



# Open Hearts: Renewing Relationships with Recovery, Romance & Reality

*Patrick Carnes, Debra Laaser, Mark Laaser*

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When a couple first comes together, the knee-weakening, heart-stopping, pants-dropping passion exhilarates. But turning that love into an intimate bond comes no more naturally than learning to ride a bicycle or use chopsticks. What we are socialized to assume should be spontaneous and effortless requires patience and learned skills. Worse, should any problems erupt we fear the relationship and ourselves are irrevocably broken. We need help.

Though written by two noted psychologists, Open Hearts is not technical but gentle and uplifting. **Patrick Carnes**, along with **Mark Laaser** and **Deb Laaser**, share how they found their way to joyous and fulfilling intimacy. While these concepts originated in the recovery movement, they can transform any couple seeking renewal or trying to restore a broken relationship.

*Open Hearts* starts with basic truths:

- We can only work on a relationship when we're in that relationship. Running away never solved anything
- If we have not resolved childhood developmental issues, we will seek out partners we think will resolve them
- It's perfectly healthy to fight. We just have to learn to do it better.
- As partners we're often stuck in "coupleshame." However, working through it leads to true intimacy

*Open Hearts* is a book a couple reads together. It takes techniques that Carnes and the Laasers developed in their psychotherapy practices and weaves them into a series of individual and joint exercises. It looks at tough issues: shame, anger, money, betrayal, sex, parenting. It encourages fun: drawing up a family motto, expressing spirituality together, taking gentleness breaks. It works.

*Open Hearts* addresses coupleship to show how a relationship, no matter how imperfect or new, can be transformed and restored to loving intimacy.



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