

THE SOULMATE LOVER

**A Guide to Passionate and Lasting
Love, Sex, and Intimacy**

Enjoy these two chapters of *The Soulmate Lover*:

Chapter 1: Sexy Is a State of Mind

Chapter 9: The Power of Invitation

If you like them, we know you will love the rest of the book!

With love,
Mali & Joe

Mali Apple & Joe Dunn

What People Are Saying About *The Soulmate Lover*

"The perfect continuation of *The Soulmate Experience*, this is a masterful teaching tool and healing guide that is also a page turner.

Reading it together is great foreplay!"

~PATRICK AND SUZANNE CALLAHAN

"With personal narratives, practical applications, and sound relationship advice, *The Soulmate Lover* approaches the topics of sensuality and sexuality in a non-threatening but honest and helpful way. Mali and Joe show people that it is okay to be a sexual being and that sex can be an awakening spiritual experience. Couples often lose touch with each other—this book helps them get their mojo back."

~DR. R. Y. LANGHAM

"*The Soulmate Lover* captivated me right from the start with its elegant flow and simplicity. It is a must-read for anyone seeking a long-lasting and satisfying intimate relationship."

~MIGUEL HERNANDEZ

"Reading this book takes me back to my teenage years when I discovered the sensual-sexual world for the first time. *The Soulmate Lover* is for all of us who believe in the possibility of rediscovering our true sexual potential."

~CLAUDIA KLEIMAN

"This is an 'I can't wait to see what's on the next page' book: informative, eye opening, and could definitely save a marriage or two."

~GEORGE CALDERON

"*The Soulmate Lover* touches on real topics with a thoughtful delicacy. And it doesn't just focus on sex and our bodies. Full of great advice that everyone should hear, it explores ways to enjoy life, build relationships, appreciate ourselves and who we are, and find true happiness."

~MARGARET WARREN

"*The Soulmate Lover* is a lifetime gift for our future. It reminds us to say yes to each other even more and to look at each other with fresh eyes and really see the person we fell in love with. It pulls us up daily whenever we feel the urge to answer for one another and presume something on their behalf. Thank you, Joe and Mali, for these and many other precious gifts."

~KIRSTIE AND DEREK RICHARDSON

"*The Soulmate Lover* takes us into the realm of sensible guidance in helping us have better intimacy while empowering us with spiritual concepts such as using awareness and being open to and setting intentions for deeper joy and pleasure."

~REVEREND SCOTT DEHN

"Mali and Joe have the gift of getting to the heart of relationships in a way that is approachable and authentic."

~DIANE WISMER

"I am in my 28th year of marriage. I'm not looking for my soulmate, since I have already found him. But this book has offered me wisdom to be my highest self. In doing this, not only did I improve my own life, but I also became a better partner to my husband, and then watched him become a better partner to me. Mali and Joe's messages of love are ringing loud and clear. Thanks for sharing them with the world!"

~MONICA CAULFIELD

"I'm struck with how simple but genuinely life-changing the ideas in this book are."

~ASIA SLOWIK

"Whether you're single or in a relationship, *The Soulmate Lover* will quickly have you feeling more sensual and more sexy—both in and out of the bedroom."

~LISA VINCENT

"If you are looking for a book that will improve your sex life, look no further. But don't be mistaken: this is not a techniques-based manual but rather a pathway to enriching relationships. This book shows you how to be the quality mate you want to be so that you and your lover can relate in a healthy and fulfilling manner."

~MICHAEL DEMARCHI

"Even as an older person, the gentle advice in Mali and Joe's book opened the door for me to connect more lovingly with my 'young at heart' self."

~JEANNE HENNESSEY

"The perfect book for couples to read together to improve intimacy and joy."

~MONTY PERRY

THE
SOULMATE
LOVER

Also by Mali Apple & Joe Dunn

*The Soulmate Experience:
A Practical Guide to Creating Extraordinary Relationships*

*52 Prescriptions for Happiness:
A Year of Inspiration for the Body, Mind, and Soul*

Mantras for Making Love (audio)

Overcoming Jealousy Online Course
(available at www.TheSoulmateExperience.com)

THE
SOULMATE
LOVER

**A Guide to Passionate and Lasting
Love, Sex, and Intimacy**

Mali Apple & Joe Dunn



San Rafael, California

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The intent of this book is to offer information of a general nature to readers in the quest for emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. The authors are not physicians or licensed therapists, although members of those professions have been consulted on certain issues. This book is not a substitute for medical advice or counseling, and the authors and publisher assume no responsibility for any loss, damage, or malady caused by the information or lack of information it contains. If you require medical advice or counseling, please seek the services of a professional.

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First Edition

To Joe

*For your unwavering faith, support, and love
For your gentle wisdom and your willingness to play
And for always making me laugh*

Mali

To Mali

*Thank you for allowing me to be in this place of honor
in your life and helping you get this important
message of love out into the world*

Joe

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An Invitation

If you ever feel that there is more to love, sex, and intimacy than you've been experiencing, you're probably right. Whether you're single, dating, or with a partner, if you dream of a relationship that's loving, passionate, and fully alive, this book is your invitation to have just that.

We wrote our first book, *The Soulmate Experience: A Practical Guide to Creating Extraordinary Relationships*, to address the most frequent questions we're asked about how to create a close and connected relationship. We wrote this sequel to go more deeply into questions about how to create and sustain sexual intimacy and desire in order to keep a relationship compelling and passionate. Questions like this:

*How can I meet someone who is ready for a
deeply intimate relationship?*

If you're looking for a relationship that feels connected on every level, you'll be interested in hearing about the "secrets" taught in

a popular (and expensive!) weekend seduction seminar—and more importantly, how to adapt those secrets for the purpose of making a *real* connection with someone. If you're taking your search online, you'll also want to know how to create a dating profile that will attract someone who's really right for you.

The ideas and inspiration in this book will soon have you feeling much more positive about your ability to meet someone with whom you can have a truly intimate relationship.

*I've never been able to fully open up sexually.
What suggestions do you have for me?*

The truth is, almost every one of us could more fully open to our own sexuality. The explorations in this book will show you how to awaken your senses and your sensuality, feel more positive about your body, connect with your sexual energy, and begin letting go of any sexual shame you might be carrying with you from the past.

As you explore these ideas, you'll naturally begin to feel more comfortable in your body and more confident in your sexuality. You will be more available for deeply connected physical intimacy with your lover. And you might just find yourself experiencing more pleasure than you ever imagined possible.

*We have a sexual problem that is affecting our ability
to be intimate. What can we do?*

In the chapter on sexual healing, we'll show you how to approach a variety of common sexual issues as opportunities for intimacy and connection. By practicing the art of sexual healing, you'll be able to

lovingly address and even dissolve challenges to connecting sexually and, in doing so, create an environment that fosters profound and lasting intimacy.

We've been together for a while now.

How can we keep our sex life passionate and compelling?

Even when we're very much in love, sex with the same partner can become predictable and less frequent over time. The innovative ideas and intimate explorations in this book will energize your sexual connection and bring a spirit of adventure, creativity, and playfulness into the bedroom. This will ensure that even as time goes on, your sex life will continue to be vibrant and satisfying and your passion for each other will stay strong.

Our sex life is already good.

How can we make it exceptional?

The explorations in this book will help you and your lover "supercharge" your sexual connection. For example, you'll learn how to cultivate your sexual energy to heighten your pleasure and deepen your intimacy. As you discover new ways of experiencing pleasure together and open up to your full sexual potential with each other, your entire relationship will feel more connected, compelling, and alive.

*I'd love to try some of these ideas, but how can I
get my partner to try them with me?*

If you'd like to entice your partner to explore new areas of sexuality with you, or even just try something a little out of the ordinary,

you're going to want to know about the power of invitation. You'll find that invitation is one of the most versatile and valuable tools you will ever have. With it, you will be able to ask for many of the things you might desire in your relationship, and in a way that actually inspires more intimacy and love. In our experience, invitation is also the most powerful and effective way to invite your lover to deepen your intimacy on every level: body, mind, heart, and soul.

We believe in the possibility of passionate and lasting love, sex, and intimacy. We believe in this because we're experiencing it, as are countless people we've worked with. This book is our invitation for you—whether you're male or female, gay or straight, single or in a relationship—to experience that possibility for yourself.

In love,

Mali & Joe

Sexy Is a State of Mind

At one time or another, most of us have wished we felt more attractive, more desirable, or sexier than we do. But despite what advertisers would have us believe, these aren't qualities you can buy on a dress rack or spray on with a bottle of cologne. They don't depend on your age, your weight, what you wear, or even how you look. More than anything else, feeling attractive, desirable, or sexy is a state of mind.

When Lydia finally accepted Stefanie's invitation to check out the downtown evening market, she was a bit nervous. Stefanie had always said that the market was one of the best places to meet single men, but it had been two years since Lydia had even been out on a date. And it seemed like forever since she'd felt attractive or desirable.

Lydia followed a few steps behind as Stefanie wandered through the array of artists, entertainers, and food vendors. She watched her friend laugh with the man making tacos, recommend lilies to a

guy picking out flowers for his fiancé, and even flirt playfully with a couple of police officers selling raffle tickets.

"How do you do it?" Lydia asked Stefanie. "We're the same age, and we look so alike we could be sisters. But you're always so radiant and sexy and I always feel so frumpy."

"Let me tell you a secret," Stefanie said. "To me, sexy isn't about your age or what you look like. It's all about how you're feeling." She took Lydia by the hand. "Here, walk with me. Whatever you thought sexy was, forget it. Pay attention to whatever makes you feel *alive*. It could be the warmth of the sun on your skin, the scent of those lilies, or those crystal earrings shimmering in the sunlight."

They came up to a group of colorfully dressed women dancing to an energetic African beat.

"And when you hear music like this, let it in," Stefanie said. "Forget what anyone else is doing, or what they might be thinking about what you're doing. Just feel the music in your body. Let it *move* you."

Lydia closed her eyes and let herself begin to sway to the sound of the drums. The beat started to take hold, and she could feel herself moving into the rhythm of the dance.

Opening her eyes, Lydia could see that more people were joining in. She felt the evening breeze playing with her hair, bringing goose bumps to her bare skin and a tingle to her entire body. As she turned to catch the last rays of sunlight on her face, she unexpectedly made eye contact with a man standing on the other side of the dancers.

Stefanie leaned toward her. "And when you look in someone's eyes and feel a sense of connection," she whispered, "be open to it."

In the past, Lydia would have gotten nervous and turned away. Instead she held the man's gaze for a few moments. Twenty minutes later, she had a date for coffee—and an entirely new outlook on what it means to feel sexy.

What Lydia discovered that day is a new meaning of the word *sexy*, a meaning that isn't focused on the superficial. Sexy, in this definition, is a feeling of aliveness that comes from within when you are connecting with the sensual world that's all around you.

SEXY: IT'S NOT NECESSARILY WHAT YOU THINK

Say these words to yourself: "I am sexy." If that makes you uncomfortable or even a little embarrassed, let's look at some possible reasons why. Could you have grown up with the idea that people who like feeling sexy are "bad"? Do you recall ever getting the message that you weren't or couldn't be sexy? Are you holding on to an image of what it means to be sexy, like dark and exotic, or young and thin, that you don't match up to? The truth is, there are many more ways to define the word than what we may have learned from our families, friends, society, and the media.

Ian, a photographer, says that what makes his girlfriend sexy to him isn't what she's wearing or even how she looks. "It's her 'life is an adventure' attitude and her willingness to have fun," he says.

"A handsome face, a nice body, and the right clothes can certainly be sexy," smiles Evelyn, a restaurant manager in her thirties. "But more than anything, it's a positive self-image that makes a man sexy."

"I think passion is what makes someone sexy," says Jessie, a graduate student in chemistry. "And that's not only in the bedroom. To me, when a woman is passionate about anything in life, she's sexy."

It Isn't About How You Look—It's About How You Feel

Like Lydia, many of us have bought into the idea that to be attractive, desirable, or sexy, there are certain things we need to do, wear, or say, or a particular attitude we have to adopt. This isn't surprising, given the kinds of messages and images that most of us are inundated with daily.

As Stefanie knows, the key to *being* attractive and desirable is *feeling* attractive and desirable. It doesn't depend on your gender, hair color, age, or shape. It's not about what you're wearing or how much money you make. When it comes to the question of whether you *are* sexy, what's most important is whether you *feel* sexy.

One sure way to start feeling more attractive, desirable, or sexy is to stop evaluating yourself using anybody else's definitions of those words. Instead, start exploring your own ideas of what these words mean. For example, rather than wearing clothes just because they're "in," take time to experiment and discover your own individual style, one that suits your unique face and body and expresses your unique personality.

As you read this book you'll find yourself getting more in touch with who you are and with what feels sexy to *you*. And you'll discover that the sexier and more attractive you feel, the more other people are going to see you that way.

Sexy is not a competition.

Sexy is a state of mind.



It Isn't About Your Weight—It's About Being Happy in Your Body

The men and women who have the most satisfying sex lives aren't necessarily those with the most "perfect" bodies, but they are more likely to be comfortable in their bodies. And the more comfortable you are in your body, the more pleasure you'll be able to have with it.

If you are someone who's struggled with their weight, know that weighing more, or less, than you'd like does not prevent you from having an active and very satisfying sex life.

George, whose wife has been overweight all her life, says, "I've always been very attracted to my wife. All of the skin-to-skin contact is quite erotic. We really have a very sexy thing going on."

Julia, a nurse in her mid-forties, says, "I've dated men who are overweight by medical standards. And even though being in better shape would be healthier for them, it honestly doesn't matter to me when it comes down to physical attraction. A man is sexy to me when he likes being in his body."

Marcia has a condition that makes her extremely thin. She and her husband, Dan, laugh about her "negative boobs" and say they make no difference whatsoever in their sexual connection. Dan says that just the fact that Marcia's alive makes her beautiful to him.

Instead of waiting until you're a certain weight or in better shape to feel sexy, why not learn to be a little happier, and feel a little sexier, in your body right now? The ideas and explorations in this book will help you discover how to be more comfortable in your body no matter what its size, shape, or condition. And when you're feeling happy in your body, you'll have a lot more fun being in it.

It Isn't About Your Age—It's About Your Vitality

Almost everywhere we turn, we're bombarded with the message that in order to be sexy, we've got to be young. Yes, youthfulness can be sexy. But as Brandon, who's in his early forties, says, "Anyone with a youthful, positive attitude can be sexy."

The word *vital* means "full of life." Instead of letting age be an indicator of your desirability, why not look to your vitality? This means that rather than focusing on how *old* you are, you focus on how *full of life* you are.

People with real vitality have more energy for living. They tend to be more enthusiastic and more self-assured. Where others see obstacles and problems, they see opportunities and possibilities. They are excited to be alive, open to and accepting of others, and inspired to make the most of whatever time they have. It's not surprising that people with vitality often look and feel younger than they are.

There's not a thing you can do about your age. But there's a lot you can do to increase your vitality.

Ask Your Older, Wiser Self If you find yourself thinking negatively about your age, imagine yourself many years from now looking back at you today. What does your older, wiser self have to say about the thoughts you're having? One young man reported that his eighty-year-old self advised him, "You don't want to get to be my age and realize how many opportunities you missed. Stop wasting time and get out there!" A woman in her forties received this advice: "There's something to love about every stage of life. Find out what it is!"

To start with, take care of your body. We're talking about all the things you already know to do if you want to feel more vibrant and alive. Get enough rest. Eat a healthy diet. Give your body some exercise. Take it easy on the alcohol and drugs. All these factors contribute to how much energy you have and how vital you feel. Consistently taking care of yourself, of course, requires inspiration and willpower—and this book will help you with those.

Vitality, though, isn't just about treating your body well by exercising and eating right. It's also about how you treat yourself in other ways, like making time to pursue what you're passionate about and keeping the negative self-talk to a minimum. The inspiration and ideas we will be sharing will help you in these areas, too.

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL SEXY?

Take a minute to think about this question: *What makes you feel sexy?* So many things have the potential to feel sexy when we really give them our attention. Consider all of these answers to the question:

- Alisa: "Going salsa dancing with my girlfriends."
- Rick: "Playing a hard game of racquetball and then taking a cold shower."
- Ava: "Driving fast in really hot weather with the windows down."
- Drew: "Wearing my boyfriend's cashmere sweater—and nothing else."
- Lori: "Licking honey off my fingers."

- Tom: "Building a campfire and sleeping under the stars."
- Gabrielle: "Sunning naked on my private patio."
- Jason: "Shaving before going out on Saturday night."
- Susanne: "The intense rush I get from riding on roller coasters."
- Henry: "Lying around in bed on the weekend, reading the paper and drinking good coffee."
- Stephen: "Wearing my best suit for a formal event."
- Claudia: "Splurging on a sexy bra."
- Dara: "Parading around my house in a bikini."
- Sidney: "Feeding my girlfriend sushi."
- Liz: "Wearing a silk dress on a warm summer evening."
- Jackie: "Listening to the blues."
- Keshni: "Seeing my curves in the mirror."

Now how would you answer the question, *What makes you feel sexy?*

Go Through the Magic Door Here's a powerful technique to help you step out of self-doubt and into self-confidence anytime you want. When you walk through the Magic Door, you choose to accept yourself exactly as you are right now—including your appearance, your personality, and your present life situation. Any door—whether it's the door to your apartment, the door of a restaurant, or even an imaginary door you create on the spot—can serve as a Magic Door. However you happen to look or whatever is going on for you, make the decision to own it. The Magic Door is a way to get in touch with your own magic: the power you have to change your state of mind in an instant. It's your reminder that it's perfectly okay to be you, exactly as you are.

STEPPING INTO A SEXY STATE OF MIND

Life gives you endless opportunities to feel authentically sexy. Here are some ways to make the most of those opportunities:

- *Recognize that you're sexy in your own way.* It's easy to fall into the habit of comparing ourselves to others, but playing the comparison game can be a significant obstacle to feeling good about yourself. Yes, a fit body can be sexy, but so can someone who truly likes being who they are. Sure, stylish or provocative clothing can be sexy, but so can someone who wears clothing they love being in or who carries themselves with confidence and grace. And yes, a youthful face can be sexy, but so can someone who has a joyful or positive attitude. When you catch yourself playing the comparison game, *stop*—and remind yourself that you are unique and sexy in your own way.
- *Show up for a sexy class.* Try some activities that encourage you to explore and enjoy your body in a sensual or playful way. Look for a class that focuses on making a connection between the music and your movement, such as salsa, tango, bachata, ecstatic dance, hip-hop, contact improvisation, or freestyle dance. Or invite a friend to get adventurous with you and take a burlesque, belly dancing, pole dancing, or aerial aerobics class, all of which are designed to help you feel strong and self-confident in your body.

**Stepping into a
sexy state of mind
makes it easier
for you, and
everyone else,
to experience
the sexy in you.**



- *Have an intention to feel sexy.* Even the most mundane activity can be an opportunity to move into a sexy state of mind. Go for a walk, sit on a rock in the park, or just do the day's errands while devoting that time to experiencing yourself as sexy. Allow yourself to appreciate anything that stimulates your senses or feels the least bit sensual, such as the movement of your body, the smells of nature, or any physical sensations you are experiencing. Just having an intention to feel sexy will provide you with plenty of opportunities to feel sexy more often.

Can you feel
sexy when
no one else is
around?



- *Use a sexy mantra.* When you're trying any of these suggestions, you can also incorporate a personal mantra. Try repeating to yourself, "I am sexy and beautiful in my own way," or "I feel sensual and alive," or just "I am sexy." This is simple to do, and it works. When you make a statement like this to yourself, your mind automatically goes to work showing you all the reasons why it's true.

As you put all of these ideas into practice, don't be surprised to find yourself shifting into a very sexy—and very alive—state of mind.



Creating your own definition of what it means to be sexy—or confident, attractive, or any other quality you desire—allows you to own that quality. It also allows others to experience that quality in you.

Because when you feel sexy on the inside, it shows on the outside!

The Power of Invitation

When it comes to relationships, invitation is the number one secret for having it all: getting your desires fulfilled while simultaneously increasing the love and intimacy between you and your partner. In fact, the art of invitation may end up being the most versatile and valuable skill you'll ever have—not only in your relationships, but in the rest of your life as well.

Teresa and Dillon, who belong to the same photography group, were friends for several years before getting romantically involved. When they finally began going out, things progressed quickly and it wasn't long before they were talking about a possible future together. Everything was a huge *yes* for Teresa, except for one minor thing: Dillon turned out to be much less sexually assertive than she'd always imagined he would be.

"I'd seen his take-charge side from time to time before we started dating," she says, "and imagined how exciting that would be in the bedroom. But he's always very loving and gentle with me,

which is great—it's just that once in a while I'd love to be, well, just *taken*."

One day she finally got up the courage to ask him about it.

"I know this is going to sound cliché, but he said he loves me so much he'd never think of treating me as anything but a princess," she says. "His explanation was really pretty sweet. But I still wanted to experience that strong, masculine side of him too."

A few weeks later, before they left on a weekend trip, Teresa secretly went shopping. That Saturday, after spending the day taking pictures of the local scenery, they returned to the cabin they'd rented. While Dillon made a fire, Teresa disappeared into the shower to get herself ready for the surprise she had been planning.

The warm water relaxed her body, and she could feel her anticipation building. She began to imagine herself in the role of an experienced seductress: a woman who was sensual and self-assured, a woman who could entice her lover in endless ways. She watched as that woman in the mirror dried her hair, rubbed lotion over her entire body, and then got dressed in the black lace-up bodysuit she had packed away.

"I love that you think of me as your princess," she said to a stunned Dillon as she walked into the room. "But tonight, I want to be your *bad* princess."

What Teresa was offering Dillon was an invitation: an invitation to get more intimate by bringing out sides of themselves that they hadn't explored together before.

And what if Dillon had been reluctant to play along?

"I went in knowing that was a possibility," Teresa says. "But Dillon and I have been able to work through anything that comes up between us, so I felt okay taking that risk."

Invitation is useful for more than just encouraging your partner to be a little adventurous. It can help you ask for many of the things you might desire in your relationship, and in a way that can actually inspire more intimacy and love.

HOW WE USUALLY TRY TO GET WHAT WE WANT (WHEN ASKING POLITELY DOESN'T WORK)

Below is a list of approaches we often use in our attempts to get what we want in our relationships. Having picked up these tactics from family, friends, the media, and previous relationships, most of us have tried many of them at one time or another.

Spend a few minutes reflecting back on your own relationships. See if you can think of a few instances when you used one or more of these tactics with someone you loved:

- Complaining
- Guilt tripping
- Getting annoyed or frustrated
- Criticizing
- Making demands
- Using sarcasm
- Blaming or making accusations

- Getting angry
- Taking away your love, affection, or attention

We might also add "having expectations" to this list. Holding expectations that your partner "should" do certain things can lead you to use any of the other tactics that are listed.

Now, for each example you identified, consider how well that approach actually worked. Think about not only whether you got what you wanted, but the overall effect the approach had. Did everyone involved feel good about the interaction and the outcome, or did it cause disagreements or disharmony? Did your partner end up feeling guilty, unappreciated, or inadequate? If you didn't get what you were after, were you left feeling frustrated, sad, or even resentful?

Notice that all of the tactics on the list have something in common: they are all forms of manipulation. These behaviors can be so ingrained in us that we may hardly be aware we're using them. Whether we know we're using them or not, they are still manipulation; they may just be *unconscious* manipulation.

Most of us don't enjoy being manipulated, so it's human nature for your partner to respond to such tactics with resistance, such as by getting annoyed, becoming defensive, or ignoring you. And even if the tactics do happen to work, your partner still might end up feeling irritated and resentful.

**A heartfelt invitation
is far more likely
to get an
enthusiastic yes!
than manipulation
ever will.**



The point is, *manipulative tactics might get you what you're after in the short term, but they won't produce a connected, fulfilling relationship in the long term.*

A MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE—AND LOVING—WAY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

Using invitation instead of manipulation is a better choice for several reasons: First, if your partner doesn't feel pressure coming from you, he or she is more likely to consider your proposal in a positive light and feel better about saying yes. Second, with a genuine invitation, you won't be left feeling frustrated, hurt, or disappointed if the answer doesn't happen to be yes. And third, it's much easier for love to thrive in an environment that's free of manipulation.

To harness the power of invitation, follow these three steps:

Step 1: Notice When You're Using Manipulation—and Then Stop

You can't use invitation at the same time as manipulation. So recognizing when you're using manipulation, or are about to use it, is essential.

For example, we often try to hide our true intention behind our choice of words. Suppose Alan really wants his girlfriend, Alexandria, to accompany him to his uncle's house for a family dinner. In an effort to convince her, he might indirectly accuse her of not being committed to the relationship by saying something like "People who are together should show their commitment to the relationship by spending time with each other's family." Or, "If you really loved me, you would *want* to go to this dinner with me." Can't you just feel the guilt trip?

To learn to recognize when you're using manipulation, pay attention when you and your partner have a difference of opinion or are trying to make an important decision together. Listen not only to *what* you're saying but to *how* you're saying it: your tone of voice and the words you choose.

When you catch yourself attempting to use manipulation, one way to make a shift is by actually pointing out your own behavior. If Alan recognizes that he's trying to manipulate Alexandria into going with him, he could get honest with her about what he's noticing: "Wow, did you hear how I was trying to guilt-trip you just now? I don't want to do that. If you go with me, I want it to be because you really want to, not because I pressured you into it." You will probably find that acknowledging what you're doing and admitting it to your partner can instantly lighten the mood and reconnect you with the love you feel for each other.

When you're not using manipulation, you have an opportunity to approach the situation in an entirely different way.

Step 2: Let Go of Your Attachment to the Outcome

The next step to trying invitation is letting go, as much as possible, of any attachment you have to getting what you are asking for.

Carmen, who's been learning the art of invitation, speaks for many of us when she says, "That step is the hardest!" Yes, letting go of our attachment to an outcome can seem quite challenging at first. But when you try it out and are successful a few times, it becomes much easier.

What does it mean to be attached to an outcome? When you are attached to a particular outcome and events don't turn out the way you want, you'll experience some form of unhappiness, like irritation, frustration, or resentment. The less attached you are to the outcome, the better you're going to feel no matter what happens.

In Alan's case, if he's attached to the idea of Alexandria accompanying him to his uncle's and she doesn't want to go, he's likely to feel hurt, sad, or disappointed. If he can let go of his attachment to this idea and have it be just a preference—something he'd love to have happen but not something he'll be upset about if it doesn't—he can enjoy himself whether she accompanies him or not.

How do you let go of attachment? Often just remembering that not being attached is an option can help you turn your attachment into a simple preference. And when you hold something as a

Manipulation:
Getting what you want
by making your
partner feel bad.

Invitation:
Getting what you want
by making your
partner feel good.



Make Your Heart Grow Fonder Being apart from the one you love can sometimes be challenging. If you're feeling disappointed because you're going solo to a party, sad because circumstances are preventing you from being together, or lonely because you're just missing your lover's company, use that time apart to reconnect with your love for them and your gratitude for having them in your life. This practice will dissolve feelings of sadness, frustration, and resentment by moving you away from the "bitter" side of bittersweet and toward the "sweet" side!

preference, you won't get upset if it isn't met. Here are a few other ways you might be able to make the switch from attachment to preference:

- *Remind yourself that your partner is a unique, independent human being.* He or she is here of their own free will and has the freedom to make his or her own choices, decisions, and mistakes.
- *Take full responsibility for your own happiness.* Let go of the idea that anything in particular has to happen in order for you to be happy.
- *Be genuinely open to seeing things from your partner's perspective.* Acknowledge and accept that this is how your partner feels in this moment.
- *Know that however your partner responds to your request is not a reflection of your value.* Your value—your worth as a person—is intrinsic; it does not depend on anyone else. "No" means that, for now, your partner just doesn't happen to be interested in your offer, not that you're not good enough.
- *Be open to the possibility that not getting what you want in this situation could result in unexpected benefits or opportunities.* This realization makes it easier to let go of your attachment and to see those benefits and opportunities when they do show up.
- *Understand that even if you don't get what you want, invitation will likely have much better consequences for your relationship than manipulation or demands ever will.*

Letting go of an attachment can be challenging. So don't expect yourself to be able to use invitation in every situation. There will

probably be outcomes you're not willing to let go of your attachment to—at least not yet.

Step 3: Offer a Genuine Invitation

Beneath (sometimes far beneath) almost every attempt to manipulate your partner is a sincere, authentic desire to connect with the person you love. As you let go of your attachment to a particular outcome, you'll be able to express that desire in a simple, heartfelt invitation.

In Alan's situation, as he lets go of the idea that Alexandria "should" go with him to his uncle's house or that he "needs" her to go, he can get in touch with his authentic desire, which might be something like "I really love being with her." He can then express that desire through an invitation: "Would you like to go to my uncle's house for dinner Saturday night? I really love hanging out with you, and I'd like everyone to see what an amazing woman I have in my life."

When you offer someone an invitation, there's always the possibility that they may be reluctant or even say no. If their response bothers you, that just means you are still carrying some attachment to the outcome. Remind yourself that a true invitation doesn't seek to manipulate, restrict, or control in any way; the other person has the freedom to accept or decline, without pressure, judgment, or repercussions.

Also, having no attachment doesn't mean saying the right words to give the *appearance*

**A true invitation
is free of
obligation.
It has no
"should"
quality to it.**



that you have no attachment. That's simply more manipulation. Have you ever said "It's fine" when it wasn't fine at all?

No matter how freely you offer something, of course, it may be that your partner is simply not going to be interested (this time). Or you might be asking for something that's just not negotiable for them, such as moving to a foreign country or having a threesome. When you recognize that the issue in question is non-negotiable, you have a number of options:

- You can keep trying, sometimes for years, to convince your partner to change his or her mind, and never succeed. (Remember, this is non-negotiable for them.)
- You can decide that this issue is so important to one or both of you that the best thing to do is to separate, ideally with as much love as possible.
- You can consider whether there might be some unique, creative approach to the situation that will get each of you much of what you desire, even if it's in a different way from what you originally pictured.

Although invitation is not a guarantee, it's by far a better choice than manipulation, not only for its short-term benefits, but also for the ongoing health and happiness of your relationship. So let's look at how it works. The more examples you see, the easier it will be for you to apply the power of invitation in your own life.

**Manipulation
comes from
the head.
Invitation
comes from
the heart.**



USING INVITATION TO DEEPEN YOUR CONNECTION

When Carmen and Jeremy first started dating, Jeremy made it clear that because he had recently ended a twelve-year marriage, he wasn't ready to get serious anytime soon.

Carmen really liked Jeremy and saw the possibility for a truly amazing relationship, but she was cautious. She never suggested anything for them to do together; instead, she always waited for him to contact her. After a date, sometimes days or even a couple of weeks would go by before Jeremy would reach out again. When he did try to get in touch, she sometimes made it a point not to return his texts or calls too quickly so that he wouldn't know how available and interested she really was.

After almost a year of being hesitant to "put myself out there and face the rejection of having him possibly pull away," she says, "I'd had just about enough. I felt like I was living my life on restriction."

Carmen could see that her reluctance to ask Jeremy out or to let him know how she really felt about him was not getting her what she authentically desired: an opportunity for the two of them to get closer and see where their connection might take them. The only way they would ever be likely to get that opportunity, she realized, was if she did the inviting.

So how did Carmen get past the idea that Jeremy turning down an invitation from her would be a rejection? How did she stop worrying about whether or not he would say yes?

To begin with, she recognized that not being attached to Jeremy saying yes was a real possibility for her. She decided that if he said no, it would mean he wasn't interested, not that she wasn't exciting enough to be with. And she realized that if their relationship ended, she would be sad for a while, but eventually she would go out and "meet someone else to create a really great relationship with."

Letting go of her attachment to Jeremy saying yes made it possible for Carmen to simply invite him to get together. She then found it much easier to make simple offers like these: "A friend has extra tickets to the music festival this weekend; would you like to go with me? It'd be fun to check it out together." "Would you like to come over? My garden is producing like crazy right now and I'd love to make you dinner." Or just "Would you like to do something together this weekend?"

Just as Carmen learned she could invite the person she's dating to explore their connection more deeply, invitation can also be used with someone you've recently met who may not realize they are ready for and capable of having a deeply connected relationship, or who doesn't know that type of relationship is even a possibility. And it's by far the most effective way to encourage a long-term partner to experience more intimacy. When you invite someone to take your connection to the next level—with openness, sincerity, and no attachment to whether they take you up on it—at the very least, they're likely to be intrigued!

**Invitation creates
an environment
that encourages
your partner's
willing
participation.**



ASKING AS IF FOR THE FIRST TIME

Whenever she and her boyfriend start to make love, Elaine often finds herself frustrated. Antonio absolutely adores her body, but in his excitement he always seems to forget that it takes her a while to get warmed up. In particular, Elaine's nipples are extremely sensitive, but all too often, Antonio heads straight for them. Elaine pulls away, saying something like "Ouch! I wish you could remember to be more gentle."

She finally had an honest conversation with him about it—and learned something important.

"I'd do anything for you—I'm crazy about you," Antonio assured her. "But I guess I'm not as good at remembering things as I'd like to be. Feel free to remind me any time you're thinking about it."

The fact is, everyone's memory works a little differently. Expecting our partner to remember something that they consistently forget can often lead to frustration, exasperation, or blame. If Elaine succeeds in learning how to ask Antonio for a gentler touch—and asking every time as if it's the first time—she will be able to relax, he will be grateful, and they'll both feel much more sexually connected. (And Elaine, by the way, will pretty much have mastered the art of invitation!)

Instead of expecting your partner to remember what you like, use invitation to help them rediscover what you like.



To help you get the hang of this skill, here are some more examples of offering an invitation as if for the first time:

- Instead of "I wish you'd go out on the boat with me once in a while; I'll be taking it out again tomorrow," try "I'd really love to show you the sunset from out on the water tomorrow night; it should be gorgeous."
- Instead of "This is the third time Taylor and Jamie have invited us over for dinner. Am I supposed to just keep going by myself?" try "Taylor and Jamie invited us over for dinner Friday night. Would you like to come? I know you'd love the view from their place, and Taylor is an awesome cook."
- Instead of "I know you don't really like parties, so you probably wouldn't be interested in going to this one with me, would you?" try "If you'll be my date to this party, I promise to wear that blue dress you love so much—yeah, *that* one!"

If you're thinking that any or all of these alternatives could sound manipulative, you're right; almost *anything* can sound that way if it's said with an intent to manipulate. And if it is, you will both feel it. So imagine how each of these examples might sound as a truly genuine invitation, said with no attachment to the outcome and no attempt to manipulate. There's a big difference between trying to convince someone to do something they don't want to do and simply offering them a possibility for why they just might enjoy doing it.

The secret to these kinds of invitations is this: each time you ask, let go of any resentment you might have from when you've asked before, as well as any expectation you might have about the answer this time, and ask as if you were asking for the *first* time. Like any skill, the more you practice this, the easier it will become.

INVITING YOUR LOVER TO FULFILL A FANTASY OR DESIRE

Invitation may be the best way to entice your lover to try something new, whether that's one of the many explorations in this book or another one you come up with on your own.

Elizabeth, an accountant, tells the story of a fantasy she's had for many years. She imagines herself and her lover arriving separately at an exclusive nightclub. She gets there first and has enough time before he arrives to meet and have a conversation with a couple of gentlemen at the bar. When her lover enters the club, they don't let on that they know each other. She watches him as he orders something to drink. They begin to flirt with their eyes. They move closer. The magnetic attraction between them is undeniable. They leave together—and everyone in the place knows exactly where they're headed.

When she started dating Steve, Elizabeth kept imagining him in the role of her lover in this scenario. "Steve's pretty adventurous in other ways, so I thought he might be open to playing this out with me," she says. "What really enticed him to try it, though, was when I said I loved the idea of everyone there knowing how hot I think he is."

Now *there's* a sexy invitation.

**Invitation
is like
holding the
door open
to a new
possibility.**



The night of their rendezvous, they drove to a popular bar in an upscale hotel. The plan was that Elizabeth would go in first; Steve would follow in twenty minutes or so. But as soon as Elizabeth

opened the car door, Steve panicked. He offered no explanation; he just said he couldn't go through with it.

Elizabeth could have let herself get discouraged or disappointed when Steve backed out, or she could have felt too awkward or embarrassed to ever bring it up again. She didn't do any of those things, however. Instead, back at his apartment, she invited Steve to have a conversation about what had happened. "I'd love to hear about what came up for you back there," she said to him. "Would you be willing to talk about it?"

Steve admitted that the image of Elizabeth in conversation with another man was pretty exciting to him. So was the idea of that man watching as the two of them hit it off and left the place together. He was embarrassed to admit, though, that part of him was worried she'd end up meeting somebody else she would rather go home with instead of him.

Elizabeth reassured Steve that going home with someone else was the furthest thing from her mind. She told him she'd still love to act out her fantasy with him "to show you just how into you I really am—and why you have nothing to worry about." She assured him that if they got to the bar and he still wasn't ready, she'd be totally okay with that. She was just happy he was willing to give it another try.

This isn't the only fantasy that the couple has now played out together. "I happen to have a lot of them," Elizabeth laughs. "As Steve says, we're having a hell of a good time!"

Elizabeth offers some insight into what can help someone say yes to an invitation. "What I've found is that Steve will go along with

my little adventures as long as he knows that my real interest is in having an exciting experience with *him*."

Here are three more examples of how someone might express their desire through an invitation:

- Instead of "You never _____ anymore when we're making love like you used to," try "Remember how you used to _____ when we made love? I would absolutely love it if you did that again—like, right now!"
- Instead of "I've suggested this before and you weren't interested, but . . . ," try "I love imagining you in the role of _____. What could I do to entice you into acting that out with me sometime?"
- Instead of "I know you don't go for these kinds of things, but there's this tantra workshop for couples being held in the city next month," try "I love when we explore new things sexually. Do you want to go online with me to check out this couple's workshop and see if it might be fun for us?"

Hailey, a dance instructor, has practiced using invitation often with Dakota, her partner of many years. "Sexy invitations have a special magic—they can be irresistible," she says. "And for us, fulfilling our fantasies together is just incredibly fun."

Of course, whether or not to ask your lover if they'd like to participate in fulfilling a particular desire will depend on what that desire is and the relationship you and your lover have. You'll have to decide whether your relationship—and your lover—seem as if they could be ready for what you have in mind.

INVITATION AND THE DESIRE TO BE SEEN

We all have a natural desire to be acknowledged and appreciated, to have our partner truly *see* us. We're not talking about the constant need for validation that can come from low self-esteem; we're talking about our natural, healthy desire for human connection. (Some people believe we should try to rise above our desire for others to see and acknowledge us. But for most of us mortals, that's just too lofty a goal, and may not sound like much fun.)

The reality is, it's not uncommon for couples to get into a routine and stop really noticing each other after a while. So if you ever feel as if your partner doesn't seem to be *seeing* you and instead is just *seeing through* you, here are some approaches you can try:

Start by taking in all the times they *do* acknowledge and appreciate you, even if only in small ways, and be grateful for them. You might be surprised how often people in relationships say, "I feel unappreciated for all the times I *do* notice him/her."

Additionally, don't assume that just because your partner doesn't seem to notice something about you (by, say, not complimenting you on it as they would have in the past) that means they no longer appreciate that aspect of you. What's more likely is that they have simply become used to it. Psychologists call this phenomenon *sensory adaptation*: our natural human tendency to become less responsive to the same stimulus over time.

What's important to recognize is this: when your partner does not seem to be noticing something he or she used to love about

you, it's not necessarily a reflection of how they feel about you. And if it's something they appreciated in the past, they can probably appreciate it again. Understanding this can keep you from slipping into disappointment or resentment and instead give you the courage to invite them to see it again. If appreciation is not freely offered, if you have to go asking for it, you may feel it has less value. But it has far more value—for both you *and* your relationship—than resentment or disappointment ever will.

If your partner doesn't seem to be seeing a certain aspect of you, invite them to.



"It can be really hard to point out to my husband something I like about myself," admits Karen. "But if I don't, I end up feeling sad and disappointed. And when I do, he always seems happy to hear about it." And her husband? He says he appreciates the invitations. "When Karen tells me about something she did that she's proud of or shows me something she likes about herself, it makes me stop and look at her differently."

Here are a few examples of how a person might invite their partner to see something he or she might be overlooking:

- Instead of "You walked right by my new design without saying a word," try "Tell me when you have a few minutes. I really want to share my new design with you."
- Instead of "I got all dressed up for the party tonight and you didn't even notice," try "I feel almost like a different person in these new clothes—check this out!"

- Instead of "You never check out my butt anymore like you used to," try "I think you're really going to like how good my butt looks in these new jeans!"

With an invitation like one of these, with no attachment to whether or not your partner takes you up on it, you're not manipulating them into doing something they don't want to do. You're simply inviting them to take another look and maybe see something they didn't see before.

INVITING YOUR LOVER TO SEE ANOTHER POSSIBILITY

You probably know that trying to change someone, unless and until they ask for your help, is nearly impossible. Through your own example, however, you can sometimes invite someone to see another possibility.

Aidan, for example, believes that their sex life would improve if he and his boyfriend took better care of themselves; they both tire easily and often have little energy left for sex. But any time he's tried to suggest that the two of them should eat a healthier diet or get more exercise, it's just made John feel criticized and judged.

Finally, Aidan decided to simply make some changes on his own, and eventually

**Often the most
loving and effective
way to encourage
your partner
to make a
positive change
is through
the power of
your own example.**



the results began to show: he started to look trimmer and stronger, and he had a lot more energy. A few weeks into the new routine, John asked what he was doing differently.

"He wanted in," laughs Aidan. "He didn't want to be left behind."

Whether it's an increase in exercise, a better diet, getting more rest, drinking less alcohol, or anything else you know would be good for your health, it often takes tremendous effort to make positive changes. As long as you don't push your new choices on him or her, your partner can—and very often will—draw inspiration and willpower from your own effort.

"It makes me stop and think when my girlfriend says no to a second glass of wine," says Cameron. "And when she gets up early on Saturday morning for her exercise class, it motivates me to drag my lazy butt out of bed and go work out too."

As Aidan and Cameron both know, sometimes our own example is all the invitation our partner needs.



*By harnessing the power of invitation, you will find
you have tremendous ability to create the relationships—and the life—
you truly desire.*

Explorations for Transformation

For your convenience, following is a list of the transformational explorations that appear throughout this book, and the pages on which you will find them.

Ask Your Older, Wiser Self, 6

Go Through the Magic Door, 8

Take a Time-Out, 14

Open Up to Each Other's Likes, 18

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Questions for Reflection

Use these questions to encourage conversation in a book discussion group after reading each chapter, or simply reflect on them on your own.

Introduction

- What do you hope to get from this book?
- What desires do you have for your intimate relationships?

Chapter 1: Sexy Is a State of Mind

- What are your thoughts or beliefs around the idea of wanting to feel sexy, attractive, or desirable?
- What was your definition of the word *sexy* before you read this chapter?
- What is your definition of *sexy* now?
- What other words, like this one, might you want to redefine for yourself?

Chapter 2: Sensuality Starts with the Senses

- What do you just love the smell of? The taste of? The sound of? The feel of?
- Describe some of the most sensual experiences you've enjoyed with a lover.
- What are some of your "I don't like" beliefs, and where did you acquire them?
- What is one area in which you would be willing to expand your sensory comfort zones?

Chapter 3: Accessing Your Masculine and Feminine Energies

- When you were growing up, what messages did you receive about what it meant to be a boy or a girl? Were you ever told that you couldn't do something, or should do something, solely because of your gender? How has gender conditioning influenced your relationships?
- When have you demonstrated qualities like confidence, will-power, or courage? In what situations might you benefit from being able to access qualities like these? How could you open up more to these types of qualities?
- When have you demonstrated qualities like compassion, receptivity, or intuition? In what situations might you benefit from being able to access qualities like these? How could you open up more to these types of qualities?
- How would you describe the balance of masculine and feminine energies in your current relationship or in past relationships? What might you do to enhance your relationship in this area?

Chapter 4: Letting Go of Sexual Shame

- In what ways, if any, has sexual shame affected your life or your relationships?
- If you have experienced any form of sexual shame, what have you done to work with it? What else might you do?
- What do you imagine a sexual relationship would be like if it were free of feelings of guilt, embarrassment, or shame?

Chapter 5: Inspiration for Getting Off Your A and Into Your Body**

- What inspires you to take care of your body? What gets in the way of taking care of your body?
- What are your favorite ways to let your body play?
- What activity have you tried recently that challenged your body in a new way?
- After reading this chapter, what new ways of motivating yourself are you inspired to try?

Chapter 6: Connecting with Your Sexual Energy

- What did you learn about nudity growing up? How comfortable are you being naked, on your own or with a partner? If you're not comfortable in the nude, what might you do to become more so?
- What did you learn about masturbation as you were growing up? How do you feel about masturbation now?
- How do you connect with your sexual energy, on your own or with a partner?
- Have you experimented with cultivating your sexual energy?
- What is your definition of sexuality? Are there any ways you might expand that definition?

Chapter 7: Seduction, Intimacy, and Keeping the Spark Alive

- What does intimacy mean to you?
- Looking back at your past relationships, how did the intimacy between you and your partners change over time? What would allow you to experience more intimacy or to be more authentic, receptive, and vulnerable in your relationships?
- If you're single, what suggestions for meeting new people are you inspired to try?
- If you're in a relationship, what suggestions for deepening your intimacy are you excited to try?

Chapter 8: Sex and the Practice of Being Present

- How has your ability to be present affected your sexual relationships or experiences?
- What gets in the way of you being present during sex? How could you bring more presence into your sex life?
- What are your feelings about pornography and its effect on people's ability to be present?

Chapter 9: The Power of Invitation

- How have you tried to use manipulation to get what you want in your relationships? How well did it work? How have partners tried to use manipulation to get what they wanted from you, and how well did that work?
- How have you used the power of invitation in your relationships?
- Is there a situation in your life right now where you could use invitation? How could you approach that situation?

Chapter 10: The Art of Sexual Healing

- What are your thoughts about the possibility of lovers using their sexual connection to heal each other?
- What experiences have you had that could be considered sexual healing?
- What situations have you experienced, or are you experiencing, where sexual healing could be helpful? What would that look like?

Chapter 11: Opening Up to Your Orgasmic Potential

- How intimate are you with your anatomy? Is there anything you could do to get more in touch with your own body?
- How would you describe your experiences with orgasm so far?
- How have you practiced cultivating your sexual energy with a partner? After reading this chapter, what suggestions are you inspired to try for opening up to your full orgasmic potential?

Chapter 12: The Five Essential Practices for Truly Soulful Sex

- What could you do to be more self-accepting? How do you practice acceptance with your partner?
- How do you practice being right here, right now? In what ways could you create an experience of the “unknown” with a long-term partner?
- How do you practice coming from a place of love? What context might you create to enhance your sex life?
- When do you feel most connected to your lover? What practices help you, or could help you, to feel more connected?
- How do you tap into your sense of gratitude for your partner? What might you do to increase your appreciation for him or her?

In Gratitude

Reflecting back on the magical four-year adventure of writing this book, we're truly in awe when we consider all the people who so generously shared their experiences, insights, and inspiration. Without their contributions, this book wouldn't be the book it is.

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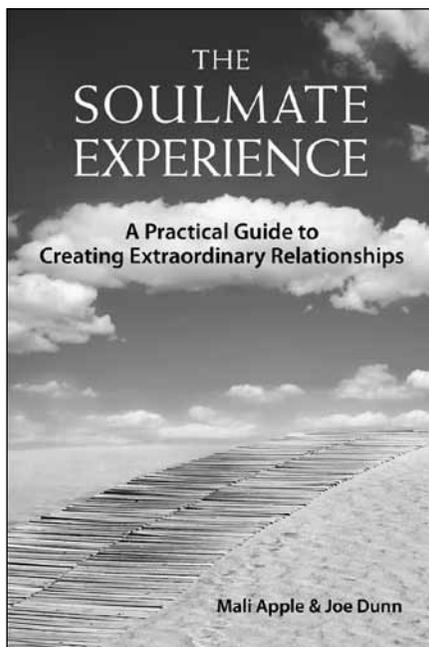
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Mali & Joe

If you liked *The Soulmate Lover*, you will love *The Soulmate Experience*, Mali Apple and Joe Dunn's bestselling guide to creating and sustaining relationships that are intimately connected on all levels—emotional, intellectual, sexual, and spiritual.



**The Soulmate Experience: A Practical Guide to
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