



Dr. Chalmer's Newsletter - Issue #5

Everything about relationships! Be kind, don't panic, and have faith.



Please tell your email app to display images--if you're not seeing my smiling face, your email isn't cooperating!

Welcome to Issue #5!

If you want to catch up on earlier issues, you can find the archive [here](#).

We got some fascinating responses to last issue's discussion about the dreaded question, "Do these pants make me look fat?"

One suggestion I heard from several people was that the woman asking the question should pick two or more outfits and ask which one the man prefers before she puts either one on.

Jan Kline added, "Don't ask for validation through an object. State directly what you want/need that you feel your partner isn't offering by magically knowing your mind."

And another writer who has been in the women's clothing business, said, "Women should ask me that question, not their partners."

Thanks to all who wrote in! And feel free to keep commenting. If you'd like to hear more on this subject, Judy and I talk about this in our most recent episode (#106--wow, we've been doing this for a while!) of our ["Couples Therapy in Seven Words"](#) podcast.



Today's Relationship Tip

Doing the Dishes is Foreplay

Let me start by acknowledging that the whole idea of "foreplay" implies that it's something you do leading up to the main event. But I really mean that doing the dishes can be erotic in its own right. ("Foreplay" makes a better headline, right?)

Of course, it's more general than just doing the dishes. *Anything* a couple does can be erotically charged, if you're open to the possibility.

The erotic charge I'm talking about isn't just about sex per se. Have you ever noticed how some couples seem to be alive to each other? I'm not talking about PDAs--it's often more subtle than that. It's the sense that they're energized by having each other in their lives.

Well, sure, you might say--everybody has that in the early stages of a relationship, when everything is hot and you're obsessed with each other. But that goes away over time, right? As you get to know the other person and your initial idealizations are replaced by actual experiences--some of which are annoying--then that person you were so obsessed with is not so hot any more, right?

Not necessarily!

My tip for today is simply to allow for the possibility that you can [reignite the spark](#). Just knowing that it's possible can sensitize you to opportunities you've been missing--like noticing how doing the dishes together, or even seeing your partner doing the dishes, can awaken energy you thought was long gone.

More on that in the Big Announcement below.

Send me a message!



What's the Big Idea?

In this section, I tell you about one of my favorite Big Ideas—at least, I think they're Big Ideas. These are the ideas that guide me in my work, and get me all excited. Of course, I'm a recovering nerd with frequent relapses, so what I find exciting might be, well, less so for you. But I know a lot of the folks I've worked with have found these ideas helpful, so maybe you will too.

These Big Ideas are pretty much what I write about in my books and talk about in my videos, so [check them out](#) if you want to explore these in more depth.

Today's Big Idea:

Intimacy Means Tolerating Anxiety, Not Avoiding It

This is one of my favorite Big Ideas--I've written about it in both of my most recent books, done a bunch of videos and blog posts about it, and almost always talk about it with couples in their first session with me. (By the way, if you want to see a detailed summary of how I structure couples' first sessions, check out Chapter 7 in [It's Not About Communication!](#))

Recently I've been reading sexologist Jack Morin's book [The Erotic Mind](#). One of the most-quoted ideas in that book is what Dr. Morin calls the "erotic equation":

ATTRACTION + OBSTACLES = EXCITEMENT

In other words, erotic excitement requires obstacles to be overcome. It's nice when everything goes your way, but it's not exciting.

If this seems surprising, think about romcoms and romance novels. A story in which the protagonists have their "meet-cute" and then live happily ever after would be--well, boring.

More generally, the desire for someone, whether it's sexually, romantically, or both, is heightened when there's the distinct possibility that your desire won't be fulfilled.

Well, that feeling that your desire won't be fulfilled is a form of anxiety. What Dr. Morin points out--and what I've been saying for decades--is that desire, and intimacy in general, requires that you tolerate anxiety rather than trying to avoid it.

And tolerating anxiety without freaking out is a function of maturity. Which is why I like to quote the late sexologist David Schnarch, who used to say that both men and women reach their sexual peak in their 60s and 70s. He's obviously not talking about hormones or sexual gymnastics--he's talking about the maturity you need for intense levels of desire and connection.

Which leads me to the Big Announcement in the next section--read on!

Do you have a Big Idea? Or a Big Question? (Or even little ideas or questions?)

Send me a message!



News & Schmooze

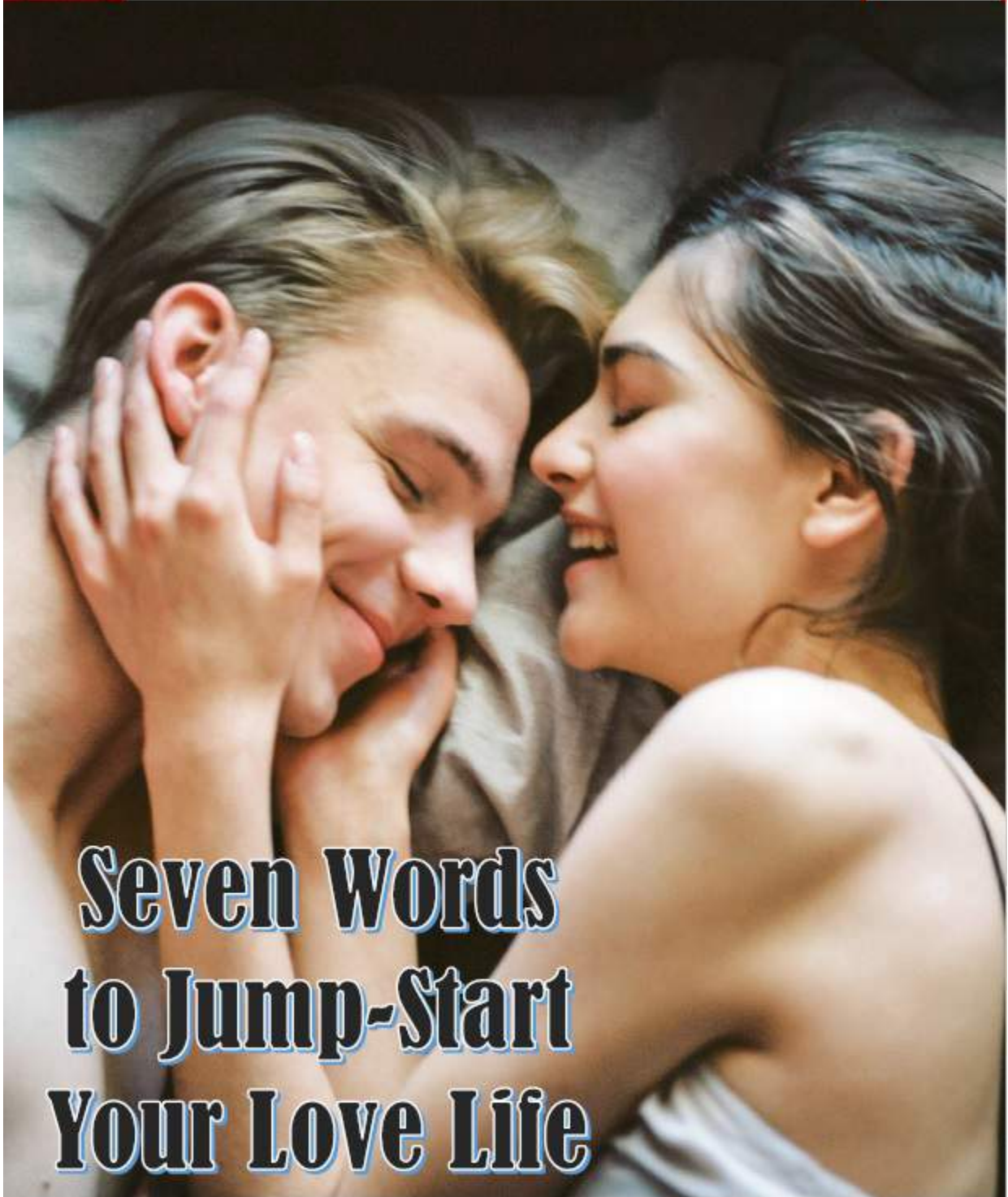
The Big Announcement: I've written a new--well, it's more of a booklet than a book-- and **you can download it for free!**

It's called *Seven Words to Jump-Start Your Love Life*. It's yours just because you subscribe to this newsletter.



Dr. Bruce Chalmer

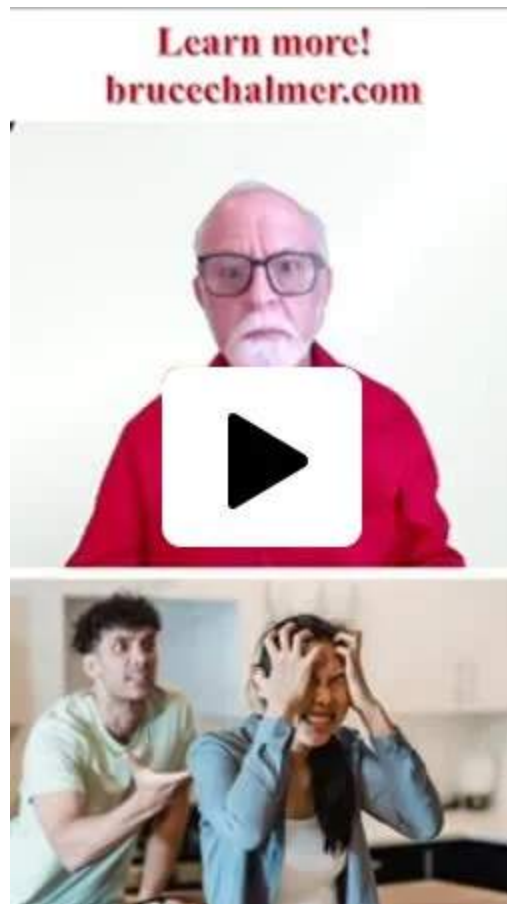
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Seven Words to Jump-Start Your Love Life

Please [check it out](#) and let me know what you think. And if you want to spread it around, please just tell your friends to sign up for the newsletter (just send them to [my website](#), where a magic box will invite them to sign up). Anyone who signs up for the newsletter will get the link to the booklet.

The Ridiculous Announcement: To promote the new booklet, and this newsletter in general, I've created a TikTok-style video featuring a Seven Words Rap. Here is on YouTube:



If you'd like to do your own TikTok video to the rap, [here's the TikTok link](#). Let me know what you've created--I'd love to see the dance craze this will inspire!

Book news: We're still looking for reviews of my recently published book (and #1 bestseller!) [*It's Not About Communication! Why Everything You Know About Couples Therapy is Wrong.*](#)

It's easy! Go to [this link](#), scroll down to "Review this product," and press the "Write a customer review" button. You don't have to write a whole megillah! (Notice the pre-Purim reference?) Even a sentence saying something you liked, or were surprised by, or made you think.

It'll take you about two minutes, so if you'd do it right now I'd be grateful!

I can't directly tell you what to write (I hear you, Amazon), but here are some things people have said stood out for them:

- The idea that you're already communicating effectively--the problem people have in their relationships isn't *how* they're communicating, but *what* they're communicating
- The distinction between ideas and ideologies, and how ideologies become caricatures of the ideas they come from--and why that matters in relationships

- The chapter called "Couples Therapy Under the Hood," which compares couples therapy to improv theater, and provides a detailed look at how I structure a first session
- The emphasis on faith--not necessarily religious--as what you really need from your therapist

If you want a Cliff-notes type summary of what's in the book to give you more ideas, you can get it [here](#).

And if you haven't yet bought the book, please [check it out!](#)

Podcast news: I already mentioned that Judy and I talk about the "Do these pants make me look fat?" question on episode #106.

We've already recorded the next episode, which is scheduled to drop on Friday 3/3. It's called "Seven Words to Jump-Start Your Love Life." What a coincidence--that's the title of the booklet I just wrote!

You can find all of our episodes at <https://ctin7.com>.

We're always looking for some more listener questions for our guests. So as I did last issue, I hereby dangle before you an offer.

The first three people to write to me with a question for us and our interview guests to handle will receive a code for a free download of the audiobook version of *It's Not About Communication!*, narrated by yours truly. Such a deal!

As always, if you have ideas for guests (including yourself) or topics you'd like us to include, [drop me a line](#).

That's all for now—bye!

--Bruce

[Send me a message!](#)

P.S. If someone forwarded you this message, and you'd like to subscribe yourself, [go to my website](#) and watch the magic box appear that says "Click here to sign up for Dr. Chalmer's Newsletter!" And if I don't already have your email, don't forget to look for the confirmation email--that's an anti-spam thing, which is why I do it. I'd love to welcome you on board!

Please take a moment to make sure these emails actually make it into your inbox! The easiest way (at least for those of us in Google-land) is just to add me to your contacts.

[Here's a link](#) that tells you how to do it for various email services. Please let me in--it's lonely in the Spam or Promotions folder!

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Podcast

Couples Therapy in Seven Words



Website

Dr. Chalmer's website:
Books, couples therapy practice, blog



It's Not About Communication!

Why Everything You Know About Couples Therapy is Wrong



Reigniting the Spark

Why Stable Relationships Lose Intimacy, and How to Get It Back

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