

# *My Imago*

*"My Imago, My image of Love and Relationships"*

**Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it in to five sections marked A, B, C, D, and E according to the following instructions.**

- A.** Thinking as a young child (from birth to age18), list at least three outstanding negative characteristics of the people who raised or influenced you (e.g., angry, withholding, depressed, critical, busy, tired, not there, preoccupied, anxious, rigid).
- B.** Now, list three of their positive characteristics (e.g., loving, affectionate, supportive, always there, nurturing, funny, smart, creative, financially secure).
- C.** Thinking back to your childhood again, recall what you wanted and needed the most as a child, specifically, your heart's desire (e.g., love, to be seen, to be a normal family, to get the attention others got, to be hugged more, to have a happy home, to be valued, to be praised).
- D.** Now, recall the happiest memories of childhood. These can be with your family, with friends, in school, and soon. Then list how you felt during these happy times (e.g., happy, loved, valued, competent, confident, excited, secure, calm).
- E.** Finally, think back on the frustrations of childhood, not just with your family, with anyone—and describe how you responded to the frustrations (e.g., by getting angry, withdrawing, trying harder, keeping to myself, giving up, blaming myself, blaming others, fighting, taking care of myself, pouting).

**After you have completed the entire exercise, go back and write in the following lines:**

Beside the letter **A**, write: "I am attracted to a person who is"

Beside the letter **B**, write: "and I expect him or her to be"

Beside the letter **C**, write: "so that I can get"

Beside the letter **D**, write: "and feel"

Beside the letter **E**, write: "but I stop myself from getting this sometimes by"

Once you have filled in these lines, read your imago from top to bottom.

It should read something like this:

**A.** I am attracted to a person who is: angry, preoccupied, and critical

**B.** and I expect him or her to be: warm, loving, and supportive

**C.** so that I can get more time and attention

**D.** and feel safe

**E.** but I stop myself from getting this sometimes by denying the facts, keeping busy, shutting off my needs, and taking care of myself.

This is my imago, my image of love and relationship.

(Love & Shulkin, 2001)