

THE MASTER Series

OVERCOMING CHALLENGING MOMENTS IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Dr. Gabor Maté



Gabor Maté (pronounced GAH-bor MAH-tay) is a retired physician who, after 20 years of family practice and palliative care experience, worked for over a decade in Vancouver's Downtown East Side with patients challenged by drug addiction and mental illness.

The bestselling author of four books published in twenty-seven languages, Gabor is an internationally renowned speaker highly sought after for his expertise on addiction, trauma, childhood development, and the relationship of stress and illness. His book on addiction received the Hubert Evans Prize for literary non-fiction.

*For his ground-breaking medical work and writing he has been awarded the Order of Canada, his country's highest civilian distinction, and the Civic Merit Award from his hometown, Vancouver. His books include *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters With Addiction*; *When the Body Says No; Exploring the Stress-Disease Connection*; *Scattered: How ADD Originates and What You Can Do About It*; and (with Gordon Neufeld) *Hold on to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*. Gabor's next book, *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness & Healing in a Toxic Culture* is due in Autumn, 2022.*

To learn more, join his e-news here: www.drgabormate.com





I want to take you through an exercise that I often do in my groups or when I speak or teach. It is an exercise that will help you overcome those difficult moments in relationships with other people.

First you need to think about a recent episode when you were upset with somebody. It could be your spouse, partner, the bus driver.. it doesn't actually matter.

You then need to describe what happened. Describe the event as fully as you can. Then you need to look at what your emotional reaction was to the experience. Name as many emotions as you can remember feeling at the time.

I would imagine that anger and sadness were two of the emotions that come up when you are upset with someone. So, I'd ask you to examine the anger. It might seem like a silly question, but why were you angry?

Ultimately you will feel like the other person has injured you in some way. And when you think about it, why would they have hurt you like that? Who deserves to be treated in that way? Only someone who is unworthy should be treated like that.

However I would like you to try and shift your perspective slightly... Are there other reasons why this other person might have behaved in this way? A reason that doesn't have anything to do with whether or not they think you are worthless or worthy. In fact, a reason that has nothing to do with you at all.

There are a million reasons.

Try naming a few? So imagine all of these other reasons why this person could have treated you badly, that really have nothing to do with you. There are undoubtedly going to be a vast number of possibilities for what took place, and only one is that they truly wanted to injure you and cause you pain. Despite this, this one possibility is the one we always default to. The worst assumption. The assumption that people are out to deliberately hurt and upset us.

SUMMING UP

So, first of all, we don't respond to what actually happens we respond to our perception of what happens. We respond to our own perceived to reputational damage, however that takes shape.

Number two - of all the possible, limitless answers we choose the worst one.

Number three – That second statement isn't true. We didn't choose it. It's not like you went through all of the possibilities, and then weighed up what you knew, weighed up the evidence and then chose the answer to be that they just wanted to hurt you. That wasn't how it happened. Your brain jumped there automatically.

THAT BRINGS US TO THE QUESTION OF WHY?

Now, was that the first time in your life that someone has caused you to feel hurt, angry and upset? I very much doubt that it was. You have probably felt like people have treated you this way, to a varying degree, since way back when. I bet you can barely remember the first time you felt hurt or angry. It normally will go right back into childhood. And that's what trauma is. We don't respond to the present moment. We respond to the past.



Understanding this is a beautiful learning opportunity. What if you assume for a moment that you're the most lovable, most worthy of care, most worthy of respect person in the history of the universe? And still this person behaves in the way that they do.

What's your response?

I would guess that it would be any number of the other options which would not trigger an intense negative emotional state.

Therefore, this mean that something within you actually believes that you're not worthy of care and respect. That you deserve to be treated in the way you were and that it's not that bizarre that another person would treat you badly. That is what gets triggered.

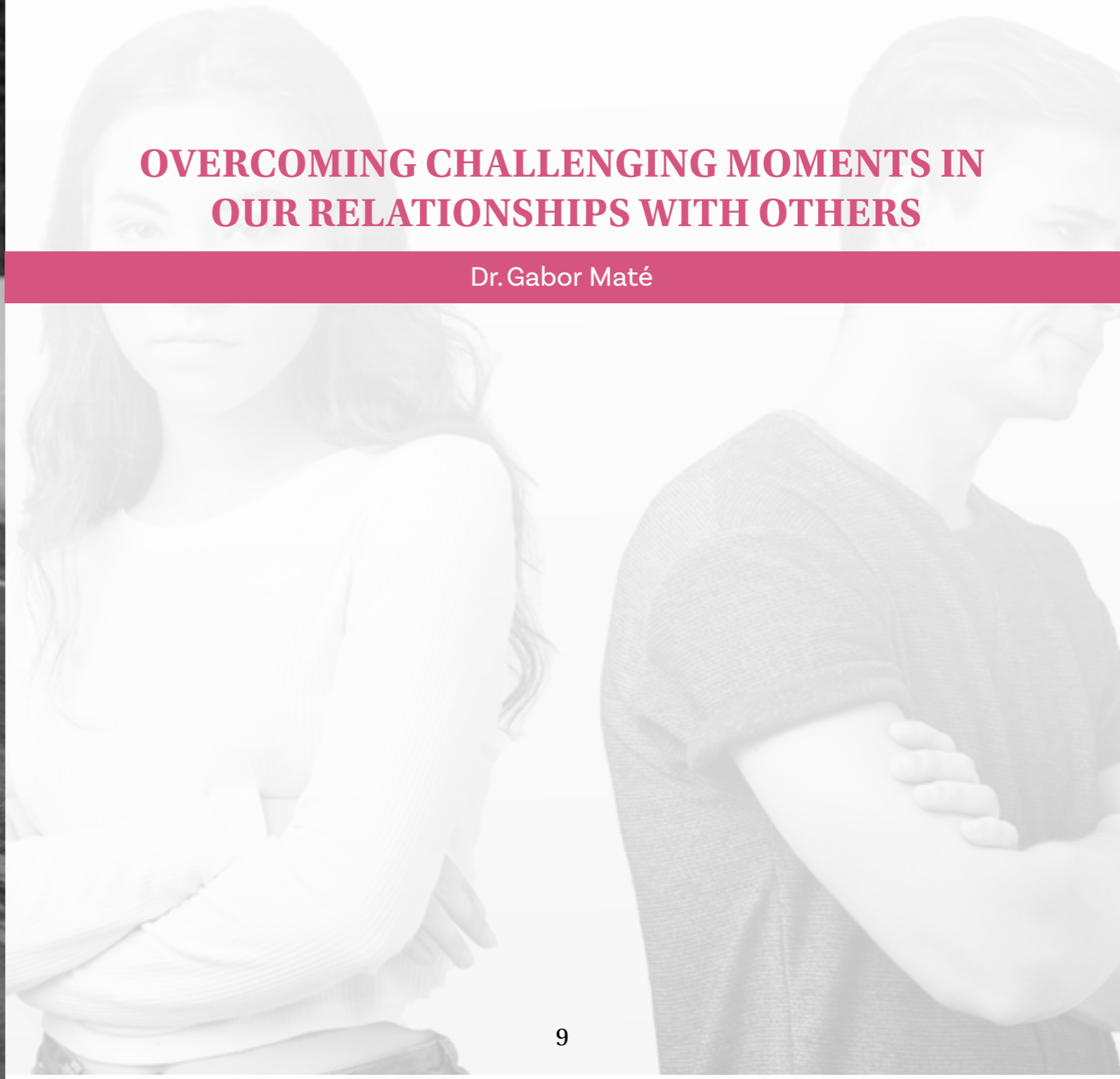
So who is the person that doesn't care about you? Who is the person who wants to hurt you? Who believes that you deserve to be hurt? Most likely it's you who believes all of this, not the people around you.

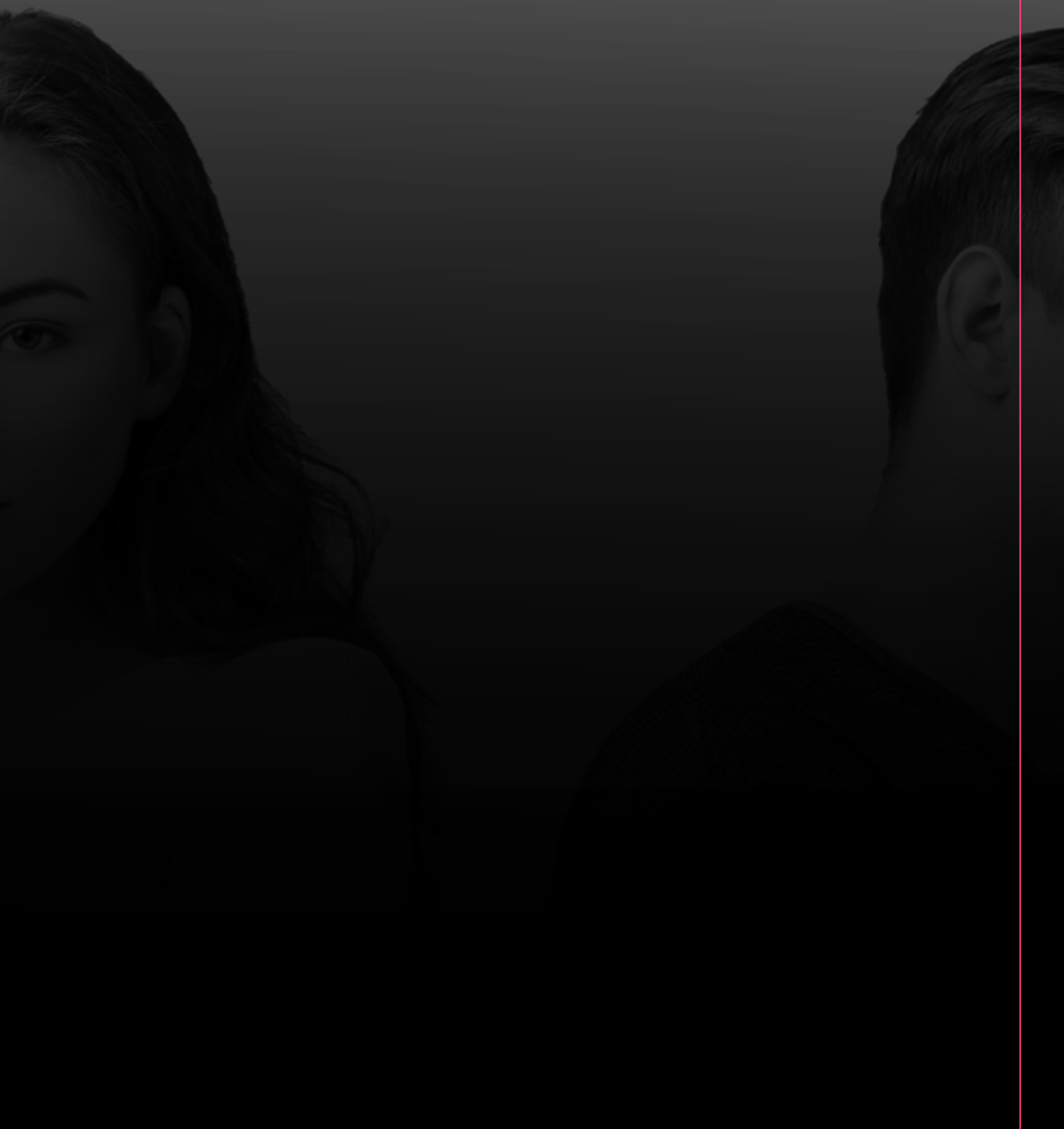
And that's the beauty of healing. Suddenly you are able to reframe things and that causes a shift. Understanding this is liberating, because guess what? Feeling a certain way because of the behavior of someone makes you a victim. But if you shift that perspective and see yourself as the source of these feelings. That makes you powerful.




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