

# *Getting Back to Love: When the Pushing and Pulling Threaten to Tear You Apart*

## Introduction

We believe that everyone deserves to have fulfilling and satisfying relationships. Attaining one, however, is one of the more challenging, if not impossible, tasks facing individuals today. As a society, we say we value love, marriage, and the family, but we do not educate ourselves or our young people about love, the value of love, how to grow it, and how to sustain it. As a society, we take it for granted that our young people will find their way as we did. But we didn't find our way to the value of love and how to grow and sustain it; we found our way to the highest divorce rate in history. In addition, there are many couples who live together without getting married, free to break up and move on with little to no legal ramification. This makes the divorce rate, in terms of indicating the break up of family units, incomplete. It takes courage, energy, passion, time, and even an investment of money these days to figure out what it means to love another person and to learn how to value love, grow it, and sustain it.

In 1997, we made a discovery about ourselves as individuals. We each discovered that love mattered, that love could make a difference, and that pouring our effort, time, energy, money, passion, courage, and faith into learning about love, how to value it, grow it, and sustain it was worth it! We trusted that we could make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others by studying love and what it meant to practice love within all our relationships. We'll get more into our personal story in a few more paragraphs and in chapter three. For now, our study of love revealed that there is a

unique pairing of certain kinds of men and women who start out loving each other like crazy only to *drive* each other crazy by the time their relationships reach a certain level of commitment! These couples believe they recognize love and value it but consistently get stuck when it comes to growing it and sustaining it. They are Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls, and they attract one another like flies to honey.

The Mama's Boy and Daddy's Girls relationship in particular is prevalent here in the United States. We've seen it in Presidents of this country; in CEO's of large-, medium-, and small-size corporations; in the arts; in schools; in medicine; and in service fields. On all the playgrounds of life and among all ages, the dance between Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls can be witnessed. We'll explore in greater detail in this book how Mama's Boys try to get their power first from their mothers and then from other women in their lives. Daddy's Girls try to find fulfillment first by taking care of their fathers and then by taking care of other men in their lives. As complementary reflections of one another, Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls invariably attract each other. The relationships between them can manifest in a number of ways.

Mama's Boys present in a variety of extremes: from a physically or psychologically abusive man who feels powerful only when he is abusing a woman, to a sex-addict moving from one conquest to another. Some are fundamentalists of their particular religion and use religion to "keep women in their place." Others display the completely opposite behavior of a sycophant, depending totally on women. These extremes are ways Mama's Boys express their desire for power through compensatory behaviors. There are less extreme Mama's Boys, but they nevertheless have unsatisfying relationships with the opposite sex because they are in some way trying to get their power from the women in their lives.

Daddy's Girls have their own extremes, from a woman who berates and belittles her man in public, to a woman who makes all the decisions on behalf of her family. One woman may not be able to sustain a romantic relationship with a man because her loyalty to her father comes first while another might be her husband's sex-slave. Some women are not just submissive but subservient to their husbands, only able to relate to men in a

child-like fashion. These extremes are ways that Daddy's Girls try to find fulfillment – by taking care of the men in their lives. Then there are women who don't live these extremes but find themselves saying things like, "My husband is my third child!" These women experience an ever-present dissatisfaction in their relationship with their significant other and don't know what to do about it. They want more from their relationship but they don't know how to name it, how to frame what's wrong, so they can constructively do something about it.

The relationship between a Mama's Boy and a Daddy's Girl is ripe for both passionate love and frustration and resentment. It is the kind of relationship we, the authors, know best, and it is the one within which we can make a difference! We can make a difference in the lives of Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls because we have made a difference in our own lives and in the lives of family, friends, and clients.

This book grew out of our respective journeys as a man and a woman. When we fell in love, we discovered an intriguing dichotomy between us. In spite of a seventeen-year age difference, we soon came to realize that the very things that had frustrated each of us in our individual lives up to that point had a complementary expression in the other. Joseph was a "Mama's Boy," used to getting his power from the women in his life. At the time we met, he was learning to get his power and integrity from his masculinity. Sarah Elizabeth was a "Daddy's Girl" who believed it was her job to take care of the men in her life. When she met Joseph, she was learning to slow down and experience and embrace her femininity rather than continue to expend her energy taking care of men who were perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. It proved to be an exciting if sometimes exasperating time to come together. We were each working on our own "stuff" in an area that was intimately impacted by our new relationship.

We met in a self-development program designed to teach people how to love themselves so they could have a positive impact on the world around them by drawing from the well of love within. Part of the learning curve involved Joseph exploring his masculinity and Sarah Elizabeth embracing her femininity. Our relationship began with new and exciting tools in place. For instance, we were learning how to value our feelings

and take responsibility for them. We regularly practiced being “emotionally honest,” meaning that we took responsibility for our own thoughts, feelings, and actions without having to make the other person wrong. However, the old dysfunctional habits were firmly in place as well. For instance, it just isn’t satisfying for a man to lead in the relationship by instructing his woman on how to be more feminine. Women don’t get their femininity from men – men don’t have it to give. Even though a man may have a great deal of respect and regard for the feminine and may really want to support his woman as she nurtures her feminine energy, he cannot lead her there. If he tries, and if she lets him, then they both wind up feeling like failures. It is also frustrating for a woman to have spent a lifetime “mothering” the men in her life only to find out this behavior is not only unfeminine but is counterproductive. “Mothering” grown men who are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves is patronizing and condescending.

We didn’t have the innocence of falling in love and learning to just cope with the dysfunction we brought to the relationship. However, as we met the dysfunction, we did have the tools to make changes to improve the relationship and the tools to learn to love our own selves and each other deeply and passionately. As you read *Getting Back to Love*, you’ll receive the tools we discovered back then as well as those we’ve used in our own lives and in our practice in the past several years. These tools will allow you to love yourself and your partner deeply and passionately. They will give you the opportunity to have exciting options in your relationships that you may have given up on until now.

Almost a decade later, one of the things we’ve discovered is that the dysfunction we brought to the relationship, he being a Mama’s Boy and she being a Daddy’s Girl, is something that may never completely go away. That is something we’re excited about. Where we once thought we had to heal these things – meaning eradicate them from our lives – we now know they are an integral part of who we are as individuals and as a couple. It’s exciting and inspiring for me, Sarah Elizabeth, to watch Joseph’s masculinity grow. At the same time, he has nurturing qualities that I would never want to see disappear. As for me, Joseph, it’s fun and engaging to watch Sarah Elizabeth’s femininity blossom. In addition, she has strength that I appreciate and would never want her to

change. Where we once thought that being whole meant changing ourselves completely, we now realize that being whole means embracing and loving it all, then choosing to enhance the parts that need enhancing without diminishing any of our strengths or talents.

Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls attract one another! It's like a dance. They are in each other's arms. He steps forward with his left foot as she steps back with her right. He draws his right foot forward beside his left as she draws her left foot back to meet her right. He steps to the left and brings his right foot close as she steps to the right and brings her left foot close. And so they go around the floor, dance partners who are perfect mirrors of one another.

Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls attract one another because they can feel the energy in each other. They each feel the hunger and longing for what is missing in the other. He sees what he didn't get from his parents and she sees what she didn't get from hers. All that anger and frustration and desire is bedrock for passion! It is also a foundation for misunderstanding, poor communication, mixed signals, and a variety of relationship collisions. But Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls also have the potential for developing very loving, stable, and mature relationships between equals. We can show you how. In the chapters that follow, you'll have the opportunity to discover (if you don't know already) whether or not you are a Mama's Boy or a Daddy's Girl. We'll help you understand why you are the way you are, the impact that has on your relationships, and what you can do about it so that your relationships become fulfilling and satisfying.

Husbands and wives, life partners, and boyfriends and girlfriends are not the only Mama's Boys and Daddy's Girls who dance this dance. Mirrors attract reflections of themselves. If you are a Daddy's Girl, chances are you have danced the dance with every single man who has ever been important in your life. If you are a Mama's Boy, chances are you have done the same with every woman who has ever been important in your life. And you've probably danced it with strangers as well.

This book will help you understand the steps you keep dancing that invariably leave you dissatisfied, and it will show you steps to assist you in making the dance what

you really want it to be; a dance of love and passion, support and comfort, trust and play, of confidence, and peace of mind and heart.