



THE FOUR GIFTS

THE NEUROCHEMISTRY OF LONG TERM RELATIONSHIPS



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Introduction

In any relationship, there are going to be some incompatibilities between partners. In the beginning of relationships during the infatuation phase, we don't notice the incompatibilities. As relationships progress however, incompatibilities become more obvious and problematic.

Take a look at the numbers...

66-75% of people in relationships would cheat if they thought they could get away with it.

20% of marriages are classified as sexless and

50% of marriages end in separation or divorce

After a failed marriage, many people think that with the experience they now have, they can do better, but the numbers tell a different story.

41% of first marriages

60% of second marriages and

73% of third marriages end with divorce or separation.

In fact, the more marriages a person has, the less likely they are to be successful in getting to happily ever after.

The truth is that staying in love with and attracted to the same person for years isn't a given. In fact, we are genetically programmed to fall in love for a predetermined period of time, then fall out of love, then fall in love with someone else. Why this happens and what can be done about it are the questions this book will answer.

DNA wants diversity

We say we want happy long-term relationships, yet seem unable to make them happen. We get about six months of infatuation. Then, if we still like the person once the infatuation wears off, we get about two years of warm affection. After this, relationships start to fall apart. Why?

It is our genetics. Our DNA wants us to make babies, raise them for a few years, then make more babies... with someone else. We are not programmed by our DNA for happily ever after. We are programmed by our DNA for genetic diversity.

The three stages

In order for DNA to achieve its goal of genetic diversity, it has to cycle our relationships through three stages over and over again. In the first stage, our DNA gives us a neurochemical cocktail that maximizes our chances for fertilization. We call it, infatuation.

In the second stage, the DNA shifts us into childrearing mode. Infatuation winds down allowing a couple to focus on children rather than each other. This stage is designed to create a family bond to raise children until they are old enough to survive without an intact family unit.

In the third stage, our DNA shifts our neurochemistry so that we become unsatisfied with our current partner. This sets us up to feeling infatuation with someone else... and the cycle repeats.

To cycle us through these stages our DNA manipulates us with four powerful neurochemicals. PEA, oxytocin, cortisol and prolactin. These neurochemicals affect our moods and how we feel about our partners. They are what give us the feelings of

infatuation, affection and dissatisfaction that move us through the relationship cycle.

Fortunately, there is a way to outwit our DNA and escape the program. We can learn to control these neurochemicals and how we feel about our partners. To do this we need to learn four counter-intuitive skills. I call these the Four Gifts, one for each neurochemicals we need to master.

We'll get to each of them in this book, but first we need to take a closer look at these three stages.

Stage one: Infatuation

DNA's program for genetic diversity plays out as polygyny for men and hypergamy for women. Polygyny means men prefer fertilize as many women as possible. Hypergamy means women want to find the best man possible.

Put another way, men want quantity (variety) while women prefer quality. Men want a large portfolio while women prefer a solid investment. That's not to say that women aren't interested in variety and men aren't also interested in quality, but this is the general rule.

This makes sense since the investment for a man is one teaspoon of sperm while the investment for a woman can be nine months of pregnancy, then childbirth (which due to our large head to hip ratio is sometimes fatal without medical intervention), followed by two years of breastfeeding and watching a toddler.

We don't always desire for polygyny and hypergamy though. If we did, families would disintegrate before infants could get to the point where they could survive on their own without constant attention. Men wouldn't stay around to help provide for and

protect the family and women would constantly be seeking to upgrade to a better man.

To temporarily suppress polygyny and hypergamy, our DNA gives us infatuation. We literally become addicted to our partners for a period of time, usually about 3-6 months.

Infatuation, while great for making babies, isn't great for raising them. So our DNA switches gears, turns off the neurochemical responsible for infatuation and turns on the neurochemical that creates affection. This takes us to stage two.

Stage two: Affection and family bonding

The second stage bonds the couple together to create a protective family unit long enough for a woman to go through pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. Now babies are able to walk around and be a little independent. This stage lasts about two years.

Stage three: Cheating, breaking up or quiet desperation

After about two years, the affection and bonding program starts winding down. In this third stage our DNA restarts our hypergamy and polygamy programs to trigger us to find new genetic partners. After all, having children with the same partner over and over doesn't increase genetic diversity and for the DNA, genetic diversity is what it's all about.

To do this, our DNA now shifts our neurochemistry yet again so that we become disillusioned with our partners. Then, depending on our personality types we either shift predominantly towards frustration or depression. We are now susceptible to becoming infatuated with someone new and this was the program all along. This doesn't mean breaking up necessarily. It could

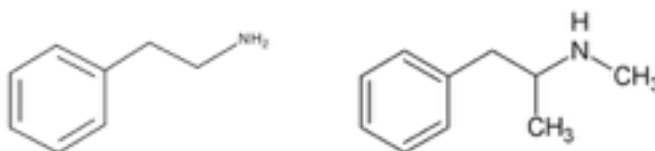
mean cheating or a life of quiet desperation. In either case, it's not good for relationships.

So, if we want to get to happily ever after, we must outwit the DNA and its plans for our relationships and to do this, we must regain control of our neurochemistry. We must learn how to hack these programs. So, let's start with understanding how our neurochemistry affects our relationships.

Phase One - Infatuation with PEA

The DNA gets what it wants (genetic diversity) by stimulating the release of specific neurochemicals in our brains in a very choreographed and predictable manner.

The first neurochemical the DNA gives us is called phenylethylamine, or PEA for short. It's responsible for feelings of infatuation. When someone is addicted to a drug, it's called dependence. When someone is addicted to a person, it's called co-dependence.



PEA molecule

Methamphetamine molecule

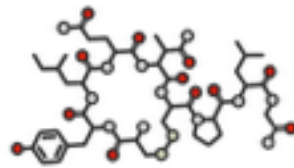
Addicted is the right word as PEA (on the left) is only two methyl groups (CH₃) and one hydrogen atom (H) away from methamphetamine (on the right). Like methamphetamine, PEA stimulates risky behavior (like unprotected sex and cheating) and can literally make us addicted to the person we are experiencing it with. PEA is part of what is responsible for the weak in the knees, butterflies in the stomach and heart pounding feelings of infatuation.

PEA blinds us to any incompatibilities we may have with our partners.

...but being hopped up on PEA is unsustainable. It is an amphetamine after all and addicts don't make the best parents. So after about six months, PEA production drops off and if things are still working out, our DNA gives us a new neurochemical called oxytocin.

Phase Two - Affection and family bonding with oxytocin

While PEA blinds us to any incompatibilities we have with our partners, oxytocin turns them into adorable quirks. We see them, but they don't bother us as much. Also, like PEA, oxytocin suppresses the hypergamy and polygyny programs.



-The Oxytocin Molecule-

Oxytocin makes people more:

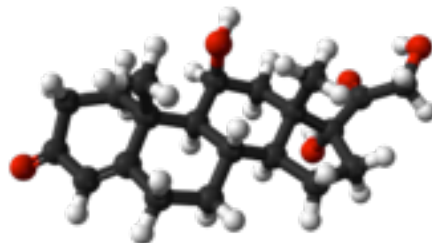
Affectionate
Cooperative
Compassionate (happiness from another's joy)
Honorable
Communicative
Forgiving
Compassionate
Compromising and
Sacrificing

These are all important things for long-term relationships once PEA has worn off. In fact, each is necessary to avoid the destructive psychological games that couples can end up playing with each other. *We'll go into this topic in more detail later on.*

So far so good. We started with the excitement of infatuation which lasts about six months. This is followed by the calm affection of oxytocin which lasts for about two years. What could go wrong?

Phase Three - Breaking up with cortisol and prolactin

In order for DNA to achieve its goal of genetic diversity, it must break up the family unit or get one or both partners to cheat. To do this, oxytocin production drops off and our DNA begins increasing production of two different neurochemicals. One is cortisol and the other is prolactin. We'll discuss cortisol first.



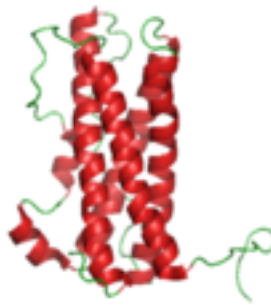
-The Cortisol Molecule-

Cortisol is what makes us feel angry when we are hungry, overly tired, PMSing or experiencing any other stressor (teenagers...). If oxytocin is the angel on one shoulder, cortisol is the devil on the other.

Cortisol makes people more:

Angry
Selfish
Vengeful
Stubborn

Cortisol is the opposite of oxytocin. While oxytocin makes is the best versions of ourselves, cortisol makes us the worst. Without PEA or oxytocin in our systems, incompatibilities are visible and they aren't adorable quirks anymore. Add cortisol and now those same incompatibilities drive us crazy. Additionally, long term cortisol exposure causes immune suppression and makes our brains shrink.



-The Prolactin Molecule-

The other neurochemical that people can experience in Phase Three of relationships is prolactin.

Prolactin makes people:

Uncommunicative
Depressed
and lowers sex drive

It also lowers sex drive because at this point the DNA doesn't want you to make any new babies with the person you are with. It wants genetic diversity.

Why we bicker

Have you ever been bickering, then forgot what you were bickering about, then asked your partner to remind you why you were bickering so you could start bickering again? Who in their right mind does that? If you've stopped fighting, why start it up again? That's prolactin.

Many people would rather feel angry (cortisol) than feel hopeless (prolactin), and cortisol suppresses prolactin. This also explains the phenomena of make-up sex. Fighting lowers prolactin levels for the couple and with the prolactin temporarily suppressed, their sex drive returns.

Back to Phase one... with someone else

So, we start off with PEA (infatuation). After about six months this wears off and it is replaced with oxytocin (bonding). This lasts about two years at which point cortisol production comes online and we start to fight about incompatibilities and unmet needs. If cortisol stays around long enough, prolactin joins in.

Angry, hopeless, with a low sex drive, and depressed, the DNA has us right where it wants us, primed for PEA (infatuation) with someone else. When this happens, we feel sexy and excited again. This new person must be our real life partner and soulmate. They must be our ticket to happily ever after.

Of course if we go on with a new relationship without understanding these four neurochemicals and what to do about

them we will be right back where we started in a few years, so let's talk about outsmarting our DNA.

The Four gifts - Outsmarting our DNA

Okay, now you know about the three phases relationships goes through... What are our options?

We could stay in unsatisfying relationships, fight, perhaps cheat, perhaps live lives of quiet desperation. No thank you. Next?

We could have an open discussion with our partners about becoming polyamorous... but polyamorous couples break up just as often as monogamous ones. So we really haven't solved anything. Next?

We could have serial monogamy. We could make our peace with the fact that relationships have a shelf life of a few years and gracefully exit them when the ride is over. Any other options?

We could try to hack our neurochemistry and stay in stages one (infatuation) and two (affection and family bonding) in perpetuity. Hmm, I like this one. Okay, let's try it. Let's talk about how we can hack the system. Are you with me? Good.

Gift One - Suppressing prolactin

Prolactin has a 50 minute half-life. This means that once it gets into the system, it lasts for over 3 hours. Clearly, the best way to deal with prolactin is not to create it in the first place. So, what makes prolactin? Unresolved long term stress, excessive sleep and... (here comes the counterintuitive part) orgasms.

Sex is great for relationships, it feels good, lowers stress and raises oxytocin... but orgasms cause multiple prolactin spikes over the next two days.

Orgasms also decrease testosterone and increase estrogen receptors in males. (Don't know about females yet). Thus, orgasms also have feminizing effect on men. Finally, orgasms lower dopamine, the feel-good neurochemical.

So, what do we do? It's called Karezza, lovemaking without orgasm. When you master it, you can make love multiple times a day and still want more. You will stay attracted to your partner and keep the prolactin down. Why is this? When you make love without orgasm, the message your DNA gets is "Keep going, genetic diversity is just within reach..." You trick your DNA into keeping you attracted to your partner.

Ladies, how many of you have had the experience of a man courting you day and night, but as soon as you have sex, he loses interest? Some women have learned to play hard to get. They try to delay sex long enough to get the man to feel some oxytocin (fall in love not just lust) so that once they have sex and his genetic drive for diversity has been satisfied, there is still something there to keep him from going off to his next conquest. Well, now you know another way.

This works for women as well as men. By having sex without orgasm (Karezza), women suppress their hypergamy programs, minimize prolactin and raise oxytocin.

So, no more orgasms? Not quite. While most of us have only experienced orgasms in the genital region, it is possible to have orgasms in the heart (the cardiac nerve plexus, also known as the heart chakra). Cardiac orgasms do not result in ejaculation and do not raise prolactin. Instead they even further raise oxytocin. You can have multiple cardiac orgasms once you

learn how. It is a discovery you will have to make for yourself, but here's a hint; focus on the space in the center of your chest during lovemaking with a non-lustful attitude. Meditate on loving your partner and being grateful for them. In time you may experience a cardiac orgasm.

Also, this doesn't mean not to have orgasms. It means to observe yourself and your response to them afterwards. Not everyone has the same prolactin spike. Find the ratio that works for you. Orgasm every other time, every third? Just observe how you feel about your partner after an orgasm and find what works for you.

Okay, what were those other two things? Sleep and unresolved long term stress. Prolactin also rises the longer you sleep in. So, if you really want to get it down, try to get no more than 8 hours of sleep, and wake up as early as possible. As for stress, we'll get to that in the cortisol chapter.

One final trick. To suppress prolactin, take cold showers...or at least end showers with cold water. Cold exposure not only lowers prolactin, it also decreases inflammation and has a whole host of physical and psychological benefits. Coffee also works to lower prolactin in both men and women, but coffee also raises cortisol which takes us to...

Gift Two - Suppressing cortisol

Unlike prolactin, which is a response to chronic stress, cortisol is a response to acute stress. Once you have prolactin under control, you may still have cortisol to deal with.

Common cortisol triggers:

Hunger
Fatigue

Stress

Cortisol is called a glucocorticoid. This means it raises blood sugar. So one of the main causes of cortisol is... low blood sugar. Now you know why people get irritable when they get hungry. If you or your partner get cortisol from being hungry, then either make sure you don't miss meals. Alternately, you can train your body to burn fat instead of sugar (ketosis).

The next common trigger is being tired. If we are tired, yet are not in a position to fall asleep, our body will give us some cortisol to keep us awake. In fact it is cortisol that wakes us up in the morning. Why does cortisol wake us up in the morning? Because we haven't eaten since the day before and our blood sugar is getting low. The longer a person sleeps in, the lower their blood sugar goes and the more cortisol they get. It's a neurochemical alarm clock. If you get cranky in the morning, better to wake earlier and eat so that cortisol alarm never goes off.

Finally, the last cause of cortisol is stress. Cortisol mobilizes us for survival and our brains aren't very good at distinguishing modern stresses (traffic jams) from ancient life threatening stresses (sabertooth tigers). So, learn what stresses you and your partner have, minimize what you can and make your peace with what you can't.

For more information on handling stress, I invite you to read my book [Purifying the Elements](#).

Like prolactin, cortisol also has a long half-life. It takes four to eight hours for cortisol to leave the body once it gets triggered, so it's much better to keep it from getting triggered in the first place than to try to deal with it once it's already in the bloodstream. However, once it is in the system, you can try taking a supplement called phosphatidyl serine to help break it down.

Now for the counter-intuitive part. Don't communicate during a cortisol spike. If you do, it is likely to turn into a fight. During a cortisol spike, the devil on your shoulder is running the show. I know you want to be heard and have your grievances addressed, but be patient.

It takes a lot of impeccability to be in cortisol and wait it out. Cortisol is not a patient neurochemical. It is a 'this is an emergency, fix me right now' neurochemical, but this is not the best space to have a calm discussion from. So, when cortisol is in play, instead of talking, try the following:

1- Try to figure out what triggered it in you or your partner. Hungry? Tired? Perhaps you need snack or to take a nap.

2- Separate for a while, at least an hour. Remember, cortisol lasts a while. If your partner is having a cortisol spike, you can say something like:

"I know you're upset but now isn't a good time for us to talk, we'll just end up fighting. I'm going out for a bit. We'll talk about this when I get back."

Bad Psychological games

Cortisol and prolactin show up in the third phase (break up) of relationships and cause people to play bad psychological games with one another.

Game 1: Tit for Tat

Tit for Tat games are when both people are full of cortisol. Both are angry and they take turns hurting each other. If either felt **compassion**, they wouldn't want to hurt the other but lack of oxytocin and high cortisol makes them the worst versions

of themselves. Both players are caught in a destructive downward spiral. To stop playing Tit for Tat game we need the virtues of **cooperation, forgiveness, compassion, compromise and sacrifice**. Someone needs to **forgive** the other, have **compassion** for the other's pain and make the **sacrifice** to be vulnerable again, or the downward spiral will continue.

Solution: Take some time, take a nap, eat a snack and do not talk to each other for a minimum of 2 hours.

Game 2: Chicken

In the game of Chicken, one person is full of cortisol and the other person is full of prolactin. The cortisol person will make ultimatums and threaten the more passive prolactin person who will usually collapse and give in to the demands of the other. To stop playing the Chicken game the cortisol person will need the same virtues that stopped the Tit for Tat games but the prolactin person will need to be **communicative** and be **provokable**.

The prolactin person must **communicate** their boundaries and unmet needs. **Provokable** means that there are consequences to your being disrespected. Preferably you are in a relationship with someone where you only need to be **communicative** to get your needs met, but with some people, you need to be **provokable** too.

An example might be when your partner agrees to go to your favorite Italian restaurant next week after going to their favorite French restaurant tonight. When next week comes around, they aren't **honorable** and don't want to go to Italian.

You respond by being **communicative** and tell them that it is upsetting when they are not honorable with you, and that you have made other arrangements with friends to have Italian food without them. That is being **provokable**. When you return

however, you bring them an Italian dessert as a sign that you **forgive** them and want to start anew with good **cooperative** games.

Solution: The prolactin person must stand up to the cortisol person so that a pattern of abuse is not reinforced, but then leave for a few hours while the cortisol in that other person wears off.

Game 3: The Big Chill

Whereas in Tit for Tat there are two cortisol personalities, in the Big Chill game, there are two prolactin personalities. Both settle into a relationship of quiet desperation. Only when both partners are **communicative** can they hope to exit this dynamic.

Solution: Take a cold shower, have a cup of coffee and talk.

The 8 virtues

Look back and you will see eight words in **bold**. These are the eight virtues we need to end bad games and play cooperative ones instead. Oxytocin gives us seven of them. Remember from before, oxytocin makes us more:

Cooperative
Compassionate
Honorable
Communicative
Forgiving
Compassionate and
Sacrificing

What is left is being:

Provokable

What this means is that we should be nice, but not pushovers. Of course, if both people are full of oxytocin and acting lovingly, then there will be no need for being provokable, but we aren't perfect all the time.

So, the best way to stop playing bad psychological games is to raise oxytocin. How do we do that?

Gift Three - Raising oxytocin

The following actions raise oxytocin:

Stroking, squeezing and scratching
Kind words
Eating and serving good food
Eye gazing
Kissing
Karezza (sex without orgasm)

When primates want to bond with each other either to apologize, form alliances, curry favor or as an invitation to sex, they groom each other's fur. They patiently and attentively remove bugs and dirt from each other especially in places they can't get to themselves like their backs.

To give you an idea of how important grooming and raising oxytocin is in the primate world, consider that for hygiene purposes alone. Only 2% of the day needs to be dedicated to grooming but primates spend 20% of their day doing it.

When one primate is grooming another, it is not:

- (1) eating food
- (2) having sex
- (3) on the lookout for predators
- (4) sleeping

Grooming says to the other primate: “You are more important to me right now than eating, sex, self-preservation or a good nap combined.”

The most powerful kind of grooming takes place during lovemaking. Taken from the Italian word for ‘caress’, Karezza is sex where orgasm is not the goal.

Because of the high number of oxytocin receptors in and on the sexual organs, Karezza can raise oxytocin to levels that can only be described as spiritual union. Additionally, by avoiding the prolactin triggers of orgasm, this high oxytocin status can stay with a couple for hours.

Oxytocin only has a 3 minute half-life. This means that unlike the hours it takes for cortisol and prolactin to leave the system, it only takes 16 minutes before oxytocin is out of the system. What do you do? Be mindful not to trigger the bad ones and keep grooming to keep the oxytocin high. Try not to go more than an hour without a minimal amount of touching (grooming) when you are near each other.

We have our oxytocin systems ‘initialized’ during childbirth. The mother experiences an enormous rush of oxytocin that the baby also experiences. This not only helps with the stimulation of delivery but also makes the child and mother bond. Unfortunately, many childbirths are Caesarian or the mother is taking pain killers. This can block the oxytocin release. As a result, not only do the mother and child not have the kind of

bonding they could have, the child's oxytocin system is never turned on.

Many of us through difficult births or trauma later in life (stored in the amygdala) have damaged oxytocin systems. If you suspect this is true, nasal oxytocin may be beneficial to jump start the system. We offer this at www.remedylink.com (satori).

Gift four - Re-infatuation

In the beginning of the book I talked about how infatuation was caused by the neurochemical PEA. PEA works by triggering the release of the neurochemicals dopamine (novelty) and noradrenaline (excitement) and testosterone (sex drive), while at the same time it decreases serotonin (satisfaction). This cocktail is what we call infatuation. While low serotonin isn't much fun, novelty, excitement and sex drive are. So, let's see what we can do to raise these up.

Emotional Transference

Psychologists did a study where they asked strangers to rate their attraction to each other before and after they went on a roller coaster ride together. What they found was that after the roller coaster ride, each had more attraction for the other person than before. This is due to a phenomena known as emotional transference. It states that if you experience an emotion with someone, you subconsciously associate that person with that emotion. While PEA is the main infatuation neurochemical, there are others associated with the 'cocktail' of this experience. Two others are noradrenaline (excitement) and dopamine (novelty), and these can both be stimulated by your environment.

Since roller coasters aren't readily available, try this. The next time you and your partner are walking to a restaurant, take your partner's hand and have them close their eyes. They will

have to trust you not to walk them into anything or anybody. This is a novel (dopamine) experience. Remember, the DNA is looking for genetic diversity (novelty) which is created by dopamine. If you do something novel which raises dopamine with your partner, you will seem 'novel' to each other well.

As for increasing sex drive in addition to lowering cortisol and prolactin, regardless of what is politically correct, men are genetically wired to be attracted to femininity and women to masculinity.

Men who follow, men who lead

In the same way that relationships are genetically programmed for diversity (as opposed to happy monogamy), most men are not programmed to be leaders. DNA only codes for about one out of every twenty men to be leaders. This 1:20 ratio optimizes a social hierarchy so that there is the right proportion of leaders to followers. We see this in wolf and ape packs and the same is true in humans.

Women on the other hand are programmed to be attracted to this one leader and since most men are not, most women are not being as completely satisfied with their men as they could be.

Masculine energy is to 'provide and protect'. Feminine energy is to 'nest and nurture'. Here are two classic mistakes beta (follower) men make with women.

1- When a woman asks her man to lead and he is cooperative instead.

Example: The woman asks a man where he would like to go to dinner. It's been a long day and she wants to relax and not make any more decisions. She also wants to nurture him and get his needs met.

Mistake: “Whatever you like dear...”

This is the woman being feminine, and the man being feminine in return. Nice, but no attraction.

Instead try this:

“Put on your black silk dress, I’m making reservations at the new French restaurant in town. Be ready by 6.”

If your woman asks you to lead... lead.

Here is the second kind of mistake.

2- A woman is acting unimpeccably (high cortisol) and he placates her.

Example: The woman is experiencing PMS and having a cortisol spike. She saw her man fail a social test with other men and she is stressed and snaps at her man.

Mistake: “Oh, I’m so sorry, how can I make you happy”

She was stressed by the weakness of her man, then he shows even more weakness letting her speak badly to him.

Try this instead:

“Nobody talks to me like that.” Then, learn the social dynamics of male interactions and next time another man ‘invites’ you to a submissive position, hold your masculine frame. When your female partner sees that you can hold your own, you will be the powerful man her genetics desire.

Understanding social dynamics, how to lead and how to push back against aggression is part of what it takes to be a healthy man. When a man does this, he will have the attraction of his partner and the respect of his peers... which takes us to our next book "An Invitation to Kingship".

All books are available as free downloads at
www.spiritualsecretagent.com