



The RISC Course

Week #1 – A Fresh Start:

How to Create an Extraordinary Relationship Foundation

Session Transcript

[0:00:00]

Christian: Hi, everybody. We're so glad to be with you here. Thank you to Michael. For those of you who don't know yet, Michael Russer is our wizard of operations. He'll be in the background.

Welcome to our RISC course. Welcome to our home. You're here with us in our living room. We're really glad to be with you. We can't tell you how excited we are to share with you the material that we're going to be presenting to you here over the next seven weeks, and which you will be practicing starting tonight.

Sonika: Yeah. We absolutely want to start by acknowledging you for being someone who's committed to increasing the quality of your relationships such that you're willing to invest your time, your energy, and your money to do so. We really do consider it a privilege to get to work with you and share this leading edge information with you.

I'll tell you, just what we're going to give you tonight has turned relationships around. We're really looking forward to sharing with you today and the next seven weeks this transformational material.

We really want you to know that your relationship isn't going to be the same after this course. You really dive into this material, do the homework we're going to be offering you in between sessions, you're going to experience some pretty profound results, and not just in your intimate relationship.

I'll say too this material is applicable to every relationship. You can use it with your intimate partner. I tell you, we use this with our kids, with our friends and

our co-workers, the people who work for us in our business, my ex. We use it everywhere. It really does produce amazing results.

Christian: We have our kids coming back to us using the stuff they have seen us do. It's not because we taught it to them directly. They just observe how we talk to each other, and they are now coming back using our own tools when they communicate with us or want something.

Sonika: We want to show you really whether you're single, you're coupled, you're married, gay, straight, somebody new in relationship, or somebody who's been in a relationship for a long time or more experienced, or really if your relationship is in total breakdown – we've had some people come to us like "This is our last-ditch effort" –

Christian: Yeah. Good for you for giving it a last-ditch effort.

Sonika: Yeah. Some other people are like "You know, we're doing pretty good, but we just want to add a little more spark." Wherever you are, it's totally for you.

Christian: Yeah. I've got to say, we are – and I particularly am – excited about the stuff we're going to present, because it just flat-out works. I had a guy ask me today "Well, how's it so easy for you with you and Sonika?"

How it's so easy is because we live what we teach. The relationship we have – it's just great. It's better than the dreams I used to have about what it could be. We still have deep intimacy and crazy personal growth and full self-expression and passionate lovemaking and plenty of fun. We've been together for more than ten years now. We are together most all the time. We work together. We parent together. We have two children, a seventeen-year-old boy and a now fourteen-year-old girl which we had a half time. We co-parent with Sonika's ex.

We use it for all of that, and life is still rich and full and rewarding. Our relationship is the foundation of all of it, which is what tonight's session is about: creating a new foundation.

Sonika: Yeah. Really, you know, it's true too that it hasn't always been easy. We've been through our own share of relationship struggles and breakdowns. Really, between us, we've experienced just about everything. Abusive relationships, distant relationships, unsatisfying relationships, sexless marriages. We've been through separations and divorces. We just said we've got our kids living in two houses. We've got stepparents.

We've been through it all. Not only that, but we have had the opportunity to work with thousands of other people in various stages of relationship breakdown

and bliss. We have a lot of experience here that we're bringing to this conversation.

Christian: Yeah. It's definitely been true for us as we hope it is already or will be for you that all our pains and mistakes and blunderings we've done have been gifts in disguise, because that's what inspired us to find a better way.

I used to be no good whatsoever at relationships. I really sucked at it, although I thought at the time I was pretty great. But I really wasn't. It wasn't working, and it wasn't working, but I just kept at it and kept studying with mentors and teachers and all the material until I figured it out. Really, that's what it took for us to take on new practices.

In the end, Sonika invented a bunch of it before I even met her. Our signature system here – which we'll be teaching to you – and that is what has helped us break through our negative patterns and stuck places and to keep our love alive.

Sonika: Yeah. Really, contrary to popular belief, love isn't magic. It feels like it when we first fall in love, when we're in this blissful state, and it just seemed to happen all by itself, but after we're in a relationship for a while and we kind of dip out of the honeymoon stage – what we're going to talk about a little bit more here tonight – it doesn't happen all by itself anymore.

[0:05:18]

It clearly is a state of being in a set of skills that we can learn and learn how to replicate so that we can keep love and passion alive in our relationships. I promise that this body work is going to give that to you.

Christian: I want to also say that this doesn't mean even though you practice and you get this and you get new tools and new skills and new foundation, it doesn't mean you're not going to experience a fight again or that you'll never be upset or triggered. That's not true for us, either. We're two different people. We've got our judgments and preferences. We get mad and annoyed and sad and all of that.

We're human, right? We just know what to do with it. As we practice, we get quicker at it, and now, we're really good at doing it quickly, and so can you over time.

Sonika: Yeah. The other thing I'll say too is that we're going to be presenting to you this evening a radical new approach to relating. This is very different than the traditional stuff that you might get in counseling. We're not going to be teaching you "I" statements or how to paraphrase and back what your partner said. It's

much more shifting at the core – where it is we're coming from – so we can produce a different result.

We're also really aware that it takes time and practice for our bodies to learn. We aren't like machines where you just –

Christian: That would be cool if we were. Just input a new program, enter, system-wide compliance. It doesn't work like that.

Sonika: We're much more like plants than machines. It takes time for our bodies to learn. We're going to give you some practical, usable tools that you can put into practice right away so that you can begin to shift yourself over time to be able to create what it is you want.

Christian: Yeah. Speaking of that humans are more like plants than machines, you're trying something. Do what I do. Fold your hands. Yup, just fold your hands like you always do. Notice you can do that. You can do it ten times a second, and you just fold your hands, okay?

Notice which thumb is on top. I have my left thumb on top. How many of you are left-thumbers? I know we can't see your raised hands, but you can take note of that. How many of you are right-thumbers? All right. Cool.

Now what I want you to try is spread your hands apart, and then interlace them again, differently now so that the other thumb is on top. How's that feel?

Sonika: Weird.

Christian: Pretty weird, right? It's very uncomfortable. It's very weird. It's like that with learning a new thing. In the beginning, it's not bad or wrong; it's just really weird, because that's not what we've been doing up till now. But if you do it many times in a row, over time, it will feel just natural. Same with what you'll be learning here.

Sonika: Well, I've got to say too, there was a time in my life when being shut down in my relationships – not intimate, not revealing, not passionate – it felt normal. As I started learning new patterns and behaviors, it felt really weird at first.

I will never forget the first time I was totally open in embrace. It's like, "Whoa, that is weird." Just like new shifting my hands here. As I kept practicing over and over and over, now, it's the opposite. Shut down feels really weird.

Christian: Yeah. We want to encourage you here as we ask you to engage in these new behaviors and use these new tools that may be uncomfortable is to allow for the

discomfort that you may feel. As a matter of fact, you can just plan on that it might be a little uncomfortable trying on these new things that we'll be suggesting to you. Any kind of change requires that you be able and willing to notice all the different feelings that come with trying on something new.

If you feel uncomfortable with any of the exercises or tools that we're trying on here, just know that change is happening, and it's okay. It's uncomfortable. It's not dangerous. You're actually rewiring your relationship patterns. If you stick with these new practices long enough, you're going to find that they get easier and easier over time. At some point, you're going to find yourself engaging in these practices without even thinking about it. It'll just be the new thing. It takes a little time for that to happen.

Sonika: Let's take a moment here before we jump into tonight's material to talk about what's going to allow you to get the most out of this online webinar. The first thing we're going to ask is for you to commit to this hour and a half every Wednesday night, to give it your full attention.

I don't know if you're like me, but there have been times when I've done stuff like this, and while I'm listening, I'm also answering emails or making dinner. I'm engaged in 20,000 other activities.

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When I that – and the same is true for you – you're just not going to get the same value out of this course if you don't give it your undivided attention. We're really going to be teaching some new concepts and tools that are going to take your full attention to be able to grasp and embody. That's the first thing is we really want you to set aside this time with no distractions every single week so you can really be with us and be with your partner. Be doing this with your partner.

Christian: Yes, indeed. If you're doing this with a partner, if possible, we encourage you to be on these webinars together so you can make eye contact with each other and do the exercises together that we'll be suggesting. Some of the exercises, we'll have you do right here while we're with you, and some of them, we'll send you off to do on your own afterwards.

If you can't be together in the same space for whatever reason, do the exercises best you can on your own. We'll give you instructions for that as we go along as well with the intention though of doing them as you come back together. We'll also give instructions if you're just on here as a single person.

Sonika: Now, as you already know, we're going to be meeting here every seven weeks for the same time, 5:30-7:00, Pacific Standard Time.

Christian: Right here in the living room.

Sonika: We're also going to ask that you commit to being to every single class. If you need to miss a webinar for any reason to listen to it in between sessions so you can stay caught up. A lot of this material builds one webinar to the next, so we want to make sure that you're able to stay caught up with the sequence of courses here that we're going to be doing. Really, you're just not going to get the same value if you don't dedicate this time to the course.

Christian: Yeah. Good for you for doing whatever it took to be on here now, taking the time and money and energy and investment that it took. Since you've already gotten yourself here, you might as well milk it to the last drop.

When we talk about committing to it, we're using the word "commitment" as we make these requests of you. We're going to talk more about significance of committing before we end this night.

Let's just say for now that committing to something is a creative and powerful act. You're declaring your vision of what will be and aligning yourself with that vision.

Sonika: It's really the first step to creation is declaring your commitment, your intention, upfront. It's a little harder if you're taking a trip if you don't have some end destination in mind to know that you got there. It really makes a big difference to say "You know what? I'm committed to creating a fabulous result here."

Really, what we're requesting is for you to commit to completing this program. To commit to attending the weekly webinars, doing the homework in between sessions, because we're going to be spending an hour and a half together every week, but the bulk of this is your life, which is going to be happening in between sessions. That's where the homework comes in.

Christian: Right. You'll see we'll put it up. We'll put up this commitment statement on the slide here in a moment. We encourage you to just say this out loud. Say it to your partner if you're both here. If not, say it out loud for yourself, if you are willing. "I am committed to completing this program – both the weekly webinars and the homework – for the benefit of my relationships, our relationship, and all my relationships." Awesome. Thank you.

If you are not willing to commit to that, that is your choice as well. I think we made the point about that. Cool.

Sonika: Now, while we're talking about this – let's actually jump into the meat of tonight's program – is because words have power. Words have creative power. Words are things. We actually create our relationship with our words and with what we say, with what we think.

Let's give you an example of this here. You'll see how this ties into a relationship. I want you to imagine that I'm going to say these next couple of words to you, and I want you to imagine that I'm talking to you specifically, and just notice what gets produced as I say these different phrases to you. All right, ready? First one.

"You look really shut down and unfriendly, and I am not looking forward to being with you in this class."

Good. So just notice, what gets produced for you as I say that? You might notice – which is what happens for a lot of people when we do this at our live trainings – a lot of people say they feel more closed-off when I say that to them. Less open, less trusting.

Christian: Perhaps even just shut down. Could you feel that in your body somewhere? In your throat, in your chest or your gut as Sonika said those words to you?

[0:15:07]

Sonika: A lot of times, you can actually watch people shut down literally.

Christian: If you weren't censoring yourself, what's the first thing you'd want to say right back to her? Yeah. Most often, the answer is "... you!" Yeah.

Sonika: Notice how I can actually take somebody who's feeling pretty open and shut them down pretty fast, even as an experiment, just saying "You're shut down."

Now, I'm going to say something else, now, and I want you to notice what gets produced from here.

"You look so open and friendly, and I am looking really forward to being with you these next seven weeks."

What gets produced from there? Well, if you're like most people we work with, you probably feel a little more open, a little more seen, a little more trusting.

Christian: A little more willing and invited to take a step forward, be interested. Although you might also notice a little bit of skepticism because of the first thing she said,

and that is exactly what happens in relationships. I might have said one thing first that was more like her first statement – "You look so shut down. You're not very friendly." – and then when I come back and now I feel all better and I say "Oh, man, you're wonderful.", she might not be quite ready to just jump into the open.

Sonika: Now, you might wonder what this has to do with relationship and really what this has to do with a fresh start, so we're going to talk about this here, because it's real crucial for how we create a positive experience or not in relationship.

Think about this. In the beginning of relationship, you just love your partner so much. You just think they're the best thing. Kind of how I heard it once which I just love is like your lover becomes a god – like a god in your love-struck eyes.

Christian: Right. I think we have a picture of it on the slide here.

Sonika: Yes. You're just so in love. You focus in on what you love about your partner.

Christian: I know. You do stuff like that. You go to the park. You share flowers. You find yourself to be a poet all of a sudden, and you didn't even know you did stuff like that. Sonika actually did that when we were first falling in love. She wrote me a song, a beautiful song.

You go so out of your way to be together. I used to travel across the Atlantic. Sonika did the same thing. Just to be together. You express all this love that you feel in a million different ways. You tell them. You show them. You touch them. Make love to them. You cook for them.

Sonika: You'll travel the universe to be with them.

Christian: You'll travel the universe. Yeah.

Sonika: All of your words are matched to this incredible love. You're just saying how much you love this person over and over and over again. We say things like "Wow. These look really open. I can't wait to spend this next evening with you or this next week or our lives together."

Christian: Yeah. However, as time passes, our focus generally narrows and switches to what doesn't work so good about our relationship, and what we don't like about our partner. Our view of our partner has been wonderful and perfect and glorious in every way. It begins to slowly change as we begin to have issues, as we begin to hear stuff from their mouths that we didn't think they would ever say to us.

Or we might notice they're not as open to sex as they used to be, they're not as attentive and thoughtful, they want to hang out with their friends rather than with you. Or they might appear more controlling or fearful or jealous than anything we had experienced previously.

Sonika: Yes. At first, when we're so in love, we might see some things that we don't like very much. How I think about it actually is our partners are really fabulous, maybe a little bit garbage.

Christian: That scale.

Sonika: Yeah. There's hardly any garbage, though, because it's mostly fabulous. But then as they become less and less godlike and more and more humanlike –

Christian: The scale evens out.

Sonika: It kind of evens out where there's just as much fabulous as garbage, and then it switches all the way over when we get close to divorce where there's almost no fabulous left. It's all garbage. All the stuff that we hate.

It's unfortunate, actually, that so many marriages – it's 50% for first marriages, 63 for second marriages, and –

Christian: Seventy-three for third marriages, the last statistics we obtained.

Sonika: You know it can get pretty gnarly at the end. Now, what is it that happens? Let's actually ask you a question here: When we aren't having that in-love feeling that we had at the beginning, what do we do to try to get it back to how it used to be? What is it we try to do with our partner to feel in love again? We only get back to that state of bliss and love and feeling –

[0:20:21]

Christian: Everybody likes that one better.

Sonika: Feeling passionate, sexual, and alive. What do we usually do to try to get it back to how it used to be?

Christian: Well, we tell them. We tell our partners. We tell them what we don't like about them and what we think should change. We say things like "You're so shut down. You don't want to have sex with me anymore. You're not attracted to me anymore."

We complain or pout or yell or withdraw or insist or threaten or cry or plead. Sonika and I call this complaining, although when you do it, you probably don't think about it as complaining. You probably more think about it as just pointing out a problem here. "I noticed that you're not as open or as friendly or as respectful or as attracted to me as you used to be, so I'm just saying. I'm just saying."

Sonika: Right. We work tirelessly to try to get our point across.

See if you can relate to this, okay? We're going to play out a little example here. Really, we expect that complaining is going to work.

If I say something like "You know, you don't listen to me like you used to. You used to really focus in on me and really give me your undivided attention, care what I had to say...."

Christian: "What do you mean? I'm still listening. What do you mean? I'm right here, listening."

Sonika: "Now, you get all defensive, and you interrupt. You just want me to hurry up and get to the point."

Christian: "Would you like me to repeat every word you just said so you can see I'm listening?"

Sonika: "Well, you're saying the right words, but I just feel totally judged and like you're distant."

Christian: "Oh, now I'm judging you, am I? Okay, great. Well, it used to be a lot easier also, because you used to actually want to hear what I had to say, and now, when I tell you stuff, you don't even care what I tell you, or you disrespect me, or you just dismiss it like I'm an idiot."

Sonika: "So now we're talking about you not being heard? That's exactly what I'm saying. Now, I don't feel listened to, because now, we're talking about you again. It always goes back to you."

Christian: "Yeah. Sure. Always."

Sonika: Sound familiar?

Christian: You can take any example. This was "You don't listen." It could be any starting point. "You don't talk to me nicely." "You don't want to hang out with me

anymore." "You don't want to have sex with me anymore." "You always nag at me." Whatever.

Sonika: Yeah. I have the positive intent when I say that that it's going to produce change. That's why we call this "complaining for change". I really believe that if I say "You don't listen to me anymore, honey. You used to totally be focused in on me, and you're not anymore...."

Christian: The secret fantasy. We have a secret fantasy when we complain. The secret fantasy is that this is going to happen.

Sonika: "You just don't listen to me anymore, honey."

Christian: "Really? Sonika, I don't listen to you? Oh, honey. I am so sorry about that. Come here. I can't even believe I haven't been listening to you properly. I'm really sorry about that. That won't ever happen again, because you deserve to be listened to all the time. As a matter of fact, from this moment forth, that is going to change. You're going to have my undivided attention whenever you want. I'm yours right now. What can I do for you?"

Sonika: Yes! Really, that's what we're wanting, right, is to produce that kind of a change when we communicate to our partners what isn't working for us? But what actually get produced –

Christian: Has that ever happened? Has anybody ever responded like I just did when their partner says "You don't even listen to me anymore"? No. Nobody has ever done that, ever.

Sonika: Right. It actually produces the opposite result. It produces more defensiveness, resentment. Last thing he wants to do is listen to somebody who's telling him "You don't ever listen to me."

Christian: As I want to listen even less, she now has even more material to complain about or to just point out a problem about, and I now feel even less likely to listen, and here we go on this downward spiral of negativity instead.

Sonika: What we don't realize, actually, is that the more we try to produce change by focusing in on what we don't like and what we don't want, bringing it to the attention of our partner, we'll actually end up creating more of what we don't want instead by default. We actually get more of what we don't like and what we don't want, which gives us more to complain about. It gets us in this endless downward spiral.

[0:25:08]

Christian: Yeah. I want to point out, even though it has a good, well-meaning intention, that's what's behind the secret fantasy. "I really hope that if I just say that, it's going to get better, but I get the exact opposite."

Eric, I just want to make sure that you have it set so we are the ones on screen as our viewers and students here are looking at us.

Sonika: All right. There is a reason why we talk this way in our relationships. I want to actually explain this so you understand why we all talk this way to each other with what we're intending to produce and what gets produced instead.

We've all been influenced by a man named Descartes. He was a French philosopher from way back when who thought the world was fixed and rigid and something we could objectively observe and describe. There's a reality out there that we can look at and describe.

We live in this Cartesian reality every single place we go, right? We're always moving like there's a reality out there and I'm describing it. We do that in our relationships as well. When I lived with you for 11 years, I've gotten to know you pretty well. I can describe you.

In my descriptions, I might say things like "You know, you don't listen. You're shut down. You're not available. You're selfish. You don't make me a priority."

Christian: "You're such a nagger. Oh, my God. You're disrespectful. You don't care about what I think."

Sonika: When we say things like that, we're moving a lot like a scientist where we think we're making sort of a neutral, objective observation of something we've been noticing, and we just speak it like a scientist.

Christian: Yeah. Just like they taught us in college science class that when you're a scientist, you'll be objective and neutral. The belief was that we don't mess with the results of our experiments. We step back so we can neutrally and reliably and objectively observe. We don't impact the results out there. We move more like scientists. When I say stuff like that, I feel like I'm just making an observation. I'm just saying.

Sonika: Yeah. Like these scientists here on this slide, right? We think we're just being these objective observers. We're not aware actually that in the moment that we're describing, we're also creating.

When I say things just like I did with you in this little experiment where I say "You are shut down" and actually produce a result like my speaking is not just an observation. It's also a creation.

When I say things like "You never help in the kitchen" and "You don't talk to me the way that you used to", "We're not happy and in love like we used to", "We don't have sex anymore", the whole time I'm saying it, I'm speaking like I'm a passive observer, but I'm also creating.

Christian: Just like you saw in that little demonstration Sonika did with you when she first said "You are so shut down. I am not looking forward to spending time with you." Versus "You're so open and friendly, and I can't wait to be with you." You could feel the difference in those statements.

Sonika: Think about that. We have lived and moved with our partners like they are fixed and rigid, like they're just a certain way. We observed them, and we described them.

What Descartes missed and is now common knowledge in quantum physics actually is that there is no way anyone just is. We're energy in motion. We're always shifting and changing. There is no rigid way we just are.

Christian: There's no such thing as a purely objective, passive observer. You can't not impact what it is you're observing.

Sonika: Right. We're always affecting what is showing up out there, just like you got to see in this demonstration, right? You are shut down. Imagine how that is when you're in a relationship and you keep saying things like that to each other. Again, with the positive intent that it's going to produce some kind of transformation change. But really, what is happening the whole time you're saying it is you're reinforcing it, recreating it, making it worse over time.

[0:30:00]

Heidegger, a 20th century German philosopher, he declared the same thing – that there's no objective reality out there. When we interact with reality, we're always modifying it, filtering it, altering it. It's ever-changing.

Christian: Right. That is exactly what we're applying and observing with all relationship and all the people we explore in relationships is we are effectively energy in motion. That means not a locked, fixed, rigid end result. It can all change.

Who you are and who your partner is is the result of what you expect to see together. It doesn't matter what you were or how your partner was in the past.

You can't actually create a new expectation and a new something to see that is possible. It's a new reality that can be created by shifting our mindset and point of attention. We'll be talking about how specifically to do that.

Sonika: I guess this is really huge for me, because when I first came across this whole idea, I was like "Oh, my gosh. That means there's no way I just am, and there's no way you just are. Really, we are possibility. We could be anything to each other."

You've probably had this experience you have where you're different with different people at different times. You're different with your mom than you are with your kid than you are with a partner than you are at work. That's because you bring out a different possibility, a different aspect of you or different side of you in these different relationships.

Given that, we have the possibility in relationship to reinforce what we've reinforced up until this point, which is usually for a lot of us a bunch of negative stuff –

Christian: That we don't really like.

Sonika: That we don't really want to keep reinforcing – or we can create a fresh start, like really create a new possibility by realizing "Oh, there's no way you just are. Who you are is who we co-create you to be in any given moment."

Christian: Right. We have even more power than that, actually. It isn't just our spoken words that have huge creative power. It is also what we think that has great creative power.

We're going to tell you a story which is great at illustrating this point. It is from a book called *Mindful Loving* written by Dr. Henry Grayson who you'll see on the screen here in a moment. Dr. Grayson, he's a psychologist. He has been a therapist for couples and singles – for tens of thousands of couples and singles, for many, many decades. He did an experiment with his wife over a two-week period. He said "Don't do this at home, by the way."

This experiment that took place over two weeks, his wife didn't know anything about. Here's the experiment: on the first day of the experiment, he would go to work, just like he always did. On the first day, he would think only positive things about his wife and about their relationship. He would deliberately keep his mind on the track of what an amazing partner she was, what a fantastic human being, what a beautiful woman, what an amazing mother, and think about all the good times they shared and how much he appreciated her. That's what he'd be thinking about all day.

Then he'd come home same time as usual around 6:00 at night. He'd come home just like he always did. He'd open the front door and say "Hi, honey. I'm home." That was the first day of the experiment.

On the next day of the experiment, he would flip is 180 degrees, and he would think only and deliberately negative thoughts about his wife and about their relationship. He would deliberately bring out all the grudges he still held, all their unfinished business, think about all the times she got mad at him for no reason, all the times she yelled at him, all the times he got accused unjustly of stuff – that's what he'd be thinking about all day.

But he'd still come home in the same fashion around 6:00 and open the door and say "Hi, honey. I'm home." He would go back and forth, positive-negative like this for two weeks.

After two weeks, he shared with his wife that he had been conducting this experiment from which she was extremely relieved, as you'll hear in a moment.

The results of his experiment was that on every single one of his positive thinking days – so seven total – **[0:34:38] [Audio Glitch]** she would be right there in the first room of the house to greet him. Sometimes, she'd even have a drink made in hand to hand to him. This was New York in the summer, so it's super hot. She would have a drink or an iced tea or something made for him already.

She'd take his hand, lead him over to the couch, and they'd talk about their respective days, chat, watch a movie, make dinner, make love, have a great night together on every single one of these days.

[0:35:05]

On every single one of his negative thinking days, however, when he'd come home in the same fashion – "Hi, honey. I'm home." – she would be nowhere to be found. The few days in which he got any response, he says it was like a bark from the back of the house – "Grr!" – somewhere. He had promised himself in advance that he would go engage her in conversation no matter what happened, so he did, and every single one of his negative thinking days, they ended up in a spat or a quarrel or a fight about something.

Not only this, they also then reconstructed his wife's experience. This is why she was relieved to hear it was an experiment, because she'd thought she'd gone schizophrenic, because she had found herself without knowing why on Monday just feeling generally hopeful and positive and upbeat, looking forward to him

coming back. That's why she'd sometimes even take the time to make him a drink.

Then on the next day, she'd find herself oddly grumpy and grouchy and noticing that sink in the dish and that stuff on the floor and "Am I the only one doing anything around here to keep this place nice?" Back and forth for two weeks like that.

Dr. Grayson would have been coaching and counseling thousands and thousands of people. He was already onto the power of what we say to each other and about each other. But he also added this piece about "Wow, I don't even have to tell you. I don't even have to say it out loud. I can just think about this stuff, and we don't even have to be in the same house or in the same room or on the same block or in the same town for this impact to be in effect."

He also concluded that the more we know each other, the longer we've known each other, the more tight-knit we are, the more immediate this effect that we have on each other is.

Sonika: Our words and our thoughts have creative power. One of the things we always say is that in relationship, we are never, ever, ever just passively observing and saying what we see. We are always creating.

Just like you got to see, this whole complain for change – it doesn't work. It produces the opposite result. It's really a common strategy in our culture, right? It's like when we want to fix something, we talk about it. We sit down. We've got to talk about our problems. We've got to get to the bottom of it. We've got to work this out.

Christian: Effectively complain about it in the hopes that change will ensue.

Sonika: What actually gets produced is the opposite.

First thing we've got to do if we want to create this fresh start that we're going for here in this first session tonight is we've got to be able to slow it down and find out, what are we creating by default?

If you can, right now, everybody close your eyes for a moment. Just take a reflective moment here. If I were going to ask you to describe your partner or your relationship, what would you say?

Christian: All of it. The good, the bad, and the ugly, like nobody else was listening.

Sonika: What is it you're really thinking about your relationship? That it's hopeless? "My partner never wants to have quality time"? "There's no sex. There's probably never going to be any sex"?

Christian: What do you say to your friends when your partner isn't there? What do you say about men or about women? The women or men you date if you're out dating?

Sonika: Whatever comes to mind here as I ask that question, "How would you describe your partner or your relationship?", those thoughts, that way of moving is creating your partner and your relationship to be more of that. It's not just an observation. It's also a creation.

Just think about it for a moment. "Wow. This is what I'm creating with my words and my thoughts." Again, you're well-intentioned. You've had the positive intent absolutely to just address the issue so you can get back to being in love. I want to make sure you don't beat yourself up for that, because we all do it.

What's great about seeing this and seeing this new possibility is we can start to ask ourselves, do we want this to keep being true?

[0:40:02]

Christian: Yeah. In case you're telling yourself "Yeah, but what if it is true? Yeah. I notice I'm thinking about my partner or about all my relationships that he or she was really offensive and aggressive and selfish. What if it's true?"

What does that mean, for one, that it's true? When we say something is true, it means that that is what I have observed up till now.

Sonika: And created.

Christian: And helped create up till now by my observation. When you say "Just saying", we really should be saying "I'm just saying – oh, and helping it to be created like that." We all look to our past to ground our beliefs, our stories, and our assertions. We say things like "My son is bright. My daughter is messy. My husband cooks. My wife is lovely, or she's angry." How we say statements like this is we look to the evidence, and we make observations.

They're our observations, though. We observe what we think, what is, and what has been, and then we speak it as if it were fact.

Sonika: Kind of how I said, we take the past, whatever it is we've observed. Really, it's kind of interesting, too, because we're never actually seeing things as they are.

Even our observations are completely skewed. Our bodies take in millions of bits of information.

Christian: Right. Something to the order of our century system takes in something to the order of. It's like a million bytes of bits of data. Eleven megabytes of data every second of the day. How much we can be aware of at any given time is, for an average human being, around ten 10-20. That's not 10-20 thousand. That's 10-20, period.

There's about a one to million relationship between all the information I take in and what I have the ability to be aware of. That means I have the ability to be aware of a tiny fraction of everything.

Sonika: Yes. Even our observations are completely skewed, but we take these observations that we have through the past, we glue it to the present, and speak it right now like it's true. When we do that, we say something like "Wow. You are shut down."

We take that same assertion and project it out into the future. What am I likely to get more of when I do that? I take the past. "Wow. You've been shut down." I speak it in the present like it's true. "You are shut down." I'm likely to keep seeing you and keep creating you in the future as being somebody who's shut down.

It's very powerful, the power of our speaking. The power of our thoughts in creating.

Christian: Yeah. How we like to say it is – and we'll put it up here on a slide – is "The quality of your relationship is the quality of your communication. It's the quality of your thoughts and the quality of your story." The quality of your relationship is the quality of your communication, your thinking, and your story.

Every moment of every day of every month and year, you're presented with a choice, basically. Do you want to reinforce what you don't want, or do you want to reinforce something else that you would like? Do you want to reinforce what has been true up till now, or what you would like to be true?

A successful relationship really is a series of positive choices that leads to good results that are strung together over days and months and years, and then you can look back and say "Wow. That was a great relationship last week, last year, last decade.

Sonika: Yeah. One of the things that we have also come to notice in our work with ourselves and the thousands of couples and singles that we worked with is we

spend the bulk of our time in reaction against what we don't want instead of in creation towards what we do want, right?

We spend most of our time talking about and noticing all the stuff we don't like and all the stuff we don't want instead of focusing in on what we want to create. We're going to actually be working on this in this class here, in this whole seven-week course. But how do we move ourselves from that downward spiral into an upward spiral? We're going to give you the beginnings of that tonight.

The first thing we've got to do if we want to create a fresh start where we see our partner with fresh eyes instead of reinforcing all this junk we don't like that we've been carrying around from our observations from the past and keeping going with our thinking is we want to make a separation between who we've been in the past and who we could be in the future.

[0:45:03]

You could also say who we have been, how we've acted, and our behaviors, and our potential. Our potential for growth, our potential for change.

For example, using "shut down" example, let's just say there's a lot of evidence for how I've been shut down from the past. Well, who I am and my potential is open.

We want to make a distinction here between who I've been – doesn't necessarily mean that's who I'm always going to be in the future. We've got to take a little space here in that.

We're going to actually give you an experience of that, and we're going to play with this. This is really crucial for being able to set up a new foundation for your relationship to begin to create something new together.

To do that, we're going to do a brief visualization. If you can, allow yourself to close your eyes. Get yourself comfortable.

Christian: We'll put up a slide here that says "Full Potential Visualization", because that's the name of it. Don't look at us now. Just close your eyes and tune inwards.

Sonika: Take a couple of nice, deep breaths.

Christian: Put on the previous slide, Eric, if you would, that says "Full Potential Visualization". If it's not in there –

Eric: Looks like we may be missing one.

Christian: Okay. Don't worry about it. Just leave that one up there. It's fine. We'll get to that later. For now, close your eyes and tune inwards. Take a deep breath. Just let go any tensions you might have.

Sonika: Just take another nice, deep breath.

In your mind, take yourself to a place where you feel really peaceful and safe. It can be a place outside in nature or a special room somewhere. A place you've been to before or a new place you're creating here in your mind.

In this place, just allow yourself to look around and see what there is to see in this place. Just notice your surroundings. Notice the colors. Pay attention to any sounds. Notice any sensations or feelings.

Just allow yourself to drink in place that you've created here in your mind. Great.

Now, see coming towards you an image of you in your fullest potential. The you you would be if you were the most loving, present, powerful, grounded, passionate, open, fully expressed – the most lovely being you can imagine you being.

Just allow yourself to see this image of your full potential coming towards you.

Christian: If you're like me, you might not see it with a big, bright visual. It might be more of a sensation or a thought which is totally fine. However you're getting it is just great.

Sonika: Just allow yourself to connect up with an image or a feeling or your full potential.

Just notice – if you're seeing an image here – just notice how your full potential looks. How is your full potential carrying him or herself? What are they wearing? What feeling is evoked in you as you connect with this experience here of your full potential self?

Consider here you're connecting with this image or feeling of your full potential self. This is you. This is your potential. This is the you you are striving to become and realize. This is the you you already are in your essence.

In the privacy of your mind here, ask your full potential this question and just listen to the answer your full potential gives you.

[0:50:02]

What is one thing I could do right now in my life, in my relationship life, to help me realize my full potential more in my relationship? What's one thing I could do that would be a better expression of my full potential? Just listen to what your full potential tells you.

Christian: Either in words, pictures, feelings, thoughts.

Sonika: Actually see yourself doing whatever guidance you're receiving from your full potential. Actually see yourself implementing this feedback, this advice.

As you imagine yourself doing what your full potential is telling you, know that you're creating in this moment. Remember the power of words, the power of thought, the power of pictures, the power of feeling that as you imagine yourself being this full potential, there are literally hundreds if not thousands of changes happening in your body. New chemicals and hormones being produced, neuronal pathways rewiring themselves. You are creating a new possibility in this moment as you are imagining yourself being.

Go ahead and take a nice, deep breath, and reconnect once again with your whole potential image or feeling. Just thank your full potential for this message.

Now, in whatever way feels good to you, I want you to imagine yourself merging with this image or feeling until you and this full potential being become one. As this full potential self, go ahead and take a couple of nice, deep breaths, and one more nice, deep breath as you open your eyes.

Now, if you would, connect up with your partner. If you're here doing this webinar with your partner, turn so you can face each other and make eye contact with each other.

If you're not doing this with a partner or for some reason your partner isn't here with you or you're single, totally fine. Just allow yourself to keep your eyes closed and share your experience. Imagine that your partner is there, and you could actually share it out loud.

For those of you who are partnered, actually share what you just saw, what you just experienced.

Christian: It'll take about a minute and a half each. We're going to call out a time signal. First person is going to go ahead and share, then we're going to call time to switch, and the other person is going to go.

Another tip, if you're by yourself, can be also you can write it out in your notebook if you have a notebook by. Just write out what you just experienced.

Sonika: Yeah. Share who did you see or feel and what message did you get. Who is this full potential being?

Christian: This full potential you. First person, go ahead, and we'll give you a half time signal.

First person, start wrapping up your share. Then go ahead and switch and let the other person share their experience.

Start wrapping up your shares, everybody.

Stop talking, please. Then we're going to add the next step here.

Sonika: The first step to creating a relationship anew is we've got to identify ourselves as our full potential – not by who we've been, but by who we could be or who we want to be.

Christian: And can be.

Sonika: And already are. It might be in the past, the 20 bits of information that we haven't been taking in.

When I was really shut down, there was a point in my life when I really would shut down, where I would used to look to say "I am shut down" was to the past.

Christian: Lots of evidence.

Sonika: Right? Reinforce it.

Well, now, instead of identifying myself as my past – "I am shut down. I'd like to be open." We're going to switch that up so that now, I'm identifying myself as my potential.

[0:55:08]

Instead of saying "I'm shut down. I'd like to be open.", now I'm going to keep the past in the past. I'm going to say "I used to be shut down. Who I am in my potential is open."

We're going to identify ourselves as our full potential self. Now, I'm going to say "I am open. I am present. I am passionate. I am loving. I am fun. I am powerful. I'm a risk taker. I'm funny. I'm fully expressed." I'm just going to speak all qualities and characteristics of my full potential as though it were true now. I'm

going to declare it for myself. I'm going to claim it. I'm going to own it. I'm going to move like it is me. I'm going to identify myself as that full potential, leaving the past in the past.

Christian: How you'll be doing that just now is you're going to face your partner, make eye contact the whole time you're declaring this, and I would do just like Sonika spoke it. If it were my turn, I'd go "I am powerful. I am kind. I am wise. I am loving. I am brilliant. I am sexy. I'm handsome. I'm generous. I'm big-hearted." You just keep going until we tell you to switch.

One of you decide who is going to go first. For those of you who are on the line by yourself here, speak it out loud. Then you can imagine, if that helps, that you're speaking either to your actual partner who's not here, or to a partner that you can just imagine. But we want you to speak it out loud.

Sonika: There is great power in speaking out loud. If you're doing this with your partner and you say something there's not a lot of evidence for from the past – let's just say you haven't had sex for ten years, and your partner says "I am sexual" –

Christian: This would not be the time to roll your eyes and say "Yeah, right."

Sonika: You're just going to be a silent "Yes" to everything your partner says, because that's what you want to create more of. Whatever your partner's saying, that's who you're partner's declaring him or herself to be. That's what they want to create more of in this relationship. When you say "Yes", it's like you're saying "Yes, I want to create more of that, too."

Christian: Right.

Sonika: You're not actually going to say that. You're just going to silently listen to the person as they're going on and on about their full potential, identifying themselves as full potential self.

Christian: The person who is speaking "I am", it's okay if you need to stop for five seconds to think of the next thing, but keep going until we tell you to switch, and maintain eye contact with your partner.

Person going first, as you see on the screen here – but don't look at the screen, actually, look at your partner – "I am..." qualities and characteristics of your full potential – go ahead.

Say a couple more "I am's"...and person who has been listening, this is your only chance to speak. Say "Yes, you are."

Good. Everybody take a deep breath. Now, switch roles. Other person, go. "I am..." qualities and characteristics of your full potential – go ahead.

Say a couple more "I am's".... Person who has been listening, say "Yes, you are."

And stop talking, please.

Everybody take a deep breath.

All right. That's one of the first steps is I've got to identify myself as my full potential in order to have a full potential relationship.

Next step is I've got to identify you as your full potential if I want that kind of relationship. How we're going to have you do that now is you're simply going to speak – same thing – facing your partner, making eye contact. If you're with your partner, it's also really great to add touching, hold hands, or put a hand on each other's arms just so you can feel the kinesthetic here as well.

"You are..." all the qualities and characteristics of their full potential. If I were going that with Sonika, it might sound something like "You are wise. You are brilliant. You are gorgeous. You are hot. You are a great mother. You are loving. You're kind hearted. You're generous. You're wise. You're brilliant. You're imaginative. You're creative."

[1:00:14]

You just keep going until we tell you to switch. You can use some of the words your partner used before if you'd like a little help. Maintain eye contact the whole time. If you're there by yourself, still speak it out loud, and imagine you're speaking it to a certain somebody who is significant to you.

Sonika: Yeah. If you're not in a relationship, imagine you're saying it to your future partner. That's another way you could do this. You want to say "You are..." qualities and characteristics of your full potential.

If your partner says something, and you notice those little gremlins coming up saying "Okay, right. They're just saying that." You know how I am when I hear that is I'm like "You know what? Thank you for seeing me that way. Thank you for reinforcing that. Thank you for wanting to create more of that in me. I want that, too."

If those little gremlins show up, that's just from past. It's not potential, okay?

Same thing. A minute each. "You are..." Really let yourself sink into being appreciated, those of you who are being seen and spoken of.

One more thing, notice how you feel as you do that. All right?

One of you go ahead and start.

Christian: "You are..." Go ahead.

Say a couple more "You are's".... Person who's been listening, say "Thank you for seeing me that way."

Everybody take a deep breath.

Now, switch roles. Other person, go. "You are..." qualities and characteristics of your partner's full potential. Go ahead.

Sonika: Say a couple more.

Christian: Person who's been listening, say "Thank you for seeing me that way."

Sonika: Just take a moment to notice the quality of the connection between you having just shared that with each other.

Christian: How does that feel, and what does it do to the relationship between you?

Sonika: Again, that reminder: the quality of our relationship is the quality of our speaking, the quality of our thinking. For a lot of people, when they do this, they get to experience more love, more connection, more possibility.

All right. We're going to do one more here.

Christian: Everybody, deep breath.

Sonika: This time, you want to speak your full potential relationship. "We are..."

Now, you're going to identify yourselves as this potential for your relationship. If Christian and I were doing it together, we're just going to go back and forth this time, not one person talking. We're back and forth.

Christian: Helping each other out, creating this future relationship.

Sonika: We're spontaneous.

Christian: We're creative.

Sonika: We're very passionate and sexual.

Christian: We're having lots of fun.

Sonika: We're inventive. We're playful.

Christian: We're kind. We're patient and understanding.

Sonika: We're really great communicators.

Christian: We're honest and totally authentic and transparent.

Sonika: Yeah. There's not anything we aren't willing to share with each other.

Christian: We go places both in our personal growth; we go places in the world. We go deep. We go wide. We go far.

Sonika: We really trust each other.

We're just going to kind of go back and forth, speaking "We are" like we are our full potential relationship.

Christian: If you're there by yourself on the line, still speak it out loud, and you speak both parts. You just speak the "We are" but still speak it out loud. Speaking it out loud is a bridge between the realm of thought and the realm of reality. It helps you get there.

Sonika: All right. Go ahead. Couple minutes.

Do a couple more.

Christian: Couple more "We are's".

Sonika: Go ahead and stop talking, please.

Christian: Yes. All right.

Sonika: Again, thank your partner for doing this with you. If you're doing this by yourself, you can hug and thank yourself.

Christian: Give yourself a high five, or give us a high five.

Sonika: All right. God, this hour and a half went so fast. We want to give you a couple of homework assignments here, and then we'll open it up for comments and questions.

It's really essential as you create your fresh start to your relationship is to feed your full potential. You want to identify yourself with your full potential, see your partner as their full potential, and feed it.

[1:05:04]

One way to feed your full potential is to give appreciations.

Christian: Eric, if you'll put up the next slide that has the practices we're suggesting for this week. The first one here, if you'll click along, Eric, look for and acknowledge your partner's full potential, and do it out loud as often as possible.

You'll see we put a couple of examples up here on the slide. "You are loving. You're so beautiful. You're a hard worker." Anything will do for appreciating them.

Get a little specific. "Thank you for doing everything you do. Thanks for doing all the laundry. Thanks for cooking." So on and so forth.

Sonika: Yeah. **[1:05:50] [Indiscernible]** full potential. One of the things we always say is that appreciations are as essential to human beings as water and sun is to a plant. A relationship begins to whither when we quit appreciating each other. When you think about the honeymoon phase, that's what we were doing the whole time. We were appreciating the bejeezus out of each other.

We just want to get back into that practice. It feels good to be appreciated. Not only that, but when I appreciate you, I have to look for what I loved and what I liked to be able to say what I appreciate. Not only am I giving to you when I appreciate; I'm giving to myself. "Wow. Look what I got. Look what I created. Look what's here."

Christian: That is a pre-requisite for starting a new foundation. After that, we can begin to talk about "Yeah, but how do we deal with our problems, and how do we deal with how different we are?"

That is for later. For now, we want to establish a fresh foundation. This is the best and one of the most efficient way of doing that.

Eric, you can click the next couple of bullets up here.

What we're suggesting you also do is you give three appreciations to your partner before you go to bed. If you're by yourself or you don't live together, you just speak it about yourself, or text or call each other with appreciation so that's the last thing out of your mouth before you close your eyes and go to sleep.

Specific things, like the suggestions we're putting up on the screen here. Specific stuff from the day. "Thanks for mowing the lawn today. I loved how you put your arms around me when I was cooking. Thanks for saying I look beautiful the first thing in the morning." Or "Thanks for driving the kids around one more time. You do that so often. I really appreciate that."

Sonika: Okay. Appreciation, appreciation, appreciation. You can't overdo it.

Christian: You can't overdose on that cure.

Sonika: We have one more homework assignment, if you're willing to take this on.

That "We are" that you were speaking about – write up your relationship vision five years out in the future in present tense like it's happening right now. Create your vision for your relationship, your full potential vision, in writing form.

All that stuff you just said – "Wow. We are having the best time, and it's been so great. The last five years have been the best of our lives. We're having more connection, more intimacy, more sex and passion than we've had this whole time. We really understand each other. We listen to each other. We're really present for each other. We're going places we've never gone before." – you want to write up your relationship vision.

Christian: Eric, if you'll put the slide back up, we put a couple examples up here. Write this vision from five years out or two years out. It's not even really important. But in present tense.

You can either write out your own, or if you're up for it, sit down and do it together. Either is fine.

There's an example right there for you on the screen like Sonika just spoke. "Hey, we're more intimate and loving with each other now more than ever. We share everything with each other. We withhold nothing. It's evidence of how safe we feel to be ourselves with each other."

You keep going with your words.

Sonika: It can be a paragraph. It can be six pages. Really. Anything in between. It's your vision. Just let yourself write out what you're going for and speak it in present

tense, again, realizing the power of word, power of thought, power of creation. You're setting in motion a new possibility and reality.

Christian: Right. We totally encourage you to post it on our forum. It's really useful and inspiring if you're willing to share yours, if you also can get to see others, because we really inspire each other. Sonika and I might read someone else's vision who is talking about how great they are at dancing together through life or how amazing they are at dealing with the challenges of their children. I'm like "Yeah. I really want to incorporate that in what I'm going for."

Go ahead and post it on the forum when you have written that.

Sonika: We got a few minutes left here. We'd love to open it up for comments, for questions.

[1:09:45] End of Audio