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**LINDA &  
CHARLIE BLOOM**  
*Blossoming into Right Relationship*

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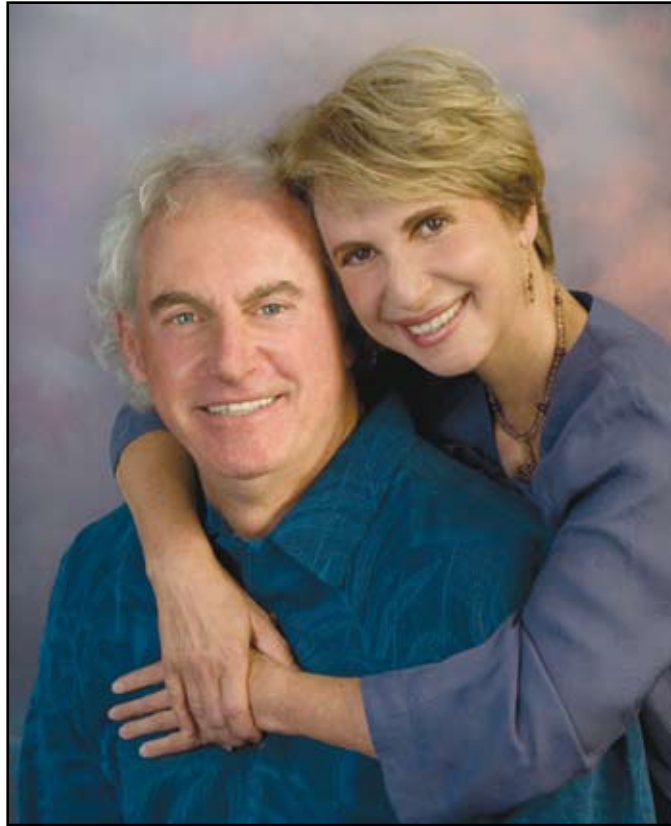


Photo by Seraphina

# Charlie & Linda Bloom

## *Blossoming into Right Relationship*

By Donna Strong

**T**he work of Charlie and Linda Bloom goes straight to the heart of what matters most — our love relationships. For more than three decades, this committed couple has intertwined the personal with the professional, combining their own marriage with work as therapists.

Proof that they know what they are doing is evidenced in a revelatory new book, *Secrets of Great Marriages* (New World Library). The Bloom's new book is overflowing with inspiration. The stories in it are drawn from twenty-seven couples who demonstrate the willingness to surrender to what life brings, the ability to sense what is needed and the spiritual tenacity to stay as present as possible while moving through the growing pains entailed in facing chal-

lenging and traumatic dilemmas together. Having found a way of mindfully meeting many trials and tribulations, these couples illuminate a trail of wisdom to follow.

One of our most innate human needs, to feel a sense of love, is the reason why relationships play such a pivotal role in our lives. We can readily see the divine in another when we fall in love, yet as issues surface to be addressed, we may become confused about how to proceed in our most heartfelt connections. Linda, Charlie and the couples featured in the book share the rich rewards of finding right relationship together.

Charlie and Linda's professional partnership is appropriately named Bloomwork. In gardening, with the right attention and care, flowers blossom and bring more beauty into our

lives. The work of the Blooms, like that done in fine gardening, is to guide couples to cultivate a life that allows both to flourish in their full authenticity.

**Awareness: To start, with the considerable history of your work spanning three decades, where is your focus now?**

**Linda:** One of the things that I try to strengthen in people is their ability to vision. One of the motivations in writing the book is to stimulate people to hold the bar up higher about what they can have in their lives. I'm from the school of thought that people don't use nearly enough of their innate natural talents, intelligence, and creativity. We want the readers to know that with commitment, a love of learning and the willingness to make their relationship a priority, they can create great relationships like people in this book.

**Awareness: That's beautiful and it really came through.**

**Charlie:** We know that no real teaching occurs unless the teacher is walking the talk. It gives a kind of authenticity that is different than simply being exposed to information.

We were hoping that people would experience exactly what you acknowledged, to be inspired to recognize the possibilities for them and to see that it doesn't require an exceptional person to create a great relationship. Even with a very ordinary history, or a very troubled and problematic history, that with the right attention and adequate support, it is possible to create something that you would never have imagined. One of the reasons we had such a wide range of stories in the book is for people to see there is no particular type of person you need to be

to create a great relationship.

**Awareness:** *Your book celebrates the unique facets that we all are, and has an empowering message; we can all find the fulfillment of love. One of the key things that I feel you're doing is shattering myths about needing to homogenize as a couple. Instead, you are showing that people can be authentic and thrive.*

**Linda:** I think it really comes to mindfulness, about paying attention and seeing what's causing pain or what's creating more joy — and continuing to put the corrections in. It's all well and good to have a very fancy vision, but you have to get down to the very hard work of manifesting the vision. It requires developing the qualities within yourself that help you get ready to become an eligible player for a great relationship. Very few of us had a good model — of someone who took good care of themselves and yet was very generous to the partner, being both resilient and going after the best she or he could be, while making a contract to support the other's greatness to come forward. A lot of the people we interviewed said it was on-the-job training. I think that it is, so just keep putting in the corrections until you hit upon the things that work.

**Awareness:** *Life is a creative process and yet very few people feel they are empowered to approach it that way. You're doing brilliant work in showing what can emerge from the synergy of two people.*

**Charlie:** I think that this is the miracle of what relationships can provide for couples and the world. The combination of two people working together is infinitely greater than what can be produced by two separate individuals. Most people understand that conceptually, but something happens when you have an experience of the potency of true synergy, when you really have an experience of creating something beyond what you know that you personally could have created.

There were people in the book who said, "There's no way that I could have done what I have done and created the life I have without my partner." When you really know that on a cellular level, when you know what

is possible when two intentions align in such a deep way and you've experienced it, there's something so compelling that it absolutely cements the bond. It not only holds it together, but it creates a continual ongoing growth and development on the part of both people.

There's a point at which you get really locked in, and it's not that you're stuck with each other, it's that there's such a vivid awareness that the relationship is a miracle — and you would never knowingly do anything to jeopardize it. That's what we're talking about when we use the word commitment. It's a whole different level than what most people think commitment is. Do you know what I mean?

**Awareness:** *I do, when there is a sacred connection that is realized with another person, there's a code of conduct that comes with it.*

**Charlie:** We want people to have a glimpse of this in the book.

**Awareness:** *I think you turned the light on high! You coined a phrase, going from 'bumps to breakthroughs;' would you comment on how you have seen people emerge through events that seem to guarantee only catastrophic outcomes and instead they find their true strength with one another?*

**Linda:** Thank you for asking, because it's one of the major themes of the book. When you hit a really rough spot, and you're in breakdown, whether it's your health, your finances or one of your teenagers acting out and it's a serious crisis, one of the things I always say is that crises are highly under-rated...

**Awareness:** {Chuckle...}

**Linda:** It is so fraught with opportunity when your life goes to hell in a handbasket — lying around in pieces — that you're quite motivated to learn, just from the pain and suffering driving you. So one of the myths we wanted to break is these people had charmed lives — they found a soul mate and everything just flowed from there. They have all the trials and tribulations that everybody has — what Buddhists call the 10,000 joys and the 10,000 sorrows, but their attitude about those crises is different than those people who are

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# Blooms...

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crushed and ground down by them. This was a very responsible group of people.

There were four different couples who lost their money in the group, and when the financial crisis was putting the men into terrible depression, the women in these couples believed in the men and said, "You know, you're the same person you were before. You're wiser than before, you'll make a fortune again and I'm sticking by you." All the men spoke so touchingly about how much it meant to them that the women stood by them in their darkest hour.

We had other people who faced threatening illness, the most dramatic being Mariah Gladis, with ALS (aka, Lou Gehrig's disease), and she said she wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for Ron's belief in her — that she could live with this disease and have children.

This group demonstrated qualities of resilience and responsibility. When things happened, they would roll up their sleeves and get to work, individually and as a couple. They'd say, "We're going to handle this somehow." Though they may have been rendered helpless at first, grieving and thrashing around for a bit, they got on task with what life gave them. These people were prime examples of becoming stronger at the broken places.

**Awareness: When people are going through big challenges,**

**how do they learn to hold the tension of the opposites?**

**Charlie:** Each of the couples is creating their relationship moment to moment. It's an organic dynamic alive entity that is continually growing and evolving, and they are continually fine-tuning it.

**Linda:** This group was extremely mature in the sense of having done a lot of personal work on themselves — spiritual practice, therapy and workshops. It helped them to know when to let things be, to wait and allow life to unfold, as well as when to step in and be assertive and proactive.

The average amount of time the couples were together was thirty years, so they were experienced in life. Their claim to fame was what they had done with the time they'd had with each other. I think people who have so much trouble being in the ambiguity have lives that are so much harder than those who have evolved to the place where they can hold the tension of the opposites, where they can be in 'don't know' mind. Even though they might not necessarily like what is going on at the time, there is more breathing room around it. That, for me, is the earmark of a person doing his/her own work to grow up.

**Awareness: I wanted to ask you about the quality of forgiveness and its importance to developing an organic and growing aspect so vital in relationship...**

**Charlie:** Almost all spiritual traditions are grounded in the notion that forgiveness is an es-

sential quality to develop and practice, otherwise we just get bogged down in resentment and pain and feel like a victim, so really it's the cornerstone. What most people don't understand about forgiveness is that it's a process, not an event, it occurs over time — it unfolds.

**Linda:** I'd like to speak about forgiveness too, because I feel like it is such a power tool at our disposal, to plow away a lot of debris that can be between people when they have a breakdown.

One of my favorite stories in the whole collection is the Coleman story. Shirley was devastated when her husband Drew told her he'd been having an affair with a friend of hers for a year. First she let herself feel her heart ripped out and her belief system in shreds, then she started to reassemble things, but she let herself experience the rage, grief and loss and then she got accountable knowing that she played a part in it.

Both people took responsibility for the environment they created together that gave rise to the affair. The willingness to re-build the shattered parts afterward required the forgiveness of self and other. They were completely healed from it. That's why they could be so completely at ease in bringing it forth as part of their story. They learned what they needed to learn.

**Awareness: And in the process, it became a strength, as you have indicated.**

**Linda:** That's right. And they remarked on how precious the relationship is now, because

they came so close to losing it.

**Awareness: It reminds me of one of the other points you made about how we form these protective patterns in childhood that leave us frustrated and isolated in adult life. When a partner has violated our trust, it is a crossroads of choice whether we will take a risk and become more open, or cling to our old patterns.**

**Charlie:** I think I'd take it even further than that, not only is it likely we will re-experience situations that activate unhealed wounds of the past, but it's part of our unconscious intention in getting into the relationship. We unconsciously but very intentionally choose partners that will re-activate the wound, not because we're masochistic and like to suffer, but only by revisiting those places and relating to them from a different perspective can we really recover from the original wound. If we can do this with someone who is capable of giving what the original person wasn't capable of, then we will re-create a different outcome.

**Awareness: This leads me to your comments on the cycles of giving and receiving in great relationships; this group understood that there will be care when they need it...**

**Charlie:** That's really important. When you trust that you're going to get your share and that it all evens out in the end, then you don't need to keep score of who gets what, and an enormous amount of energy is freed up. Most of the couples in the book didn't come into their relationships self-actualized; they really

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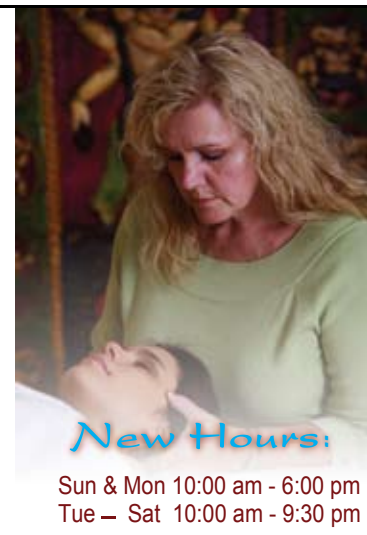


  
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grew into it in the process of being together and cultivating trust. It took the risk of letting go of some of the things they were using to keep control to make sure they were getting their fair share. There's always a certain degree of risk to move from mistrust to trust, and it takes courage.

**Awareness:** *What are some of the secrets of great marriages that you would like our readers to know about?*

**Linda:** I'd really like your readers to appreciate the importance of enlightened self-interest.

**Awareness:** *Yea!*

**Linda:** Sometimes people have an idea that if I give, people are going to take advantage of me. When you get into the flow without martyring yourself, respectfully playing the edge where you can give from the pure place more and more of the time, then it just comes back around.

These couples were glowing examples of this. They weren't busy with scorekeeping because the trust was high, and there was a lot of respect and gratitude for the other person. Spontaneously in the interviews we would hear, "See why I love her so much?"

We would hear these testimonials to how much laughter and joy this person had brought into the other person's life. It was a kick to be around them because they were getting so much joy from each other.

**Awareness:** *It's like they have found a magic elixir!*

**Charlie:** Its really compelling.

**Awareness:** *I wanted to ask you about Judith Sherven and Jim Sniechowski's expanded description of making love in daily life — of actions that give joy and respect and appreciation. It seems like this is cultivating the sacred synergy that is key to the inherent abundance of lasting love.*

**Charlie:** This is what we're talking about with enlightened self-interest. When you really tap into the whole synergistic aspect of the relationship — it's a cycle where both people are committed to each other and each one absolutely gets behind his/her partner and gives whatever is going to fill them up, and then that person becomes a beneficiary as well.

It's a mutually reinforcing deepening cycle that just keeps

going and it creates its own momentum — it doesn't stop! It's opposite the consciousness that most people live in... that the more you give, the more your tank will be empty. The group in the book know from experience that giving is what fills them up.

**Linda:** These couples are as happy as newlyweds, and they have the depth and the maturity that can only come from a long-term partnership. That's the winning combo!

**Awareness:** *Love and intimacy are soul food and we really are fed with these qualities.*

**Charlie:** We saw that it's not only possible to keep the passion and love alive, but for these couples, it keeps getting stronger. I think it's related to the enlightened self-interest — there really is no limit to the depth of love people can experience if they keep stoking the fire.

It's not just a matter of knowing what it requires, but of feeling that you are deserving and worthy of having this much joy in your life. It's what stops a lot of us from going outside our comfort zone, going beyond the happiness we've gotten used to.

**Awareness:** *So the sky is the limit when you feel deserving.*

**Charlie:** It really is.

**Linda:** It was quite validating being around these couples because of the contributions many of them were making to a larger community. They were doing all manners of good work — Barbara and Larry Dossey come to mind with their network all over the world and the Twists, Lynne and Bill, with the Pachamama Alliance to protect the rainforests of Ecuador and Brazil. Then there are Michael and Justine Toms, doing interviews with the greatest thinkers of our times.

These couples are proactive in creative ways to make the world a better place. To me, this shows that they are on the right path and the love they have created in their pair bond as romantic partners is so full and overflowing that it demands a wider arena of expression.

**For more on Charlie and Linda Bloom, visit [www.bloomwork.com](http://www.bloomwork.com)**

**Donna Strong is a writer and gardener with a passion for flowers and flourishing in all her relations. For more information see [www.donnastrong.com](http://www.donnastrong.com) or <http://spiritsynergy.wordpress.com>**

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