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The Secret Formula f...

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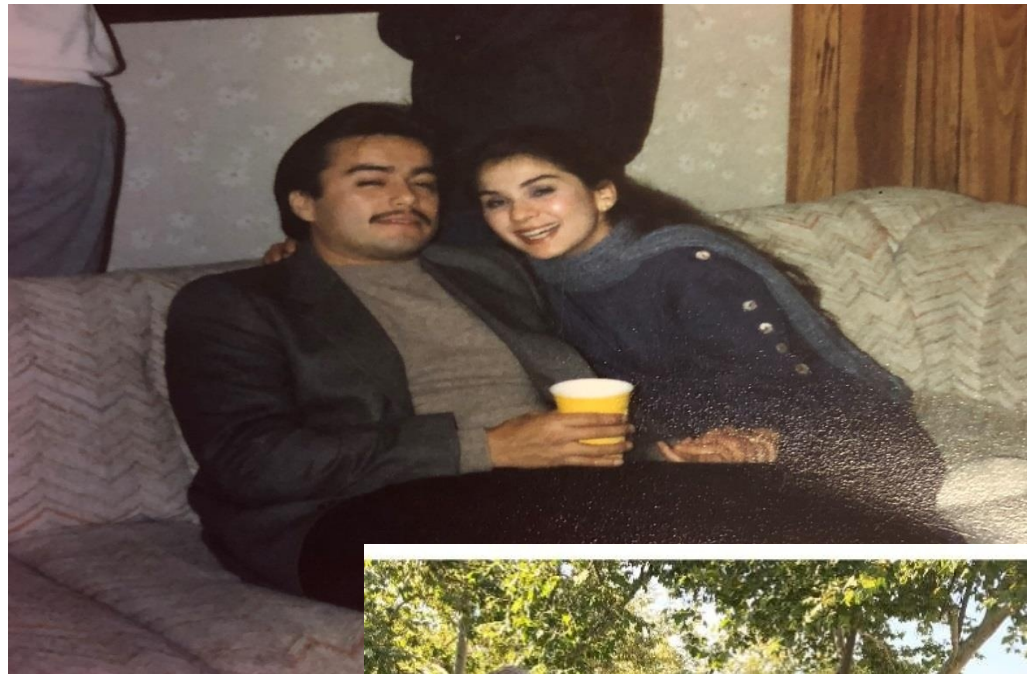
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Dedicated to Steve Gomez on June 6, 2018

Time is a valuable thing; watch it fly by as the pendulum swings,
Watch it count down to the end of the day, the clock ticks life away.

-Linkin Park (In the End)



This little booklet is about marriage and dedicated to my husband, Steve. We will be celebrating our 37th wedding anniversary on June 6. I used to liken myself to Princess Diana who was married the same year, a month after me. I am Diane, and sometimes called "Di", and I am also the mother of 2 sons. I was 19 when I married Steve, and Princess Diana was 20 when she married the Prince of Wales a month later. I have learned that life is no fairy tale and that for most marriages, there is no "they lived happily ever after." I felt sad for Princess Diana because it must have been hard for her to feel unloved. I was so sad when Princess Diana died so prematurely, and I grieved for her and her young sons. Steve and I visited Kensington Palace last year to view a memorial where her sons had put together a collection of her favorite things. We toured Clarence House, where Prince Charles lives. There were intimate photos of William and Harry displayed in the public viewing room. They are now grown men, as my sons are; I pray to God that their marriages will be happy and lasting and that they know God in their life.

It is now 2018. Steve and I are still together, and life's a beach. That's my motto. Life can be wild, rough, serene, and peaceful, a lot like the ocean and a lot like marriage. It is challenging these days to be married, but if you stick it out, it can be fun too! It really depends on your perspective. I was inspired to write this little book, so I could surprise my husband with it, as a gift for our anniversary. I graduated from high school in 1979, and thanks to my high school counselor, Miss. Kuriowa, I ended up at CSULA. I met Steve at a bus stop shortly after I began my classes. At the time, the campus was undergoing construction, and students had to take vans from the bottom parking lot up to the campus above. I ended up sitting next to Steve in one of the vans, and I asked him about a scar on his hand. We continued talking once we reached the top and agreed to meet the next day at the student union. I remember meeting him the next day for lunch and already knowing at that time, that I would marry him one day.

It was love at first date. I now know that this attraction is related to fate and phenomes. My mom says the same thing about my dad. He had come over to her parents' house one day to attend a party, when her sister called her over to tell her about this good-looking guy that had just arrived. One look at him and she knew he was the one for her. Their union lasted more than 60 years until he succumbed to Dementia. His final breath was after my mother kissed him with her signature red lipstick; he smiled at her and then died. My mom felt his passing breath flow through her body and heal her of the pain she had been experiencing the previous few months. They shared a beautiful love story. My sister, Liz, is also celebrating her 38th wedding anniversary. Three of us sisters were married within 6 months of one another. It was a rule that we could not leave our home until we were married. My mom grew up with same message.

We used to have so much fun in those early years. They were wild times. We would travel to Pismo Beach, Rosarito Beach, Las Vegas, and the mountains. We were always on the go having

fun and being spontaneous. We still are! In the early years, Steve would drive me to the Kern River, and then I would say I want to wake up at the beach. Good ole Steve would drive me there in the middle of the night. We were young and in love. I just thought about this because this Easter we left Los Angeles around 7:30 pm to head north for a five-and-a-half-hour drive. What was I thinking? It was such a struggle to stay awake.

Now that we are older, we must stop multiple times on our drives just to use the restroom and load up on senior coffee from McDonalds. We arrived at our destination, Easter night at 1:15 am. We were exhausted when we collapsed into bed. Steve reminded me, "I always get you, here right?" It is a little scary because we are changing--our wild early party days have given way to jobs, homeownership, and raising a family. Now retirement is on the horizon. Steve is working part-time as a substitute teacher, enjoying this calling, and I have been inspired to write. Thank God, our sons are thriving, (Congrats Al on finishing your year of classes & Cam, for your successful first case!) and we are enjoying our time as grandparents.

Cameron called to let us know that a judge pulled him over to let him know that he had done a good job the day before and that she was impressed with his performance. Our second son, Al, has a beautiful boy who is the highlight of our life. Steve takes care of him on Wednesdays, and it has become the best day of the week for us. I remember the day when my son told us his girlfriend was pregnant. He had been ill, and we knew something was bothering him. As soon as we sat on the couch, he began to cry as he told us his girlfriend was pregnant. "Why are you crying?" I asked, "Babies are a blessing!" (LOL, my spell checked ended the sentence with a question mark instead of an exclamation mark, and it made me laugh because my friend Marci said to me, "kids are a blessing, but they can suck the life out of you!")

My son Al was 25 at the time, and I was 25, when I had my first son. I had wanted more kids, but I could not conceive after having my two sons. I really wanted a girl. I even named her. I heard a ditty, "A son is a son until he gets a wife, a daughter is a daughter all of her life!" I had prayed and prayed, but I was surprised when I could not have any more kids because God has always spoiled me and given me the desires of my heart. Oh well. He knows best, and I am grateful for the two sons that I do have. I am pleased to write that my son and his girl are the best parents ever. We are proud of them. *The Secret Formula (SF) for Kids* was written with my grandson in mind, and his face graces the pages throughout the booklet.

Steve and I were talking about the SF one day, and I told Steve that one of my friends had thanked me because she used the SF to have a tough conversation with a superior. It ended well. She was so pleased. She said she had felt unheard, and so she practiced using the SF sentence frame, over and over, until she felt comfortable. She arranged another meeting, used

the SF, and felt heard and respected. Another time, I was teaching the SF to a class of 6th graders when the teacher told me that the SF would save a lot of heartache in the future. The teacher said that the techniques that I was teaching would be helpful for the students now and later in their marriage. Most marriages (85%) end because of the inability to communicate. There is an art to communication and the quality of relationships is dependent on the ability to communicate and understand one another while treating one another with respect. Sounds easy, but it is not.

It's true. I can't believe all the years that have gone by, all the fun and all the fights. How much better our marriage could have been had we simply communicated better. Could the tools from the Secret Formula books help marriages? This book is meant to help the young'uns and hopefully the message will inspire them and teach them. Yes, it is not easy, but as I reflect on my years with Steve, and all that we have gone through and all that we have done together, through the good times and the bad times, there would be no one else with whom I would rather have spent my life. When I wrote the *Magic Formula for Being at Peace with Yourself and Others*, I highlighted a *glimpse* from a dream I had of Steve's side of the closet completely empty, and it made me realize how sad life will be one day for either me or him, when one of us is no longer in the picture. I see my mom and my aunt who were married almost 60 and 70+ years, and I can only imagine how hard it is for them to be without the loves of their lives.

I want to make the most of every moment. I once had a student come in who was having difficulty with her mom and she felt bad about it. We searched for a mantra that could help her not feel guilty, but rather have a glimpse and this is the one we found, "Treat your loved ones with loving care, you will only know their value when you see their empty chair!" This sign was on my wall until an 8th grade boy asked me for it. I am thankful that God answered my prayer when I asked him to let my mom sit in her chair again, after she was hospitalized with cancer. Her positivity and belief in prayer helped her to bounce back and we are grateful.

Steve and I are physically changing, and I know our life can change in a minute. I am going to strive to be the best that I can be every day because when I am the best that I can be, all my relationships improve, too. I choose to be present every moment of everyday and make the most of it. I will stay out of the past where there may be pain and the future where there may be fear. Instead, there is power in present moment awareness. There is also power in just keeping quiet, too. Now that we commute together, our time driving to work can be stressful or peaceful. Today, I wanted to tell Steve for the 100th time to slow down in an area where I had received a speeding ticket, and to get off his cell phone while driving. In the past, I would take his non-compliance as rejection, which would resurrect other moments of rejection. The situation would escalate quickly and develop a life of its own, far removed from the original

intention. It could easily get out of control. I just had an upset student who had an argument with her friend that escalated, and she did not know how it got so crazy so fast. "I know exactly what you mean," I commiserated.

Instead, I chose to remain quiet, continued saying my rosary and by the time, we arrived at my site, I was feeling peaceful and ready to start the day. Every reaction is a choice. True peace begins within. I have learned that I cannot change others; I can barely change myself, and even that can be a challenge at times. Today, I choose to be the best that I can be. When I arrived at work, I read my little desk calendar that has scripture reflections for the day. It spoke to me: *"Aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one."*

We are now at the stage of our lives where we are empty nesters, mostly enjoying each other's company. We have worked hard to get to this point. For me, my twenties were turbulent and wild. (I would angst over one pimple. Really?) The thirties were thriving-too busy to think. In my forties, I finally opened my eyes. My fifties have been freeing, allowing me to be me. The sixties, I call "Sexty" and revolve around security. Hopefully, the seventies are serene, and we will make it to the eighties if we have the energy! The nineties are a novelty. If we celebrate our 100th, we are _____! (My neighbor's mom just turned 100 and I will ask her to fill in the blank.) Unfortunately, she died two days later so I asked her son Lee, to fill in the blank for me and without a moment hesitation; he said "painful." They hosted a big birthday celebration for her on her 100th birthday, and two days later, she was gone, forever. *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."* Proverbs 4:23

Life can be unpredictable. In the early days, I used to say that Steve and I were like ships, floating alongside one another and occasionally we would collide. Now we are literally on the same ship, working for the same district and it reminds me to take advantage of every opportunity that I have with Steve. It reminds me to live in the moment and be the best that I can be, because we never know when someone we love will be taken from us for all eternity. There are no do-overs, which is a reminder to live each day as if it was our last. One morning, I was talking with a student who was shot minutes later, a painful lesson that life is fleeting and promised to no one. I love the song by John Legend and Meghan Trainor, which reminds me to make every moment matter, with the following lyrics "I am going to love you like I am going to lose you!" *"Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."* Psalm 90

Be present and enjoy this moment now. Being in present moment awareness is not easy because our minds vacillate between the past and the future and the imagination can be intense. I read on the internet, "Our brains have it in for us. We produce up to 50,000 thoughts

a day and 70% to 80% of those are negative" and 85% of the things that we worry about in the future never even happen anyway. Because our mind constantly makes things up and our thoughts are mostly fearful or negative ones, we need to counteract these thoughts with a positive thought or do something positive instead to attract positive energy. We need to make a conscious effort to release the fear by choosing to be kind to ourselves and to others. We need to remember that *they are simply thoughts that can be changed*, especially, if the thoughts are not true. That is why I love the **THINK** model, "Is it true, helpful, inspiring, necessary or kind?" Sometimes I have a thought and before I know it, my mind has worked it up into a crazy scenario. When I use T-H-I-N-K, I don't get past the T, is it true? because, most of the time, it is not true! My mind has just gone off wildly, making things up. Our minds believe everything we think, whether it is true or not. At this point, I say to myself, "not true, not happening," take a breath and focus my mind to come back to present moment awareness.

Challenging the negative thoughts, with not true and not happening and letting the thoughts go has really helped to calm my mind and become present, attract positive energy, and make better decisions. It is important to choose to be mindful, not mindless. Use your senses to **PAUSE- Practice Awareness Using our Senses and Experience, take some deep breaths** and become aware of what is happening in you and around you. *Taste and see the goodness of God.* Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you when you do not know what to do. He will help you; he is our advocate in times of need. We spend time nourishing our mind and our body but rarely do we pay attention to matters of the soul and yet it is in this spiritual realm that all our power exists, ready to be released through the power of love. *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and a sound mind."* 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV Fear cannot exist where there is faith and trust is the absence of fear. Pray to God when you are fearful, he listens.

Over time, our thought process will change for the better when we are able to unclutter the mind and manage the thoughts that we think. This will change the way we express ourselves, how we respond and the things that we do. When our inner self-changes, so will our outer self. Everything is a symptom of an underlying issue that takes place inside of our minds. When we change our negative thoughts to positive thoughts and become present before we say something or do something, we can steer our life in a positive direction. A negative mind will never give you a positive life. *"Be careful what you think because your thoughts run your life."*

I have a painting by Denis Bloch (on the cover). It is of Albert Einstein holding up a sign, which reads, "Love is the answer." In private letters made public, Einstein wrote his daughter, Lieserl Einstein. *"There is an extremely powerful force that, so far, science has not found a formal explanation to. This universal force is love. It is the most powerful unseen force. Love is Light that enlightens those who give and receive it. Love is gravity, because it makes some*

people feel attracted to others. Love is power, because it multiplies the best we have, and allows humanity not to be extinguished in their blind selfishness. Love unfolds and reveals. For love we live and die. **Love is God and God is love.** This force explains everything and gives meaning to life. This is the variable that we have ignored for too long, maybe because we are afraid of love because it is the energy in the universe that human has not learned to drive at will. Einstein continues, "If we want our species to survive, if we are to find meaning in life, if we want to save the world and every sentient being that inhabits it, love is the one and only answer...each individual carries within them a small but powerful generator of love whose energy is waiting to be released. When we learn to give and receive this universal energy, dear Lieserl, we will have affirmed that love conquers all, is able to transcend everything and anything, because love is the quintessence of life. I deeply regret not having been able to express what is in my heart, which has quietly beaten for you all my life. Maybe it's too late to apologize, but as time is relative, I need to tell you that I love you and thanks to you I have reached the ultimate answer!" **Love is the answer.**

I called my dad "Einstein" because to me, he was the smartest man ever, and I thank God that I knew I was loved very much by him before he left us. I described my dad as the dutiful dad, because his job was to bring home the bacon, as he told me. His father died when he was very young, so I knew he did the best that he could as a parent. He would surprise us on our birthdays with a half-gallon of ice cream just for us and every Friday, he would give us our 10-cent allowance. My father loved my mother very much, and we were blessed to have witnessed this love first hand. It was not always perfect, no relationship is, but I remember visiting them, after my dad retired and often finding them in bed, relaxing, with my mom draped over his body. Now, Steve and I are in that phase of our life, too. I recently saw a quote on Facebook, "Travel and tell no one. Live a true love story and tell no one, live happily and tell no one, because some people ruin beautiful things." It's true, even when something is positive, it can be distorted and seen negatively.

It all depends on the hearers' mindset, perspective, and experience. If they are in a negative mindset, everything that they filter may be viewed negatively. Likewise, if they are optimistic by nature, they will view things from a positive perspective. "If you think in negative terms, you will get negative results, and if you think in positive terms, you will achieve positive results." Whatever you choose to think, your mind takes it seriously and your actions will reflect your thinking. We are all we choose to be, "Cada loco con su tema." My momma says, "Everyone in their own world."

I was inspired to write this little book in part by a message that I recently received from a childhood friend, after Steve and I had dinner with him one evening. Philip wrote, "I greatly

admire you and Steve for the example you set for a strong marital commitment. You inadvertently provide a model for an ideal, long-term marriage and beautiful, successful children." Gag me, you may be thinking. I am laughing too, because I used to say that a lot in the day and I would have thought the same thing too. It's true; the last thing you want to read about is someone's lasting marriages especially if you are struggling through yours. But, that is the message. The message is to hang on. Yes, it is tough. Marriage has its difficulties for sure and it is not easy to survive. One in two marriages does not. If you love your partner, be open to learning something new and practice these things every single day. It does not matter if you are newlyweds or long wed. There were plenty of times when we almost did not make it. It was not easy. I have learned some things that have helped us survive, and I hope they help you too.

What have I learned? LOVE, love one another, choose to love every time, love is the answer and the highest force for good. PRAY, without ceasing, FORGIVE, 70 times 70. I forgive others constantly and continually. I must, or I would be filled with pain and hurt. Forgiveness is hard at times, so if you have a hard time forgiving someone, pray for them instead. It may not change the person that you are praying for, but it will change you. When a person pops into my head and before my mind makes it into a negative thought, I say a prayer for that person from Numbers 6:24-26. It is an ancient prayer and asks God to bless them, let his face shine upon them and grant them peace. I changed it to grant "us" peace, so I am praying for myself as well. Treat others how you want to be treated. Love God. Love yourself. Love others. Have fun--lots of fun! Be faithful always. These are my thoughts. I am no expert, but these strategies have helped me stay married. I plan to add the thoughts of my mom who was married at 17 to the love of her life (my dad) for almost 60 years and my aunt Toni and Yoga instructor, Rae, married for 70+ years, and some of my cousins and friends who have been long married to the partners of their youth.

In addition to their thoughts of the secret to long lasting marriages, I will cover the Secret Formula communication sentence frame, STOP, PAUSE, THINK and GO!, and STOP, PAUSE, REFLECT and then RESPOND, Things to Do for Mind, Body and Spirit, Anger Management tips (in back), "Oopsie," AGAPE, "Glimpse instead of Guilt,," "Grrrr," Let it Go Ditty, and Catch Them Being Good!" (Reinforcing the desired behaviors), SLAPPERS, take a Breath/PAUSE-present moment awareness, and other tools (journal writing, Bible study, daily inspirational reading) that can help us navigate the ups and downs of this thing called life. What we believe will become true for us. Faith is not about everything turning out okay. Faith is about being okay no matter how things turn out! "God listens to the Godly person who does his will." John 9:31

I am one of the lucky ones. At age 23, I had a spiritual awakening that changed my life around. I have always had a relationship with God, but I was on a crooked path. On March 6,

1984, during a personal crisis, God transformed me and promised me "I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight." I am comforted because God promises to always be with me and that is one of the main reasons why I am still married. I read in the Bible that God hates divorce and that man should not undo what God has done. When we married, I promised God that I would stay married to Steve through thick and thin. It has not been easy. There were times when we almost did not make it. One thing that kept me married was the fact that I wanted to be with my sons 24/7, and there was no way that I would be separated from them. I also did not want any other female influencing my sons as they navigated adolescence, but me. I am grateful that we did survive that turbulent time because my sons mean the world to me. When they were young, I would yell in the house, "Thank you Jesus, for my beautiful boys!"

When they were older, we saw a marriage counselor and at the very first meeting, the therapist asked Cameron, who was 13, "How is it going?" and the first words out of his mouth were, "It's my mom. She over-reacts to everything!" I was shocked. In my mind, I was the best mom ever, and when he said that remark, it made me change. That was his perspective, his truth. That remark was a turning point for me. I knew I had to change. Something else the therapist said that was memorable to me was, "Expectation is resentment in the making!" I have learned since then, that I came into the world alone and I will leave alone. It is up to me to make my boat float. Thank God, He is the captain of my ship, because with him at the helm, everything is possible. I know that during the storms of my life, He alone can bring me calmness. Separate the word, Impossible to I'm possible and "With God all things are possible."

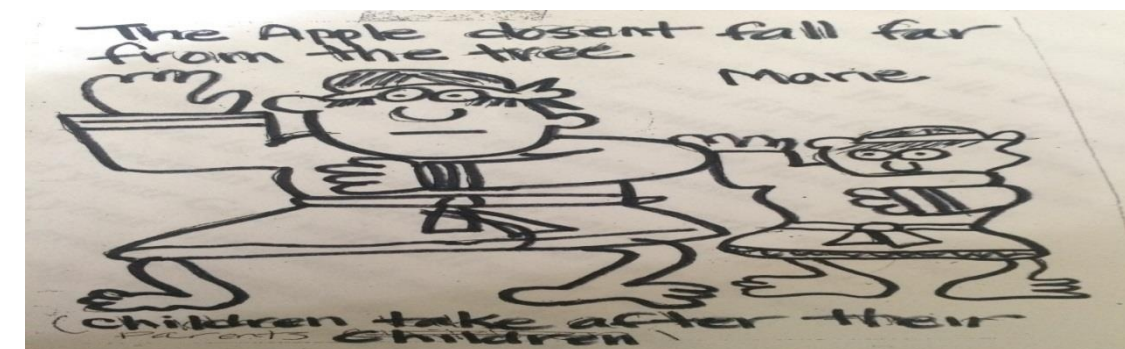
I knew I had my sons for only a few more years at home and that they would be leaving one day, and I did not want them to continue to think that I was the problem. So, I did change. I decided that my boys knew everything that they needed to know by that point and I would just enjoy them as much as I could and have some fun with them, making memories. I am glad I did. Even though I was still the Mean Momma and constantly on them, to do this and that, and my Steve was still Disney Dad. I know, "Everybody loves Steve." It is true, he is a great guy. Every time I hear him talking to our sons, it is always, "Hey sporty, what's up, did you see that game, and hey are we going fishing?" My conversations were "Did you clean up your room? And watch the data on your cell phone!" No wonder, everybody loves Steve. I was the heavy. My mom said that someone had to be the heavy and she had been the heavy too. My mom said that when we all left the house, she was finally able to relax. It's true, when I think about it, most of the difficulty that Steve and I had through the years was over parenting issues. Now that we are older, life is much easier and the relationship with our sons, rewarding.

I came to realize over the years that I would rather have had a Disney dad, than a distant dad, a disappearing dad, a druggie dad, a defensive dad, or a dating dad and that I was grateful

that Steve was such a great dad to his sons. He could have been like his father (disappearing dad), who left his mom when he was five and then completely disappeared from his life when he was a teen. I have a student whose parents are separated, and the dad's new girlfriend does not like the mother, so the father does not let his daughter see her mom. It is sad because the student cries every time I see her. I have also been talking with a student, who described his dad as distant, and I asked him to role-play a message to his dad, using the Secret Formula and he said, "I feel sad because we do not spend much time with each other, like we did when I was young, and I miss that." I hope all aspire to be do-right dads when they become parents.

My boys grew up listening to the words of "Cats in the Cradle" and we would all sing the song aloud, reminding us, of how time is fleeting and what we do with our kids today would affect our tomorrows. "My child arrived just the other day, He came to the world in the usual way but there were planes to catch, and bills to pay, he learned to walk while I was away and he was talking 'fore I knew it, and as he grew, he'd say, 'I'm gonna be like you dad, you know I'm gonna be like you!'" by Harry Chapin. Every time I hear that song on the radio, it resonates with me. Steve and I were listening to the song on YouTube the other day and the songwriter's son spoke of how much that song has touched people's lives through the years. I asked my 8th grader (with the distant dad), if he knew the song, and he did. It is amazing how this song has really stood the test of time, because the lyrics are so powerful and life changing.

The song is also a good reminder to treat our children well, because one day when they are older, we want them to continue to have an adult-adult relationship with us, and we want them to want to spend time with us. It is not always easy to maintain meaningful relationships as they become adults and are busy with their own lives, but it is worth the effort. They do become Mini-ME's. The drawing below, given to me many years ago, reminds me that parents were children too and it is what they have learned from their parents that they in turn teach their own kids. The girl, who drew it for me, wanted me to know that her mother had similar issues at her age. I love the mantra, "What goes around comes around." So True.



I see how much it hurts kids to be without their parents for one reason or another. So many of the kids I counsel suffer from depression, anxiety and are lonely. I have since discovered little kids, little problems, big kids, and bigger problems. I now advise kids, "One day, be the best parent that you can be. Remember how this feels to you now and avoid doing it to your child. Break the cycle." Keep the things that you liked growing up and release and do not repeat the things that you did not like. It is very likely that we will become a lot like our parents, so it will take effort and awareness to be better than our parents were and that is the goal in life-to become better at parenting. I know my parents did their best, as Steve and I did our best, now our sons will hopefully become even better parents than we were. My mom reminded me to include the following poem that I used to have on my refrigerator when my boys were toddlers. I loved the last line. "I wish I could go back and do the little things you asked me to."

To My Grown-up Son by Alice E. Chase- 1975

My Hands were busy through the day; I didn't have much time to play. The little games you asked me to, I didn't have much time for you. I'd wash your clothes, I'd sew and cook. But when you'd bring your picture book and ask me please to share your fun, I'd say: "A little later, son." I'd tuck you in all safe at night and hear your prayers, turn out the lights, then tip toe softly to the door...I wish I'd stayed a minute more. For life is short, the years rush past, a little boy grows up so fast. No longer is he at your side, his precious secrets to confide. The picture books are put away. There are no longer games to play, no good night kiss, no prayers to hear, that all belongs to yesteryear. My hands once busy now are still, the days are long and hard to fill; I wish I could go back and do the little things you asked me to.

Some things change through the years, but mostly they stay the same. It is important to be open to new ideas to keep things moving along. Recently our grandson was upset, and he made a Grrrrr noise, and clenched his fists to let us know he was angry. He is only 3 years old and already he knows what he likes and what he does not like. He acknowledged his frustration, expressed it, and then simply let it subside. My sister, Liz, loved it when I told her about it. When she was mad at her husband, she made a "Grrrrr" sound, clenched her fists and mimicked our grandson to let him know that she was angry. It is cute, because it conveys the message, and she did not have to do more than that to get this simple message across. It is simple and effective. No more slinging to the past or a big blow up, just a few second reminder to get her husband's attention that this is how she was feeling, expressed it, and let it go!

Now that we are older, it is sometimes hard to let others know exactly how we are feeling and why. If someone mistreats us, we hold grudges, talk about them, blame them, or choose instead to ignore them. Recently, a colleague expressed frustration because of some rude things a colleague told her. I told her about the Secret Formula and that the secret to the secret formula is to not say the word, YOU! And how hard it can be to tell someone directly how their behavior makes us feel. We practiced role playing, using the SF and I saw her confidence start

to blossom. It is easy for kids to use the Secret Formula; it becomes harder for adults to express ourselves as we get older. Our response may be to flee, freeze, fight or try and forget about it.

I know that as we get older, there is more at stake and a lifetime of hurts, disappointments, and miscommunications. Sometimes it seems like it is better to avoid the issue then to confront it head on, and potentially step on a landmine, but we must! At times, we just think "forget it," but we don't. We hold on to the anger, and it builds and builds. The truth is, we do not forget. This is where forgiveness comes in, as the Bible states, when asked how often should we forgive? 70 times 7, translation=continually. Hopefully though by this point in our lives we are becoming more tolerant of one another because as we age, we make more mistakes. And we also want to spend our time with people who bring out the best in us, not the stress in us. Life is hard enough. A strategy, my sister Liz and I just started to do when we are with our husbands (aka The Fubbs,) playing cards and someone messes up, we say "Oooopsie!" Steve used to say sorry so much it lost its effect for me. Now when he messes up and says "Oooopsie," it is easier to handle and makes me laugh. Using, "Oooopsie" and "Grrrrr" are two easy strategies that we can use to be forgiving and tolerant of one another. We still get our point across in a way that lessens the negative energy that being angry brings. All feelings are based in love and fear. Love based feelings attract positive energy and fear-based feelings attract negative energy.

At this stage in our life, I just want to be peaceful and in the present moment, because I know that life can change in a heartbeat. My Steve is on insulin. While we were out of town, he forgot his prescription. Thank God I found some that he had left behind from our last visit. I am thankful to God for always being there with us, through the good times and the bad times. We watched the movie, "Paul, Apostle of Christ," and he talked about the power of love and how love is the only way. It is true. When you do not know what to do or say---choose love. When Steve and I are angry and at a crossroads, one of us will finally pipe up and say, "Agape." That means we must *let it go, let it go, let it go!* It works for us. Think of a word that you and your partner can say as the ultimate truce, to stop and "**let it go.**" You must agree that once the truce word is said you must stop and let the matter drop because life is a process of letting go.

Recently at Mass during Holy Week, I asked God why he puts it on my heart to do so much for others. "Why me? I don't see you putting things on others' hearts like you do me," I questioned him. During the service, God revealed to me, "*I have loved you from the world, and I will be with you always!*" The bishop even exhorted us to listen carefully, as he repeated the sentence. Later, I was chosen to have the bishop wash my foot (and kiss it!) during the last supper mass. I was thrilled. If you are reading this, know that God has inspired these words. These SF books are my ministry to be of service to others and even though it is not always easy, I am grateful that God meets my every need and that he has blessed me with Steve by my side.

I want to curate these ideas now in these little books, so my sons will one day read them and learn from them. I love them very much. I pray that they are blessed with long unions with their girls. This book is dedicated to Steve, my sons, grandson and all the young-un's. Thank you for always being there for me, in good times and in bad. Thank you, Steve, for all the breakfasts that you have made me and our visitors over the years, the countless miles you have driven me (multiple times around the world, as you say), for all the fun that we have had together through the years, for being a wonderful father (Disney Dad) to our sons and PAPA. You really are a great guy (Senator) and I thank God that we ran into each other all those years ago at the bus stop at CSULA. I am truly grateful for everything. You are a good man, Steve, and I pray our boys will follow you and be the best men that they can be.

There is no easy answer to what makes a marriage work, but one thing I do know, is that when I practice awareness on being the best me that I can be, all my relationships seem to fall into place. When I set my sights on God and focus on him and surrender my thinking to his plan, life works out. "Hombre pone, Dios dispone-Man plans, God un-plans." I also heard "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." It is so true; when I try to plan my life, it never quite works out, but when I let go and let God, things seem to flow, and I am content. Most things happen for me, when I least expect them. Even as I write these books, I am inspired by something, and I know it is something that God wants me to mention in my little books. Sometimes the thought comes to me in the middle of the night, and by morning, I have forgotten. "Oopsie!" My sister Liz calls me, "Angel" and I just read that Angel in Greek means messenger! Thank you, Liz!

We can all be messengers to others and sources of inspiration. I love the quote, "Allow each soul to walk its path! "God loves us all; we were made in his image and **we are all his children** with our own unique talents and gifts. We are all special in his eyes and God loves to shower us with blessings. Here is a prayer for you: "Dear God, You constantly pour out Your blessings on us: help us to be a blessing to others. You gave us our hands: help us to use them to work for You. You gave us our feet: help us to use them to walk in Your ways. You gave us our voices: help us to use them to speak gentleness and truth. You gave us our minds: help us to think only pleasant, kind thoughts. You have made our lives pleasant every day with love: help us to make other's lives happier every day with our love. Help us to please You, Lord. Help us to learn: some little deed to thank You with, instead of words; some little prayer to do instead of say; some little thing to give You because You never tire of giving us so much." Amen (Unknown)

My co-worker who is on an awareness journey, rushed in one morning, ready to vent, when she told me, "I stopped myself and realized that I was the one that needed to change my reaction." I was so proud of her because awareness is the first step to change as well as the

knowledge that we cannot change anyone. We can barely change ourselves but with awareness, our focus does change. It is not easy to change. It is easy to remain a victim and think it's them, they need to change. This thinking only limits you. When you recognize that you need to change, it is a breakthrough because change requires commitment and effort. It is hard work. Why do you think most people, give up, and remain the same? With the Holy Spirit, prayer, and steadfastness we can transform our minds. We can ask the Lord to help us overcome our fears by filling our mind with positive thoughts and our life with positive actions. This will improve our relationships with everyone with whom we come into contact. Our mind can heal, hurt, or haunt us. Become a mind master: choose love and keep choosing to love every opportunity. *"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things that I can and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; taking as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; thrusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever and ever in the next."* Amen (Prayer attributed to Reinhold Neibuhr, 1892-1971)

The secret to a lasting marriage is for us as individuals to focus on being the best self that we can be. Think back to the early days and what you loved most about yourself and your partner. Reinforce (Reinforcement is anything that maintains a behavior) and encourage the desired behaviors. Catch them being good! Everyone likes to be acknowledged when they do well. A simple "thank you" to your spouse when they have done something nice for you, works wonders. So many times, we focus on what they did not do, instead of what they did do. (I am mindful of this Steve, and I am thankful for all that you do for me and our family). We will never change our partner, and we must learn instead to accept them and love them for how they are now. **We can only control what we say and do.** Most of the time, we don't, and we blow it continually. The tongue has a life of its own. It can be vicious and use some discipline. The Secret Formula books teach us to Stop, Pause, Think and Go! And I practice this problem-solving model daily. Before you say something or do something, stop, **PAUSE**, take some deep breaths, **THINK**, (is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary or Kind?). **If not, stop; if so, GO.** Be the best that you can be! I am teaching this mantra to all my 6th graders, because if everyone practiced this simple task, we could all be the best that we can be, and the world would be a better place.

Recently, Steve and I had our grandson in the backseat. We were driving home from the YMCA and our conversation started getting a little heated. From the backseat, we heard him sing sweetly, "Stop, Pause, Think and GO!" It was beautiful, a gift from God! He knew exactly how to shift the energy at that moment from negative to positive. It changed the mood instantly and brought us both to awareness. We have made the mantra into a little ditty. We

sing the verse three times and end with, "Be the best that you can be!" I heard a girl singing it outside of my office during lunch. That also was a gift from God; it was music to my ears and a reminder that I am on the right track with these techniques. I know that one day I will be glad that I took the time to record these events during this time of my life, and I hope that they help others to be the best they can be.

Something else that helps us be the best that we can be is to read books that provide inspiration. I love the book, *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz and I encourage you to read it, so you learn more about yourself. It is a good beginning for your journey because it will guide you in all your relationships. I also loved the books called *The Female Brain* and *The Male Brain* by Louann Brizendine, and I encourage everyone to read them as well. They were written in an easy to read style and are exceptional because they teach us why men behave the way they do and why we women, behave the way we do. Time magazine once wrote, "Provocative differences in the way our brains are built shed light on everything from the way we flirt, to the way we fight, to how we raise our boys!" This is so true. The books taught me so much, especially how not to take the actions of the men in my life so personally. Even my animals were male. I was outnumbered. Once I learned why they acted as they did, I was able to understand, and I could attribute their thinking and actions to the brain.

I admire Eckhart Tolle, who encourages us to live in the moment and the power of now, Joel Osteen, Marianne Williamson, Matthew Kelly and Ernest Holmes, *Science of Mind*. I recently read a book by Louise Hay and on my office wall, I had a print out of some thoughts and I now recognize them as more than likely coming from her. They are: "We are each responsible for our experiences. Every thought we think is creating our future. Everyone is dealing with the damaging patterns of resentment, criticism, guilt, and self-hatred; these are only thoughts and thoughts can be changed. We need to release the past and forgive everyone. Self-approval and self-acceptance in the "now" are the keys to positive changes. The point of power is always in the present moment." I recall some of these thoughts in her book, *"You can heal your life."* I just picked it up a few weeks ago at a yard sale, where I find little gifts from God. I was reading the book when something I read reminded me that I did not pay my house insurance. I jumped out of bed, found the bill, and called their number, only to discover that my insurance was set to cancel the next day. I am so grateful that *God always has my back*. I do not recall exactly what sparked the thought, for me it was an example of the power of flow. *"All things work for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28

I read that Louise Hay began her company by writing small booklets and I was inspired to write a booklet myself. My goal is to share ideas, thoughts, and research from great thinkers with others that are not so inclined to read, like my family. lol. I hope one day that they will be

inspired to read my little booklets and remember me fondly. I am a bibliophile, and I have stacks of books by my bedside. I asked my mom recently why she pushed me to be in the summer reading club until I was in high school, and she told me, "I wanted someone to love to read as much as I do." It worked mom! I love to read. My son just wrote on my Mother's Day card, "Come over during the summer, so we can kick back by the pool and read!" Last year, while Alex was fishing with Steve, Cameron and I stayed in the hotel room and read all morning, until check-out time when we were reluctantly picked up, to go and fish, too!

Reading books that inspire, is so important, but if I could only take one book with me, it would be my Bible. It is a daily bible that I have read faithfully since 1997. I love my daily Bible reading because I have also documented dates and experiences that I hope to always recall. On today's date, 15 years ago, I surprised my mom and dad in San Francisco where they were visiting with my aunt and uncle. I remember my mom's shock, (it was classic!) when she answered the door at the hotel, where we had also booked a room. I love to recall the experiences that I have had and call others to remind them of those memories as well. I have also been keeping a journal for decades, which has helped me during my life, simply by putting my thoughts to paper. (I recently found my journal from when I was 22; I can't wait to read it.)

Sometimes, I am more interested in the handwritten notes I've written in the bible than the bible readings themselves. I did inscribe the bible by writing, "sin will keep you from this book and this book will keep you from sin!" I have listened to Greg Laurie of Harvest Ministries for decades and I have learned so much from his messages. He is truly inspired by God and one message on his version of, "THINK" also inspired me to write books for kids. I am grateful that Steve is really into listening to him and it helps when we listen to podcasts on the way to work, so there is no chance for any negative energy. Good tactic Steve! Instead we arrive to work in a better state of mind. Just this morning, he put on the message called Wonder Woman (5-11-18). It was the second part, but it was so illuminating. It is based on Proverbs 31 which describes a Godly woman and that the goal for us is to do our best to lead our children to Jesus.

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her. So he will have no need of spoil. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar, but she also rises while it is just night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it, for her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms, she perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night, she stretches her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle, she extends her hand to the poor, yes she reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is

clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them. And supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also and he praises her; Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing. But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

Greg Laurie begins a Mother's Day message, by asking kids what their mother is like. One kid described his mom, as angel wings with a little bit of mean. That made us both laugh. It is not easy to be a virtuous wife in today's world, but he did say that a wife should be the husband's greatest cheerleader and build him up in public. If she needs to tell him something critical, to say it to him in private. Women should respect their husbands. Men should also love their wives, as Christ loved the church. I am proud of Steve and the journey he is on. He has come a long way spiritually; me too. When I wrote the first Secret Formula book, it was a family book and I had references to the Creator in bold. When I would read the book at my school, I would skip those bolded sentences. One day, my intern told me, you know you are shouting, when the print is in bold. Oh no, I thought, I had it in bold, so I would know where to skip, so one day, he and I put all the references to the creator in these cute little squiggly quotation marks and I wrote in the beginning of the book that it was designed holistically, mind body and spirit and that they could read those spiritual references at their own discretion.

When I sent in the document to be made into a PDF, it came back how it originally was, unchanged. No squiggly quotes. I called the intern who told me, "I think someone is trying to get your attention!" I think so too, I told him. I am not taking out any references to the Creator. I don't want God one day as I stand before him to tell me, "Hey remember when you tried to take me out of your book? You go to time-out!" I left it as it was, and a few weeks later, God told me, "Take out all the bold and call it, "The Secret Formula for Educators." I have since learned that I am going to write books about God, how could I not? Greg Laurie said today, that only 2% of us share our faith with others. God is the biggest part of my life and my reason for being. He completes me. I am glad that I have made this realization. How can I offer hope to others without God? I do not know what the future holds, but I am excited and with God at the helm, it will turn out good. *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11*

This is my 33rd year as a counselor to kids, and I still love what I do. I am grateful to have a job that I know makes a difference for kids, and I regularly get messages from former students and young adults that I have worked with through the years. I just met a student today who is in danger of not promoting from Junior High and asked him the following questions adapted from Matthew Kelley's book, *"Perfectly Yourself,"* which is good and thought provoking. Matthew Kelly wrote that he wished someone had asked him these five questions.

If you can do anything with your life, what would you do?

What are you really passionate about?

What do you think you would be really good at and would enjoy?

What do you feel you could do with your life that could really make a contribution?

How many people do you truly know that are happy in their work?

Matthew Kelly writes "We will spend 86,400 hours by the time you retire from the time you graduated college- And to think about this: Life is about love. What do you love doing? Do it. What do you love being? Be it. What do you love having? Have it and share it. What do you love loving? Love them. Create a space in your life for the things you are passionate about. It is so important to do what you love." Earlier, I had two boys in my office. They are from Egypt and brought me apple slices. They are so sweet. One of them told me today that he would like to go to UCLA. I told him he could. My son, Cameron, knew by age 9 that he wanted to go to UCLA, which he did. He then ended up at USC Law School. I call him my Brujon! One student told me his motto is, "Work hard when you are young and relax when you are older!" So true, what you do today, determines your tomorrows. My boys are now grown, and I am proud of the men that they have become. I pray that God guides them and keeps them close to him always.

My mom reminded me that parenting is for such a brief part of your life and to enjoy it, *because this too shall pass* and where we are, is where we are meant to be. It is not always easy. This prayer by Saint Teresa of Avila helped me immensely, "May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use these gifts that you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each one of us." Unfortunately, it was many years before I was truly content to be where I was meant to be. Enjoy and bloom where you are planted! Don Miguel Ruiz wrote in *The Fifth Agreement*, "You are here, just to be, for no reason. You have no

mission except to enjoy life, to be happy. The only thing you need is just to be the real you. Be authentic. Be the presence. Be happiness, Be Love. Be joy. Be yourself: that is the main point. That is wisdom." "God does not ask that we do great things, only small things with great love."
Mother Teresa

I love kids, they are sweet, and I thank God that he knew way better than me, what my purpose was to be. If you asked me when I was young what I wanted to do with my life, I would have said, "police officer!" I thank God I met Steve when I did, because I was moved into another direction. Kids keep me joyful and continually reinforce me to be the best I can be. Matthew Kelly wrote, "Most of the time we know what is the right thing for us to do is. I am always amazed if a child of 4-6 years comes to ask, "Can I do...?" And you ask, "Will it help you to become the best version of yourself?" They know instantly. They are not unfamiliar with all they are capable of being. The voice of the authentic self is probably stronger in younger children than the rest of us, who have been ignoring it for years and years," or had their voice squashed by negativity. I have a picture of myself at age 7, (thanks Nina!) as a reminder to me to recall that authentic voice when I was pure of thought that had come from God. I'm reminded to love that girl, so that she can continue to help the many kids that cross her path each day.

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Mark 10:13 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." We really need to treat the children in our life well for we will be held accountable. I composed the following list for my students so that they can be the best they can be, inspired by my own journey to be the best that I can be!

- **Stop and PAUSE** (takes some deep breaths throughout the day and be in the moment!) Practice awareness using senses & experience.
- If you do not like what you are thinking, **THINK** of something else! (Ask yourself before you speak or act, is it true? helpful? inspiring? necessary? and kind?) If not, STOP! If so, GO! Sing the little ditty, "If you don't like what you're thinking, think of something else!"
- Have some fun from the "Things to Do List!"
- Meditate and still your mind for a few minutes with your personal mantra or little ditty.
- Do a random act of kindness or think of something encouraging to say to someone. When we give put-up's, the opposite of put-downs, we feel good, attract positive energy and the other person will feel good too. It is a win-win situation where everyone benefits from the positive energy.

- Move your body. Get outside and walk or run, shoot hoops, play corn hole, practice Yoga, or go to the gym. Just 30 minutes a day will make a big difference.
- Read. Get into a habit of daily reading; it will enrich your life.
- Practice gratitude by recalling 5-10 things that you are thankful for today.
- Be present in all relationships. Really listen and cherish your time with others.
- Eat deliciously! If it is delicious, eat it. If it is not delicious, do not eat it.
- Seek the positive in every situation. Reinforce the desired behaviors that you want more of "Catch them being good!"
- Ask for help if you need it. There are people who can support you and it is okay to ask for help.
- Drink water. (Add fresh ginger, mint leaves, or lemon slices for flavor)
- Get to bed at a reasonable hour.
My list that I give to students ended above. They concentrate on Body and Mind. The things that I listed below are meant to nourish your Spirit. They have been my lifeline.
- Keep a journal to record your thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Read your Bible and other forms of spiritual guidance.
- Pray and communicate with God, meditate so you can hear God.
- Forgive continually.
- Pray the Rosary daily, as a form of meditation. (Thank you, Aunt Petra!)
- Go to adoration at your local church and spend an hour with Jesus or search on YouTube! (Thanks Mr. Menchaca!)
- Get involved in your church community-where there are 2 or more gathered in His name, Jesus is in the midst.
- Within you, there is stillness and a sanctuary to which you can escape to at any time. Invite Jesus into your heart and develop a friendly relationship with him. Allow him to provide you with guidance throughout the day. A simple prayer, "Please be with me Lord, in all that I do and say and help me to be pleasing to your will," is a good start.

I recently read *The Five Agreements* by Miguel and Jose Ruiz and I gave Steve, *The Four Agreements* to read. I am grateful that he is enjoying the book because if we both follow the principals of the agreements, it will help us to become better people, and improve our relationships with others as well. I recently had an experience where I was very upset about something and I did not use the Secret Formula to express myself, which made me even more upset with myself. Then I triangled, (aka gossiped) and told someone else what I should have simply told the offending person. I ended up feeling low because all the negative energy released left me feeling depleted. So now I recall these four agreements, which are very

helpful. I am currently working on not “Making assumptions” and Steve is working on “Being impeccable with his word. You can focus on one of the agreements, or all four. Mix it up!

1. Be impeccable with your word. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love.
2. Don't take anything personally. Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you will not be the victim of needless suffering.
3. Don't make assumptions. Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness and drama. With just this one agreement, you completely transform your life.
4. Always do your best. Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse and regret.

I know that for some of us, we were taught not to express our feelings when we were growing up. Instead, we kept them bottled up, masked them, and buried them deep. This created additional problems later. Telling a person directly how their behavior is making you feel is the easiest way to convey your truth and live peacefully. The hearer may not like your truth, but the truth will set you free. It can be hard to tell someone how you honestly feel, but honesty is the best policy and the truth is liberating. When I could not use the SF with the person I mentioned earlier, I knew, having the conversation would release an assortment of problems and so I had to learn a lesson from the experience. What I did realize was that as we get older, it becomes more complicated to tell someone honestly how you feel because it can lead to a confrontation. I know how much I avoid confrontations, but there is power in standing up for your beliefs and when you express yourself with the, “I message.” Speaking without expecting to change someone else is how we know we are headed in the right direction.

Practice using the Secret Formula, “I feel _____ when/because _____.” You must add an emotion in the first blank that describes what feeling you are experiencing, and then why, using when or because. Seems so easy, yet it is very hard to do. If practiced regularly now, it can help you to have a more peaceful future. Keep practicing the Secret Formula, it really helps. Just remember the secret to the secret formula is not to say the word, “you.” As soon as you say, “you” the conversation may head into the danger zone, aka a full-blown confrontation or landmine. All feelings stem from love (positive energy) or fear (negative energy). Use feeling words that feel comfortable for you. There are more than 3,000 words to describe emotions to choose from. Steve and I went to a parenting class more than 30 years ago and learned that

“SLAPPERS” stop communication as well and can cause negative energy. This tool allows us to recognize our communication styles that can prohibit a healthy dialogue.

- S**-arcasm (Sarcastic remark back)
- L**-ecturing (Response is speech like)
- A**-ccusing (Told you so!)
- P**-robing (Who were you with?)
- P**-lacating (Don't worry, everything will be okay!)
- E**-valuation (What did you say?)
- R**-ejection (No, not true...)
- S**-olving (You need to....)

Steve and I were surprised at how often we used “SLAPPERS” in our communication with one another, and we learned how to listen better to one another because of this simple message. And we would call each other out when we used them by simply saying, “Slappers!” I added some new “SLAPPERS” to the list above. I call them “MUDI” because they muddy up the conversation making an issue more confused or complicated.

- M**-makes the conversation about them (They start sharing about their experience)
- U**-uninterested (Looks away and may involve themselves in another conversation close by)
- D**-distracted (Checks their cell phone or another object (playing) while you are speaking)
- I**-interrupts (Does not let you finish what you were saying)

My goal is to be a better listener. It is tough because I need to talk with kids because they need guidance and sometimes they just do not know what to do in a situation. I listen, too, but I want to get better at listening. There was a book written a long time ago, called, “*How to talk to your kids so that they will listen and how to listen, so kids will talk.*” That title always resonated with me and was always in the back of my mind because one thing that I find working with kids is that they just need someone to listen, non-judgmentally--just like our partners. **Everyone** needs to feel listened to, and when we listen carefully, we are letting them know that they are worthy of our time. When they feel heard, they tend to feel loved and respected. Listening and communication are two very important skills that we need to learn to master to improve our relationships and connections with others. *The Fifth Agreement* that Don Miguel Ruiz and his son Don Jose Ruiz added in their recent book is, “Be skeptical, but learn to listen.”

You too can become a good listener by doing the following:

1. Give the speaker your undivided attention (put the electronics away!)
2. Show that you are listening. Give the speaker eye contact and gesture that you are listening by nodding your head. Listen without judgment or interruption. Focus on facts and feelings. Summarize what you have heard them say to you.
3. Allow time for reflection. Respond appropriately with respect- avoid using “SLAPPERS” or “MUDI.”

In addition to becoming a better listener, we can learn how to deal with negative feelings and the thoughts that drive them and become more **intentional**, rather than **reactive** in our responses by being mindful. Mindfulness is paying attention in the present moment, in an open and non-judgmental way. It allows us to experience the moment and be attentive to our relationship with the other person. To be intentional we: **STOP**-Take a big breath from the belly **PAUSE**- **Practice Awareness Using Senses and Experience**- use the senses (sight, touch, hearing, smell, taste) to help come to awareness and to experience what is going on, in us, & around us.

REFLECT- The key is to listen without judgment. Use the THINK process- Is it true, helpful, inspiring, necessary, or kind? If not, STOP and if so GO! **RESPOND with respect**- There is always a positive way to say everything. If you cannot think of anything to say, don't say anything. It is okay to not have a comment. It is very easy to be reactive and much more difficult to respond appropriately. Once you say something negatively, it is hard to take it back. Words wound! Sometimes, people will hold on to the offensive message forever. The key is identifying your reaction to the comment and possibly use a few simple comeback lines to improve the situation. I love what Ann Landers would suggest, "What do you mean by that?" This puts it back on them to say what they meant by their remark. Jesus was straight forward in his communication with others, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong, but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Despite him being hit, Jesus maintains his dignity; instead of reacting, he responds. He speaks out with honesty. He does not trade an insult with an insult. He is not angry. He simply asks a question. As my Momma says, "Throw the ball back at them."

When you speak your truth to others in an assertive manner (taking care of your needs while respecting the rights of others), the truth does set you free. If someone cannot handle the truth, that is not your problem. It is their problem. If someone says something negative or insulting to you, let them know how that comment made you feel, or you will wear that comment like a heavy coat. The next conversation you have with that person has the potential to escalate and before you know it, you've stepped on a landmine and there is an explosion. To prevent these types of escalations from happening, take the time to listen carefully. Remember the following process to help you. **STOP, PAUSE, REFLECT & RESPOND with RESPECT!**

Come up with your own positive response, that way you can say it easily when the need arises. It will help you maintain your peace and dignity during what could become a very stressful situation. Remember, that when we do not address the issue honestly, instead keeping quiet and pushing our negative feelings down and down, they will erupt when we least expect it. Making a choice not to react to others' negativity is also critical to maintaining our peace. Sometimes when I am with a group of people and someone starts making inappropriate comments about another person, I sometimes get sucked in, respond reactively, and lose my peace. I now know that to keep my peace, I should leave when tensions are high or go do something else or say something encouraging instead. Decide to stay away from the negative energy and choose instead to be with people who bring out the best in you, not the stress in you. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word, stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1

One of my students wrote, "Don't be negative. When you are negative, that starts drama and you lose friends!" Surround yourself with people who are joyful and kind and radiate positive energy. When you spew negative energy, people will avoid you. I know it is risky to tell someone how you honestly feel but if we do not speak up, we become resentful. Resentments do grow stronger in time. Steve said that there is a cost associated with being honest and speaking the truth. But, the truth will set you free. Life is not an easy ride. Jesus's life was filled with suffering, persecution, and betrayal yet he responded with love and forgiveness, even while hanging on the cross, Jesus said, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

I am going to end my little booklet with the Ten Commandments. They are meant to keep us safe, in God's care and be the best that we can be. They were God's words to us, to keep us close to him. When we live a life with God at the helm, he completes us. When our mind is calm, we will hear his voice. With meditation and prayer, you will hear his voice increasingly. We are all children of God made for his purpose. When we follow Jesus and his ways, he will give our lives guidance and direction and as my friend Marci writes, "God gives us a mission every day, which is part of God's plan and purpose for our life!" Where God guides, he provides. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you- and even more." Mark 4:24

Follow God's commandments and live. The Peace Pilgrim wrote that the laws are well known and well believed and therefore need to be well lived. If we are out of harmony through ignorance, we suffer somewhat, but if we know better and are still out of harmony, then we suffer a great deal. No life can be in harmony unless belief and practice are in harmony. "Teach me your way Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name." It is the little things that matter most in life, the small gestures, that make us or break us.

Pope Francis writes, "A woman goes shopping, she meets a neighbor and the gossip starts, but she says in her heart- no I will not speak badly of anyone. This is a step forward in holiness. Later at home, one of her children wants to talk to her about his hopes and dreams, and even though she is tired, she sits down and listens with patience and love. That is another sacrifice that brings holiness. Later she experiences some anxiety, recalling the love of the Virgin Mary; she takes her rosary and prays with faith-yet another path of holiness. Later she goes out onto the street and encounters a poor person and stops to say a kind word to him, one more step." "Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

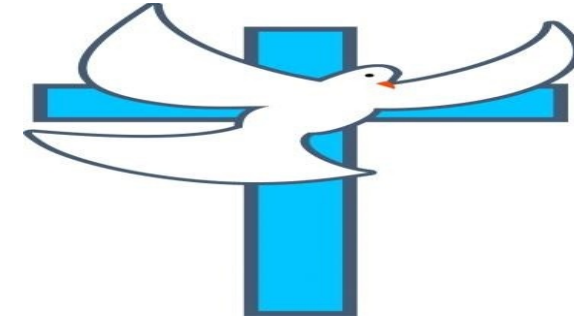
The Bible says the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. (Galatians 5:22-23) Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Jesus also said, "You are with me or against me." Ask yourself: *What is your relationship with God? Do others see Christ residing in you? God tells us, "I am the way, the truth and the life!"* **God is life!** "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Remember our emotions are involved in everything we do. You cannot separate emotion from the mind and the will. Love is an emotion and the greatest of all because God is love. With love you can

transform your mind to the mind and will of God. The word says, "If man/woman love me, and have God as the Lord and Savior of their life, the Holy Spirit comes to live in them and produces fruit. Joy is one of the gifts of the spirit and we need to choose love every moment that we can. The bible confirms that believers are filled with joy. If Christ dwells within you, there is joy and peace throughout your soul. I love Psalm 91:1 (God's 911) and have peace because Jesus is my love and the Prince of Peace! I love you too, Steve, Happy Anniversary. "May the Lord bless you and keep you, may his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, and may he look to us with kindness, and grant us peace." Thank you to everyone who helped me, "God be with you!"

The anniversary celebration that I had envisioned in my mind did not quite turn out the way I expected. Life happens. My dear friend Jovita died and she was buried on our anniversary and Steve also took his mom on that day to two doctor's appointments. The book reveal did not go as planned, "hombre pone, Dios dispone!" Most of the time I plan things, they never quite go as imagined! We did end up at Steven's Restaurant where Steve did read to me the beginning of the book. He did enjoy it. When we returned to Ventura, I received a book from Matthew Kelley who wrote, "we write books that we need to read!" and it is so true, I needed this book, to re-read, to forgive, to let go, and practice all the strategies that are in it. I told my grammar guru, Stacie, I don't know why I write these books, but I hope that they will help others someday as the strategies have helped me. I bugged my boys to read it and yesterday I received a text from my oldest son who said that he was praying to God for inspiration and God told him to read my book, so he did, cover to cover! Thank you, God!



The Ten Commandments



- 1. Thou shall have no other God's before me.**
- 2. Thou shall not make onto Thee any Graven Image.**
- 3. Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.**
- 4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep Holy.**
- 5. Honor thy Father and thy Mother**
- 6. Thou shall not kill.**
- 7. Thou shall not commit adultery.**
- 8. Thou shall not steal.**
- 9. Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**
- 10. Thou shall not covet.**

Exodus 20:1-17- God spoke these words: See also Deuteronomy 5:6-21 (NIV)

Family/Friend perspectives to 3 questions: 1) How did you meet? 2) What do you think the secret ingredients to a lasting marriage are? 3) What do you want the young un's to know about marriage? (This is where you respond with your children in mind.)

From my other half Steve— (Steve said, I wrote how we met but to add his perspective: long hair and tight brown pants!) For the secrets: Have God between you. Try not to go to bed angry. Always a gentle touch before sleep (please warm your hands first Steve!) Love your wife as your best friend and confidant. Always find peace, there is no winner in a battle. Winning is not as important as compromise. Say I love you often; Show how you love her more. Always have her back. If you are wrong, admit it. Say you are sorry but not so often as to minimize its sincerity. Listen in a focused way, then listen some more. If you have forgotten how passionate kissing was, do it again to remember. Communicate always, partner before children, and love and laugh often! He told me to add, "Pray together." Most nights, we say the "Now I lay me down to sleep prayer, (Old nursery rhyme) alternating verses. Sounds cheesy, but I love that Steve always prays for all the children in the world, the boys, the girls, our mothers, etc.)

From my mom Carmen Diaz, who was married to my dad, Alfonso (5 days short of 60 years!) How did you meet? 4551 Zaring Street in East Los Angeles, my family home. I saw him from afar, and I thought, "Oh that guy is for me!" When he saw me, he really fell in love with me too. It was love at first sight. We were married a year later, September 3, 1950 and I met him on August 13, 1949. The 13th is my favorite day! I always liked it. We moved to our family home in Commerce on July 13, 1957, and we were married for almost 60 years. We had a 50th anniversary party and we renewed our vows about 14 times, throughout our marriage (whenever church did it for marriage day, through marriage encounter, our 25, 45, and 50th anniversary and many more.) We were very happily married.

What were the special ingredients? We loved each other very much. We were always together, hardly ever apart and we were always holding hands, or our arms were interlocked, holding each other close. I would tell Daddy, "He was my cane and I was his!" That way if we fell, we both fell together!"

What would you want us to know about marriage? I wish that everyone would have a good spouse, so you can have a happy home. One thing you girls(&Rich) had was a very good father who loved his family very much and kept his family first. I would always ask why he didn't become a supervisor and he would say, "Why, they get just 10 cents more, and I would rather be with my family!" He did. Every day he would come straight home at 4:00pm, and I would see his call pulling in. (I remember running to the door when my dad would come home too!) When I told my mom about seeing her draped over my dad's body when I would visit, she said,

"At the time, I just wanted to spread out, but what I would give to be with your dad, resting in bed, now!) You will Madre, just not yet. ☺

From Aunt Toni (70+ years)

When we met, Manuel was 15, I was 14. We met in Junior High School. He then went into the navy. When he came back, we were married, in one week (1945). He told me, "Sugar, I am going to change your name, you are going to be my Sugar Forever!"

Marriage is a serious affair, but it can be wonderful! Protect it with lots of love. Make your Husband your best friend! Treat him with honor and respect, when he wants to share with you, never be too busy to deny him your time, and never ever compare him with other men that, is a put down and most of all love him in the morning, love him at night, which is a secret to a long-lasting marriage. That's our marriage life; this is our 70 years of marriage. We wish you the same Dear Lovers. May God Be Your Guide to bless your togetherness! Love, Aunti Toni and Uncle Manuel

P.S. I just saw my Aunt Toni recently. She is 91 and when I asked her about her thoughts on marriage for this book, she said, "Treat your marriage with respect. Marriage is sacred. When you have respect for one another, truly enjoy one another, and respect your marriage, which is the most important!" "Love and respect, they go together!"

From my yoga instructor Rae Beebe, (70 years)

I went to Church one Sunday morning at Monroe Ave. Methodist Church in Rochester New York and was surprised to find a young man in the pulpit who I had not seen before. After listening to his sermon, I decided to go up to the front to tell him I liked it. He seemed pleased and quickly invited me to a beach party the youth group was having that afternoon. I tried to find a friend to go with me but I was not successful. I went to the Church myself and was surprised to learn he wasn't only the youth director but also the preacher's son. I guess it pays to not be shy!

Amazing how the years fly by. Being a preacher's wife at age 19 was the beginning of a mutual partnership. We moved into a parsonage with the responsibility for two churches while he continued with his second year of college. After he graduated from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School we moved on with four children in tow. One of the many hallmarks of our relationship was his willingness to help with the daily childrearing, including diaper changing. I became the choir director at the Church as well as typing his school papers. So there definitely was a mutual interest in togetherness. We have had moments of strife as every couple does but manage to always share a forgiving spirit at the end of the day. He helps me and I reciprocate. He was supportive when I went back to school at age 47 to earn a B.A. from UCLA though I admit it took me several years to broach the subject since I did

not want to rock the boat.

What would I say to young people today? Commitment is important though so many seem to take it lightly. It is such a blessing to find someone who you love and loves you in return. It is probably important to understand each other's values as well as their hopes for your life together. There are no guarantees to insure happiness. It is always wise to express your true feelings, so you do not build up quiet resentment. Remember to be mutually respectful of your spouse's opinion and TLC (tender, loving, care) is a useful technique for every household.

Rae wrote the following poem at age 8 and then added the second verse for her 50th wedding anniversary! (Thank you, Rae, for your friendship, you are my role-model!)

When I was eight, I thought life through and this is what I thought I would do.
The way I'd like to live would be to buy a sweet old apple tree,
I'd have a house with sixty rooms and have my work done with magical brooms,
I'd live near an ice cream hill and never have to pay a bill,
And never have to worry about the world-wide troubles galore.

We may not have an apple tree but the roots of the faith have enriched me
My house with many spaces was found in ten different places,
The broom was picked up by my dutiful spouse, who needed it with six kinds in the house,
We gave up the ice cream because of its fat. We learned of its danger and all things like that,
Though life may not answer all questions of mine, I will tell you this,
All things are lightened by Quinn's hug and kiss.

From Cousins Manuel and Petra Briones - (Thanks Petra for your help with my books!)

Manuel and I met in 1979 at a Halloween party given by my cousins the Diaz's. What attracted me to him was that he gave me the attention that I really didn't think I got at home. Manuel was dressed as a bum and I was dressed as a china doll. My face was covered in white paint, so he didn't know how I looked! He always tells me that he would have taken out any of my sisters if they said they were me!! :).

We were together 6 years before we got married. At the time, I was in school, so he wanted me to finish because he knew if we got married, I probably would have gotten pregnant and, I wouldn't have finish, so in some ways he was right!!

2. What do you think the Secret ingredients to a lasting marriage are for you and your spouse?

1. Being Respectful to one another
2. Never put down our spouse in front of others
3. Never bring in past hurts if we already talked about it and moved on.
4. That love is a decision and it takes work to make a marriage successful.

3) What do you want the young-un's to know about marriage? (This is where you write what you want your kids to view.)

Congratulations, young couple on saying yes to being a Sacrament of the Church. You are entering a wonderful journey that will cause your life to go through many changes. It is through your love for one another that you will discover the true meaning of happiness and challenges. If I were to share with you some of what I've learned over 29 years of marriage with my beautiful wife, it would involve being open to God's plan. You cannot necessarily know what lies ahead and some of it will be hard and difficult, but God's mercies will endure-So stay close to the Lord in all things. Jesus's love and graces have filled my life with much goodness and promises, my life partner, my children, grandchildren, relatives, friends, and work. Keep them all close in your heart. Protect and respect them always. (Manuel Briones) As you begin your marriage as husband and wife, the things that I would want to share with you is that marriage can be difficult. Especially, when you do not see eye to eye, on the issues. Sometimes, I can hear Dr. Phil in my ear asking me, "Do you want to be right? Or do you want to be happy? Lol. Being married for over 29 years, the first thing I would say is to respect one another and treat each other the way you want to be treated. In our marriage, we made it a priority not to disrespect each other by putting each other down or cursing at each other especially in front of family or friends. It is tough because when you say hurtful things to one another, it is hard to take them back. Yes, we did backside sometimes but one of us always apologized. The hardest part was to accept the apology and move on. We also made it a point to spend the time with each other and to keep the lines of communication open. My spouse is my best friend. My hope and prayer is that you will have God in your lives and that you make your faith and commitment the number one priority. Try not to live a married single life style where you are married in name only and always connect with each other with a kiss, hug, text, or phone call. When my spouse walks in the door, the first thing he does is to find me and give me a kiss. Make that commitment to each other that above everything else; you value your relationship with your spouses. May God bless your marriage, and may he always be a part of your lives together. It really does take three to keep a marriage going. (Petra)

From Cousins Mike and Martha Hidalgo

Just wanted to share my recipe for a happy, healthy marriage, since we have been married for over 45 years and we still love each other! Remember to respect and honor each other and make your spouse your best friend! Honor God in your relationship and you will have a loving and happy marriage; it worked for us. I only wished we knew that at the beginning of our marriage instead of 19 years after. Marriage is not always 50/50. Some days you may have to give 90% and your spouse 10% or the other way around, but whatever it is, try to remember your spouse's most endearing quality for that day and it will help. Never go to bed angry, stay up and fight and learn to forgive each other. Be patient and be willing to make sacrifices sometimes, it will help in your relationship. Remember to communicate with each other, we are not made to be mind readers and sometimes it helps to let your spouse

know what your needs and wants are. A successful marriage requires falling in love many times and always with the same person. If you keep this in mind, your marriage will be a happy and passionate one. May God Bless you with a lifetime of love and blessings! (Martha & Mike)

From Family Friend Nora Menchaca!

Manny and I met on Memorial Day weekend at a dance at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles. I was with my mother and her friends and some of my friends. Manny was there with a buddy and they both checked me out as I walked passed them. I later dated both of them, but Manny won my heart and it's been his ever since. I don't believe there are secret ingredients to a lasting marriage. Manny and I treat each other with respect, loyalty, support, consideration for each other's needs and love, of course. But without the first four, love is usually not enough to sustain the challenges life presents us. Love just strengthens our bond as we overcome life's challenges. The best thing we can do for our children, I believe, is to lead by example. Always show your love by being the best husband or wife you can be. True, unselfish love is the greatest gift of all. That's why God gave us a heart. We married on June 20, 1970. We'll be celebrating our 48th next month. (I spoke to Mrs. Menchaca and she also said that it is not what parents leave in their checkbook that matters; rather it is what remains in their hearts after they (parents) are gone.) Which reminded me of the last words of Steve Jobs as he lay dying in the hospital, he wrote, "Stop pursuing wealth, it can only make a person into a twisted being, just like me. God has made us one way, we can feel the love in the heart of each of us, and not illusions built by fame or money, like I made in my life. I cannot take them with me. I can only take with me the memories that were strengthened by love. This is the true wealth that will follow you; will accompany you, he will give strength and light to go ahead. Love can travel thousands of miles and so life has no limits. Move to where you want to go. Strive to reach the goals you want to achieve. Everything is in your heart and in your hands. What is the world's most expensive bed? The hospital bed!

From Family Friend Manny Menchaca-Question one- We met at the Hollywood Palladium in 1968. It was Labor Day weekend holiday dance...the rest is history. ?2. FAITH, LOVE and TRUST. Work as a team: tho at times we are not on the same page but respectfully we come to an amiable compromise. AMEN! #3 That our young-uns, would have a genuine FAITH, not mere motion religion but a formation of a personal relationship with Jesus and Mary. That they would not just have "stuff" but have Faith and Trust above all. Finally, don't go to bed mad, and "I'm sorry," and a good night kiss does wonders.....AND pray! Mmm....Thought, I would add this little tid bit when I asked my grandfather before I was to marry (they were married 58 years!) ME: what's your advice for me Papa Chon? He said you must change your mind and change your clothes. Ha, ha, ha.

From Cousin Olivia Manilla

I met Al back in 1970. My best friend Gloria was his cuz, we were at Al's house visiting his sister. Al walked into the room while I was changing. (Somewhat embarrassing!) A month went by. It was Thanksgiving. Al was in town visiting his Aunt. He called Gloria and asked her to join him as he wanted to stop by. After that we started dating.

I think the secret ingredient is love and lots of it. And if there have been bad times in the marriage-you must forgive like God has forgiven us. Sometimes it keeps coming up but you need to let go. Also it is about communication. Al and I have been together for 46 years and I'd be lost without him. I don't even want to go there!

Question 3- I'd like my Daughter to always admire the man she married and love him like she did when they said their "I Do's". I want her to trust him completely cuz he goes on a lot of gigs to the Bay. Jaz is a drummer-Jazz music. It has been almost 4 years now, and now their struggle is becoming parents. I know if this happen soon their happiness would be a big plus! When they lived in the Bay, they went to church weekly. Esther is very picky about churches and the word. They now live in South Pasadena. I believe their marriage would be blessed if they could only find a church they like. Cause we must have faith, for ourselves and our children. So let us pray for them Dear Cuz, never let love die! (Dear Cuz Olivia, I will pray for this request and for all of our children!) Everyone, please pray too! This is my life desire, that our kids know Jesus- He is the way, the truth and the life!

From our Neighbor-friends Lee and Marianne Gotwals

1. Lee and I met about 55 plus years ago in Burbank, CA, where we lived approx. 1 mile apart. We lived in our family homes. Our dads did electrical repairs on the parish church rectory and church sound system. Our moms helped on different committees at church and were fortunate to be stay-at-home moms. Lee's sister, Jan, and I played on the same softball summer league during high school. Lee pitched to us, round the world style, and I was a catcher. I know he didn't pitch as fast as he did on his team, but, OUCH! The distance was shorter, and it seemed just as fast. Bruised shins were my first physical encounters.

Lee went into the Air Force after 1 year at Jr. College. It was during the Vietnam War. Fortunately, he was stationed in Taiwan, the Philippines, and Adak, AK. For about 4 years we wrote letters to each other. This is where I got to know him and basically "fell in love" with him. Upon his return from the service, I was more mature after 3 yrs. of college. He returned to school in the electronics field and I continued with my art major/PE minor/teaching credential. Shortly after, we married and had 3 sons in the first 5 years. Lee was employed by Lockheed Aircraft Corp. and I was a stay-at-home mom in my 1940's style home. We both graduated from college and life moved on with my school aide jobs, teaching credential and Hueneme School District teaching job and Lee's out of country gigs in Nagoya, Japan and Anchorage, Alaska. We relocated with the DOD in Ventura. Here we are retired with "Patches".

SECRET INGREDIENTS TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

1. TRUST each other completely
2. CARE FOR EACH OTHER both mentally and physically
3. COMMUNICATE openly. If unsuccessful at first, revisit the issues and renegotiate.
4. KISS GOODNIGHT – every night, leaving all misunderstandings behind.
5. EXPRESS your fear and anger but channel it productively.
6. SELF-CONFIDENCE: individually and as a couple
7. KNOWING EACH OTHERS' STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES: work on them so they complement each other.
8. STAYING CLOSE PHYSICALLY: holding hands, hugs and kisses, etc.
9. PRAY TO A HIGHER POWER for help and strength.
10. DAILY ROUTINES with summer/weekend getaways to chill and relax.
11. CHILDREN: having some, if willing and able, to “blast this love” and have experiences to share in family situations.
12. NEVER GIVE UP ON EACH OTHER! This LOVE will grow and last forever beyond our time on earth.

KNOWLEDGE OF MARRIAGE- Marriage is an ever-changing sacrament. Society tells you one thing, but you must decide if your love will blossom and you will feel completely satisfied in all aspects of your being. Every generation has a different outlook for success and purpose. Spiritually, under Christian/Catholic beliefs, you have a set of rules and guidelines to help you maintain these beliefs and grow in love. If you associate with groups of Christian friends, you as a couple will be fortified in your marriage. Of course, you will be tested constantly, but stand firm in your love for each other and never give up!

From Brother Richard and Monique (they answered together, just like my mom and dad, always together!)

1) We have been together for 32 years. Our first contact was when Richard was working at a party, and I pulled up in a limo asking Richard if could call my friend out, he said “That will be \$5.00 and I looked at him like, “Are you serious?” and then I turned to his friend Phil, who ended up being our best man in our wedding!” and he let me right in. The \$5.00 came out of his pocket.

2) What are the secret ingredients? Trust, communication, creative sex

3) What do you want the young’uns to know? When they decide to get married they need to be ready for it, because it is a commitment that requires strong communication skills. There will be good and bad times and you need to work through it.

From Co-worker, Andrew Vasquez

1. Maureen and I met at a Catholic Bible study group sponsored by Assumption Parish in Ventura, CA. The second I saw her in a green sweater, with her dark hair, and green eyes—I knew she was the one! The feeling was electric. I believed before even talking with her that she was the answer to the prayers of my father—namely that God would bless me with a friend and companion for the journey. I have the very words written in a Valentine’s Day card that I still have which my father gave me just a month before. I met Maureen on March 15th, 1985 and just a few months later, had her inscribe the inside of the new Bible I had just bought—knowing that her message would be for life. We have been together for 33 years and married for 26 years. We celebrate both anniversaries—the day we met 3/15/85 and the day we were married—10/10/92.

2. The Secret ingredient for a successful marriage, characterized by longevity and contentment, is that it be Faith Based. I have no doubt whatsoever that God directed our paths together—that He orchestrated our meeting, courtship and union. My sense goes directly to the admonition, “What God has brought together, let no man draw asunder.” One must first believe in a generous, loving, caring, personal God before taking the next step of faith, which is to believe that God finds us worthy and wants to bless us with a special person who would be our life mate.

3. Maureen and I want to pass on a legacy to our children and to those in our Circle of Influence that is best described as “Personal and Relational Growth through Grace, Mercy, and ultimately Forgiveness.” Without this triune Shelter of Love, no relationship is able to survive or better yet thrive for any length of time. As humans we are “fallen,” imperfect beings that will invariably transgress and hurt others, especially those we love most. All healthy marriages have good communication, honesty and trust; but even more important they must have Grace, Mercy, and Forgiveness.

From Cousin Anna Kulikoff

We met through our high school friends Linda Perez & Jimbo Brown, 38 years ago. After a couple of years of dating we knew we wanted to be together for life. We have been blessed with 31 years of marriage with a beautiful family.

- Plenty of Love, Faith, Respect & Trust
- A daily dose of Communication
- And a pinch of patience and understanding

It is a lifetime commitment to love your spouse. The remembrance of all the good times will get you through the difficult times. All great lasting marriages are a result of applying the secret ingredients faith, love, respect, communication, patience, and understanding.

From Friend, Marci Hellmuth

1) Tom and I met when we were both letter carriers in the Van Nuys Post Office. It was kind of funny because I thought Tom was cute and nice, but I thought he was married because he wore a gold puzzle ring on his wedding finger. I was talking to a friend of his that also worked in the post office and Tom's name came up in the conversation. I remember saying that it was too bad that Tom was married. He laughed and told me that Tom was not married. He then suggested that he and his girlfriend and Tom and I should go out on a double date. Well, Tom asked me out, and we went on that double date. That was right before Christmas, and we were married the following May. We just celebrated our 39th Wedding Anniversary.

2) I think it is important to appreciate each other and be supportive of each other's goals and dreams. I also think it is important to include God in your marriage and to pray together and for each other. Tom was raised in the Lutheran Church and I was raised in the Catholic Church. We were both Christian and had relationship with Jesus, so we needed to work out what that would mean when we had children. We agreed to baptize our children and raise them in the Catholic Church. This was important to decide before we had children so there would be no resentment between us. Learn what your spouse's love language is: do they feel loved with words, gifts, touch? It is important to remember and acknowledge their birthday and your Wedding Anniversary.

3) Marriage is a commitment and a covenant. You need to remember that when times are challenging - because they will be. You are a team, and you are helping each other get into Heaven. Make time to do fun things together and laugh together. You are modeling behaviors for your children, so make sure they know that you love and respect each other and God. Take your children to a Christian Church and give them a faith base (they may change when they get older, but you have given them a base), read the Bible, and talk to them about your relationship with God. Teach them how to pray. And let your children know that you will always love them - no matter what.

From Sister Liz Van Ness

We met at our first job, Major Los Angeles, we were 19. He had asked me out for over a year before I accepted the best date of my life, because it is still going on to this day. Ray said that if you go out with me it will be forever! It was like for a whole year before we went out. God had plans for me. After that I started looking forward to seeing him, so I wanted to see what he would do for my birthday. Lo and behold, it's my birthday and I went to the lunch truck where we always met to talk, and he wasn't there. At lunchtime, I went back, he wasn't there! Ray had called up one of his friends to go to Thrifty's to buy me a birthday card. It was a little kid's card with a clown face that he just signed. I was so disappointed. Mom had a dinner for me at home and the next day, he worked overtime and after work he came over to my house and brought a

beautiful tea cup filled with forget-me-not flowers. He came over at two and we stayed and laughed all afternoon. When it was time to eat, I made some frozen steak, straight from the freezer and then I made him homemade French fries and the meat was as tough as can be. Diane, he was so impressed that I fixed him dinner; he thought I was something special.

Question 2: I believe that there are a lot of qualities that go into a happy, loving, long marriage. Love, honesty, compromise, and the most important is respect. When you truly have respect for each other you can handle any of life's trials that come your way. And when you really respect someone you won't mistreat them, and you will always be true to them.

Question 3: Always respect your partner, listen to what they have to say, and make the best decision for the situation. And don't forget to compromise, because sometimes people only want their own way and you need to think about your partner's feelings. Listening to your partner is very important because their perspective tells you exactly how they really feel about the situation or about life in general. Always have fun, plan dates, and constantly tell each other, how much you love and mean to each other. We always acknowledge the 19th of each month with a little game, of who says, "Happy Anniversary," first. The date represents our wedding day of April 19, 1980. And finally, keep God in your life, no matter what, always pray to him and seek him and thank God for all of your blessings! I have a personal relationship with God and I am speaking to him throughout the day, and just giving him praise and glory for all the blessings that he bestows upon me. I would like to end this with, **"TO GOD BE THE GLORY!"**

Scripture reading for June 6

He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:2-4 *In the same way You blessed the children, surround me with Your arms and pour Your words of grace all over my life.*

Prayer during Difficult Times

"God of love and mercy, assist me in this time of trouble and anxiety. Ease my burdens. Strengthen my faith. Increase my trust and confidence in Your compassionate car. Give me the courage I need, dear Lord, to face the difficulties before me, knowing that with Your help, miracles happen and lives are restored. I pray for a share in Your healing graces, and ask that You surround me with Your comforting goodness, for health in mind and body, and for a heart filled with hope and peace." "Sweetest Jesus we implore, the grace to love You daily, more and more!" Amen!

Anger Management and Tips

What is anger anyway? It is an emotion, with one purpose: to stop or start something. When you get that grrrr feeling after an interaction goes array due to miscommunication or when someone violates your boundaries or takes something of yours. Anger sets off our fight-or-gee response, which evolved back to cave man days that helped us to survive. Of course, times have changed. There are times when anger is appropriate—when we need to protect ourselves or others. It lets others know a behavior won't be tolerated. But when your anger is chronic or explosive it can hurt someone and create toxic stress that can damage your health, as well. The best thing you can do is understand what sets you off and how it hurts your body—and learn ways to rein it in when your start to lose your cool. If you can let go of your angry feelings, your cortisol levels come back down. But if you often get angry, your cortisol levels stay elevated. This may result in weaker immunity, lethargy, and weight gain.

Even before you realize you're mad, your amygdala, the early-warning (cave man) system in your brain, begins sending alerts. When these reach your adrenal gland, it ramps up its production of cortisol and adrenaline, which causes your body to react: your pupils dilate, your breath quickens, you perspire, your heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature rise, digestion slows, endorphins course through your nervous system, and your muscles tense (clenched fists). Being ticked off can hurt your ticker. If anger is your constant companion, you are more at risk for heart problems and stroke. Especially bad is the explosive, throw-something kind of fury: You are more than twice as likely to have a heart attack during the two hours following a blow up.

Anger's hidden signals: upset stomach, clenched jaw, teeth-grinding, headaches, forgetfulness, & tears.

"Hangry" explained—when we need to eat, we often get angry. Hence hungry/angry = hangry. It is due to blood glucose drops that trigger the release of cortisol and adrenaline to pull stored glucose into your bloodstream. Those hormones trigger anxious, upset or aggressive feelings.

The impact of stockpiling frustration and not dealing with your angry feelings called, "reservoir anger" the anger stored up. Here is how this works: Someone is not meeting your need=frustration, if it happens enough it builds and morphs into anger. This feeling is like a teakettle, either you let off steam at the frustrating person (but without resolving the anger) or you swallow it. (That's covert anger.) Reservoir anger causes its own set of problems: headaches, dizziness, shaking or sweating. This puts you at risk of other risky behaviors (alcohol, drugs, or overeating). Some of this anger can be as old as you are!

What to do? Use the Secret Formula to express yourself without using the word, "YOU!" STOP PAUSE, THINK, & GO! Do something from the things to do list!

Talk to someone and discover a healthy route for expressing your emotions as well as finding your "Zen!"

Prioritize sleep- research validates that being sleep-deprived leads to more anger, hostility, and irritation.

Get your move on. Regular exercise helps decrease anger and releases feel good chemicals in the body.

Eat less junk food and do not skip meals to avoid the "hangry" kind of mad.

Quiet your mind. Take 15-30 minutes a day to do brain relaxation such as meditation—it calms your nervous system.

Own your emotions- think honestly about how often your fury pops up and what triggers it. You cannot change something unless you acknowledge that it is there.

Breathe- deep, slow breathing really does calm the body. Research suggests that it keeps certain neurons in your brain from signaling your body's arousal center, so you avoid getting worked up.

Count to 10- Fight-or-flight is fast: the rational mind moves much more slowly, so give it time to catch up. Cooling the adrenaline response also lets your body release hormones that counter it, de-escalating.

Distract yourself- It is hard to feel two emotions simultaneously, so do something that is incompatible with anger: Cuddle your dog or watch something funny or aww-inspiring on YouTube. Do something from the, "Things to Do List." When you do things that make you happy, you will become happier.

Channel your grrrrr- If current events are fueling your feelings, show up at a town hall meeting or march, or volunteer to help—you'll be around like-minded people and help make a difference. Check out your local CASA chapter, "Court Appointed Special Advocates" which helps kids in need.

When to speak to a professional- If you regularly cannot shake angry feelings, it may be useful to talk to a therapist—ask your GP for a referral. Give that person a call if you: Regularly lose your temper with people you care about. Lose sleep thinking about things that upset you. Get intense and loud when you are angry. Make blunt and hurtful comments. You are told by others that your anger is getting in the way of your personal or work life. Adapted from the Science of Anger- by Elaine Chin, M.D., Bill Howatt, Ph.D.

Prayer for Emotional Healing

Holy Mary, loving mother and heavenly guide, be present to me now and let me know your compassion and kindness. Pray for me to your Divine Son, that I may experience calmness, tranquility and peace in all my emotions. Help me to grow in faith and love. Protect me from all that displeases God, and obtain for me serenity of mind, body and spirit. I place my trust and confidence in you, dear Blessed Mother, and I pray that God's blessings of mercy, grace and gentle goodness will bring happiness to my life, now and always. Amen.

Things to Do for Mind, Body and Spirit

The following “Things to Do for Mind, Body and Spirit” woke me up at 4:00am. I started to list them in my mind and had to get up and start writing so I would not forget them. Now I know that this booklet is inspired because I never get up at 5:00am to do anything! This list is just a template to bring some joy into your life. It is basically, what Steve and I do for fun to help our relationship thrive. On Friday night, we went to a tribute of Tom Petty and it was fantastic. Tickets were free with RSVP and then we had the best pizza. We were tired by the evening end and we didn’t stay but I am sure glad we went. We try our best to do as many positive things as possible because when we feel good on the outside, it helps our insides and vice versa. PS. Steve I signed us up for a corn-hole league. Remember the tournament on the cruise, when we were the couple to beat, only to choke in the finals? Or the putting tournament when I put down the club and had to run back, pick it up, and still made it in 3 shots? I am laughing aloud now. Or our poor man’s golf at St. Andrew’s when we played the 18 holes on their putting green, while it was sprinkling and the tourists on the bus were waving you on? Or when our luggage never arrived on our last cruise and we wore borrowed clothes from the boutique on board and the shoes that they lent you that were like boats on your feet? And my luggage came home days after we did! Despite not having our “things,” God gave us one of the most amazing times of our life by helping us to enjoy one another and have fun anyways! *“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will.”*

Visit your happy place	Make a collage
Stay leisurely in bed	Invite friends over
Make your spouse’s favorite dish	Make a photobook
Encourage someone	Take pics with family
Open the door for someone	Have a frosty from Wendy’s
Be the best that you can be	Design your dream house
Forgive someone	Yard sales for treasure finding
Acquiesce to what your partner wants to do	Adoration or holy hour
Think of something you can do with your partner & do it!	Cruise the clearance section
Have a date night	Repair something-anything
See a tribute band	Help someone in need
Keep a journal	Focus on what you can do
Make something on Shutterfly	Starbuck run
Write something	Make some homemade scones
Read the newspaper	Thank God throughout the day
Play chess	Eat jello with whip cream on top
Try a new recipe	Play board games
Visit family	Drink tea
Practice present moment awareness	Go out in nature
	Eat something spicy
	Walk the dog

PAUSE-Breathe deeply in and out	Eat some chocolate
Say a rosary	Laugh out loud
Kiss your spouse when you come home (Thanks Petra!)	Stretch your body
Go for a walk/run	Play backgammon
Sit by the water edge	Read some magazines
Go see a matinee	Decorate your room
Play solitaire	Watch a musical
Bake a cake/cookies	Visit an aquarium
Volunteer	Play a sport
Play corn hole toss	Travel
Horseshoes	Donate to others in need
Plan a cruise	Go to Adoration and spend some time with Jesus
Read magazines	Walk the mall
Play Scategories	Listen to Greg Laurie podcasts
Take a hike	Work on a puzzle
Read books	Take a family photo
Compose a poem	Take a break from overthinking
Count your blessings	Take a long drive and play the radio game!
Plan a date	Meditate
Start a photo gallery	Make someone’s day
Watch American Idol	Call a longtime friend
Call your mom	Buy yourself a “nothing bundt cupcake!”
Have a cocktail	Get a pedicure
Give thanks to God!	Or a facial
Eat delicious!	Get a massage
Watch old family videos	Get in a Jacuzzi
Escape to your happy place in your mind	Watch the clouds
Go to church and focus on the message	Spend time outdoors
Love yourself and say it in the mirror	Take a hike
Go to thrift stores	Give your spouse a backrub
Paint by number kit	Scratch their back
Get your hair styled	Play backgammon
Put some fresh makeup on	Go to a happy hour
Give yourself a manicure	Watch I Love Lucy
Take a bubble bath	Be in the present moment
Organize your closet	Make a CD of your favorite music
Be spontaneous	Write in your journal
Search mantras	Smile-fake it, until you make it
Paint your nails	Visit a museum
Exercise	Go camping
Have Taco Tuesday	Make chicken soup
Watch old movies	Visit an elderly friend
	Pray
	Read a favorite book from your childhood
	Troll Pinterest/Instagram

Learn something new
Go to dinner
Call your bestie
Spray some lavender on your sheets
Start a family tradition
Put cinnamon on your coffee grounds
before brewing (thanks Laura)
Have sushi
Play dominos
Drink water with ginger
Watch YouTube
Watch the sunrise
And the sunset
Make smoothies
Lay out in the yard
Go to dinner
Go fishing
Have a BBQ
Play a round of golf
Give your loved ones a blessing
Eat some ice cream
Play miniature golf (had fun Alex!)
Swim some laps
Play cards with family! (thanks for all
games of SPADES we played Liz &
Ray!)
Add your favorite things to do below:

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