

# Ep. 66 Mental Wellness & Hedy Schleifer on Relationships! (Part 1)

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the podcast today. I have one suggestion: buckle up. I am having a moment. In January, Maria Shriver recommended the Inner Challenge podcast and I thought that's my thrill for the year. In April, out of nowhere, I had a chance to create the Inner Challenge Masterclass and I thought, I don't know if it'll get better than that.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** But today I get to create an episode with Hedy Schleifer.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Hedy is an internationally renowned relationship builder and motivational speaker. She is the founder of ECT, Encountered Centered Transformation, a process rooted in her belief that peace begins with the family and it is best achieved through strong, committed, and growing partnerships of all kinds.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** She has been a therapist for more than 50 years, with degrees from UCLA and Tel Aviv University. She is truly a global citizen, speaking seven languages, and having worked [00:01:00] with thousands of people throughout the world. I have admired her work, loved her TED Talk, and the documentary film Crossing the Bridge, tells the story of her and her beloved late husband, Yumi, decades of work, helping couples cross the bridge to one another. My respect for her went stratospheric when we prepped for today's podcast, and she shared some of her own Marital, Mothering and Grandmothering stories with me.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** It is my deepest belief that as therapists, if we are to help others with their relationships. We must first tend to our own and this extraordinary human being has done that. Welcome. Welcome to the podcast today. I am so excited. I didn't sleep much last night and I'm really honored to have you as my guest.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Thank you, MJ. Thank you so much.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** I always start with the question, how do you, a seasoned [00:02:00] professional, define mental wellness?

**Hedy Schleifer:** I'd like to start with a distinction between two paradigms. One paradigm is the individual paradigm, and mental wellness in the individual paradigm is achieving independence and autonomy, and being secure inside of yourself, knowing this is my journey, this is who I am, this is how I do my life. And then there is the relational paradigm, and the relational paradigm says we are born in connection, and we are hurt in disconnection, and we're healed in connection, and that our highest achievement, really, is to be in deep connection with others, not just one other. But with others, to be in community, to be in friendship, to be in partnership, to be in coupleship. But it is in that journey that we [00:03:00] achieve mental wellness. We achieve it through connection, through deeper and deeper connection, which then increases our relational intelligence and our relational maturity. I would say mental wellness is when we are relationally more and more mature.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** I love that. I think everyone should just play that back a couple of times because we do live in such an individualistic society that I appreciate your widening the lens on the definition.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Yes, it's another paradigm and the Western culture paradigm, as you say so wisely, is really individualistic. And yet, if we are relational beings, we will not achieve our mental wellness without actually deeply knowing how to be in connection.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Absolutely. One of the most beautiful perspectives [00:04:00] that you hold is that peace begins within the family and I wanted you to talk about that a little bit.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Yes. First of all, of course, it's built on the idea that we are relational beings and so within the family, every dynamic that we learn how to welcome and how to embrace and how to live creates peace. We are a big family. The world is a big family, and of course my heart is so heavy because our world right now is at war in so many places. I have this vision that if every couple could learn how to cross the bridge to each other and create that relational maturity with each other, if we had three percent of the population, 90 million couples, doing that It will be the tipping point that Malcolm Gladwell talks about, and it could become an epidemic. And then we [00:05:00] would have an epidemic of people being deeply connected, which is the epidemic I'm dreaming about.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** An epidemic we would not need vaccines for. In my 38 years as a therapist, it is really what people want the most, whether it's with their partner, whether it's with their children, whether it's with a work colleague or a neighbor. People deeply desire this deep connection of knowing and being known.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Exactly. I'll talk a bit about that more when we go into the structure I teach couples, but what I teach them is that they are responsible for the quality of the space between them. And that space, when it is safe, fertile, rich, it spreads, people can feel the vibes in the space. I [00:06:00] remember when my husband and I once were in an Uber, and we had been married maybe 57 years at the time, and the driver says, you guys aren't married, are you? And we said, why? He said, but it's just so fun in the back there. There's so much good vibes. There's such a good atmosphere. They're not used to people being married, being able to have that kind of space between. But that's what he felt. He felt the space between. And we said, no, we just met 57 years ago.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Oh, that's great. That's great. I have a million places that I could take today's conversation because of the depth and breadth of your life experience, your professional experience, your family experience. I think one of the things that I encounter the most in my work is people who are in a relationship, often, it's a committed one, marriage, or a long term, sometimes it's a sibling, sometimes [00:07:00] it's a person at work, and they're afraid to do any relational work. I want to begin with that, from the lens of your very deep experience, can you talk about the fear that we have that's on the other side of our desire to be close? The fear to really step in and learn how to be close?

**Hedy Schleifer:** Yeah, I'd like to make again a distinction here, and it's the distinction between our essence and what I call our survival pattern. Our essence as humans is good and connected and sweet and funny and intelligent and creative and juicy. That's our essence, and all of us are born with that essence, and I do believe it never goes away. But it gets covered up by survival. Tough situations, hurts, trauma, a [00:08:00] variety of things that occur, and we build a survival pattern that protects us from feeling the hurt. We are not our survival pattern. Our survival pattern sometimes is so strong we don't even know the distinction between it and our essence. I'm going to tell you a quick story about my beautiful husband, as he died a year and a half ago. I miss him terribly.

**Hedy Schleifer:** He's everywhere, but he's not right here physically. And I miss his physicality, his eyes, his hands, his touch. But he and I went to a workshop

where we learned that distinction and he learned it well because he went to that workshop as Yumi Schleifer. I went to the workshop as a Clinical Psychologist, and I learned nothing because I had my professional hat on.

**Hedy Schleifer:** What he learned in that workshop was that distinction between his pattern of survival and who he is as a person. It was the [00:09:00] first time that he realized his sense of worthlessness is a survival pattern. He's worthy, his sense of terror is a survival PA pattern. He's comfortable. He really saw the distinction and for two weeks he did work every day telling me, oh, I just realized. That's me. I'm good. Oh, I thought I was such a bad person. So, he did all this work, but his arteries were not ready for this amount of flow, and he had a heart attack. In the coronary care unit, he said to me, I want you to know, I'm coming home, my survival pattern is staying in the hospital and he was serious. He knew that's the work he was going to do. Leave the survival pattern over there and have the courage to be the person he really is. That told me I'm going back to that workshop when he's well and I'm gonna learn because that's something I want to know something [00:10:00] about.

**Hedy Schleifer:** In the survival pattern, we are afraid. We are afraid of closeness, we are afraid of connection, we are afraid of others. The reason we are afraid in the survival pattern is we've been hurt by them One way or another, there's been hurt coming our way and so we have defended. And in reclaiming our essence, we reclaim the longing for connection. That's in our essence. It starts from when we are born. You watch a little kid who's not being heard, and they look in your eyes, and they're just thrilled, and they'll point their finger, and they'll say, make a connection with me, and you come close, and they're thrilled. Have they been hurt already? There's already a little bit of that survival pattern. The fear is in the pattern. In our essence, we are thrilled to be in connection.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** I so believe that. It's the great paradox because what heals us is what [00:11:00] hurt us.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Exactly. That's such a powerful way of putting it. I just want to add, what hurt us were connections that were not connected. It heals us, our connections that are deeply connected, and learning how to welcome that level of connection.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Yes. I just came back from 10 days with my 8-month-old grandson. Who I think so far his two hurts are he had a cucumber taken away from him and that made him cry, and bumped his head. I remember watching his openness. Pure, so pure. You go to get him from his nap and he's so open. He's so trustworthy. I would watch him and try to take that in. I

thought, oh this is why people love to be grandparents because it's a healing process.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Yes.

**Hedy Schleifer:** What's his name? This little guy. His name is [00:12:00] Neel NEEL.

**Hedy Schleifer:** NEEL. Ne Neil. You were in touch with the essence of the human. 100%.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Yeah, and I think all the time, the only job he has right now in his life is to remind us all how loving we are.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Yes,

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** That's his only job.

**Hedy Schleifer:** And when you talk about the two hurts the cucumber and bumped his head. What we learned that time at that workshop, which was really a very important basis to a lot of the work we then developed, was that it is natural for us when we get hurt to discharge the hurt through crying, through shouting, through banging, whatever it is that comes naturally. And if we are welcomed in also that part of life, the life that allows for discharging hurt in all the ways that it comes out, then there's healing and we're [00:13:00] back to our essence. I want to tell you a quick story.

**Hedy Schleifer:** A friend of mine who had learned about this welcoming of discharge, she and I, and her husband, and my husband, and their daughter were in a jacuzzi. The little girl was playing with a Coke bottle and suddenly she fell into the jacuzzi, but we thought she was playing, so we did nothing and she's now under the water. She can't breathe. Her mother picks her up and she is terrified. She's spitting, she's crying, she's gesticulating. And the mother knew this is discharge and so she held her and held her, and the child was just discharging every bit of that terror she had under the water. And then she did an interesting thing, she went up again to that border and picked up the coke bottle and threw herself into the water. The mother understood she needs more discharge, so she's [00:14:00] recreating the event. So, the mother picked her up and the child shouted and screamed and she did this probably five times. Went up, under, the mother held and held, she cried, she shook, she did all the things that discharged us, she spit, everything that came naturally. And after that fifth time, she jumped again, it had become a game. And when she laughed, we knew

she had discharged it and the trauma was gone. We are actually wired to heal. If I'm loved in that discharge, it's gone. I'm back to my essence. There's no remnant of that event. But if I'm not allowed shh, no need to cry shh, or whatever it is that we do with strong discharge, then that stays with me. That's the beginning of the survival pattern. It's [00:15:00] discharge that wasn't allowed, that wasn't given room in a loving space.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** That's a beautiful story because we both know in therapy, what happens a lot is what we call reenactments And what you're talking about is a child who's hasn't had her reenactments taken away from her.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Exactly. Our instinct is, let me do this again and just get a chance to get it out of my system.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Let's shift and give the history of your newest iteration of your work.

**Hedy Schleifer:** My work is really based on Yumi and my life over the years the things we learned and then integrated into a model we call Encounter Centered Transformation. The reason we call it transformation is because it's now understood in brain research that the way the brain changes is in connection and in deep connections, it changes more and it becomes even more relational. [00:16:00] The transformation of the brain is the purpose, so the brain that becomes more and more relational, and it's based on the encounter, which I will talk more about. Before the pandemic, I used to do a two or a three-day intensive. Couples used to come, nine to six, for two days or for three days, we entered into a journey that I will tell you about. Then came a pandemic and how do I do my work? I decided Maybe Zoom will work.

**Hedy Schleifer:** I didn't know if it could work. Can I do my work and I don't see your hands and I don't see your feet and I don't see your body and I don't see how you move and can I do my work? It turns out the soul doesn't care that it's virtual. The connection occurs. When you and I just met the other day, it was right away. We were in the flow of two souls connecting, didn't care that it [00:17:00] was virtual. I decided, how do I shift what I've been doing in these intensives into a Zoom journey. I decided to divide the structure I did in that intensive into a 10-session journey.

**Hedy Schleifer:** And I'll give you each piece. The first piece of the journey when the couple comes the first thing I do is I actually meet with couples on Zoom for a free consult where they can get to know me and I can give them

what I'm going to tell you about so they can decide we do want that journey or we don't want that journey.

**Hedy Schleifer:** I thought that is such a good thing. They are now informed. They can talk through, they can watch the TED Talk, they can watch some of my YouTubes, they can really decide, yes, this is something we want to do, we commit to it, or no. The couple that has decided to come, the first session [00:18:00] is dedicated to the wildest dreams, the deepest aspirations, the greatest longings, and each partner gets a chance to explore in depth What is it they really want for their relationship?

**Hedy Schleifer:** Because I'm basing myself on the idea that our behavior follows our energy. If we put our energy up there in a very big vision, then everything we know how to do follows that vision. So, we put first a big vision on the horizon. Each person actually gets to go into dreaming. In dreaming, I like to make a distinction between the language of deficit, And the language of abundance, because quite often we'll say I don't want that bad sex anymore.

**Hedy Schleifer:** That's the language of deficit, bad [00:19:00] sex. And if you put bad sex on the horizon, guess what you're going to get? Bad sex. What is the language of abundance? I would love juicy, connected, delicious sex. Sex, let's say. So that's the language of abundance and when you put a dream out, it must be in the language of abundance. That's one of the lessons the couple learns in that first session is, how do I verbalize my dreams, my aspirations, my longings? In the language of abundance, how do I learn the language of abundance? Because what's on the horizon, I want it to be the language that most attracts good energy. And so that's session number one.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Let me ask you a couple of questions. Is it that they're sharing their dreams of their relationship with each other or of their life or of work or parents. What's the focus of it?

**Hedy Schleifer:** The [00:20:00] focus on this one is just the relationship with each other because that's what we're going to focus on. It's what I want with you.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** So, it flips a lot of marital therapy on its head because people love to come in and say what's wrong with their spouse.

**Hedy Schleifer:** It's such a contradiction. You're so right. Because not only do I have to say what I really want and what I long for, it's got to be in the language of abundance. It's got to describe the best of the best. Indeed.

**Hedy Schleifer:** It's a paradigm shift.

**Hedy Schleifer:** And you know what happens? It's, I'm glad you asked the question because often when I reread the six Dreams. People cry together. They've not seen those dreams sometimes since they were at their wedding speaking vows. They've not lived that space in which you speak the highest of you, the best of you, and the best of the other. So that sudden atmosphere [00:21:00] of the best of me with the best of you.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Yeah. That's beautiful.

**Hedy Schleifer:** In that session, I will ask questions because sometimes people will say, for example, I dream where I understand my man deeply and he understands me deeply and we know how to talk in a way that flows. I'll say, did you see that when you were growing up as a child? Because you see, I want to know already, why is that such a big dream? A person might say, no, I've never seen it. My mother didn't know how to welcome my father. My father didn't know how to welcome my mother,. People go into why then is it so important for their children to be able to see something they've never seen. In the dream section, in the aspiration section, I will ask some questions of the journey of why that dream is so basic. And so important. That [00:22:00] session brings in the story of both people, and they hear their story in a whole new way, because it's not embedded in a dream.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Yes. So, what do you do the next session?

**Hedy Schleifer:** The next session is dedicated to the distinction between the dance of life in survival versus the dance of life in connection. The way I do that session is this.

**Hedy Schleifer:** I say to them, I'm going to ask you to do something you never, ever have to do again. Ever. What I'm going to ask you to do is have your worst conversation with each other. But just for 13 minutes. And when 13 minutes are up, I'm going to go, stop! And you stop even if you're in the middle of a word, in the middle of a sentence, or even if you're winning for the first time. Whatever it is, you stop. Now, the reason I chose 13 is in Hebrew, every letter has a numerical value. 13 is [00:23:00] Ahavah, love, or Ahavah, one. And so, 13 is Ahavah, love, or Echadh one. I explained to the couple, if you're going to



have that tough conversation, might as well be in the name of love and oneness. That's where we're going. We're going to the horizon that you've just designed last week. So might as well be, but you sit across from each other. And just enter it and let it go just the way you do that, which is the toughest for you to speak about. Couples talk about in laws and children and work and sex and, the typical subjects in which things are tough and I'm looking at my watch and when time's up, I ask them to look at me.

**Hedy Schleifer:** And I say to them, imagine that you were in a restaurant, and the table next to you had this couple that we just saw, that couple, and you're looking at [00:24:00] them, and you're noticing what they're doing, and somebody whispers in your ear, see that couple? They are Wygelians. Wygelia is Another planet. And they're from there. They're Wygelians and they speak Wygelian so you didn't understand a word of what they said. Not a word, but you could see what they were doing. You could see their facial expression. You could see their body movements. You could see who moved forward, who moves backwards. You could see who speaks loudly. What did you see? I take the time and I write it down, their description of the Wygelian couple.

**Hedy Schleifer:** The Wygelian woman, she pushes and she's louder and she's got tears. I'm just describing one person. And the man, he's behind a wall and he gets smaller and he's looking through a little hole. Couples do an amazing job describing the Wygelian couple. And so, the Wygelian couple, the Wygelian woman, the Wygelian man, and what they're doing is [00:25:00] they're actually describing for the first time, sometimes in the long marriage, the survival dance. That they've been dancing forever, right?

**Hedy Schleifer:** Brilliant.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Are describing it because It's really not them. I do say that when they're done describing, I reread it to them, and often they'll say, that couple needs therapy. And so, we laugh. Usually, we stop when it becomes funny, because describing the survival after a certain while, it actually becomes funny. We laugh, and then I say, First of all, I have very good news for you. The Wygelian couple is not you. It's what you do in danger. That's how you dance in danger. But it's not you. I met you in your dreams. I know who you are. I started with your dreams because I wanted to meet you. This is [00:26:00] not you. But the other good news is you're part of a big club. The international Club of Wygelian Couples. They are everywhere in China, in Spain, in Australia, and often the very same dance you just described, because there aren't that many survival dances.

**Hedy Schleifer:** And here you are, part of a very big group of Couples Who Dance, the Wygelian Dance. We talk a little bit about energy because in the survival dance, there's often the person whose energy expands in danger, gets bigger, louder, tears, emotions, gestures, and the person who in danger constricts and gets smaller. A nice metaphor is the hailstorm and the turtle. I was the hailstorm in my relationship with Yumi, and Yumi was the turtle in our dance. But then, every once in a while, his [00:27:00] turtle became a ninja turtle, and he got out, and I became a turtle on the other side, because energy stays in balance. For a little while there, we talk about that so that they know they're part of something that's universal. I have to tell you, a couple who did something lovely with this they told their children about the Wygelian couple, and they said to their children, often we disappear, and these Wygelians are your mother and father. We want you to draw these extraterrestrials. So, they sat at a table and the children drew these extraterrestrials and the parents put them on the fridge and they said, whenever you see us do that dance, get us to the fridge so we can see the Wygelians and we can be your mother and father again.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Oh, that is Incredible. We think no one can see it. Actually, you could bring the children in and they could just do a [00:28:00] shortcut and say, this is my parents. But I do think it's universal. How many different Wygelian dances are there? Do you think there's eight, ten, four?

**Hedy Schleifer:** Not even.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Because in having done this for so many years now. Yes. They're nearly the same. The differences in the description, but we are all similar because, it's the primitive brain, it's the reptilian brain, and that's not a thinking brain, that's a reactive brain. To think we need the frontal lobe, and I do describe to them where the dance comes from. It comes from the reptile who says danger.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Yes. So, our essences have a lot of uniqueness, but our survival dances are quite similar.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Exactly. That's such a good observation. We're so beautiful in our essence and we have our own language and music and rhythm but in the survival dance, we are like every single couple, every [00:29:00] single reptile on, on the planet,

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** yes. We're not special. That's right. Not in that. Not in that.

**Hedy Schleifer:** And I say to them, now I'm ready to teach you a basic principle. Take your notebooks, because that's something they bring with them, a notebook and let me give you a conceptual idea, the conceptual idea is the survival dance will always disconnect you. You can count on it. Every time you enter it, no matter what, even if you use a different tone, whatever, it's a survival dance. It will disconnect you. What connects you? Three invisible connectors. And let's talk about those invisible connectors, because that's what we're going to be journeying with.

**Hedy Schleifer:** One connector is the quality of the space between. We don't think about the space between, but we're [00:30:00] responsible for the quality of the space between. The first person who named that space was a Jewish philosopher by the name of Martin Buber. And Martin Buber said, our relationships live in the space between us. It doesn't live in you or in me, not even in the dialogue between us, but in the space between, and that space is sacred. He called the space between us a sanctuary. What he was teaching is we are responsible for that sanctuary. I let the couple; know I teach them that we're going to be learning how each one of you will take 100 percent responsibility for the quality of the space between. And that's going to be one of the learnings. And a very good reason if you have children is that the space between the couple is the playground of the child. If that space [00:31:00] is sacred, the child plays in a sacred playground. One connector, the space.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Connector number two, a bridge. There's a bridge between couples. Why? Because only incompatible people fall in love with each other. The worlds of a couple are so different from each other. One is fire, the other one is water,

**Hedy Schleifer:** yep.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Why do we need the bridge? We need it so I can learn you. I can learn your culture, and your language, and your rhythm, and your ideas. I can cross the bridge, leave my world, leave the shores of where it's safe for me, and come over to be with you, to learn you. What we're going to be doing as a couple is we're going to be crossing the bridge to our partner. One of us will be a host. Come over. I'm inviting you. I'd like to show you a neighborhood in my world. Our world is filled with neighborhoods. I would [00:32:00] like to show you a neighborhood in my world. I'm coming over. I'm leaving my world, my language, my rhythm. I'm leaving everything. I'm learning you. You know how certain tourists never leave America. They go around the world, but they're Americans. They haven't crossed the bridge to really learn a culture, another culture. And that's what as a couple, you guys are going to do. I say you're

going to learn to really enter the world of the other through that bridge. Number two connector.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Number three connector is also from Martin Buber. It's called the encounter. The encounter is that magical time where I feel completely connected to you. It's magic. It feels like a miracle. And we often go there with each other and then we get snapped out of it. And we don't know how we got there. We don't know how we got snapped out of it. But we know the encounter because we have experienced it. Sometimes we've [00:33:00] experienced it with a baby. I think you and Neel that encounter zone, it's magical. The point of honoring the space and crossing the bridge is to arrive at the encounter. The encounter isn't just between people, we can have it in nature. You can go walking into nature, and suddenly, you're in the encounter zone, and everything smells stronger, and there's more color, and you hear the sounds of nature, and sometimes you have tears, it's whoa, it's so beautiful. Zone of the encounter. You can have it with music. You can hear a piece of music you've heard a million times, but suddenly you're in the zone of the encounter, and wow. It's beautiful. The music is more beautiful than you've ever heard it before. A sports team can be in the zone and when they're in there, they win, even if they're not the better team. But if they're in that [00:34:00] zone, my grandson said, Bubbe, could you tell my coach this? I want him to know about the Zone of the Encounter. The team communicates in ways that are beyond the regular communication in that zone of the encounter. I explained that's what we're going to do. We're going to honor the space. We're going to cross the bridge. We're going to create the conditions for the encounter. And I know from my own relationship, when you do one encounter and another encounter, you arrive, you transcend, and you live in the zone of the encounter. That's what the Uber driver felt with us, was the zone of the encounter. I give the couple that lecture, they ask questions, they want to know more, but when that lecture is done, that's still the second session, I say, we're going to just practice. Establishing the bridge.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Now, establishing the bridge is nonverbal because there's been a lot of research on [00:35:00] what is the percentage of words in communication. Words versus everything else. eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, loudness of voice, body movement, skin, what's the percentage? Do you have a guess?

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** I want to say 80 to 90.

**Hedy Schleifer:** 90. You're getting closer. The researcher is called Mehrabian. He did an amazing piece of research there and he saw that everything else,

including skin, movements, touch, everything, 93 percent words, seven. I say to the couple, let's start there. Let's start with 93%. Here's what I asked them to do.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Sit, across from each other with a pillow behind the seat of the chair so that they can get close because the eyes have to be at 18 inches. Now, why 18 inches? The research has shown, and you know that with Neel that [00:36:00] there is limbic resonance when you are that close, at 18 inches, because that's where we hold a child, and our brain is structured that at that proximity, there is limbic resonance, both limbic systems resonate together, and then there is limbic regulation, which is the central nervous system calms down. That's why you can't say to a child, go to your room and calm down, because they need your eyes at 18 inches that say, I'm here. Or like my friend who held her daughter after, she nearly drowned. She held her close like that. because of that limbic resonance that could allow for the limbic regulation. I have the couple sit, and I explain this to them so that your eyes are at 18 inches. And I say to them, you know in movies you'll see, before the couple kiss, They look at each other at 18 inches, just [00:37:00] stand there or sit there and then they kiss because we're structured that way. They're going to sit like that, you're going to hold hands, and then I guide them in this establishment of the bridging which I simply say, look at each other, just look. We're going to take a moment of silence in which you're just looking, feeling, looking, breathing, and they sit in silence. What's very interesting is that for many couples, they haven't had a moment like this. Maybe since their wedding, of just looking, just being, nothing to say. I guide it like that, and then I say to them, imagine a bridge. There's a bridge, between your world and your partner's world. Imagine that bridge, and imagine crossing it, and learning to land on the other side.

**Hedy Schleifer:** [00:38:00] I'm just guiding now, what's going to happen in the other sessions. Imagine now that space between the two of you and imagine it beautiful like a garden that you have taken care of and it's fertile and there's beauty there. Imagine that's between the two of you and the two of you take care of it together. And they're just looking, like you and I are doing right now. They're just looking at each other and then I say, and just for a moment, thank your partner with your eyes. And then I have them, if they have children, bring the picture of their children, and I say, who's looking at you? Because your children are watching you. And so, then they look at them, because here are the kids, watching them doing this very basic establishment of the bridge. Then I say, close your eyes and bring your attention to the energy in your hands so that they can actually feel. It's about really also feeling part of that [00:39:00] 93 percent that is skin touching each other. Go there now and be just with the energy in your hands. And say something with your hands because the language of the hands is part of the language. So, they say something and now explore a little bit with your hands. I guide them to know that piece of the 93 percent.

Now put your hands on your laps. And from a deep place within with your eyes closed, let an intention for your relationship reveal itself. What's really beautiful is people have amazing intentions, because then I say, when you're ready, with your eyes closed, just speak your intention. People say magnificent things. My intention is for us to be really safe with each other, so we can dance a dance of life in connection. Or my intention is to be so open with you that you come to know me deeply. People just say poems, that come out of their mouth. And then I have them open their eyes [00:40:00] and look at each other. Then I'll say, feel the space between you right now. What's in it? They'll go connection, warmth, safety, hope. All kinds of things that haven't been there in a long time. But it's in the space now and they've co created that. Then I do what I do at the end of every session. They have their journal there and we look at four things. Number one, something I learned, I never knew it before today. Number two, something I relearned, I've known it. But today has made it so much deeper for me. Number three, something that surprised me. Whoa, it came out of left field. I did not expect that. And number four, something that intrigues me now. And so, the couple writes, it's an integration. We've done it also after the dream session. Now we do it after the Dance of Life in Connection session. They write it down and they speak [00:41:00] it. Session number two, done.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Do you have people who say, oh, I can't do this? It's too close, it's too much. I just really want to complain. Though you do have the 13 minutes, so I guess that would meet their need.

**Hedy Schleifer:** Strangely, the way I've structured it, with that 13 minutes of getting it out. People are thrilled to learn something different. It's interesting because when you said that, I thought, doesn't that occur? But it's because people have had a chance at their Wygelian days and they do want something else.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Yes, sir. That's why they're here. Oh, this has been beautiful. We're going to stop here today. And the second half of my conversation will be brought to you in two weeks in episode 67.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Here are my Inner Challenge insights.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Insight number one.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Our highest achievement is to be in deep [00:42:00] connection with self and others. One more time. Our highest achievement is to be in deep connection with self and others. This is how we achieve mental wellness.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Insight number two.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** What if we really believed what Hedy said. Our essence as humans is good and connected and sweet and funny and intelligent and creative and juicy.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Insight number three.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Only incompatible people fall in love with each other. The only way through is to cross the bridge and gain a deep understanding of why that person is so incompatible with you.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Insight number four.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** I'm not sure that everyone who gets in touch with their essence would need to have a heart attack like Yumi did. But on second thought, maybe it's not such a bad idea to attack our heart so we can let go of our survival patterns and reclaim our essence.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Insight number [00:43:00] five.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Notice if the space between you and your beloved is polluted. For example. If they are talking, are you polluting the space with silent judgment or maybe you're talking and they're scrolling on their phone, half listening. Less pollution, is the solution. More green less mean.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Insight number six.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Survival patterns are tricky. Often we frame them as strengths instead of obstacles. As you go through your week, listen for people bragging about not caring what others think. Someone minimizing their own needs because serving others at all costs makes them a good person. Or individuals unsure how to navigate all the changes in today's world and wanting, maybe demanding, others to follow their norms and values. Survival patterns are protective- not connective.

Insight number seven.[00:44:00]

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** There was a lot in this episode. Here's a few tips:

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** let's share our dreams, using the language of abundance. Let's lean into the best of one another. Why not own our inner, Wygelian enough to laugh about it. Let's choose the dance of our dreams instead of the dance of survival. Let's build a bridge of curiosity with those incompatible partners of ours, whether we've been with them for two years, 10 years, 30 years or 50 years.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** There is so much more in my part two conversation that I cannot wait to share it with you in two weeks. I am so thankful and honored to have had this time with Hedy and to share all of her wisdom with you. You want more information. I'm linking her website in the show notes.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** Thanks for listening and give that [00:45:00] incompatible person that you love a hug and share dream. This is your Inner Challenge.