

# Getting The Love You Want Harville Hendrix

Fully Updated and Revised Edition of  
This Groundbreaking Guidebook

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# Getting *the* LOVE You Want A Guide for Couples

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'Readers will benefit from the new wisdom of these two  
pioneers in understanding relationships.'  
JULIE SCHWARTZ GOTTMAN and JOHN GOTTMAN,  
author of *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*

Harville Hendrix, PhD,  
and Helen LaKelly Hunt, PhD

## Introduction to Harville Hendrix and "Getting the Love You Want"

**Getting the love you want** is not merely a romantic aspiration but a profound journey of understanding oneself and one's partner, as emphasized by Dr. Harville Hendrix in his seminal work. Dr. Hendrix, a renowned therapist and author, co-created the Imago Relationship Therapy, which

serves as the foundation for his book "Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples." This transformative approach to relationships aims to help couples navigate their emotional landscapes, fostering deeper connections and healthier interactions.

## **The Core Concepts of Imago Relationship Therapy**

Imago Relationship Therapy is built on the premise that our childhood experiences significantly shape our adult relationships. Dr. Hendrix posits that individuals subconsciously seek partners who mirror the traits of their primary caregivers. This mirroring can lead to profound love and understanding, but it can also trigger unresolved issues from childhood that manifest as conflict in adult relationships.

### **Key Principles of Imago Therapy**

1. **The Imago:** The term "imago" refers to the unconscious image of love that each person carries within themselves, shaped by early childhood experiences. This imago influences partner selection and relationship dynamics.
2. **Conscious Partnership:** Hendrix emphasizes the importance of moving from an unconscious relationship model to a conscious one. This shift requires couples to engage in intentional dialogue and actively work on their relationship.
3. **Healing Childhood Wounds:** Imago therapy encourages partners to address and heal their childhood wounds. Recognizing these wounds can lead to greater empathy and understanding between partners.
4. **Dialogue Techniques:** One of the cornerstones of Imago therapy is the use of structured dialogue techniques that promote active listening and validation, allowing couples to communicate more effectively.

## **The Process of Getting the Love You Want**

Dr. Hendrix outlines a clear process in his book that guides couples in their journey to achieving the love they desire. This process includes several key steps.

### **1. Understanding Your Imago**

The first step is to identify and understand your imago. Couples are encouraged to reflect on their childhood experiences and how these experiences shape their expectations in relationships. This introspection can lead to revelations about why partners may react in certain ways during conflicts.

## 2. The Power of Dialogue

Effective communication is vital for any relationship. Imago therapy introduces specific dialogue techniques, including:

- The Mirror: One partner shares their thoughts and feelings while the other mirrors back what they heard, ensuring they understand each other correctly.
- Validation: After mirroring, the listener validates the speaker's feelings, acknowledging their emotional experience without judgment.
- Empathy: Finally, the listener expresses empathy, offering a deeper understanding of the speaker's feelings and experiences.

This structured dialogue fosters an environment where both partners feel heard and valued.

## 3. Exploring Feelings and Needs

Once couples have established effective communication, they delve into their feelings and needs. This exploration helps partners articulate what they truly desire from each other, moving beyond surface-level complaints to uncover deeper emotional needs.

## 4. Creating a Safe Space for Vulnerability

A crucial aspect of getting the love you want is creating a safe emotional space where vulnerability is welcomed. Couples are encouraged to share their fears, desires, and insecurities without fear of judgment or retaliation. This openness can lead to deeper intimacy and connection.

## 5. Building a Vision for the Relationship

After addressing individual needs and feelings, couples can work together to create a shared vision for their relationship. This vision may include goals for emotional connection, shared activities, or even long-term aspirations. By collaborating on a vision, couples reinforce their commitment to each other and foster a sense of partnership.

## Common Challenges in Relationships

While the journey to getting the love you want can be fulfilling, it is not without challenges. Some common obstacles couples face include:

- **Communication Barriers:** Misunderstandings and assumptions can lead to conflict, making

effective communication essential.

- **Emotional Triggers:** Past wounds can resurface during conflicts, causing reactions that seem disproportionate to the current situation.
- **Fear of Vulnerability:** Many individuals struggle with opening up about their feelings and needs, fearing rejection or judgment.
- **Resistance to Change:** Change can be daunting, and some couples may resist the effort required to improve their relationship.

## Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

To navigate these challenges, couples can employ a variety of strategies:

1. **Practice Active Listening:** Make a conscious effort to listen without interrupting. This practice fosters understanding and reduces conflict.
2. **Identify Triggers:** Recognize emotional triggers and communicate them to your partner. This awareness can help prevent escalations during arguments.
3. **Embrace Vulnerability:** Share your fears and insecurities with your partner. Vulnerability can strengthen intimacy and trust.
4. **Set Aside Time for Connection:** Regularly schedule time to connect with your partner, free from distractions. This dedicated time reinforces emotional bonds.
5. **Seek Professional Guidance:** If challenges persist, consider seeking the help of a trained therapist who specializes in Imago Therapy.

## The Long-Term Benefits of Imago Therapy

Engaging in the process of getting the love you want through Imago Relationship Therapy can yield significant long-term benefits, including:

### Enhanced Communication Skills

Couples who practice the dialogue techniques learn to communicate more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts.

## **Deeper Emotional Connection**

By exploring feelings and needs, partners can cultivate a deeper emotional bond, fostering intimacy and trust.

## **Greater Empathy and Understanding**

As couples learn to understand each other's childhood wounds, they develop greater empathy, allowing them to support each other more effectively.

## **Resilience in the Face of Challenges**

Couples equipped with the tools of Imago therapy are better prepared to navigate challenges, leading to a more resilient relationship.

## **Conclusion**

Getting the love you want is an attainable goal, as demonstrated by Harville Hendrix's Imago Relationship Therapy. By understanding the dynamics of their relationships and employing effective communication techniques, couples can foster deeper connections and navigate the complexities of love. The journey may require effort and vulnerability, but the rewards—greater intimacy, understanding, and fulfillment—are well worth it. Whether you are in a committed relationship or seeking to enhance your future partnerships, the principles outlined by Dr. Hendrix can serve as a valuable guide on your path to lasting love.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the main premise of 'Getting the Love You Want' by Harville Hendrix?**

The main premise of 'Getting the Love You Want' is that relationships can be transformed through understanding our unconscious patterns and needs. Harville Hendrix suggests that by recognizing these patterns, couples can create deeper connections and fulfill their emotional needs.

### **How does Harville Hendrix propose couples improve their communication?**

Harville Hendrix advocates for a process called 'Imago Dialogue,' which encourages couples to listen empathetically and communicate openly. This involves mirroring, validating, and empathizing with each other's feelings and perspectives to foster understanding and reduce conflict.

## What role does childhood experience play in adult relationships according to Hendrix?

According to Harville Hendrix, childhood experiences shape our unconscious beliefs and expectations in relationships. He argues that unresolved issues from our upbringing can influence how we relate to our partners, often leading to recurring patterns of conflict.

## Can 'Getting the Love You Want' be beneficial for single individuals as well?

Yes, 'Getting the Love You Want' can be beneficial for single individuals as it encourages self-reflection and healing from past relationships. By understanding their own needs and patterns, singles can prepare for healthier future relationships.

## What are some practical exercises from the book that couples can try?

Some practical exercises from 'Getting the Love You Want' include the 'Imago Dialogue,' where partners take turns sharing their feelings while the other listens without interruption, and creating a 'love list' that outlines each partner's needs and desires for their relationship.

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