

## The Boston Globe

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### HOW TO LOVE

By Gordon Livingston

DaCapo, 240 pp., \$19.95

Loving your work is important, but what about loving each other? "**How to Love**" by psychiatrist Gordon Livingston, provides a fresh approach to the way we learn to love. Love, says Livingston, depends on character traits we need to teach ourselves to recognize in others, like kindness, optimism, courage, and compassion, qualities that endure even as people change. A system for how to love, he feels, should be taught in schools, right along with math and science, because what is more important than passing on to a new generation the kinds of human behavior and personality traits that could contribute to their lifelong happiness?

Livingston argues that in learning to appreciate the personalities that will make us most happy in the long run, we're also transforming ourselves, because when we're with someone optimistic or kind we're more apt to exhibit those traits ourselves. So how best to choose the people we want to be with? Choose the partner who is the person you want to become, Livingston advises. Have a clear idea of the qualities you need to look for, don't excuse warning signals (a selfish person on a first date is going to be a selfish person at the wedding) and you are much less apt to make a mistake. As gracefully written as Erich Fromm's classic "The Art of Loving," "How To Love" recognizes the things in love that last, and may alter the way you look at others and yourself.

*Caroline Leavitt's novel "Breathe" will be published by Algonquin Books next year.*