



Exploring the Spark

A Guide to Understanding
Limerence, CEN, and
Your Inner Heart

Mina Todorova

HEALING THE VOID

From CEN to Wholeness

Exploring the Spark: A Guide to Understanding Limerence, CEN, and Your Inner Heart

Welcome & Reflection

Attraction outside your relationship can stir intense, confusing, and sometimes guilt-laden feelings. If you notice your heart drawn to someone else, know this: your feelings are valid, natural, and meaningful. They are not a moral failing or proof of something “wrong” with you. Instead, they are a message from your inner world—an invitation to explore unmet needs, longing, and parts of yourself that crave attention, care, and recognition.

Take a moment:

Before diving in, write down what you feel right now when you think about this attraction. Where do you feel it in your body? What emotions arise?

Pause. Breathe. There is no judgment here—only curiosity.

Understanding Your Inner Landscape

Your heart's longing is connected to your **inner landscape**—the parts of you formed in childhood, shaped by experiences of attention, neglect, and emotional connection. These few concepts can help make sense of your feelings:

- **Childhood Emotional Neglect (CEN):** When your emotional needs were overlooked, ignored, or minimized, a part of your inner self can feel unseen or unworthy. This part often seeks recognition in adulthood through relationships and attraction.
- **Fearful-Avoidant Attachment:** This attachment pattern is a mix of longing for closeness and fear of vulnerability. You may feel drawn to connection but simultaneously pull away to protect yourself.
- **Limerence:** The intense, often obsessive attraction to someone, characterized by preoccupation, longing, and emotional highs and lows. It is not a failure—it is an alert system for your unmet emotional needs.

Reflective Exercise:

- List the qualities you find magnetic in this other person.
- Next, ask: *"Which of these qualities do I already see in my spouse or my life?"*
- Note areas where your heart feels hungry for attention, play, or curiosity.

Dialogue With Your Parts (IFS Exercise)

Internal Family Systems (IFS) can help you communicate with the parts of you that are drawn toward someone else, and the parts that are fearful, protective, or ashamed.

Step 1: Connect with the longing part

- Close your eyes. Bring attention to the part of you that feels in love. Ask:
 - *“What do you feel right now?”*

 - *“What do you need from me?”*

 - *“What are you hoping this attraction will give you?”*

Step 2: Connect with protective parts

- Notice the parts that are worried, ashamed, or afraid of acting on these feelings. Ask:
 - *“What are you protecting me from?”*

 - *“What do you need in order to feel safe?”*

- Allow these parts to speak without judgment. Listen with curiosity.

Step 3: Facilitate a conversation

- Imagine your parts speaking to one another.
- Ask the longing part: *“How can you receive attention and care safely?”*
- Ask the protective part: *“How can I reassure you while honoring my inner longings?”*
- *Write a dialogue between your longing part and your protective part. Let each speak freely, without censoring or editing.*

Journaling Exercises

1. *“What qualities in this person feel magnetic, and how might I cultivate these within myself or my marriage?”*
2. *“What unmet needs does this longing reveal?”*
3. *“Which small acts of curiosity, play, or tenderness can I offer myself today?”*
4. *“If I could speak to my inner child, what would I say to soothe and honor them?”*
5. *“Where do I notice longing, excitement, or discomfort in my body, and what message might it carry?”*

Practical Emotional Tools

Intense attraction can flood your system with dopamine and adrenaline, creating obsession, restlessness, or agitation. These tools help calm your nervous system:

- **Breathing:** Try 4-7-8 breathing (inhale 4, hold 7, exhale 8) for 5 minutes.
 - **Body Scan:** Lie down or sit comfortably. Scan your body from head to toe, noticing tension, warmth, or fluttering sensations. Breathe into each area.
 - **Movement:** Gentle yoga, stretching, or walking helps release excess energy.
 - **Anchor Ritual:** Every morning, place a hand on your heart, breathe deeply, and check in with your emotional state. Ask: *“Which part of me needs attention today?”*
-

Setting Safe Boundaries

Boundaries protect your inner and outer life:

- Limit contact or exposure to the person you’re drawn to (social media, messages, one-on-one interactions).
- Notice urges, then redirect to journaling, your partner, or a grounding practice.
- Seek support from therapy, friends, or women’s groups who understand these patterns.

Reflection Prompt:

“Which boundaries will help me explore my feelings safely while honoring my marriage and my inner world?”

Practical Exercises for Your Marriage

- **Small Playful Acts:** Introduce curiosity, humor, or spontaneity into your relationship.
 - **Vulnerability Check-ins:** Ask your partner about his emotional state or desires and share yours.
 - **Mirroring Practice:** Take turns reflecting each other’s feelings without judgment.
 - **Shared Adventure:** Even tiny adventures—a walk, trying a new recipe, a weekend outing—can deepen connection.
-

Suggested Reading & Resources

- **Dorothy Tennov – *Love and Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love***
Explore the psychology of intense attraction and understand why it feels so consuming.
 - **Jonice Webb – *Running on Empty***
Learn how childhood emotional neglect affects adult relationships and self-perception.
 - **Amir Levine & Rachel Heller – *Attached***
Understand adult attachment patterns, including fearful-avoidant dynamics.
-

Closing Reflection

Your feelings of attraction are **messengers, not mandates**. They highlight parts of your heart that crave attention, recognition, or play. By listening with curiosity, journaling, practicing IFS dialogue, and nurturing your marriage, you transform what feels like a threat into a **pathway for self-awareness, healing, and connection**.

Final Journaling Prompt:

Write a letter to the part of yourself that longs, offering understanding, reassurance, and care. Notice how your body feels as you do this.