

POWER TOOLS FOR MEN



BUILD A LIFE OF LOVE

Leonard Szymczak & Rick Broniec

Praise for *Power Tools for Men*

“This is a down-to-earth breakthrough book that weaves heart-felt stories with practical concepts that promote healthy masculinity and help men thrive in the 21st century.”

— Jack Canfield, New York Times bestselling co-author of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, which has more than 250 titles and 500 million copies.

“If I had a nickel for every time a woman sighed in despair wondering where the conscious men were, I’d be a wealthy woman. Thank God I now have an answer. Szymczak and Broniec have cracked the code on modern masculinity. No more modeling manhood after our distant, dominating fathers! The new man is an awakened, mature, and integrated man who is connected to the power of his heart. Women, buy this book for the men you love, and men, buy this book to finally know how to step into your true power and destiny.”

— Katherine Woodward Thomas, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Conscious Uncoupling: 5 Steps to Living Happily Ever After* and *Calling in “The One”: 7 Weeks to Attract the Love of Your Life*.

“Rick Broniec and Leonard Szymczak answer the question, ‘What the hell is happening to men?’ Their book provides a powerful roadmap for men during these turbulent times. By sharing their personal stories and those of men who have been touched by their work over the past thirty years, they empower men to open their hearts and embrace healthy masculinity. This book is a must for men and the women who love them or are raising sons.”

— Rich Tosi, Founding President, ManKind Project

Other Books by Leonard Szymczak

The Roadmap Home: Your GPS to Inner Peace

Cuckoo Forevermore

Kookaburra's Last Laugh

Fighting for Love: Turn Conflict into Intimacy (co-authored with Mari Frank)

Other Books by Rick Broniec

A Passionate Life: 7 Steps for Reclaiming Your Passion, Purpose and Joy

The Seven Generations Story: An Incentive to Heal Yourself, Your Family and the Planet



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The information in this book is meant to provide helpful information about men and relationships. It is not meant to replace therapy. Every man has unique concerns and should seek professional advice when appropriate.

1. Self-help. 2. Personal Growth. 3. Men's Studies. 4. Men's Personal Growth. 5. Masculinity.

BUILD A LIFE OF LOVE

Your task is not to seek for love but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself you have built against it. — Rumi

Men have difficulty with three powerful words—“I love you.” We may feel comfortable demonstrating through action our love for a woman or our children, or we may tell a close male friend in an off-handed way, “Luv you, Bro.” Loving with an open heart is hard enough for men, let alone loving beyond an open heart which asks us to extend our love into the world.

Because we’ve been taught to be warriors, to enter the domain of the lover and become emotionally close requires balls of courage. Love is fraught with fear for men. We fear getting rejected or abandoned, feeling smothered, losing ourselves, sacrificing ambition, being unlovable, unworthy, or not good enough. No wonder love can be terrifying!

Leonard

Growing up, I never heard the words, “I love you.” My parents were in survival mode, so affirming words were not part of their vocabulary. As a result, I felt awkward about saying or even hearing the words, “I love you.” Many years ago when I was studying family therapy, I attended a workshop that explored the impact of our childhood on our ability to love. The facilitator asked the participants to say aloud, “I love myself.” At first, I choked on the words. I had a hard-enough time speaking the words, let alone expressing them in a group. That workshop helped me wake up to my feeling of being unloved and forced me to grow into love.

Rick

Expressing love was difficult for me in my first marriage. In fact, it was so evident that my wife and I often joked that we were “young likers,” instead of young lovers. That statement causes me pain even today. My then wife, a victim of terrible childhood sexual abuse, had a

difficult time simply saying to me, “I love you.” Instead, she’d say things like, “I appreciate you and the way you father our daughters.” Or “You’re a good man, Rick.” But I yearned to hear those magic words from her and also yearned to say them freely to her. Strangely, both of us could say to our daughters, “I love you.” Since we had such a hard time loving each other, it was no wonder that we eventually divorced.

If we experienced childhood neglect, abandonment, or abuse while growing up, we will have difficulty with love. We may yearn to have a loving relationship and feel loved; however, the traumas of the past will impact our ability to live with an open heart. Even if we were raised in a nurturing household, we would bear invisible scars from the past. As Harville Hendrix, creator of Imago Relationship Therapy, wrote, “. . . from the moment you were born you were a complex, dependent creature with a never-ending cycle of needs. . . . And no parents, no matter how devoted, are able to respond perfectly to all of those changing needs.”¹

Those wounds taught us about conditional love. In order to survive, we learned to act in certain ways to satisfy our needs and receive love from our caregivers. We then projected our early experiences of love onto the world. If we were shamed, unloved, or smothered as children, we will anticipate the same unless we have an emotionally corrective experience of real love. We need to update our version of love from the conditional model that we received. In that model, we adapted by feeling, thinking, and behaving in ways that might bring us attention, acceptance, and love. If achieving brought accolades, then we worked hard on accomplishment. If pleasing others brought positive attention, we adopted that behavior. If manipulation or bullying made us feel more adequate or in control, then we utilized those behaviors to get what we wanted.

¹ Hendrix, Harville, *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*, Owl Books, New York, 1988, p. 15.

Men's socialization, which is quite different from women's, impacts our ability to grow into love. Nancy Chodorow highlights the differences when discussing attachment. As babies, both genders start life attached to their mother and experience love through her. "A girl, then, can develop a personal identification with her mother, because she has a real relationship with her that grows out of their early primary tie."² Boys, however, must developmentally detach from their mother to create an identity separate from her. This means that a boy "... tends to deny identification with and relationship to his mother and reject what he takes to be the feminine world."³ *As a result, masculinity stresses differentiation from others and the denial of emotions while femininity stresses a relational process that includes mutuality and emotions.* When men reject what is perceived as the feminine world, the dimension of love, often not modeled by fathers who are absent or emotionally unavailable, is harder to access.

Since we are more likely to identify with the images of masculinity as portrayed in the media and by culture, we often express love by doing, rather than being in the world. If we are good enough, strong enough, smart enough, or successful enough, then we will be loved. Unfortunately, this outcome depends on external praise and reinforcement. We can be extremely successful in the outside world yet be miserable on the inside. Worthiness doesn't come from the outside; it comes from the inside—where real love exists.

In *Real Love*, Greg Baer says, "Real Love is caring about the happiness of another person without any thought for what we might get for ourselves. When we give Real Love, we're not disappointed, hurt, or angry, even when people are thoughtless or inconsiderate or give us

² Chodorow, Nancy, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, p. 175.

³ Ibid, p. 176.

nothing in return—even gratitude—because our concern is for their happiness, not our own. Real Love is unconditional.”⁴

To build a life of love, we must find that place within. That means we have to get past our defenses and cultural images of masculinity. If we grew up with guilt, shame, rejection, or abuse, we have likely erected barriers around our hearts and carried on stoically.

We access the power tool of love by living the words of the mystic Rumi: “Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” Building a life of love requires us to find the beliefs that act as barriers such as “I don’t deserve love.” “Love is conditional depending on the way I act or look.” “If you see the real me, you won’t love me.”

After becoming aware of our unspoken and often unconscious beliefs, we need those balls of courage to face and dismantle the negative ones about love. However, that requires us to welcome all facets of our lives, including the shadows.

Becoming aware of our beliefs allows us to heal our wounded hearts. As Rumi also said, “The wound is the place where the light enters you.” When the light of love enters us, we love with and beyond an open heart. We learn to truly love ourselves unconditionally. Without that self-love, we will love only upon the condition that we be loved.

So how do we practice self-love? *Brené Brown* wrote in *The Gifts of Imperfection*, “We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known, and when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust,

⁴ Baer, Greg, *Real Love: The Truth about Unconditional Love and Fulfilling Relationships*, Gotham Books, New York, 2003, p. 4.

respect, kindness, and affection. Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow.”⁵

As Jerry Jampolsky writes in *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*, “Love is the total absence of fear. Love asks no questions. Its natural state is one of extension and expansion, not comparison and measurement.”⁶

Since love is inherent in each of us, we don’t have to find it. We merely need to access it. Love is our natural state of being and has nothing to do with performance, accomplishments, status, or any other cravings of the ego. It is unconditional, without guilt or shame and without boundaries or expectations. Love simply encompasses all of who we are.

We can learn to love from the inside out by using these simple power tools:

1. Recognize who you are and where you’ve come from. Your ancestors and your history shaped your story to be what it is today.
2. Acknowledge your wounds and the defenses you built to survive outside attacks.
3. Forgive yourself for closing your heart to others, blaming others, and not being available to give or receive unconditional love. Forgiveness is the healing balm for any wounds.
4. Accept yourself the way you are. Even though you may be frightened of opening your heart, you can still accept that you are fearful of getting hurt and nevertheless move forward.
5. Make a commitment to be more loving to yourself. This involves acts of self-care in thoughts and in deeds. The more you love yourself, the more love you will have for your neighbor.

⁵ Brown, Brené, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*, Hazeldon, Center City, MN, 2010, p. 26.

⁶ Jampolsky, Gerald, *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*, Celestial Arts, Berkeley, CA, 1979, p.17.

6. Step into courage and open your heart to others. The word *courage* stems from the Latin word, *cor*, which means *heart*. With courage, you can love beyond an open heart and inspire others to expand their love.

As we open our heart, we step into the different shapes and sizes of love.

Fatherly conveys protection, caring, strength, appreciation, joy, admiration, and tenderness. The flavor of fatherly love can be captured in the images of a father cradling an infant, comforting a two-year-old son or daughter, playing with his children, or teaching a child lessons or skills. That type of love nurtures a child's growth and development.

Imagine being a child on the receiving end of that love. He or she would feel safe and secure, appreciated and valued, comforted and cared for. Having received that type of love, the child could easily embrace a mentor, ask for help, feel a deep and profound love for self, and share that love with a brother or sister.

Brotherly love is about seeing other men and women as members of our family. We treat them with understanding and acceptance, compassion and forgiveness, tenderness and heartfelt joy. From that place we can extend love beyond an open heart and encourage, support, even challenge our brothers and sisters to create a loving world. We can love our neighbors as ourselves for we belong to the same family of man.

Romantic love expands our heart by taking us outside of ourselves into the inner sanctum of another where the power of two creates a powerful one—a union of hearts, minds, and spirits. While romantic love, or *eros*, awakens the senses, deepens feelings, and expands the heart to become a bigger vessel, it also activates an inner fire to transform and heal. Passionate love can be intoxicating and addictive. When we fall in love, we want to hold onto the intense feelings that we associate with a special partner. We often crave that special relationship to

create the love chemicals in our brain. Partners may trigger chemical combustion, but the love factory is an inside job. Our inner state triggers the chemical reaction.

Dr. Daniel G. Amen's book, *The Brain in Love*, highlights attraction chemicals such as testosterone, estrogen, and pheromones; infatuation chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, and epinephrine; and bonding chemicals like oxytocin and vasopressin. These feel-good chemicals make us feel happy, alive, connected, and loved. Who wouldn't want to feel that way? And if we stop producing those chemicals, it's no wonder we fall into despair.

Self-love summons us to become self-generating lovers so we can access the feeling of love, no matter what's going on outside of us. If our love tank is empty, we have little to give. Self-love nourishes and refuels. The more love we generate, the more love we can give. *Brené* Brown writes, "Practicing self-love means learning how to trust ourselves, to treat ourselves with respect, and to be kind and affectionate toward ourselves. This is a tall order given how hard most of us are on ourselves."⁷

We men are notoriously bad at self-care. As a result, we tend to look to our partners to care for us. Once we connect with our senses, bodies, and our feelings, we can notice our needs and desires, the first step to self-care as *Brené* Brown says.

Once we master self-love, we can then love our partners more fully. Gary Chapman, a therapist who wrote *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* identifies five ways that help us give and receive love: physical touch and affection, words of appreciation, quality time, acts of service, and gifts.⁸ Each of us tends to prefer one or more of the languages that generate loving feelings, and we tend to use that language on others.

Physical Touch and Affection

⁷ Brown, Op. Cit., p. 27.

⁸ Chapman, Gary, *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*, Northfield Publishing, Chicago, IL, 2015.

Infants need touch. If they are not held, they fail to thrive. As we age, we have the same need for touch and affection. Children and grandchildren readily supply that need. Baths, showers, and massages stimulate our skin. Dogs and cats give us unconditional love. But we can ask for and share hugs which boost our physical and emotional health. If we hug for six seconds or more, we release oxytocin, a bonding chemical that generates a feeling of belonging. The renowned therapist Virginia Satir famously said, “We need four hugs a day for survival, eight hugs a day for maintenance, and twelve hugs a day for growth.”

Rick

My first love language is physical touch with words of encouragement as a close second. Though I'm a very sensual man, I was touch deprived for much of my adult life. No wonder I was in such dissonance in my first marriage. Looking back, it was amazing and sad to me that I lasted in my first marriage for twenty-three years with very little of either of my primary love languages fulfilled. Now that I am clear about my languages of love, I have established a deep, loving relationship with my current partner, Michele. Her love languages are identical to mine, so we both find it easy and natural to shower each other with loving affection. The awareness of our needs and the willingness and desire to satisfy them change everything!

Leonard

As a child, I didn't receive much affection from my parents. My lack of physical contact created a longing for touch. Since I'm single and still need touch, I gravitate toward people who enjoy hugging. When I greet friends, family, or the men in the group, I welcome them with a loving bear hug. The physical contact establishes a sense of belonging and generates love.

I am also touched by the environment. When I lived in Chicago, I suffered from seasonal affective disorder which comes from the lack of sunshine, so living in a sunny, warm environment like California makes my body feel loved. So do massage and swimming.

Words of Appreciation and Praise

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy helps us reprogram negative beliefs with positive ones. Old wounds can be healed when we express positive affirmations to ourselves. Genuine words of praise help us love ourselves and others.

Leonard

Since I rarely heard words of appreciation as a child, I tell them daily to myself and to others. At the end of every therapy session with clients, I acknowledge something positive about them such as their honesty, courage, or willingness to change. I ask couples to share appreciations about themselves and their partner. Heartfelt words act as a powerful elixir to promote love.

I periodically tell my friends, “If no one has told you today that you’re amazing (or some other affirming quality), let me be the first to tell you.” The positive response that I receive is just as rewarding for me as it is for them to hear the affirmation.

Rick

Since I didn’t receive much praise from my father and only conditional love from my mother, I need to be appreciated and loved regularly. One aspect of my relationship with Michele that I dearly love is our monthly check-ins that take place on the anniversary of our first date. We check in with what is working well in the relationship and how we can be better. We both look forward to this process as it gives us an opportunity to express our appreciation and love for each other. We also do a course correction, when necessary, to keep our relationship healthy and juicy. Michele’s loving words become a healing balm to my soul. She gets to see the real me and reflects it in her feedback. Being seen and loved unconditionally, I extend my love for her beyond an open heart.

Quality Time

This language of love sends the message that we're important and special. When we make time for friends, conversation, men's gatherings, walks in nature, exercise, meditation, or relaxing, we validate activities that increase our self-worth. Friends and lovers appreciate the special time, even a phone call or text, as it conveys care and attention.

Rick

I love riding my 2005 Harley Davidson Heritage Motorcycle with its cool custom paint and lots of chrome. People tend to think of bikers as tough guys not to mess with. I must say that I do enjoy the projections that are placed on me as I roar up the road.

The roar of the engine and the flash of sunlight off the shiny parts of my blue bike exhilarate me. I simply love the quality time—whether alone or in groups of other men. While riding, I clear my head, check-in with my senses, and feel totally alive! It's the perfect antidote to my pattern of shutting down, isolating, and ignoring the messages of my body and soul because I must pay attention to what's around me at all times to be safe. I can't check-out with the wind in my face and the sun on my body.

I moved to Southern California in large part to ride year around. That's a lot of quality time, whether it's a short hop to the grocery store or a week-long ride and camping trip to a National Park like Zion or Arches.

My favorite rides occur with some buddies from my men's group who regularly take our bikes into the foothills of the coastal mountains or along the beach. We check-in with our lives at our frequent stops for gas, food, beverages, and bio-breaks. (These stops occur more frequently as we age!) The immense joy and gratitude are so intense that I can almost feel my heart leaping through my leather jacket!

Leonard

When I was a boy and my mother found me reading a book, she would say, “Don’t just sit there. Do something!” As a single parent, she always found work for me to do. As an adult, I made an agreement with myself not to work on Sundays. That day would be reserved to DO NOTHING! Just writing those words generates self-care because I can drive myself mercilessly to accomplish and achieve. My doing nothing rule means that I do nothing on Sunday that feels like work. That means visiting a local resort overlooking the beach and sipping a coffee and reading a good book. Doing nothing may prompt me to connect with friends over a meal, attend a church service, take a luxurious nap, swim at the gym, or attend a personal growth workshop.

The quality time of doing nothing at the end of the week rejuvenates me with self-care so that when Monday rolls around, I’m ready to hop on my metaphorical motorcycle and burn rubber with love.

Acts of Service

Men typically show their love through acts of service like fixing problems or doing things for our partner. Women often complain about their male partners who don’t listen to them but instead leap into fixing them or the problem. What they often don’t realize is that fixing makes us feel important and successful. We can practice acts of self-care by fixing an unhealthy eating problem, staying in shape, or washing our car. We can also volunteer our services to help others.

Leonard

During one of my walks by the beach, I encountered a boy who was trying to untangle his fishing line. I used to fish a lot with my son, so I asked if he wanted some help. He gratefully accepted my assistance to unravel his fishing line. By the time his line was straightened out, both he and I were happy. I was able to share my care and he could resume his fishing.

Some of the acts of service I give to myself to feel loved include organizing a massage, cooking a favorite meal like zucchini lasagna, and walking by the beach.

Rick

Michele loves it when I fix something broken in her house, especially her electronics. She says, "It's a real turn-on when you put on your tool belt, Rick, and fix something that's not working. I love watching you figure out what needs to be done and then do it." I receive great joy out of offering these simple acts of service which cements our relationship in a win-win way.

Gifts

Stereotypically, women like flowers, chocolates, or clothes while guys have enjoyed computer gadgets, tools, fishing gear, or cars. (Notice that women's gifts are relatively inexpensive while men's are not!) Giving presents lets someone know that we are thinking about them, and when we receive a present, we can experience the joy of being loved. Gifts do not have to be material. A person's presence can often be their present.

Rick

One of the best gifts I ever received was an overstuffed recliner I got for Father's Day some years ago. I still feel warm and loved when I sit in that chair. It brings back fond memories of sitting there with my daughters snuggling in my lap while we watched TV or read the Sunday funnies together.

Leonard

When I was a boy, I loved to visit my Polish grandmother who was called Busha. Living in the apartment below my family, she would serve me toast and hot coffee with sweetened condensed milk for breakfast. Yum! That loving memory gets recreated every time I treat myself to a creamy latte.

Since my daughter and her family live in Australia, I gift myself a trip there every year. I bring a suitcase of gifts from my grandson, Thomas. I have just as much fun buying them as Thomas has opening them.

As we build a life of love, we become self-generating lovers. In the process, we keep our brains' chemical factory in high production of love drugs. However, we are ultimately called to share that love with the world. We call this love beyond an open heart. This becomes easier when we hang out with other men and women who are also committed to spreading love in the world.

A global awareness is shifting our consciousness from the separateness of “I” to a “We” interconnectedness. This We-Space transcends our individuality so that we become more than a collection of separate hearts. We-Space creates a collective open-heart. Where two or more are gathered in the name of love, magic happens. Every relationship becomes a holy encounter.

Patricia Albere, one of the pioneers in this movement, wrote, “People are starting to awaken together, both in paired relationships and in community collectives. . . . Today, Evolutionary Relationships represent the unfolding edge of our development as a human species. In truth, the longing is not our desire for divine love so much as divine love desiring and needing us. This new dimension of love and more evolved consciousness needs our surrender and our wholehearted cooperation.”⁹

Albere wrote a wonderful blog where she described the NBA world champion Golden State Warriors as a team that represents “. . . a new paradigm that is the next evolutionary wave of consciousness. It goes beyond the personal and the individual and stretches us into a space of a living, dynamic and powerful unitive awareness that can only come into being when we engage it *together*.”¹⁰ She highlights five ways how the Warriors demonstrate this paradigm: They

⁹ Albere, Op. Cit., pp 5-6.

¹⁰ Albere, Patricia, “5 Ways the Collective Consciousness of the Warriors Is Reshaping the Future of the NBA (and Beyond), <http://evolutionarycollective.com/5-ways-collective-consciousness-warriors-re-shaping-future-nba-beyond>, July 21, 2017.

embrace the collective over personal glory, adopt a sharing style of play, play as one organism, improvise and adapt with an evolutionary attitude, and play for the love and joy of the game.

Imagine loving from that We-Space. Like the Golden State Warriors, we can put aside our egos and bring the dimension of love to our relationships. Rather than viewing differences as separating us, we can appreciate each player as contributing an integral element of the team. No doubt, we will stumble and lose some games along the way, but if we continue to use our power tools of love, we become part of a team of men dedicated to creating a world of love and peace.

Connected with a loving heart, we can build a life with authenticity, the next tool in the CLASSICS brand of power tools.

Stretch into Love

1. What would you be like if you could love yourself and others without fear?
2. What barriers have you built that prevents you from giving love? From receiving love?
3. What's at risk if you let down your defenses?
4. How can you open your heart to love?
5. What is your language of love? (Touch, Words of Appreciation, Quality Time, Acts of Service, or Gifts)
6. Consider instituting a daily practice of self-care and love. What can you do now?
7. How can you share that love with a loved one? With other men? The world?

Resources to Help Men Thrive

Men's Organizations

- ManKind Project: www.ManKindProject.org
- Victories for Men: www.victoriesformen.org
- Men's Division International: www.mentordiscoverinspire.org
- Sterling Institute: www.sterling-institute.com
- The Boys to Men Mentoring Network, San Diego, CA: www.boystomen.org
- Illuman, a nonprofit organization for men interested in becoming better, more authentic men: www.illumian.org

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He has had a wide range of clinical services including a crisis intervention program with a suburban Chicago police department, treatment of adolescent males, and men's therapy groups. As a result, he has been in the forefront of men's healing for 35 years.

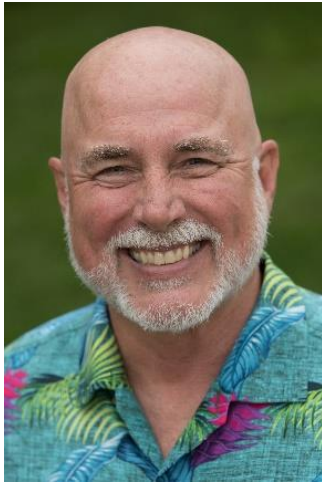
Leonard is an award-winning author. His books are *The Roadmap Home: Your GPS to Inner Peace*, an Amazon bestseller, as well as the novels, *Cuckoo Forevermore* and *Kookaburra's Last Laugh*, lighthearted satires on psychotherapy. He is the co-author along with Mari Frank of *Fighting for Love: Turn Conflict into Intimacy*.

He is an international speaker and workshop presenter and maintains a counseling and coaching practice in Orange County, CA. Leonard is the proud father of two adult children and two grandchildren.

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Rick Broniec, M.Ed. is a writer, inspirational speaker, coach, and workshop facilitator. He has been a pre-eminent leader of men's international trainings since 1987. He has facilitated men's personal growth and leadership workshops on five continents and ten countries for thousands of men which give him a unique window into the needs of modern men. Clearly, these demonstrate Rick's passion for men and his multicultural expertise.

Rick is an Amazon bestseller author of *The Seven Generations Story: An Incentive to Heal Yourself, Your Family and the Planet* and *A Passionate Life: 7 Steps for Reclaiming Your Passion, Purpose and Joy*.

Besides running his own business, Transformational Adventures, LLC, Rick consults for the international, not-for-profit men's initiation and healing organization called the ManKind Project. Rick continues to actively lead and train men around the world.

Rick is proud of his three daughters and crazy in love with his three granddaughters.

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