



## Dr. Chalmer's Newsletter - Issue #13

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 #13!

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

**It's been a busy month!** Besides restructuring my practice (that's a fancy way of saying I've stopped accepting insurance), I've also taken on directing the high holiday choir this year at my synagogue, [Temple Sinai](#) in South Burlington, Vermont.

While we're on the subject of my musical pursuits, if you're interested in learning more about my compositions, you can check out <https://music.brucechalmer.com>.

Back to the practice: Last year I got licensed to do telehealth with folks in Florida--they made it easy for people licensed in other states to do that. (Probably the only time I'll ever say, "Thanks, Governor Desantis!") So now I can see people in Vermont and Florida under my psychology license. I do have some telehealth openings, so feel free to spread the word.



## Today's Relationship Tip

### See below!

Today's relationship tip is also the Big Idea. You might well say it's a *ridiculously* Big Idea. But bear with me...



## 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.

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:

#### The Magic Key that Solves All Relationship Problems!

Okay, if there's one thing that distinguishes how I think about this work--you could even say it's my brand--it's that pronouncements like "the magic key that solves all relationship problems" are bullshit.

You might recall that the subtitle of my recent book, [It's Not About Communication!](#), is "*Why Everything You Know About Couples Therapy is Wrong.*" And if you've read the book (that's a subtle hint, by the way), you'll have seen that I apply that statement to myself: everything *I* know about couples therapy is wrong too.

And yet...Here I am claiming that I have the magic key. And I actually think there's something to it.

What's the magic key that solves all relationship problems? Here it is (drum roll, please):

The magic key that solves all relationship problems is the ability to be mildly annoyed.

Huh? The ability to be mildly annoyed? I wouldn't blame you if you found that rather anticlimactic. As well as mildly annoying that I claim such power for such a blah idea.

But think about it. Any relationship involving human beings involves dealing with differences. Some of the differences are just what we're looking for--consider, for an obvious example, a heterosexual couple. But inevitably, some of the differences cause friction.

And this isn't just about couples--I said it's the key to *all* relationships. The word "politics" comes from the Greek word *polis*, meaning city. A city is where you're thrown in with a bunch of people who aren't like all the people you grew up with in your little village. And they're all annoying!

(In her recent comedy special "[Corsets and Clown Suits](#)," Alex Borstein has a song in which she celebrates her fellow Jews--my people!--for our wondrous ability to be annoying. I totally relate! One of the reasons I think we're so annoying to the rest of the world is our stubborn insistence on two contradictory principles: (1) We're different, and think our way of doing things is fine even if it's not yours. And (2) you don't have to do it our way--in fact, we don't want you to! How annoying is that? But I digress...)

Regarding couples, here's how Alain de Botton explains his idea that "[you'll marry the wrong person](#)":

We need to swap the Romantic view for a tragic (and at points comedic) awareness that every human will frustrate, anger, annoy, madden and disappoint us — and we will (without any malice) do the same to them. There can be no end to our sense of emptiness and incompleteness. But none of this is unusual or grounds for divorce. Choosing whom to commit ourselves to is merely a case of identifying which particular variety of suffering we would most like to sacrifice ourselves for.

Sounds pretty dismal--but it doesn't have to be! When we recognize that we're all somewhat annoying at times, and therefore all somewhat annoyed at times, we can put it in perspective.

When you're not freaked out by the occasional annoyance, you can be grateful for the joy. This is true for couples--your partner's tendency to leave a mess on the counter doesn't have to be grounds for divorce.

And it's true for whole societies too. The annoying differences we see in "those people" don't have to lead to wholesale demonization. After all, we're annoying to them too.

If you'd like to hear more about this idea, check out [our podcast episode about it](#).

Let me know what you think!

Send me a message!



## News & Schmooze

**A word from our sponsor:** Our sponsor for this newsletter is Laria Zylber, an author Judy (that's Judy Alexander, my wife and podcast co-host) and I know. Laria's book, *The Blue Tent: Erotic Tales from the Bible*, is available in paperback, eBook, and audiobook versions--just go to her website, <https://lariazylber.com>.

Judy did the narration for the audiobook, and, if I may say, it's very sensual.

Having read the book, I'm delighted to endorse it enthusiastically--of course, that's if you like explicit erotica. Not only is it very sexy, but it also shows a deep knowledge and love for the biblical narratives and the midrashic stories that have surrounded them over centuries.

Tell your friends! And if you liked it, please give it a rating and review on [its Amazon page](#). Thanks!



**Podcast news:** Here are some of the topics and guests Judy and I have covered on our "Couples Therapy in Seven Words" podcast since my last newsletter:

[Toxic Workplace? The Seven Words Can Help! An Interview with Leanne Abraham](#)

[The Magic Key that Solves All Relationship Problems!](#)

[Ethical Nonmonogamy, Kink, and Sex Therapy: An Interview with Jodie Shea](#)

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!" 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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## Helpful Links



### 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



### Seven Words to Jump-Start Your Love Life

What You Need to Know About Relationships, in One Sentence



### My Husband Complains About My Cleaning!

### What Do I Do?

Hint: It's Not About the Cleaning

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United States of America

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