected the various factors that contribute to how we love and interact with our spouses—and their advice has saved many marriages. Any couple can benefit from the Yerkoviches’ wise and insightful advice.”

—JIM DALY, president of Focus on the Family

“Milan and Kay bring us a fresh look at intimacy and how we learn to love. Their practical and personal approach will enrich anyone’s marriage.”

—DAVID STOOB, PhD, psychologist and author of *When Couples Pray Together*

“I found *How We Love* to be extremely enlightening: a discovery of how best to love my wife, how to nurture her through a better understanding of our love styles, and how to implement change.”

—PHIL WAUGH, executive director of Covenant Marriage Movement

“I have had the joy and privilege of working with Milan and Kay on a professional level and have been amazed at the success of their therapeutic techniques. Understanding our love styles and taking down the walls created by our imprints are skills that can help every marriage. I am thrilled that more couples will learn how to strengthen their relationships through the tools described in this book.”

—DR. ELIZABETH JOHN, MD, psychiatrist

“Milan and Kay have taken their own life experience, their research over the years, and their experience in the counseling office, and distilled it into a work that is rigorous, original, and understandable. If you want to strengthen and enrich your marriage, as well as grow personally, I strongly encourage you to read and digest this material. The effect on all your relationships will be powerful.”

—DR. JIM MASTELLER, executive director of the Center for Individual and Family Therapy

“Forget everything external you think defines you. The quality of your relationships and your contributions to them are what make life great or miserable. This book is a key to a world of insight into intimacy only *you* can bring to your relationships. With each page, I felt Milan and Kay had seen my movie! My marriage is different today because of the simple, profound help I discovered in these pages.”

—KENNY LUCK, author of *Risk* and *Every Man, God's Man*, men's pastor at Saddleback Church, and founder of Every Man Ministries

“The Yerkoviches have taken important developmental and psychological concepts and given them to us in a user-friendly fashion. They give us a peek into their personal journey and the countless people they have helped move from young hurts toward more meaningful intimate attachment. *How We Love* helps us see ourselves more clearly and understand our roles in the impasses of our relationships.... A practical and impactful read for all!”

—JILL HUBBARD, PhD, clinical psychologist, cohost of *New Life Live!* national radio program, speaker, and full-time mom

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EXPANDED EDITION

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Enhance Your Marriage

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WATERBROOK

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HOW WE LOVE, EXPANDED EDITION

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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To our four children, who effortlessly exposed every character flaw we didn't even know we had:

To our firstborn son, Kevin, his wife, Stephanie, and our wonderful grandkids, Holland, Trevor, and Savannah. Kevin, you continue to bring new meaning to the word *enthusiastic*, and we have always loved your passion for life.

To Amy, our firstborn daughter, her husband, Steve, and our adorable grandchildren, Reece and Roxy. Amy, your sweet spirit and generous heart touch all who know you.

To our son John, his wife, Shannon, and our delightful granddaughters, Penelope and Juniper. John, your free spirit and love for the arts teach all of us to appreciate each moment and make the most of it.

To our daughter Kelly, her husband, Blake, and our sweet grandsons, Brayden and Gavin. Kelly, you are filled with grace, and your love for the Lord shines through you wherever you go.

We are grateful that each of you has taught us, loved us, and helped us redefine how we love!

We love you,
Mom and Dad



To Mike and Fran Cole, who tirelessly mentored couples and individuals within *How We Love* small groups in the greater Seattle area. They led in the development of the new *How We Love* small-group study curriculum that is currently being utilized in churches all over America.

Fran passed away suddenly in August of 2016, and she is now experiencing pure love in the presence of all the heavenly saints and her Savior Jesus Christ.

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Foreword

Talk is cheap, real cheap—until it comes to paying for marriage counseling. That kind of help can be quite expensive by the hour—hour after hour, week after week, month after month. Furthermore, *bad* marriage counseling can cost you more than money. It can cost you your marriage. A counseling degree doesn't guarantee quality help.

Of course I am a firm believer in good, solid counseling for individuals as well as couples. But when it comes to marriage counseling these days, a whole lot of time and money are wasted. After all, improving your marriage is not just about learning to communicate better or listen more closely. It involves much more than formulaic prescriptions, and sometimes it takes a marriage falling apart before you fully realize how rare good advice and wise counsel can be.

Through the years I have worked with hundreds of marriage counselors in a variety of capacities. I have even sought marriage counseling for myself from no less than ten therapists. Some were excellent, and some were nothing short of horrible. I believe all their motives were well placed and their desire to help, strong. But the results I'd hoped for never materialized. Desperate and willing to try anything, I implemented what they suggested, but nothing helped. In one particular case, a very overrated counselor gave advice that was very, very damaging. I do not blame any of these well-meaning professionals for my problems. They did the best they could. But the money and time I spent did not help my marriage.

You may have had a similar experience. You too may have found yourself in a claustrophobic office, talking to a clinician who didn't say much, and desperately wanting hope to surface somewhere, somehow. Often I felt as if we were chatting over a cup of tea in the parlor while my house was burning down. Counselor after counselor seemed to major on minor issues, to focus on topics that didn't seem all that helpful—and usually weren't helpful at all.

When my marriage was most vulnerable, I still had a thousand answers for everyone else, but I didn't know what to do to turn things around in my own relationship. I was like a plumber who spent his days under someone else's sink while his own pipes at home were leaking. And no matter where I turned, no one had a wrench that fit the pipes in my house. Eventually those pipes just disintegrated.

Since those dark days I have learned many lessons that have changed me in profound ways. Pain does that. It breaks you and then it makes you, and my life could have been so different if I'd learned those lessons earlier. Now I hope others can learn some of these lessons without having to go through the "graduate school of pain" that is now my alma mater.

Some of the most valuable lessons I learned came from Milan and Kay Yerkovich. During the long process of my healing, a wonderful woman suggested that perhaps a visit with Milan would be helpful. While working at a church for a number of years, she had watched many people meet with Milan and had never heard anything but rave reviews. She had also seen great transformations in lives and marriages. I was willing to do anything, even go see a guy with the last name of Yerkovich.

From the moment I met him, I knew God would use him greatly in my life. I knew he was a man full of God's wisdom who knew how to apply it to real-life situations. He was kind and caring, but he immediately confronted me about the pity party I was throwing for myself. He also required that I stop participating in my favorite pastime—the blame game. And I learned that understanding how to communicate more effectively doesn't matter if you don't first work on how you love. I continued to meet with Milan on a regular basis, I read what he and Kay had written, and then I spent time with both of them. To say that my contact with them was life changing is an understatement. Everything totally changed when I discovered how I loved, accepted the downsides of being that way, and then moved out (fearfully) to live life and to love in a different way.

I learned that for many reasons—like genetics, family environment, personal choices, and conditioned reactions—there was an "imprint of intimacy" within me dictating decisions about love. I wanted to believe I was loving and caring, but I was actually living out a pattern of avoiding intimacy. With the help of Milan

and Kay, I was able to see the walls I was building, walls that every avoider like me feels entitled to build.

Another remarkable discovery for me was that my avoider type is attracted to vacillators, and that this sets up a core pattern of unfulfilled expectations. I'm still astounded that this pattern is so predictable. How could the Yerkoviches understand my past so well, accurately describe my current problems, and even predict what my future would be if I did not make some changes? That was the best part of my experience with Kay's and Milan's teaching. You *can* make changes. You *can* change the course of your own history-in-the-making. With their direction and combined wisdom, I began to put into practice the concepts presented in this book, and my life began to change—and yours can too.

You may not share my particular love style or pattern of relating, but you will find yourself and your type in this book, and it will amaze you how well Milan and Kay know your patterns. Their insights will open your eyes to both who you are and why you do some of the things you do. The ideas in these pages will also help you see the real people behind the facades presented by some people close to you. And once you understand those folks, rather than infecting their wounds, you just might find yourself helping to heal them even as you experience healing yourself.

I love this book, and I think you are going to like it too. Rarely is there a book everybody ought to stop and read for their own sakes as well as for the sakes of everybody around them. *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis and *Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend are two of those books. *How We Love* also falls into that category. Whether you want to change the way you love or want to better understand those you love, this book will be of great help to you. In fact, if you don't agree, e-mail your address to me at sarterburn@newlife.com and I will refund the price of the book. Your investment is secure. Now read on to understand and experience the transformation of a lifetime.

—STEPHEN ARTERBURN

P.S. You can hear Milan on our radio program *New Life Live!* at www.newlife.com or on SIRIUS satellite radio and XM Satellite Radio.

Preface to the Expanded Edition

Since *How We Love* first released in 2006, we've received thousands of e-mails and letters from couples and individuals who report having been deeply impacted by the book. We would never have imagined its steady viral growth all over the world. *How We Love* is now published in German, Romanian, and Mandarin, as an e-book, and most recently as an audio version. We are honored, surprised, and humbled.

We were delighted when our publisher asked us to create an updated and expanded edition with improvements and new insights that have evolved over the last eleven years. The familiar adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" has remained the guiding principle in our revision; thus, the majority of the original text remains unchanged. The one area that has received the most revision as a result of the deeper understanding we've gained is the "Duets That Damage How We Love" section. We now additionally refer to these duets or pairings as "core patterns." Much of our counseling work with couples is about helping them learn and escape their particular core patterns. We've trademarked our approach to couples' therapy and call it Attachment Core Pattern Therapy.

This edition greatly expands the original duets section and provides details of the reactive core patterns that make couples laugh and cry as they review their particular pattern. The feedback we often hear from readers is, "How do you know?" "Do you have a camera in our house?" "This is exactly what we do!" "What a relief to know we're not alone!" "Can you help us?" And our answer to these questions is, "Yes, we can help you!"

Originally there were four major core patterns in the "Duets That Damage How We Love" section of *How We Love*, with brief mention given to less common patterns. In the expanded edition, we feature nine common core patterns. Each begins with a diagram of the pattern that accurately portrays the bad dance every couple unconsciously follows. Next comes a review of each attachment love style,

what attracted the couple to each other, the common complaints from each person, and growth steps each person can take to improve his or her dance steps.

For a more in-depth understanding, readers can order their core pattern profile from our website, and they will receive a forty-five-minute audio CD or MP3 accompanied by a PDF file that provides an in-depth analysis of the internal emotional and cognitive reactivity of each person. Each core pattern profile concludes with strategies for exiting their bad dance from anywhere around the negative cycle.

We've also provided new information in the book on the origins of reactivity, called "triggers," as well as charts, tools, and discussion guides that will help any couple begin taking control of their painful dance. You only have two choices: take control and change your pattern, or let your pattern continue to master you. Many therapists utilize these user-friendly materials to help their clients begin a new journey of love. All of these materials provide to a couple or therapist clear guidelines that supply effective therapeutic interventions for each couple.

The original (2006) edition of *How We Love* was released in hardcover, with a separate companion paperback workbook. When the hardcover was later converted to paperback, the book and the workbook were combined into a single book. Due to the increase of new content in this expanded edition, we've decided to again divide the two books and offer expanded editions of both *How We Love* and the *How We Love Workbook*.

Lastly, we've developed a website (www.HowWeLove.com) where you can find many new products that support the material within this book, as well as a love-style quiz and useful resources that will help you to be better equipped to manage all relationships. You can also follow our travel and speaking schedule there.

May the reading of this book be helpful in your journey of love.

Preface to the First Edition

When something is broken you cannot repair it unless you understand how it works. People who understand hardware and software fix computers. Mechanics who understand how an engine works fix your car. Some of us try to fix our marriages without ever taking a look at how they work. We were stuck in our marriage in the same old frustrating place for fourteen years. When we each backed up and looked at our first lessons in love from our families of origin, we immediately recognized the unseen forces governing how we loved. For the first time, we understood the source of our frustrations and why we were stuck. Deep change was possible at last.

Writing this book has taken many years, much trial and error, and countless hours, and it certainly could not have been written before the midpoint of our lives. The sort of insight we offer has come from making many mistakes and praying through many years for wisdom. One of our greatest hopes is to save you from some of the struggles we have known.

When we present this information at seminars, our aim is to be transparent about our own failures, and we write about our journey with candidness. The concepts we share here are not completely original, but we've found that they are what work. Some of these concepts are based on attachment theory, and we are grateful to the many researchers whose study of bonding and attachment has made this book richer. (A synopsis of the current research is included in the "For Further Study" section on pages 320–322.) The Judeo-Christian outlook and applications are our own.

The corresponding workbook is essential to applying what you'll learn in these pages. It includes many specific ideas and exercises that will help you engage with the principles in this book, and it is designed to be used by individuals and couples as well as in group settings. Because the greatest growth happens when we have feedback and accountability, it is our hope that you'll use this material—at least for

the first time—in a group setting. And because the cost of therapy is quickly growing beyond the reach of many people, we are excited to share so much of what we do in marriage counseling sessions for just the cost of a book and workbook.

We appreciate your sincere desire to invest the time and energy your marriage deserves, and we pray this book will help you achieve your goal of deeper intimacy. We wish you many happy years of continued growth.

Part

1



What Determines How You Love

Why Every Marriage Gets Stuck

If we all naturally knew *how* to love, this book would be unnecessary, and Milan and I would each be out of a job as counselors. All of us who have been married more than a few years will admit it is a bit more challenging than we anticipated on our wedding day.

Every marriage has nagging problems calling for our attention. Many people end up thinking their relationship is difficult because they married the wrong person. But the fact that many people are on to their second and third marriages proves that no marriage is tension free. Sometimes our marriages seem to run fairly smoothly—until we hit a crisis or face difficult circumstances. Stress always makes underlying problems more apparent.

Over the years many couples have come to us for help with their problems. We routinely ask several standard questions no matter what situation they describe. Recently, for instance, when Hannah and Robert came in for their initial session, I said to them, “Tell me about the chronic irritations in your relationship. Perhaps it’s the same old fight that never gets resolved. Maybe it’s a pattern of relating that occurs again and again. Where do you get stuck?”

Hannah looked at Robert, and they laughed. “That’s easy,” she smiled. “It happened in the car on the drive to your office. I’m always the one bringing up the problems, so Robert is always telling me I am controlling. I was mad at him because he didn’t know what he wanted to talk about in our counseling session. He’s too passive. I want him to initiate more and try harder.”

Robert chimed in, “I do try. It’s just never enough for you, Hannah.”

Hannah looked at me. “See? Now he will pout and withdraw, and nothing will get resolved.”

I summarized, “So no matter what problem you want to discuss, this is your same old dance, the pattern that happens over and over. Is that correct?”

Robert and Hannah both nodded. They had pinpointed their core pattern.

Some couples who are just dating can already describe their core pattern. A core pattern is the predictable way you and your spouse react to each other that leaves each of you frustrated and dissatisfied. Some are married a few years before it is apparent, but sooner or later couples can readily identify the same old place where they get stuck. Maybe it's the same complaints that come up again and again without ever getting resolved or a familiar pattern of fighting, no matter what the topic. Milan and I are no different. We were married in 1972, and by 1976 we had discovered the classic scene that would play itself out over and over for ten more years of our marriage.

We would put the kids to bed and collapse on the couch. I would pick up a magazine and began to thumb through it, and Milan would sit quietly watching me. This was a familiar feeling; I knew he was taking my emotional temperature. I was hoping he would pick up the remote and turn on the television.

“How are you doing?” he would ask. “Did you have a good day?”

I would feel myself getting annoyed. “Why do you keep asking me that? You already asked me that question two times since you came home from work. It's the same answer: I'm fine.”

We were starting the wearisome dance that would send us both to bed angry and frustrated. So I would try to derail the invitation. “I think there's a game on TV tonight.”

But Milan was always undeterred. “If you're fine, then why did it bother you when I hugged and kissed you when I came home from work? I'm happy to see you, and you act like it's a chore to give me a little affection. You've been distant all evening. What's going on?”

Then came my loud sigh. *I wish you would go away and let me read my magazine*, I would think.

But for some reason, I would begin to explain, knowing it wouldn't help. “I've

had kids hanging on me all day. When you got home, I was in the middle of cooking dinner and supervising homework, and you want me to drop everything. Why do you always have to make such a big deal?" The next steps of the dance were predictable. Milan would give me examples of my lack of affection and attentiveness, and I would tell him he was too needy and made me feel smothered.

If you have been married for a few years, you can probably describe your own recurring fight, the discussion you've had repeatedly that never gets settled. You can probably also describe the ways you avoid dealing with problems, and they may be some of the same lines we hear in our offices every day:

- "I try hard to make you happy, but you are never satisfied."
- "I feel like I'm walking on eggshells with you."
- "I've told you over and over what I need, and you just won't do it."
- "Why can't you be more spontaneous and passionate?"
- "If you would listen and do what I ask, I wouldn't be angry."
- "I'm happy with the way things are. You're the one who is always bringing up problems."
- "You say you're sorry, but nothing changes."

Are any of these steps in your same old dance?

Maybe, like us, you find yourself locked in the same tiring dance. Maybe you've tried to change your marriage and have been disappointed with the results. Much marriage advice focuses on treating symptoms and surface issues. You think, *If it were possible to simply stop certain behaviors and do something different, it would be that easy.* But trying to change the things on the surface misses the underlying issues. Occasionally, the adjustment brings good results, and the annoying problem dies down. But it always comes back because there are source patterns guiding those stumbling steps, and until you address them, the dance won't get any better.

Marriage is the most challenging relationship you will ever have, and to think otherwise is to live in denial. When you are with someone day in and day out, you can't hide. Your weaknesses become quite visible, and old feelings from the distant past are stirred. The physical nearness of your mate triggers old feelings as you look to him or her to meet many of the needs your parents were originally supposed to meet.

Milan and I spent the first fourteen years of our marriage trying to change our destructive patterns, but we were only addressing the obvious issues that constantly surfaced. We listed the problems and searched for solutions. After fourteen years, though, a huge change took place when we discovered the unseen forces that determined *how we loved*. We realized our lessons in love didn't start in marriage. They started in infancy and lasted all the years we lived with our parents. Our experiences growing up, good and bad, left a lasting imprint in our souls that determined our beliefs and expectations about how to give love and receive love. Milan and I had different lessons about love, which resulted in different imprints, and without realizing it, we were dancing to different tunes. No wonder we were stepping on each other's toes! Lasting change became possible when we made that revolutionary discovery.

THE REVOLUTIONARY TRUTH

What are these imprints—these earlier dance lessons that, healthy or not, form our beliefs and expectations about love? All of us have an imprint of intimacy, the sum of our learning how to love.¹ Our imprint determines our love style—how we interact with others when it comes to love. For a few of us, our early love lessons were ideal, and our love style is healthy and positive. Most of us, though, had some hurtful experiences resulting in a harmful imprint and impaired love style. Have you ever considered the unseen forces governing how you love? Like Milan and me, you will most likely identify with one of five common, ineffective love styles resulting from less-than-ideal imprints.

I first learned how definable these love styles were when I was in graduate school. I had a wonderful supervisor and mentor named Dae Leckie. She taught me the importance of our first lessons about love and introduced me to attachment theory.² I was amazed that I could easily identify my own love style as well as Milan's. For the first time I could see how our different styles collided and were at the root of the destructive core pattern that had frustrated us for fourteen years. This new knowledge provided the most profound revelations about how we loved—and why it wasn't working.

Milan: Being cautious about some aspects of psychology, I found it interesting to see that in the New Testament the Greek word for “soul” is *psuche*, which means “inner person” in its broadest sense.³ The word *psychology* uses the same Greek root and literally means “the study of the soul,” giving rise to our concept of the spiritual that resides within. Attachment theory, simply put, is based on a child’s bond with his or her primary caregiver. God designed us to need connection, and our relationships with our parents is the first place this happens—or doesn’t happen. Attachment theory outlines specifically what can go wrong and looks at how our ability to love is shaped by our first experiences with our parents and caregivers during our early years. These early experiences leave a lasting imprint on our souls that is still observable in our adult relationships.

Kay: Of course, none of us are shaped perfectly during our formative years. Our world is less than ideal, and our ability to love is marred as a result. Attachment theory helps us recognize this by simply describing observable behavioral patterns, some that are helpful and some that are harmful when it comes to forming healthy, loving relationships. Milan and I had no idea what was driving us to respond to each other in the damaging ways we were. All we could see were the frustrating symptoms we had tried for years to resolve. Locked in this repetitive dance, we followed different rhythms and threw each other off balance, neither of us understanding where we learned the songs we danced to. It was definitely a destructive duet!

As we came to understand the harmful aspects of our imprints and the resulting love styles, Milan and I were finally able to understand that the frustrating core pattern that had plagued our marriage for years was a result of our individual imprints colliding. No wonder it felt like we were dancing with four left feet! Attachment theory explained the root of Milan’s pursuing and my distancing, the sparks behind countless arguments in our marriage. Attachment theory revealed why his “niceness” was annoying and why connection was so difficult for me. And it explained the root of both Milan’s anxiety and my depression.

We also learned where our original melodies came from and what each of us was contributing to our destructive duet. For example, we’ve heard so many couples

say, “I never felt this frustrated by anybody before. Only my spouse makes me feel this way, so it must be his or her fault.” Actually, the opposite is true. Primary relationships cause our *own* injurious imprints and resulting love styles to come fully into the light. In fact, our marriage relationships will shine the spotlight on our old attachment injuries. The good news is, marriage offers an opportunity for you and your mate to be each other’s healer as you face these wounds together. When you discover the roots of your relational struggles, you can change how you love each other.

Milan: Attachment theory is valuable, life-changing information, and it is not difficult to understand. Simply put, what bothers you most about your spouse is undoubtedly related to painful experiences from his or her childhood and a lack of training in addressing the true challenges of marriage. Your marriage problems did not begin in your marriage! You and your spouse are doing the dance steps you learned in childhood. For each of you, a pattern of relating was set in motion long before you met, causing you to relate to each other in certain ways. Most of us learn how to love from our parents, but occasionally a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or baby-sitter has a lot of influence. Unaware of the powerful influence of our early years in predetermining our dance, we aren’t able to understand our reactions or make changes.

The fact is, we can never truly know our mates until we understand their childhood experiences. As I began to share detailed memories of my past, Kay began to understand me in a deeper way. I’d been raised in a Christian home that had many positive qualities, but love meant being overprotected in some ways and underprotected in other ways. I didn’t understand some of my parents’ emotions and relational stresses, so I developed separation anxiety at an early age. When Kay learned the origin of my fear, she began to understand why her tendency to distance was so agitating to me. Kay was able to become more patient and loving when my anxiety was triggered, and I understood myself better.

Then, as I listened to Kay’s memories, I began to understand why she seemed so detached and distant at times. I felt less rejected and anxious when this happened once I understood this was a response she had learned as a child. Much of the irritation we had toward each other began to be replaced with a new compassion.

THE SAME OLD DANCE

Kay and I grew up in the fifties (What's a "shoo bop bop"?), and were teenagers in the sixties, and our lives and music are virtually inseparable. For our second date I asked Kay to a concert, and over the years we have enjoyed many styles of music. While many songs are about the blissful beginnings or the sorrowful endings of relationships, not many songs are written about the hard work of change or the rewards of persevering through relational challenges.

In my office I have a painting of a couple dancing titled *Dance Me to the End of Love* by Jack Vettriano. In it, a beautifully poised couple stands at the edge of a dance floor prepared for a ballroom dance competition. (My wife thinks they are dancing on the beach, but being a man, I see a competitive scene.) Consider this scene metaphorically. With other couples softly faded beyond them, these two individuals are ready to take their turn upon the dance floor of life. How will they fare? What challenges lie ahead? Will the whimsical currents and turns of fate sweep them along uncontrollably, finally ripping them apart, or will they navigate the passages of life and emerge on the other side more deeply in love and still dancing?

Their success will be determined by their willingness to persevere when the dance becomes awkward and they start leading in different directions. Sooner or later, every couple will struggle. They will have to acknowledge that they are out of step and be ready to grow as individuals in order to find a new rhythm and a new dance that brings them close again. But some people choose to say good-bye when the dance gets difficult. Many other couples want to improve their relationship, but they do not know where to begin.

In my work as a pastoral counselor doing marriage therapy and in Kay's work as a licensed marriage and family therapist, we have talked with hundreds of couples. Often, these hurting people want a quick fix. But what if they make a real effort and it still doesn't work out? There is no guarantee. Life and relationships are uncertain, and Garth Brooks sings about the latter in his signature song, "The Dance":

I could have missed the pain
But I'd have had to miss the dance.

He's right. Love *is* like a dance. Yet many of the couples we see in our offices would disagree with Garth. Sitting in the pain of divorce and looking back at the marriage, they would rather have skipped the dance altogether than to find themselves wounded and exhausted at the end of a dusty, bumpy road that has led them to this relational dead end.

Kay: The truth is, every marriage has areas of pain and distress, but we think the pain can be constructive. It's like a red light on the dashboard of a car signaling us that the engine needs attention. It is uncomfortable to be stuck, and it is uncomfortable to change. We might as well choose the discomfort that is productive—and change! Is the red light in your marriage flashing? We hope to help you see the cause of the discord and give you tools to do whatever needs to be done, from adjusting the timing to overhauling the engine.

YOU CAN LEARN A NEW DANCE!

Milan: Learning about love styles (attachment theory) has helped us immensely, and we believe that it can help you too. Stop for a minute and ask yourself a few questions. Are family relationships more difficult than you thought they would be? Would you like less conflict and more intimacy in your marriage? Have you been married long enough to observe that the same fights occur again and again? Is unresolved conflict eroding intimacy in your marriage? Have you lost some of the affection you used to enjoy? Are you and your spouse on opposite poles when it comes to sexual desire? Do you have trouble providing each other comfort and nurture? Do you feel like you are simply roommates, busily pursuing life and tending to family needs and occasionally stopping in the hall to exchange pleasantries, sometimes with undertones of resentment? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this book could be an insightful catalyst for change in your relationship.

Couples and families entering our offices for help come with myriad issues. No matter what the surface problems, though, Kay and I have discovered that when we focus on deepening a couple's bond and connection by addressing each person's love style, the initial symptoms often resolve themselves. We rarely see anything new. Instead we see familiar and predictable patterns created by five com-

mon imprints, and that is good news. *Why is that good news?* you might be thinking. Well, what would you rather hear from a doctor—“I’ve seen thirty of these cases this week” or “This is so rare, I need to look it up in a medical journal”? When there is ready recognition of a problem more common than we realized, we usually feel optimistic that our condition is treatable. We breathe a sigh of relief and listen attentively as the doctor explains the prognosis and recommends a course of treatment. Even though something is wrong with us, when the physician reassures us that it is not rare and is quite treatable, we feel optimistic the problem will eventually be rectified.

Kay: The same is true with harmful imprints. Each imprint is recognizable, and when different imprints collide, the resulting patterns are predictable. We hope and pray that once you understand your individual part of the marriage dance, you will begin to experience a mental shift and feel inspired to learn a new rhythm so you are no longer stepping on your spouse’s toes. This book can change how you love by giving you a clear diagnosis of and remedy for your marital problem. (We should also mention that our companion workbook offers more practical ways to facilitate change.) But, most of all, we want to share with you our passion about the revolutionary principles we’ll share, because our marriage and hundreds of others have been literally transformed by the power and application of this information.

We invite you to discover the source of your relational difficulties once and for all as we unveil the following:

- how your formative years created your relational love style
- what your problematic imprint can do inside a marriage
- why your imprint creates a core pattern with your spouse’s
- where to find the skills that will have you doing a whole new dance in your marriage

It has been three decades since God brought us the people who helped us uncover the roots of our marital struggles. We believe these people were an answer to our prayer, the one that has been spoken in our house more often than any other. It consists of four simple words: “Lord, give us wisdom.” It’s a handy little prayer that fits into every day, because we need wisdom for big and small things

alike. One of our favorite bits of wisdom is found in Philippians 1:9–11, which asks for a specific kind of wisdom:

So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary...bountiful in fruits from the soul. (MSG)

The apostle Paul wasn't talking here about trying harder to love. His was an implied request for a *greater capacity* to give and receive love based on deeper insight into real love. Since making this our prayer, God has shown Milan and me more ways to better love each other than we ever expected.

And we pray He does the same for you. We pray this book will help you examine the conflicting steps that have been tripping you up, and we pray it will introduce you to a new dance, to a deeper, richer marital relationship.

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