

# The Path to Romantic Success

What You Won't Learn in  
School or at Home about  
Finding True Love

Marilyn Cornelius



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## DEDICATION

*For Tim, Vinay, Kamal, Opeta, Aaron, and Linda.*



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To Slim Huntimer, thank you for guiding me – I feel your benevolence, and I am grateful. As I sat wearing your pajama top in your chair, I could not stop writing. Eventually my knees hurt and my wrists were stiff, but my soul is still dancing!

To the love of my life, thank you for being you...







## AIN'T NO SELF-LOVE IN THIS HERE CHILDHOOD

What we missed as children about self-love isn't anyone's fault. It's simply not around. No one teaches it, so our parents and teachers don't know.

As a child, I loved dancing, and thankfully, it stayed with me throughout the traumas of childhood and teendom (yes, I made up that word). Through my body, I always returned to truth. It took its damned time though.

In school, I learned I would be rewarded for doing my homework, memorizing stuff, and helping out the teachers. The reward was often verbal praise, and more work (including grading papers and writing report cards), which challenged me and I enjoyed learning the new tasks.

I was always driven to do better than I did yesterday, so I internalized my competitive energy and worked hard. My creativity didn't really show up except during dancing, bake sales, and the like.

All I wanted was to be liked and fit in. As I would find out much later, this is the wrong way to go about life.

It's so clear now that fitting in was not for me. I was always different.

In first grade (class 1 or year 1 for my Fijian readers), I would get into trouble for disturbing my fellow students, and the teacher would reprimand me. Thankfully, Ma stepped in, observing that I was done with my work and bored, and suggesting I be allowed to read, which solved the problem. It also ruined my eyes but hey, it was worth it. To this day I enjoy wearing glasses – I'm a nerd and proud of it – but, you guessed it, that pride took time.

Being good at netball, which is a sport like basketball but without dribbling (not on the chin, the other kind), I became even more singled out. I was the only girl of Indian heritage at my school that was playing the sport.

I was told that same year, at age 11, by a resentful student, that I talk too much. As I went on to junior high school, I became reclusive, shy, and by the time I started high school, depressed. More on this soon.

I was always at the top of my class, the teacher's

pet, and beginning to be despised by some students, especially when my work was held up as the gold standard. I remember one time in high school my entire class was asked to look at my biology lab book and the teacher said something like: "I want your work to look like this."

I cringed, heart sinking. I was being singled out again, and it was messing up my desire to blend in.

That same day, after biology class, a short angry kid walked up to me and said I had ugly lips. It hit me like a bomb – I imploded with shock, hurt, and embarrassment. For many years, I believed him. I thought I was ugly.

I became even more reclusive, and began journaling incessantly, a practice I had begun at age ten after being inspired by *The Diary of Anne Frank*. I told my diary everything. Soon, a bit like how our breathing changes when we reach a certain altitude, almost all my writing transitioned into poetry.

At home as a high schooler, I spent most of my time in my bedroom listening to U2 and doing homework, writing, and in general, pondering life, death, and the fate of the world, which often seemed to rest on my shoulders.

I observed both my parents giving and giving and giving, often without any balance of receiving. Ma had some good boundaries when it came to protecting Daddy, but Daddy could never say no. I learned this well. Perhaps too well. It would haunt

me and hold me back for many years.

Of course I don't blame them, and to this day we are all very generous in my family, but habits we learn as young children take time to change.

Nowhere in this otherwise pretty benign childhood was there any shred of self-love. I lost sight of myself, failed to see my talents clearly, judged myself harshly, but worked hard anyway. I was birthing the three "self no nos," as you are about to find out.

Guiding Questions for journaling:<sup>1</sup>

- How might we revisit our inner child and teach him/her/them to love himself/herself/themselves?
- How might we help instill self-love as a practice in our children, clients, and loved ones?
- What does unconditional love look like in practice? To the self? To others?

“Love yourself first and everything else falls into line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world.”

**Lucille Ball**

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<sup>1</sup> For help with going deeper into any of the guiding questions in this book or beyond, contact me via our website: <http://www.alchemusprime.com/contact/> and stay tuned for the online course.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marilyn is a coach, facilitator, author, cook, artist, poet, activist, and most importantly, goofball. She spends her time serving clients in ways that support authentic leadership and sustained wellness through her organization, Alchemus Prime. The sources of her creative flow include dancing and Ma Nature's bounty: flowers, trees, animals, and the ocean. This is Marilyn's thirteenth popular book; she has also co-authored several peer-reviewed publications. Marilyn holds a PhD in behavioral sciences and climate change from Stanford University.