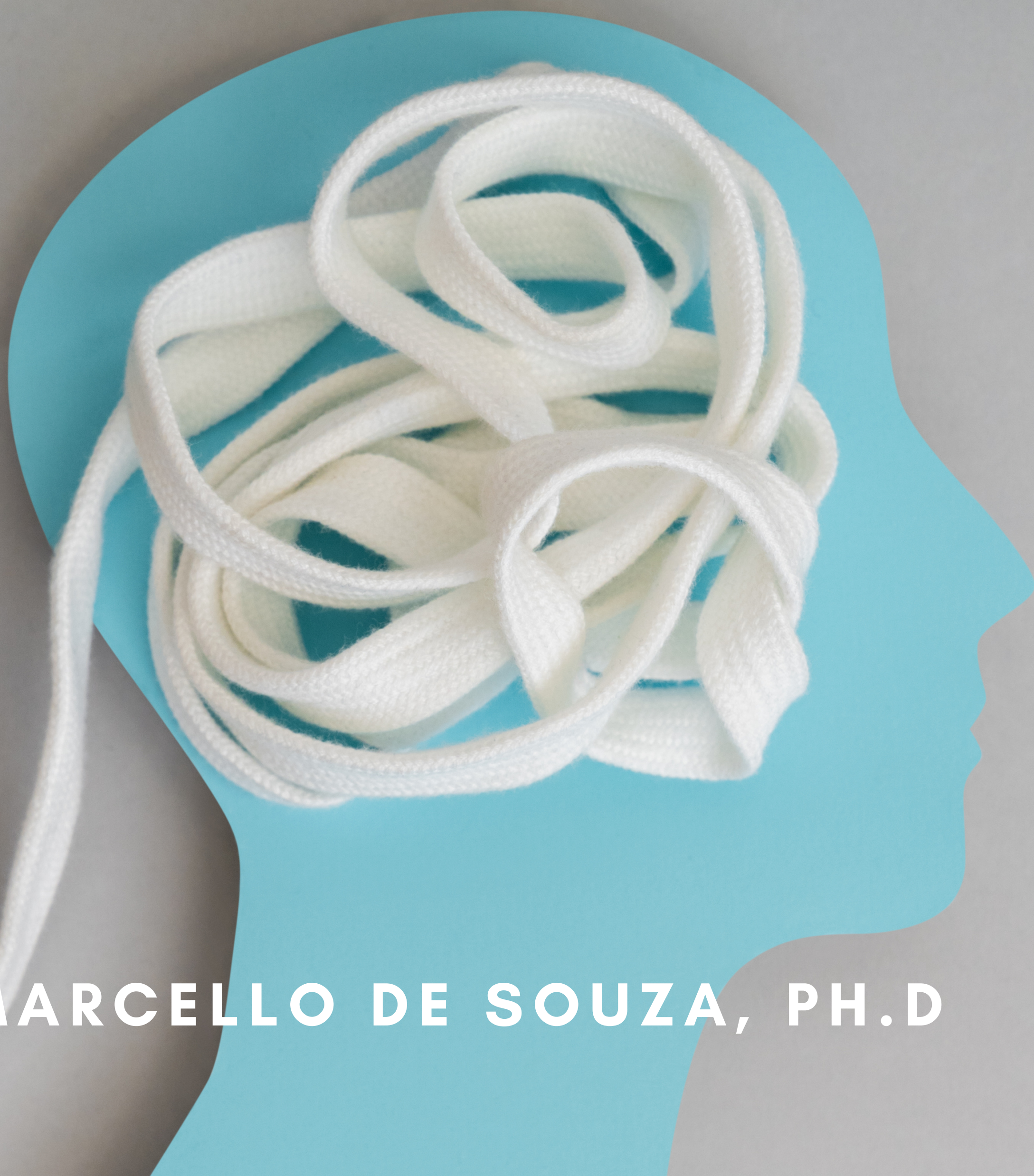


# ME, THIS, AND US

Rebuilding a Healthy  
Relationship

Part I



MARCELLO DE SOUZA, PH.D

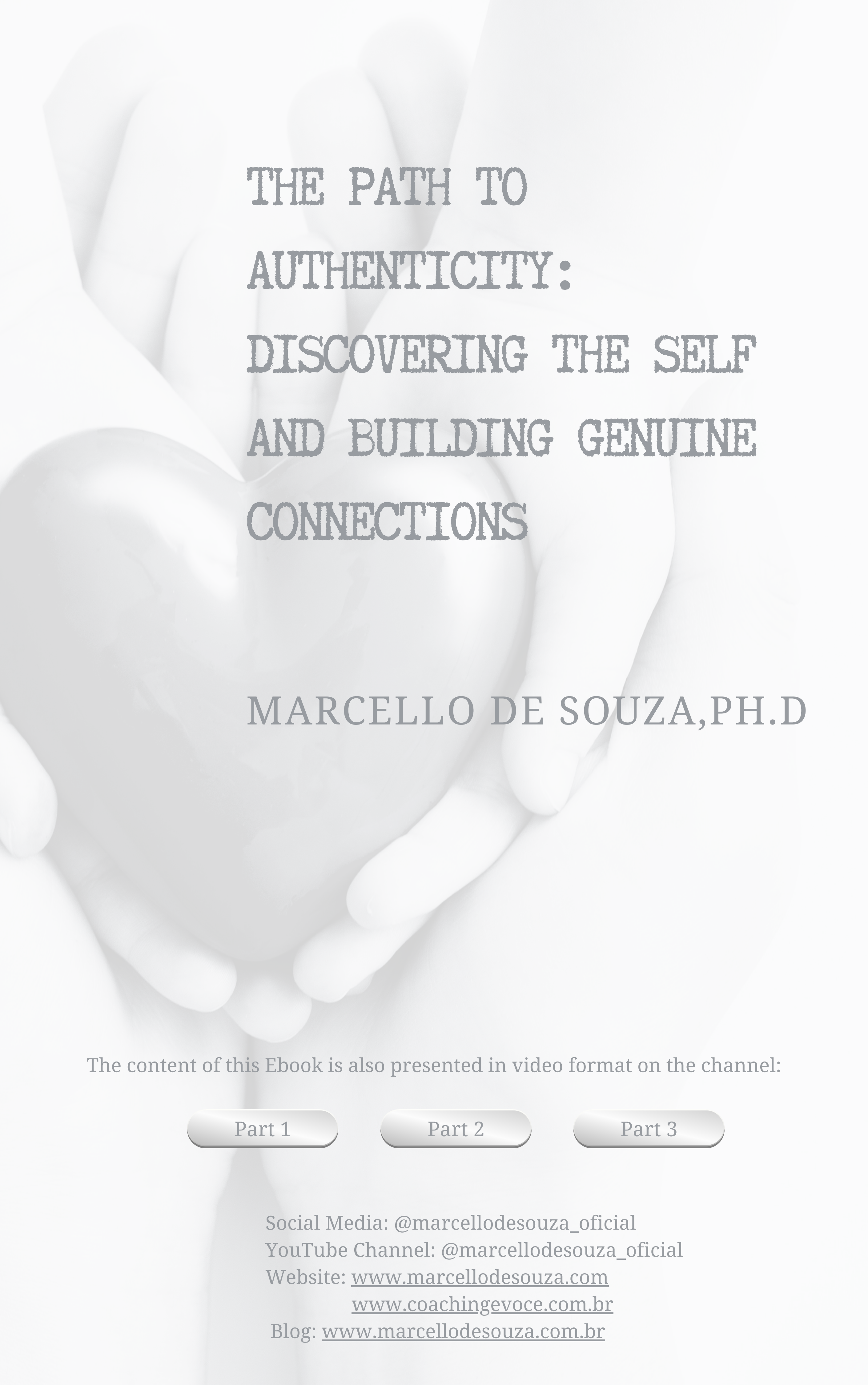
# ME, THIS, AND US

## Rebuilding a Healthy Relationship Part I

The Path to Authenticity:  
Discovering the Self and  
Building Genuine  
Connections

MARCELLO DE SOUZA, PH.D

All rights reserved. 2024 Rev. 001/2024. This material has been entirely produced by Marcello de Souza. Any and all copying of this content is prohibited.



THE PATH TO  
AUTHENTICITY:  
DISCOVERING THE SELF  
AND BUILDING GENUINE  
CONNECTIONS

MARCELLO DE SOUZA, PH.D

The content of this Ebook is also presented in video format on the channel:

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Social Media: @marcellodesouza\_oficial

YouTube Channel: @marcellodesouza\_oficial

Website: [www.marcellodesouza.com](http://www.marcellodesouza.com)

[www.coachingevoce.com.br](http://www.coachingevoce.com.br)

Blog: [www.marcellodesouza.com.br](http://www.marcellodesouza.com.br)



# About the Author

I am Marcello de Souza, a restless mind with a journey of over 27 years dedicated to unraveling the mysteries of the human psyche and catalyzing growth in individuals and organizations. My mission is clear: to transcend the boundaries of cognitive behavioral development and foster human excellence.

## FROM IT AND TELECOM TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

My professional journey began in the dynamic fields of IT and Telecom, a solid foundation that paved the way for my future explorations into the human territory. Here, I discovered that true leadership thrives at the intersection of operational efficiency and a deep understanding of human needs.

## A PASSION TRANSFORMED INTO PURPOSE

The passion for cognitive behavioral development not only refines my professional essence; it redefines it. Today, I operate beyond traditional technical capabilities, emerging as a visionary who inspires profound and lasting change. My holistic approach combines Management, Leadership, and the most advanced Behavioral Sciences and Neurosciences, establishing a new frontier of excellence and well-being for individuals and organizations.

## A MOSAIC OF TRANSFORMATIVE COMPETENCIES

At the forefront of my mission, I highlight my main roles:

- Senior Master Coach & Trainer
- Chief Happiness Officer
- Leader Coach Trainer
- Expert in Language & Behavioral Development
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapist (CBT/ACT)
- Hypnotherapist and Systemic Psychic Constellator
- Lecturer, Speaker, Professor, Writer, and Researcher
- Consultant & Mentor
- Organizational Environment Designer

## A LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSFORMATION

In addition to qualifications that include four post-graduate degrees, a doctorate, and a myriad of international certifications, I have been shaping the landscape of human development with every lecture, book, training, and coaching session I conduct. I share innovative insights that not only illuminate but also transform.

## BOOKS THAT INSPIRE GENERATIONS

Author of several influential eBooks and books such as "The Secret of Coaching," "The Map Is Not the Territory, You Are the Territory," and the anticipated "The Society of Diet," my writing seeks to challenge the status quo and equip people with the tools needed to lead their lives with purpose and passion.

## AN INVITATION TO TRANSFORMATION

Come with me to explore the unlimited possibilities that human behavioral development offers. Whether to evolve in your career, enhance your leadership, or transform your organization, I am here to guide you on this path to fulfillment and success.

# Index

## 01

- Introduction 6
- Roots of Connection 8
- Understanding the Complexity of Choices and Self-Awareness 10
- The Art of Building Authentic Connections 10

- Towards Transformation 11
- Understanding Emotions and Their Impact on Our Lives 11
- How Emotions Impact Our Lives 13
- The Art of Building Authentic Connections and the Journey of Transformation 14
- What is Vulnerability? 15

## 02

## 03

- Beyond Self-Knowledge 16
- The Complexity of Self-Awareness and Choices 20
- Authentic Connections and the Path to Transformation 21
- Transforming the Fear of Rejection into Opportunity 24
- On Reaching Our Best 27

- Our Decision-Making Process 28
- How Difficult It Is to Be Who We Are 30

## 04

## 05

- Practical Exercises 32
- Bibliography 35
- Connect and Explore More 38

## SIDE BY SIDE

I don't know what paths I will take, but I know which  
ones I won't follow again.  
I don't know what mistakes are yet to come, but I know  
which ones I won't repeat.  
I don't know how I'll face the challenges that arise, but I  
know which ones I won't avoid.  
I don't know what challenges we will face, but I know I'll  
fight to overcome them.  
I don't know what difficulties will arise, but I know I  
won't give up easily.  
I don't know how I'll face the obstacles that present  
themselves, but I know I'll give my best.  
I don't know how I'll express my admiration for you  
every day, but I know I'll make every effort.  
I don't know how I'll show my love for you every day, but  
I know which gestures I won't fail to make.  
I don't know what the future holds, but I know I'll strive  
to build a bright future by your side and I know I want to  
be with you.  
Because often, it's in struggle and perseverance that we  
find the true meaning to our battles.  
The truth is, the future is a blank canvas, waiting to be  
filled in,  
And I want to paint that canvas by your side, with  
vibrant colors of happiness.  
Because, in the end, it's in our struggle and  
perseverance,  
That we will find true fulfillment and happiness, side by  
side.

(Marcello de Souza)

# Introduction

Welcome to the trilogy "Me, This, and Us - How to Rebuild a Healthy Relationship", an intriguing guide divided into three parts, each exploring different essential aspects for the development and maintenance of healthy, authentic, and deeply satisfying relationships.

Combining scientific and philosophical knowledge, these three works are more than simple instruments of reflection; they are a compass to navigate through the turbulent seas of human dynamics. Throughout the following pages, we will unveil the layers that compose our being and explore how they influence our life, work, and relationships.

## **Ebook 1: "The Path to Authenticity: Discovering the Self and Building True Connections"**

This initial volume will guide you through the essential journey of self-discovery, paving the way for authenticity in all your relationships. Here, you will discover how conscious choices and understanding your own emotions can transform the way you connect with the world around you.

## **Ebook 2: "Strengthened Relationships: Navigating Between Toxic and Abusive Relationships and Transformation"**

The second book focuses on toxic versus abusive relationships, providing insights to recognize, intervene, and transform harmful dynamics into strengthened relationships. You will be guided through the complex distinction between being toxic and being toxic, and learn strategies to cultivate healthier and more resilient relationships.

### **Ebook 3: "Me, This, and Us: Rebuilding Healthy Relationships Through Awareness and Commitment"**

Concluding the series, this book delves into the reconstruction of healthy relationships through a balance of individuality, shared purposes, and deep connection. We will discuss how internal reality influences our external relationships and how we can use adversity as a springboard for growth and transformation.

Each book in this series has been crafted to offer value both independently and as part of an integrated journey, giving you the freedom to start with the theme that resonates most with your current experience. Prepare for a journey of discovery and insights that have the potential to profoundly transform your relationships and your life.

Get ready for a journey of discovery, where each page promises to be a mirror, a window, and a door to the vast universe of human relationships. Welcome to this adventure of self-discovery and transformation.



# Chapter 1

## ROOTS OF CONNECTION

Today, in this first Ebook of the trilogy "Me, This, and Us - How to Rebuild a Healthy Relationship", I want to bring to you the perspective that I have been using in my work, seeking guidance to regain balance and resolve issues that often turn healthy relationships toxic. But, before we talk about Me, This, and Us, we need to immerse ourselves in certain psychic and cognitive understandings so that the proposal of this Ebook really makes sense. To do this, let's begin by exploring themes related to human perception and understanding what a healthy relationship is. Shall we explore together?

To start, it is fundamental to understand that emotions play a crucial role in a healthy relationship. Emotions are not a choice; they constantly suggest to us, and sometimes we feel lost in dealing with a world that affects us in various ways. In our journey through life, emotions play a crucial role, shaping how we relate to each other.

Unlike a conscious choice, emotions flow from our deepest emotional and sentimental layers, influencing our interactions in complex and often unexpected ways. Recognizing this influence is the first step in understanding the intricate dance of human relationships.

In this sense, it is fundamental to understand that every choice we make, conscious or not, is a reflection of the values we carry within us. Even decisions that seem beyond our control are, in essence, reflections of the emotions that move us. By accepting this truth, we begin to see our actions in a different light — not as mistakes or failures, but as steps in a continuous learning process about who we really are and what we truly value, and that's where the power of self-awareness comes in.



## EMOTIONS THAT MOVE

"Emotions flow,  
silent internal rivers,  
Shaping relationships with tender and eternal  
touches.

We do not choose to feel,  
but we choose to listen,  
To the whispers of the heart,  
the fear of giving up."

(Marcello de Souza)

## **UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF CHOICES AND SELF-AWARENESS**

Understanding the complexity of human choices requires a deep dive into self-awareness. This is not just a tool for introspection, but a compass that guides us through the emotional and cognitive storms of interpersonal relationships. With it, we gain the clarity needed to identify the emotions and values that shape our decisions and behaviors. This journey of self-discovery reveals that even when we feel lost or out of control, every step we take reflects the values and emotions that guide us in the moment.

The choices we make, imbued with our chemistry and biology, experiences, and social context, form the fabric of our existence. By recognizing the subconscious influence in our decisions, we pave the way for a more authentic life and healthier relationships. True mastery lies not in avoiding failures but in learning from each choice, seeing them as opportunities for growth and deep understanding of our nature.

## **THE ART OF BUILDING AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS**

Building truly authentic connections requires us to embrace our vulnerability. By revealing our insecurities and fears, we dismantle the barriers that isolate us, allowing for the formation of deep and meaningful bonds. This act of courage invites us to explore empathy and forgiveness as essential pillars in relationships, creating an environment where mutual growth is not only possible but celebrated.

The practice of forgiveness and dedication to understanding others' experiences are crucial for cultivating enriching relationships. These are the true marks of genuine connections: the recognition and acceptance of shared humanity, with all its imperfections.

# Chapter 2

## EM TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION

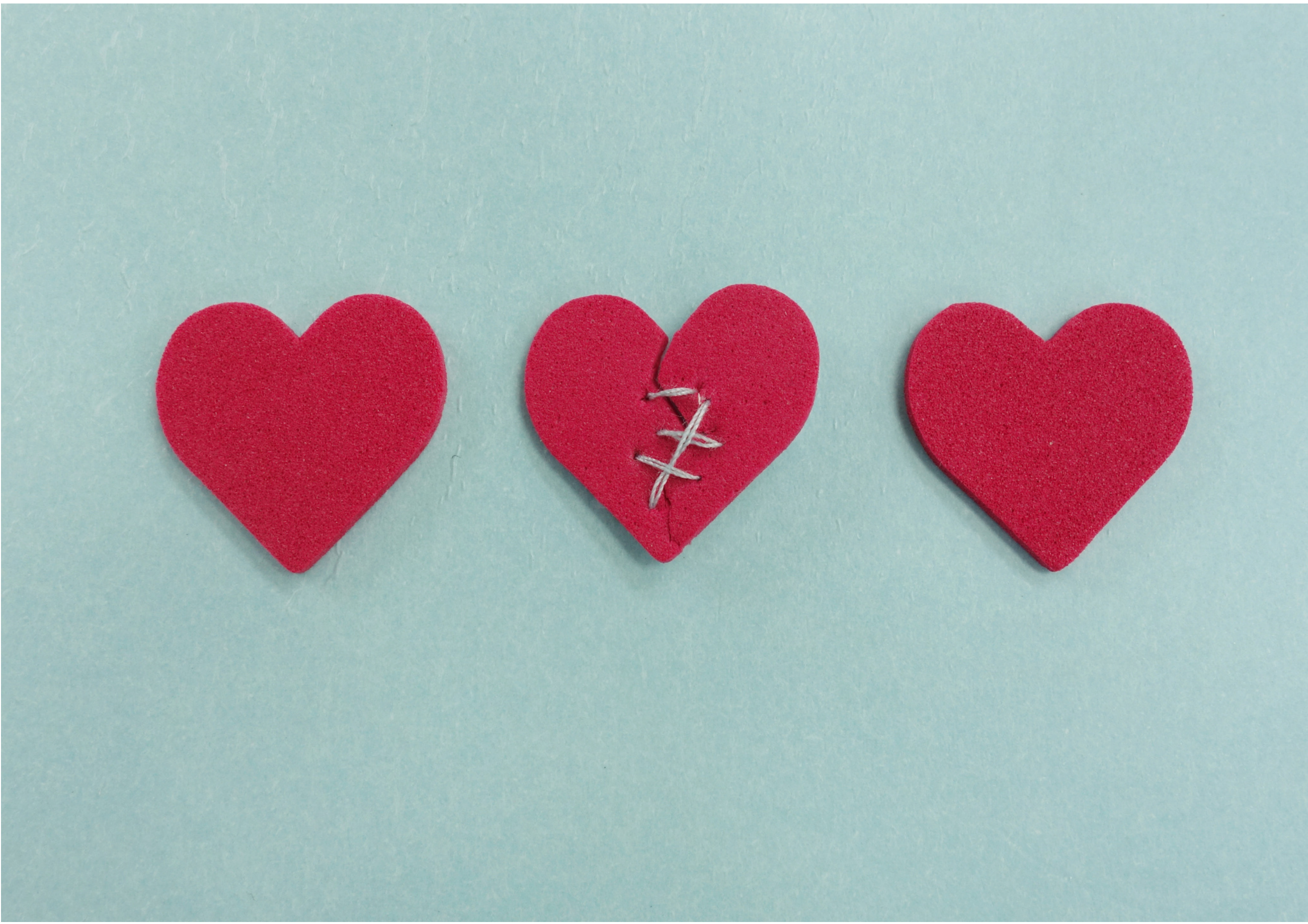
The journey towards healthier and more authentic relationships does not end with self-awareness. It demands the courage to confront our shadows, recognizing that, despite our best intentions, we are susceptible to self-sabotage and misunderstandings. This recognition should not be seen as a failure but as a vital step in our ongoing evolution.

Every moment of our lives is an opportunity to learn, grow, and choose paths that reflect our deepest values. Awareness of these choices empowers us to live more fully, embracing the complexity and beauty of the human experience. This is true empowerment: the ability to turn every challenge into an opportunity to strengthen relationships and our own being.

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONS ON OUR LIVES

Emotions refer to the set of emotional experiences that are intrinsic to the human condition, encompassing feelings, emotions, and moods that deeply influence our behavior, perceptions, and decisions. They are the psychological and physiological responses we have to stimuli encountered in our environment and social interactions, ranging from joy, love, and gratitude to anger, sadness, and fear.

Unlike mere passing reactions, emotions shape our experience of the world significantly, acting as filters through which we interpret our reality. They not only color our perception of the present but also influence our expectations for the future and the way we remember the past.



## HOW EMOTIONS IMPACT OUR LIVES:

- **Decision Making:** Emotions play a crucial role in how we make choices. They can influence everything from simple day-to-day decisions to complex choices that affect our life trajectory. There is no doubt and no shortage of research in psychology and neuroscience showing that our emotions and feelings affect risk assessment, rewards, and the prioritization of personal values, impacting our decisions.
- **Interpersonal Relationships:** Our interactions with others are deeply influenced by emotions. The ability to understand and share others' feelings is fundamental to the development of empathy, compassion, and strong social bonds. Emotions play a vital role in non-verbal communication, conflict resolution, and the ability to establish meaningful connections.
- **Mental Health and Well-being:** Emotional balance is essential for our mental health and overall well-being. Positive emotions, such as joy and gratitude, can increase psychological resilience and promote a sense of life satisfaction. On the other hand, inadequate management of negative emotions, such as anxiety and sadness, can contribute to the development of psychological disorders.
- **Personal Development:** Emotions not only reflect our current emotional state but are also fundamental in the process of self-discovery and personal growth. They motivate us to seek change, overcome challenges, and pursue our goals and dreams. Learning to navigate our emotions, recognizing and managing them properly, is a crucial skill in developing a fulfilling and authentic life.

By understanding emotions and their impact on our lives, we open the doors to a richer and more meaningful existence, where we are able to navigate the complexities of human relationships and self-awareness with greater wisdom and compassion.



## **THE ART OF BUILDING AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS AND THE JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION**

The construction of authentic connections between two individuals begins with the courage to be vulnerable. By sharing our true emotions, fears, and desires, we open the doors to a deeper understanding and connection. This vulnerability is the foundation for self-awareness, allowing us to better understand our own emotions and those of others. Without this willingness to be vulnerable, we limit our ability to self-discover, grow, transform, and, most importantly, to build healthy and meaningful relationships.

Vulnerability and self-awareness are crucial in the journey of rebuilding healthy relationships. They guide us beyond the surface, allowing for a genuine and meaningful connection. By embracing our vulnerability, we not only strengthen our relationships but also promote personal growth that resonates in all areas of our lives. Thus, each moment of our journey becomes an opportunity to learn, grow, and, most importantly, to deeply connect with those around us.



## WHAT IS VULNERABILITY?

Vulnerability is the willingness to emotionally expose oneself, to be authentic, even when there's a risk of being judged or hurt. It's about showing our true essence, with all its imperfections, and being open to life's uncertainties. It's allowing oneself to experience emotions and feelings. It's presenting oneself fully, as who one truly is, not as what others want one to be. It's giving oneself the opportunity to show up in the world based on one's own values. It's no wonder that Brené Brown, a renowned researcher in the field of vulnerability, defines it as the origin of courage: to be truly seen, with all our insecurities exposed.

### Practical Example of Vulnerability in Rebuilding Relationships:

Imagine a couple facing difficulties in their relationship. One of them decides to take the courageous step of expressing their deepest fears about the future together, admitting to feeling neglected and insecure. Clearly demonstrating their own vulnerabilities. This genuine expression of vulnerability invites the partner to also share their feelings, perhaps revealing their own struggle with external pressures that have affected their ability to be present in the relationship. This moment of honesty is the beginning of a new path towards empathy and mutual understanding, laying the groundwork for more open dialogue, strengthening the bond, and rebuilding a healthier and more satisfying relationship.



# Chapter 3

## IN ADDITION TO SELF-AWARENESS

The journey towards healthier relationships is not limited to self-awareness; it demands the active practice of vulnerability. By facing our shadows and acknowledging our flaws, we discover the strength to transform our relationships. This transformation is not just about self-improvement, but about redefining how we relate to others, choosing paths that reflect our most authentic values and desires. In other words, the journey towards healthier and more authentic relationships does not end with self-awareness.

It requires the courage to confront our shadows, recognizing that, despite our best intentions, we are susceptible to self-sabotage and mistakes. We are imperfect and, at the same time, capable of improvement. In this sense, each of us is on our own journey. This means that every evolutionary process, an intrinsic part of our existence, is a solitary journey that each individual must undertake. This recognition should not be seen as something negative or selfish but as a vital step in our deeper understanding of who we truly are.

Each of us carries the exclusive responsibility for our own journey, facing the joys, pains, and sufferings as challenges that life presents for our growth. Our experiences, emotions, and feelings, as well as the choices we make, are non-transferable - they are essences that define us. This individual authenticity is what allows us to build a unique reality, rooted in our deepest values and beliefs.

Each individual faces their own journey, filled with challenges and unique emotions that no one else can truly comprehend or experience on our behalf.

This fundamental truth reminds us that we are the sole architects of our lives, responsible for shaping our existence according to our choices and values. At every step of this journey, we are presented with opportunities to evolve, learn, and make choices that reflect our deepest convictions.

Healthy relationships recognize and respect this individuality, understanding that each person has their own path to walk, their own lessons to learn. The richness of a healthy relationship lies in the ability to support and encourage this personal journey, without imposing expectations that limit the expression of each individual's true self.

Acknowledging our autonomy is the key that unlocks the power to live with wholeness, allowing us to embrace the vastness and beauty of our human experiences. This understanding of personal independence not only enriches our lives with freedom of choice but also strengthens us, empowering us to face every challenge as an opportunity for growth and deepening of emotional bonds.

Thus, true empowerment arises when we understand that we can shape our reality and transform adversities into moments of personal and collective empowerment. This is the foundation of lasting and meaningful relationships, where each individual is valued for their uniqueness and potential contribution.

It is no coincidence that the neglect of this clarity in a relationship represents one of the issues I most commonly encounter in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy sessions. For example, consider Ana and Carlos, two fictional names but real characters. Carlos consistently pressures Ana to adopt behaviors and make choices solely aligned with his expectations, disregarding her own desires and needs. When Ana attempts to express her own views or aspirations, she encounters resistance and devaluation from Carlos.

This pattern of disrespect for Ana's autonomy and individuality creates a suffocating atmosphere where her freedom to truly be herself is compromised. This scenario is a clear reflection of the promising start of a toxic relationship, where the lack of space for individual expression and mutual growth leads to a cycle of dissatisfaction and emotional stagnation.



## MIRRORS OF OURSELVES

“In every gaze,  
a mirror,  
deep reflections,  
Reveal hidden truths,  
bottomless worlds.  
We do not judge the other,  
without judging within ourselves,  
In the criticisms thrown,  
it's ourselves we must behold.”

(Marcello de Souza)

## THE COMPLEXITY OF SELF-AWARENESS AND CHOICES

"You can tie a man's hands, preventing gestures, you can tie his feet, preventing him from walking, you can cover his eyes, preventing sight, you can cut his tongue, preventing speech, the right to think and the power to think, however, is above all intolerance and all oppressions that nothing can do against this exercise. If the gods so wanted and if human nature itself so wanted, it seems clear that there is no more abominable abuse than trying to impose limitations on the thought of any person."

(José Alves de Freitas Neto)

We have already seen that Self-Awareness is fundamental not only for a healthy life but also for a healthy relationship. However, this is just the entrance to a deeper and more revealing path. Although continuous self-reflection may seem like an effective strategy to steer us away from harmful choices, reality shows that mere self-awareness is not enough to protect us from falling into internal traps of incapacity and confusion about our own limits and flaws.

Human existence, full of significance in search of meaning and fulfillment, often warns us that we must go beyond, avoiding becoming prisoners of our own distorted perceptions.

Our choices are often shaped in the background of consciousness, intertwined in a complex web of past experiences, lessons learned, and, of course, traumas. Such unconscious influences have the potential to lead us to limiting behavioral patterns that no longer contribute to our well-being or the development of healthy present relationships. Recognizing and understanding these hidden patterns is crucial, allowing us to make decisions that are truly in harmony with our identity and core values.

## AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS AND THE PATH TO TRANSFORMATION

By now, I hope you've realized that a healthy relationship is grounded in various cognitive behavioral issues far beyond right and wrong, criticism, and judgment. After all, I hope you understand that we are all imperfect enough. That's why I reinforce the idea that building truly authentic connections involves embracing our vulnerability. Revealing our weaknesses and fears can be intimidating, but it is precisely this revelation that lays the groundwork for deep and meaningful relationships. The masks or personas we often adopt as shields against rejection end up separating us from the genuine emotional connection we so desperately seek.

At the heart of healthy relationships lies empathy, sincere expressions of gratitude, asking for permission, apologies, as well as forgiveness – indispensable virtues that guide us to understand and accept the feelings and perspectives of others. By practicing full honesty in our feelings and striving to genuinely understand others' experiences, we cultivate an environment conducive to mutual development. This dynamic defines the essence of authentic relationships: mutual recognition and acceptance of our humanity, with all its imperfections.

In this sense, I know that many carry within themselves the fear of rejection. This reminds me that just a few days ago, a young woman approached me expressing difficulty in opening up to her husband. Joana (fictional name) feels vulnerable and fears being judged for her insecurities. What to do in these cases, as a common challenge on the journey to building authentic connections is the fear of rejection?

Many ask me, "What if I open up and get rejected?" This fear can be paralyzing, but it is possible to overcome it with focused strategies, for example:

- **Recognition and Acceptance:** Start by recognizing your fears as a natural part of the human experience. Accepting that the fear of rejection is a valid feeling allows you to confront it with compassion, rather than resistance.
- **Cognitive Reframing:** Use the technique of cognitive reframing to challenge automatic negative thoughts. For example, if you think, "If I open up, I will be rejected," try reframing this thought to "If I open up, I am giving a chance for a deeper connection, regardless of the outcome."
- **Small Steps:** Begin by sharing small vulnerabilities in low-risk situations to build your confidence. Observing positive responses in less threatening situations can increase your courage to open up more in meaningful relationships.
- **Focus on the Process, Not the Outcome:** Focus on the act of being vulnerable as an important step for your personal growth, rather than fixating on others' possible reactions. Remember that vulnerability is about your journey to authenticity, not about controlling others' responses.
- **Seek Support:** If the fear of rejection feels overwhelming, consider seeking support from a therapist or support groups where you can practice vulnerability in a safe and supportive environment.



By adopting these strategies, you equip yourself better to face the fear of rejection, paving the way for richer and more authentic relationships. Remember, every step towards vulnerability is a step towards a deeper connection with yourself and others. Furthermore, be assured that this process is also a great opportunity for us to conduct a profound and encouraging analysis not only on how to confront and interpret the fear of rejection but also on how such an experience can be a significant turning point for deeper self-awareness and for seeking more compatible and enriching relationships, thus redefining one's own story.



## **TRANSFORMING FEAR OF REJECTION INTO OPPORTUNITY**

When faced with the fear of "What if I open up and get rejected?" it's natural to feel hesitation. However, it's essential to recognize this situation as a valuable opportunity for reflection and discernment. When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and the outcome isn't what we expected, we are presented with a chance to reassess the dynamics of the relationship in question. This experience can reveal whether the people around us are aligned with our deepest values and if they are capable of offering the type of connection and support we seek.

Rejection, although painful, serves as a powerful reminder that not all relationships are compatible with our path of personal growth. This moment of reality invites us to consider if the person with whom we are choosing to share our life and our most intimate feelings truly understands and values our essence. Instead of seeing rejection as a failure or an end, we can view it as a clear indication that perhaps this isn't the most suitable relationship for our development and well-being.

This reassessment is not an easy process, but it's a crucial step in the journey of building authentic and fulfilling relationships. I encourage you to:

- **Reflecting on Your Values:** After an experience of rejection, take some time to reflect on your values and what you truly desire in a relationship.
- **Assessing the Relationship:** Ask yourself if the current relationship respects and reflects these values. This can help clarify if it's a relationship worth your emotional investment.
- **Practicing Self-Compassion:** Remember to treat yourself with compassion and understand that rejection does not define your worth as a person.
- **Maintaining Openness:** Stay open to relationships that align with your true self, knowing that vulnerability is still the key to deep and meaningful connections.

By learning to follow this line of self-analysis, each experience of rejection turns into a valuable lesson, guiding us towards more authentic relationships aligned with who we are at our core. Vulnerability, therefore, is not just a path to intimacy but also a filter through which we can discern relationships that truly enrich our lives and are truly worth living.

## BETWEEN ME, YOU, US

"In the dance of relationships,  
Between steps and beats, we discover,  
That the courage to be who we are,  
Is what binds us, in deep and true bonds.  
It's not in perfection that we find each other,  
But in the sincere sharing of our imperfections,  
Where vulnerability becomes our strength,  
And authenticity, the path to transformation.  
May this be the reminder,  
To embrace the beauty of the values that make us  
who we are,  
And in vulnerability, find the courage,  
To build bridges, not walls,  
Between me, you, us."

(Marcello de Souza)

## **ON REACHING OUR BEST**

Reflecting on everything we've seen so far, it's also crucial to understand that there are no guarantees that we will reach our best in every interaction, regardless of how confident we feel about our path or the emotions we share. Often, we harbor within us an inflated perception of our capability, believing ourselves to be holders of absolute truths and immune to error. This false sense of invulnerability can lead us to neglect the continuous effort needed for improvement, thus harming the quality of our relationships over time.

# Chapter 4

## OUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Our decision-making process, intrinsically unconscious, is a legacy of our evolution. The brain, limited in its capacity for conscious processing, resorts to heuristics—mental shortcuts based on past experiences, learnings, and social values—to navigate the sea of information and stimuli we face. These mechanisms, while useful, can predispose us to outdated or inadequate patterns of behavior for our current context.

Identifying and understanding these unconscious patterns is one of the greatest challenges and, at the same time, one of the greatest opportunities for personal development. It allows us to choose more consciously and deliberately, paving the way for a life more aligned with our authentic values and for more meaningful and healthy relationships.

The journey towards greater awareness of the decisions we make may seem daunting, but it is undeniably enriching. As we delve into the depths of our unconscious choices, we blaze a trail towards a deeper understanding of ourselves. This process of self-discovery offers us precious insights into our essence, the reasons behind our actions, and how we can evolve. It's not just about improving our relationships but about building an existence that resonates with our most authentic values and aspirations.

As we unveil the layers that guide our choices at every moment, we understand the responsibility we carry for the unfolding of our own story. This recognition of our freedom, with all its beauty and anguish, underscores the importance of consciousness at the core of human existence. Life reveals itself as a magical stage, where each interaction, each decision, weaves the intricate web of our biochemical and neural reality.

In this process, we realize that, although many of our actions are automatic, a result of our own intrinsic and unconscious strength, it is through mindfulness that we have the power to rewrite our narrative. This awareness empowers us to deliberately shape the plot of our lives and relationships, opening doors to an experience guided by authenticity and true connection.

At the heart of this vital magic is the ability to accept and celebrate our complexity as we navigate the sea of human relationships. As we delve deeper into understanding our hidden motivations, we embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery. This journey not only enlightens us about our own nature but also makes us more empathetic and understanding towards others.

Each step taken towards recognizing our intrinsic essence brings us closer to ourselves and others, fostering deeper and more meaningful bonds. While some may stray from the essence of life due to lack of self-awareness or fear of change, others dedicate themselves tirelessly to learning and personal growth. In the end, everything converges towards the awareness of what truly matters, defining the essence of our own unique existence.

## HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO BE WHO WE ARE

In our journey through life, we discover that existence is not composed of scattered moments, but rather of a rich tapestry interwoven by the experiences we accumulate. Each experience, colored by the beliefs we absorb along the way, can either restrict or expand our horizons. Faced with this, we are confronted with a fundamental choice: to remain confined by the barriers of these beliefs or to use them as a foundation to overcome challenges and authentically embrace our emotions.

Often, we act under the direction of a cunning unconscious, guided by a brain that, based on prior knowledge, anticipates the steps to follow. However, true navigation begins when we awaken to self-awareness, illuminating the path to a life aligned with our deepest values. Each lived experience then transforms into an opportunity for growth and fulfillment.

In human relationships, it is common to encounter the act of judging and criticizing others, often a reflection of our own internal struggle with vulnerability. We create personas not only as shields against rejection but also as distorted mirrors of our experiences and beliefs, causing criticism of others to resonate, in truth, as an echo of our essence.

Vulnerability is then revealed not as an obstacle, but as fertile ground for the flourishing of deeply authentic connections. It is an invitation to break down the barriers we have erected around our most genuine selves, encouraging us to show ourselves to the world with courage and sincerity. This act of bravery radically transforms the dynamics of our interactions, allowing us to be seen, and to see others, beyond social masks, in an exchange marked by empathy, compassion, and mutual respect.

By embracing the totality of our being—with all its lights and shadows—we begin to cultivate an environment where empathy and authenticity are more than fleeting visitors; they become an integral part of our existence. Renouncing the practice of pointing fingers at everything outside of us is an invitation to build bridges of love and understanding, discovering the freedom to be authentically who we are, free from the fear of judgment or the exposure of our vulnerabilities.

Therefore, this ebook transcends a simple invitation to reflection; it is a call to action. It is a summons to dive into the depths of our being, confronting our fears and recognizing our true essence. By dedicating ourselves to this transformative process, we not only change ourselves but also enrich the lives of those with whom we share our journey, fostering relationships that go beyond the surface to touch the core of the soul.



## REFLECTION EXERCISES

- Values Mapping:
  - List five values that you consider most important in your life.
  - Reflect on how each of these values manifests in your relationships. Is there any incongruence between what you value and how you relate to others?
- Mask Analysis:
  - Identify situations in which you feel the need to wear a social "mask." What do these situations have in common?
  - Explore the emotions and vulnerabilities that you try to conceal with these masks. How would you feel presenting yourself without them?
- Empathy Diary:
  - For a week, at the end of each day, write about a moment when you tried to put yourself in someone else's shoes. How did this affect your perception of the situation?
  - Reflect on how practicing empathy can change your relationships.
- The Forgiveness Exercise:
  - Think of someone who has had a negative impact on your life. Write a forgiveness letter to that person (you don't need to send it).
  - Reflect on how the act of forgiving alters your own emotional burden and perception of that person.

## ME, YOU, US

In a world that sometimes reveals itself as rough and frantic,  
Where souls wander in search of authentic connection,  
A poetry is born, weaving golden threads of understanding,  
Celebrating the meeting of hearts in genuine interaction.

Under the vast sky of infinite possibilities,  
Lies the eternal secret of relationships that truly fit,  
Not in the perfection of fairy tales, but in the imperfection of  
reality,  
Where each flaw and each scar narrates the beauty of our  
humanity.

Healthy relationships, oh so coveted, shine at their core,  
Not from inflexible demands, but from acceptance and compassion  
that emanates,  
In the little things, in active listening, in the soothing touch,  
In the sharing of laughter and tears, in the presence that warms  
the soul.

In mental health, we find refuge, the starting point,  
To dive into the oceans of our own restless minds,  
To learn to navigate the waves, to recognize when to ask for help,  
It is in the embrace of our own essence that peace is finally found.

What truly matters, then, on this shared journey?  
It is the daily construction of bridges, the fearless crossing of  
borders,  
The recognition of the light and shadow that dwells in each one,  
And the celebration of love that, despite everything, always  
reaffirms itself.

May this poetry be a beacon for hearts that seek,  
A gentle reminder of the strength that lies in vulnerability,  
For it is in the courage to be truly ourselves,  
That we discover the magic of deep connections, free from  
superficiality.

Thus, we walk side by side, me, you, all of us,  
In the infinite dance of giving and receiving, of growing and  
flourishing,  
In the certainty that, even in chaos, there is a greater purpose,  
And it is in love, in empathy, and in unity, that we find our best.

(Marcello de Souza)



# Bibliography

## MAIN REFERENCES FOR THE ENTIRE TRILOGY "ME, THIS, AND US - HOW TO REBUILD A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP":

Beattie, Melody. "Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself." Hazelden Publishing.

Brown, Brené. "Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead." Gotham Books.

Chapman, Gary. "The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts." Northfield Publishing.

Cozolino, Louis. "The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain." W.W. Norton & Company.

Damasio, Antonio. "Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain." Harcourt.

Davidson, Richard J., e Sharon Begley. "The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect the Way You Think, Feel, and Live - and How You Can Change Them." Hudson Street Press.

De Souza, Marcello. "O Mapa Não é o Território, o Território é Você." Editora Eu Sou a Ideia.

Epstein, Mark. "Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart: A Buddhist Perspective on Wholeness." Broadway Books.

Fisher, Helen. "Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love." Henry Holt and Co.

Goleman, Daniel. "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ." Bantam Books.

Goleman, Daniel. "Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships." Bantam Books.

Gottman, John M., e Nan Silver. "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert." Harmony.

Hendrix, Harville, and Helen LaKelly Hunt. "Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples." St. Martin's Press.

Iacoboni, Marco. "Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others." Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Johnson, Sue. "Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love." Little, Brown Spark.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. "Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life." Hyperion.

Kasl, Charlotte. "If the Buddha Dated: A Handbook for Finding Love on a Spiritual Path." Penguin Books.

Lerner, Harriet. "The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships." Harper Perennial.

LeDoux, Joseph. "The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life." Simon & Schuster.

Mellody, Pia. "Facing Codependence: What It Is, Where It Comes from, How It Sabotages Our Lives." HarperOne.

Norwood, Robin. "Women Who Love Too Much: When You Keep Wishing and Hoping He'll Change." Pocket Books.

Perel, Esther. "Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence." Harper.

Perry, Bruce D., e Maia Szalavitz. "The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook - What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing." Basic Books.

Ratey, John J. "A User's Guide to the Brain: Perception, Attention, and the Four Theaters of the Brain." Pantheon Books.

Ruiz, Don Miguel. "The Mastery of Love: A Practical Guide to the Art of Relationship." Amber-Allen Publishing.

Schwartz, Tony. "The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal." Free Press.

Siegel, Daniel J. "Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation." Bantam.

Siegel, Daniel J. "The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are." Guilford Press.

Tatkin, Stan. "Wired for Love: How Understanding Your Partner's Brain and Attachment Style Can Help You Defuse Conflict and Build a Secure Relationship." New Harbinger Publications.

Yalom, Irvin D. "The Gift of Therapy: An Open Letter to a New Generation of Therapists and Their Patients." Harper Perennial.

## Connect and Explore Further

If this e-book has sparked in you a greater interest in the transformative power of organizational environmental design, environmental social psychology, or neuroscience applied to workplace well-being, I invite you to delve more deeply into this journey with me.

I, Marcello de Souza, have dedicated my life to exploring the intersections between cognitive behavioral and organizational development, always seeking innovative ways to apply this knowledge to improve the lives of individuals and organizations.

## WHERE TO FIND ME?

For daily tips, deep insights, and the latest updates on my research, projects, and publications:

- LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/marcellodesouzaprofissional](http://www.linkedin.com/in/marcellodesouzaprofissional)
- Instagram: @marcellodesouza\_oficial, visit: [www.instagram.com/marcellodesouza\\_oficial](http://www.instagram.com/marcellodesouza_oficial)
- YouTube: Here, I share lectures, interviews, workshops, and various educational videos that shed light on current and relevant topics in the field of behavioral psychology and human development, visit: [www.youtube.com/@marcellodesouza\\_oficial](http://www.youtube.com/@marcellodesouza_oficial)
- Official Website: Where you can access my entire portfolio, courses, and information on how I can personally assist you or your organization, visit [www.marcellodesouza.com](http://www.marcellodesouza.com)
- Blog: For insights and reflections on personal and professional development, visit [www.marcellodesouza.com.br](http://www.marcellodesouza.com.br)
- Company: For coaching and organizational development services, visit [www.coachingevoce.com.br](http://www.coachingevoce.com.br).



If you felt a connection with the content of this e-book and believe in the transformative potential that applied knowledge can bring, do not hesitate to get in touch. I am here to support your journey of personal and professional growth, offering consultancy, coaching, and customized training that meet your needs or those of your organization.

This is just the beginning. Together, we can explore new frontiers of knowledge and apply them in ways that truly make a difference in the world. I appreciate you accompanying me this far and look forward to continuing this journey together.

Marcello de Souza - Transforming knowledge into action for a better future.