

THE LOVE SAFETY NET WORKBOOK

A is for
Attachment

Roles, Responsibilities
Rewards

Emotional
Intelligence

Developmental
Gap Work

Kim and Steve Cooper

What This Workbook is About

In this workbook you will find a series of concepts and exercises designed to help you become more attractive and effective in your relationships and your life. These exercises are aimed at improving all of your relationships, including those with family, friends, colleagues and most importantly, *your relationship with yourself.*

The concepts of **Attachment, Balancing Power, Emotional Intelligence & Filling Developmental Gaps** represent **the four pillars of a stable and happy home.** These will be explored in the chapters in Part 1 of this book to help you build healthy and loving relationships that will pass the test of time. These and the exercises in the Exercise Manual (Part 2 of this book) are designed specifically to help you grow into a person people respect and admire and that people want to enjoy meaningful time with.

Most of our work centers on couples in crisis. It came to me recently that when a couple is fighting, it can be hard to get each to focus on the basics of what they really need to be working on. Couples tend to be so focused on changing their partner that it may be hard for them to see that there are some basics 'rules' they may be breaking.



This can be especially hard to look at if the relationship is over and a person may be thinking, "What's the point, he/she is gone and never coming back, so there is nothing left that I can do."

As bad as the end of a relationship may be, and whether there is hope or not, if you don't stop and look at the basics, the sad fact is that one day you may wake up old and lonely and find there is no one left to blame but yourself.

Love and affection are such basic human needs. It has been recorded that children raised in orphanages, with all of their other requirements met, have literally died of loneliness when deprived of touch and affection. Because our human need for love



Wondering what happened to the happily ever after?

In this workbook we offer exercises and practical advice to improve your love relationships, no matter how troubled. If you are someone who makes excuses or keeps asking questions, long after others have hit the playing field, this workbook may not be for the right tool for you. I say this because turning your relationship around may require you to take some BOLD steps and make some big changes.

If you are ready and have the courage to learn, we will be here to support you all the way!

is as vital as food or air—if love is being denied to us—this may add to our feeling that we somehow have the right to demand love and respect from the people around us.

This rarely works. The sad fact is that many people will find themselves—in later life—living for years without tenderness, touch or affection. Many will find themselves in a place where remembering the kind look from another or the touch of someone's skin becomes such a rare occurrence that these moments soon become treasured memories.

The challenges presented in this workbook will feel scary at times, and may require you to do things you may not have tried before, but if you are experiencing difficulty in your relationships, change will only come about from you learning a new proactive approach and the rewards will be well worth your effort.

This work is about overcoming the fear and vulnerability that love creates in us, and learning how to accept these feelings with grace and humility. If we have the courage to keep our hearts open when love makes us feel vulnerable, this is when we experience connection with life and its meaning.

Where ever possible I will use real life examples, many of which have come from our readers and subscribers sharing their stories with us. Thank you to everyone who has helped this workbook come to be. It is from the honesty, courage and love that you have all shared, that our work has developed to this new level. This workbook is about learning to love each other and help each other feel safe. Be ready for change in your life when you begin this work *and remember it is the subtle changes you make to your behavior that will often have the greatest impact.*

How to Use This Workbook

If you purchased this book as a download—<https://thencmarriage.com/books/the-love-safety-net-workbook/>— you will notice it is in two parts. You may wish to print it at home or at your local print shop and then perhaps bind it. Make sure you leave Part 2, the exercise manual as a separate document. If you are following the chapters in our membership site (highly recommended)—<https://thelovesafetynet.com/portal/>— you should download and print the Part 2 exercises for each chapter. Either way, please make sure you place the exercises in a clip board, folder or ring binder where you can add extra blank pages as needed.

Part 2 is the section where you will write down the answers to questions and keep a journal of your progress. If you have setbacks or problems down the line, these notes will be invaluable as you review the work you have done. As you take note of the results you have achieved, you will start to see patterns emerging, and things that were hurtful to you (and perhaps beyond your understanding) in the past will become calls to decisive action that will help you quickly get things 'back on track'. You should be using Part 1 and Part 2 concurrently, referring to each chapter to help you with the exercises in Part 2.

You may wish to read through the whole workbook first, before you start doing the exercises, to get an overview of the work and an idea of the general direction you are heading in. You may get some ideas while doing this, which you will want to put into practice straight away and that, of course, is fine. With the chapter on balancing power, please thoroughly think through any new plan of action you come up with first and only try out new approaches when you are feeling calm and grounded.

Most of all, this workbook is a journey of self discovery. You will find areas where you did not realize that you lacked courage and skill and other areas where talents you did not know that you possessed come naturally to you. The reward for seeking a better relationship with others may surprise you with the even greater reward of you developing a better relationship with yourself! In the end, after all, it ourselves that we really have to live with.

How This Workbook Came to Be

Ten years into my third bad relationship. I had to face facts that if I didn't find better ways of dealing with our problems, my marriage with Steve was hitting the skids. So I swallowed my pride and admitted our problems to a few people close to me. I am a 'thinker' personality type and problem solver, but this was the toughest problem I had ever faced. Eventually I did find answers and when things got better between us, I decided to use my hard won knowledge, together with my professional web design and writing skills to help other couples in the same situation.

This is when our book, *Back from the Looking Glass* (www.kimandstevesbookshop.com), was born. Eight months later, after helping hundreds of people via email and receiving countless letters of encouragement, Steve and I first put together this workbook. The information here complements *Back from the Looking Glass* (www.kimandstevesbookshop.com), which is a key resource for people in troubled relationships. *This workbook however, teaches the foundations of all healthy relationships.* It answers some of the more common questions readers ask, while helping you to learn how to take the upper hand (when needed) in your love life and create lasting affection and attraction in your life.



Kim Cooper

The Philosophy of This Book

Love is the greatest power on earth. It gives our life connection and meaning and overcomes life's vices with grace and ease. Love has the power to do this, because all human vices such as selfishness, greed and deceit, spring from a perceived lack of love and the feeling that we are unworthy to be loved.

So why does love appear to let so many people down, and see us at times lose our direction and bearings—sometimes so completely that we feel like a person lost at sea in a storm who has lost sight of the horizon—leaving us feeling so frightened, desperate and lonely that we may reach out for anything to fill the void in ourself, whether life enhancing or not?

To understand this problem, I believe we must first see love as the great force that it is. Like a massive waterfall, or creation itself, love does not serve us but instead humbles and energizes us. In love's presence even the strongest men become as vulnerable as a child. **Love** strips us bare of our arrogance and pretense, and if in its presence we refuse to close our hearts in fear, we will find connection, meaning and a call to service which will then grow into faith and joy and finally into even more love!

Now while love makes us feel vulnerable, **Anger** on the other hand make us feel strong. Anger does this because sometimes when in danger we may need the courage to suddenly feel we are invincible.



Are you and your partner often at odds?

We all want to be loved and appreciated by someone who knows us, but this can be much harder than it seems. "The Love Safety Net Workbook" covers four major aspects of healthy and loving relationships and gives you ongoing exercises and a personal workbook manual to chart the progress. This work will expose your weaknesses and help you turn them into strengths and give you a road map to get your life back on track quickly when things go wrong. This guide was developed for use in the most troubled and difficult relationships, but will help anyone who wants to take charge of their life and their love.



This feeling of confidence and power can be addictive and seductive and may tell us we have the right to impose our will on others and that they should submit to our demands. It may also trick us that love and respect are things that can be demanded from people rather than given or earned.

So when we feel vulnerable in the presence of love, and perhaps doubt our worthiness to be loved in return, *we may reach for anger as an all too easy remedy to protect us from how weak love can make us feel*. If we choose this course, however, anger, as love's opposite, will disconnect us from meaning and the love that surrounds us, while at the same time blinding us to our own blindness.

Do you feel angry if your partner ignores you or lets you down? I wonder if it is truly anger that you feel at these times or beneath this if you are perhaps scared that they don't love you or even fear that you are unlovable? Are you able to stand in that place of vulnerability and be honest with yourself and humbled by how you feel without becoming angry, demanding or overcome?

If we lack the courage to humble ourselves in love's presence and to remain open and continue to love, despite our own feelings of vulnerability and doubt, these two emotions **love** and **anger** can begin to play out a sad dance. This happens because the courage to stay in this place of raw vulnerability and humility in the face of love is a choice for the strong hearted, and not all of us are strong.

If my husband or my children act out in fear, I can still choose to love them and help them feel safe—even if their behavior makes me angry—after ensuring that we are all safe. Likewise if I act out in anger or fear, I can hope that my family will respond with the same charity and wisdom. Much better, however, would be me learning not to let my anger overwhelm me and hence protect my family and my relationships from my own reactions to fear.

There are many people now learning these skills and so you are not alone. Help is at hand and we are learning this together. We are no masters at this, just people who have brought together the ideas of many great teachers because of our own very real need!

Learning to love deeply is learning grace and courage in the face of uncertainty. It is learning to give reassurance and security to those weaker than us and who may be behaving at their worst, even when we feel vulnerable ourselves. *Because those who we choose to love cannot always give us the certainty and reassurance that we might demand. Nor should we continue to ask for this. We all have doubts and both women and men experience the fear of rejection.*

Our job instead is to accept the vulnerability and doubt that love brings up in us, and not close to it but feel it and choose to love anyway and trust that we are not alone and that just as the birds belong here and are cared for by God, so too are we. This is no small task, especially if we were not raised feeling secure, but it is a task that gives life purpose and meaning and one that will see us working to help our loved ones know they are safe with us rather than demanding they make us feel safe. If instead, when dealing with someone who is angry, we choose to close our hearts too, then of course we will continue to ask, "Where is the love?"

Like any lifesavers' training, helping a scared and angry person is not for the selfish or faint of heart. To 'rescue' a person from anger and fear we need to be prepared with the right tools, or the person we wish to save—out of panic and fear—may 'drown' us too.

Many people (when speaking of self destructive or abusive family members) will say, "But they must want to help themselves! They are dangerous and so we must abandon them and protect ourselves!". I think this needs to be reconsidered. We rescue people at the beach who are drowning, despite the danger and even despite their possible protests. The idea that we must abandon difficult people came from a time when we did not have the tools or the knowledge to help. This ignorance is still widespread and so once you have learned the skills offered in this workbook, we hope you will help us spread the word that help is now at hand and abusive family members can be helped and family relationships can improve.

Happy and stable families are what everything worthwhile on this planet (from a human perspective) begins with and right now the human race desperately needs these foundations secured.

If you or your partner did not have the experience of an emotionally stable family growing up, it will make these lessons all the harder. It has been shown however, that experiencing a healthy relationship can indeed help you heal the past. This is called a reparative relationship and means therapy is not the only option.

People come to feel secure from experiencing security.

In this way a child or an adult who is 'acting out' needs to be taught the boundaries of correct behavior. They will not, however, be able to learn these lessons unless they feel safe and they also feel loved.

So here is your Love Safety Net Workbook. It will help you re-parent yourself and your loved ones with **wisdom**, with **courage** and with **love**. For these three virtues together overcome the need to reach for anger as a palliative to fear.

After my first date with Steve I had something like dysentery for days. I was in love and was so terrified I was sick with it!

For better or for worse I fought off the voices of fear that came to me in my fever, and to this day I do not regret it, because for all that we have been through, loving Steve has taught me the most important lesson of my life, which is that coming to trust myself and show others that I am trustworthy matters much more than worrying about who I can trust. I know how to respond to bad behavior much better than I once did and am a stronger woman today than I once was. But love still brings me to my knees and I let it, for through the humility, connection and vulnerability that love brings, my life is blessed and I feel my connection with life's greater meaning.

Sorting This From That

There is a fairy tale that you have probably heard—with some possible variations—which goes something like this:

A young girl is taken captive by a witch who sets challenges for her. One of these tasks is for the girl to sort a huge pile of seeds by the next morning. In the modern version of the tale, magical birds come and relieve her of this task while she sleeps.

This is not how the original story was told. In the original, her captor was not a witch but a wise woman and the task part of the girl's initiation into womanhood. Just as Little Red Riding Hood was originally instructional for young women about sexual predators, this tale holds an important message about life. We must learn to 'sort this from that' if we are to grow to be loving, wise and attractive. On this point we often receive letters with all of the problems mixed up and interconnected in very unhelpful ways. The story might run something like this;

"I love my husband and am lonely when we are apart but he treats me so badly that I hate him too. He sometimes is so rude to me and even steals and breaks my things when we fight. He pretends he can do things he can't and tells people he is better than he is and can be such a liar! It makes me furious when he acts like such a 'big shot' and then puts me down. I get so upset that sometimes I won't speak to him for days. I don't think I should have to be the one always to patch things up when he is so arrogant. After he has been hurtful, I wait for him to make it up to me and apologize but usually he doesn't and then I end up angry all over again. I can't prove it but sometimes I am sure he is having an affair and then other times I think that maybe I am just a jealous person and that it is really me who is a bad person."

OK so let's 'sort this from that' and break this letter down into the four major and separate issues:

1. If he is stealing and breaking her things, this is a situation where her partner is disrespecting her legal rights and breaking the law. He only does this because he has not been taught this is wrong and he has probably always got away with this kind of behavior. He may have had a parent that broke or took away his things as punishment, which taught him this was okay. This is a matter where she may need to call in support from the police in a calm and responsible manner. It is natural this behavior should make her angry, that is what we feel when others ignore our rights and disrespect us. But her getting angry

won't change his behavior. This is about her husband abusing power, setting limits on this type of behaviour is dealt with in our chapter on **Balancing Power**.

2. His lying and boasting about himself is a matter of his own insecurity and inadequacy. This needs to be treated with compassion. These feelings of inadequacy may cause him to seek praise and attention from other women. He needs **Developmental Gap Work** so that he feels more secure in himself and does not need to seek attention and adulation from others in this way.

3. Her wanting and waiting for her partner to make her feel better after he behaves badly, is understandable, but it is also irrational and ineffective. She needs to know how to take action with these problems and she needs to learn how to self soothe to help herself feel better and be responsible for her own happiness and not leave this up to him. This is covered in our chapter on **Emotional Intelligence**.

4. Her not speaking with him is ineffective discipline for him stealing or breaking things (or being rude) and it is certainly not going to improve his self-esteem or help him feel more adequate. She is only damaging their relationship by doing this, so this is about **Attachment**. She needs to learn to create a stronger and more healthy attachment with him, rather than damage it with ineffective 'punishments'. Not speaking to him as punishment is not limiting abuse, but rather an ineffective attempt to get him to serve her own immature emotional needs, and so while damaging their attachment it is also stemming from a lack of emotional intelligence.

After reading hundreds of letters and having been through the 'sorting this from that' process myself, I have noticed that the four areas I have broken this down into above are the same four which come up again and again. You can learn how to deal with these situations effectively (and differently than you have in the past) after you first 'sort this from that' and get better clarity by learning steps to take, for each area that may be a problem. This workbook is divided into these same four areas and I am going to ask you to keep track of each area separately. This will give you a quick reference in future to see which areas come easily to you and which come harder. ***The areas you find hardest are the areas that will give you the fastest results if you work on them.*** It is natural that we avoid things that are new and that we are not good at and so in time when you start to notice that one section has much less filled in than the others, you will know that this is where your work really needs to start.

The mix will also be different for different relationships. For some, balancing power may be the most pressing problem and their partner may even need to spend some time in jail if their behavior has been violent or criminal. This will not necessarily mean the relationship is over, however, if the sorting work is done well. Rather than demanding that their partner do things to make them 'feel better' The remedial potential of some time in jail will work best if instead they work on strengthening the attachment and challenging their partner to start taking steps in the right direction to fill in their developmental gaps; while taking care of their own emotional needs so that they can be supportive of their partner's progress.

Other couples may find that there is little abuse to limit when balancing power, and what there is will disappear as soon as a stronger and healthier organisational structure is built and they become more responsible for their own emotions.

Still a different dynamic may exist with a partner who is very emotionally mature and able to take care of themselves but has perhaps been blind to their partner's feelings of inadequacy and has not understood their need for support. This type of relationship will sometimes see the partner who is feeling insecure somewhat intimidated by their partner's emotional resilience if it is not coupled with understanding and the knowledge of how to strengthen the attachment and offer practical support.

So without going into every possible variation (which would be impossible anyway) I would like to empower you to have the knowledge of each of these areas so that you can help yourself no matter what 'the mix'. If 'sorting this from that' sounds complicated, it will become clearer as you read through each chapter in this workbook.

These steps are very effective to use in strengthening relationships with children and family members as well, and we will offer some specific advice on this as we go.

It is important before you start this work that you realize that who your partner pretended to be when you were first courting, is perhaps not who they really are. If you are wanting that person back you will surely be disappointed. Your partner could not keep up 'that act' and so putting pressure on them to be that person will only make them feel anxious. I want you to ask yourself if you can accept the people in your life right now with all their current imperfections? This does not mean allowing them to treat you badly, it means instead being a friend and supporting them where they need help and not holding unrealistic expectations over them. We would all love a hero, at times, to come to the rescue and make everything all right, but chances are that your partner may need a hero even more than you do! If you can first see that the perfect partner you once thought you knew was really just them trying to fulfill your expectations, you are in a good place to start work.

You may find a peaceful and happy relationship has nothing to do with you being the perfect couple or being better than anyone else.

Conversely, if your partner plays the perfect spouse in public but verbally or physically abuses you in private, this is a situation you should not accept. In this case it is important that you not only work through the exercises in this workbook—especially the chapter on balancing power—but that you also read and take the steps in Back From the Looking Glass - 13 Steps to a Peaceful Home <https://thencmarriage.com/books/back-from-the-looking-glass/>

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