

### WAKING UP TOGETHER: AN INTERACTIVE PRACTICE FOR COUPLES, VOLUME ONE

BY LELAND “CHIP” BAGGETT  
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Reviewed by Stan Charnofsky

Chip Baggett has given us a unique view of what goes wrong and what can be right with couples. *Waking Up Together* is a double entendre, the more profound meaning being to come to one's senses, or in this case to two's senses.

There are numerous tomes on how to counsel couples and also on how couples need to interact to make their partnerships work. Such disparate thinkers as psychiatrist William Glasser (*Getting Together, Staying Together, and Eight Lessons for a Happier Marriage*), and John Gottman (*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*), have forged formulae and lessons for the enhancement of couples struggling to improve their relationships.

What makes Baggett's work different is his focus on what he terms “trance” states that people get into that keep them from being fully present for each other and themselves. A “trance” state contributes to an “entranced” relationship, where old wounds and hurts dominate the interactions. Baggett cautions us that “trances” that are chosen freely and happily are beneficial, but that too many trances are triggered automatically and trap us in “spiritually diminished, perceptually distorted, and emotionally reactive states” that are fear-based and that cause suffering.

Six characteristics of “trance” states are described and fleshed out, the key point being that such a state is a “contraction of consciousness away from full present awareness.” Debilitating “trance” states are reactions to old hurts that become

fixed in memory, often below the surface.

What Baggett helps the reader understand is that the goal in relationships is to be psychologically and spiritually awake. When one is awake in this manner, s/he loses the need to guard, defend or justify, blame, control or try to change our partner, or run away, hide, or disappear. He even offers names for some of the hurtful “trances”: “my resentment trance,” “my victim or martyr trance,” “my hurt little boy trance,” “my addictive trance,” “my distrusting trance.”

Many years ago, Jordan and Margaret Paul wrote an important book: *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved by You?* They created a dichotomy: When conflict occurs, we either strive to learn from it, or to protect ourselves.

Protection often takes the forms that Baggett cites in this work: Making the other person wrong, giving oneself up, leaving the scene—all, in the present book's terminology, examples of hurt and unexamined “trances.”

Three skills are needed for awakening from painful “trances.” These are: recognition—we must realize that we are in a trance; observation—we must carefully monitor our trance state as it unfolds, and come to understand the emotional and behavioral; shifting—we must shift our identification from the trance to our external observation of it, to break us away from being fused with it.

Baggett tells us that a shared practice of awakening creates a way for relationships to become more intimate and more expansive. A relationship that is truly awake allows

partners to feel depth and freedom. It makes “problem solving easier, less adversarial, more collaborative, and creative.” It permits each person in a relationship to be the being s/he truly is, not the trance identity with s/he has become entangled.

Several well-conceived and lucidly written case-study illustrations are offered that serve to clarify the different situations and their remedies. An important point that is stressed is that either partner may

have to learn to stay awake when the other one is caught in the “dream” or trance. Such an awakening often shifts between the partners. A goal is for each person to learn to assist the other in the process of waking up.

Baggett concludes his writing with a bit of wisdom: “The instant—and I do mean the instant—

we wake up, our suffering will end, and we will have the perspective to realize the significant progress we have made along the way.”

This is an important book that leans toward a spiritual basis for relationships to prosper. While some couples might not identify with this approach—I have had clients who are hammer-and-nails realists who want concrete “answers” to what's wrong between them—it is refreshing to read an uplifting account of something deeper that can bring people into harmony with their present, full-functioning, fully awake selves.

*STAN CHARNOFSKY is Professor of Educational Psychology and Counseling at California State University Northridge, and a former President of the Association for Humanistic Psychology. He is the author of Therapy with Couples: A Humanistic Approach and When Women Leave Men: How Men Feel, How Men Heal.*

