

**THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES
FOR MAKING
MARRIAGE WORK**

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FROM
THE COUNTRY'S FOREMOST
RELATIONSHIP EXPERT**

REVISED AND UPDATED

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Contents

Love Maps Questionnaire	4
Exercise 1: The Love Map 20 Questions Game	5
Exercise 2: Asking Open-Ended Questions	8
Exercise 3: Who Am I?	10
Fondness and Admiration Questionnaire	14
Exercise 1: "I Appreciate..."	15
Exercise 2: The History and Philosophy of Your Relationship	18
Exercise 3: Cherishing Your Partner	20
Exercise 4: A Seven-Week Course in Fondness and Admiration	22
Is Your Marriage Primed for Romance?	27
Exercise 1: The Emotional Bank Account	28
Exercise 3: Talking It Out	31
Positive Sentiment Override Questionnaire	35
Accepting Influence Questionnaire	36
Exercise 2: The Gottman Island Survival Game	38
Questionnaire: Assessing Your Marital Conflicts	41
Harsh Start-Up Questionnaire	50
Repair Attempts Questionnaire	51
Flooding Questionnaire	53
Exercise 5: Processing a Previous Emotional Injury	54
Quiz: Electronic Distractions	61
Exercise 1: In-Law Problems	63
Who Does What List	65
Quiz: Quality of Sex, Romance, and Passion in the Relationship	67
Rituals of Connection Questionnaire	71

Roles Questionnaire	72
Shared Goals Questionnaire	73
Shared Values Questionnaire	74

LOVE MAPS QUESTIONNAIRE

By giving honest answers to the following questions, you will get a sense of the quality of your current love maps. For the most accurate reading of how your marriage is doing on this first principle, both of you should complete the following.

Read each statement, and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. I can name my partner's best friends. **T F**
2. I can tell you what stresses my partner is currently facing. **T F**
3. I know the names of some of the people who have been irritating my partner lately. **T F**
4. I can tell you some of my partner's life dreams. **T F**
5. I am very familiar with my partner's religious beliefs and ideas. **T F**
6. I can tell you about my partner's basic philosophy of life. **T F**
7. I can list the relatives my partner likes the least. **T F**
8. I know my partner's favorite music. **T F**
9. I can list my partner's three favorite movies. **T F**
10. My spouse is familiar with my current stresses. **T F**
11. I know the three most special times in my partner's life. **T F**
12. I can tell you the most stressful thing that happened to my partner as a child. **T F**
13. I can list my partner's major aspirations and hopes in life. **T F**
14. I know my partner's major current worries. **T F**
15. My spouse knows who my friends are. **T F**
16. I know what my partner would want to do if he or she suddenly won the lottery. **T F**
17. I can tell you in detail my first impressions of my partner. **T F**
18. Periodically I ask my partner about his or her world right now. **T F**
19. I feel that my partner knows me pretty well. **T F**
20. My spouse is familiar with my hopes and aspirations. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

10 or higher: This is an area of strength for your marriage. You

have a fairly detailed map of your spouse's everyday life, hopes, fears, and dreams. You know what makes your spouse "tick." Based on your score, you'll probably find the love map exercises that follow easy and gratifying. They will serve as a reminder of how connected you and your partner are. Try not to take for granted this knowledge and understanding of each other. Keeping in touch in this way ensures you'll be well equipped to handle any problem areas that crop up in your relationship.

Below 10: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Perhaps you never had the time or the tools to really get to know each other. Or perhaps your love maps have become outdated as your lives have changed over the years. In either case, by taking the time to learn more about your spouse now, you'll find your relationship becomes stronger.

EXERCISE 1: THE LOVE MAP 20 QUESTIONS GAME

Play this game together in the spirit of laughter and gentle fun. The more you play, the more you'll learn about the love maps concept and how to apply it to your relationship.

STEP 1. Each of you should take a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Together, randomly decide on twenty numbers between 1 and 60.

STEP 2. Below is a list of numbered questions. Beginning with the top of your column, match the numbers you chose with the corresponding question. Each of you should ask your partner this question. If your spouse answers correctly (you be the judge), he or she receives the number of points indicated for that question, and you receive one point. If your spouse answers incorrectly, neither of you receives any points. The same rules apply when you answer. The winner is the person with the higher score after you've both answered all twenty questions.

1. Name my two closest friends. (2)
2. What is my favorite musical group, composer, or instrument? (2)
3. What was I wearing when we first met? (2)
4. Name one of my hobbies. (3)
5. Where was I born? (1)
6. What stresses am I facing right now? (4)
7. Describe in detail what I did today, or yesterday. (4)
8. When is my birthday? (1)
9. What is the date of our anniversary? (1)
10. Who is my favorite relative? (2)
11. What is my fondest unrealized dream? (5)
12. What is my favorite website? (2)
13. What is one of my greatest fears or disaster scenarios? (3)
14. What is my favorite time of day for lovemaking? (3)
15. What makes me feel most competent? (4)
16. What turns me on sexually? (3)
17. What is my favorite meal? (2)
18. What is my favorite way to spend an evening? (2)
19. What is my favorite color? (1)
20. What personal improvements do I want to make in my life? (4)
21. What kind of present would I like best? (2)
22. What was one of my best childhood experiences? (2)
23. What was my favorite vacation? (2)
24. What is one of my favorite ways to relax? (4)
25. Who is my greatest source of support (other than you)? (3)
26. What is my favorite sport? (2)
27. What do I most like to do with time off? (2)
28. What is one of my favorite weekend activities? (2)
29. What is my dream getaway place? (3)
30. What is my favorite movie? (2)
31. What are some of the important events coming up in my life?
How do I feel about them? (4)
32. What are some of my favorite ways to work out? (2)
33. Who was my best friend in childhood? (3)
34. What is one of my favorite magazines? (2)
35. Name one of my major rivals or "enemies." (3)

36. What would I consider my ideal job? (4)
37. What do I fear the most? (4)
38. Who is my least favorite relative? (3)
39. What is my favorite holiday? (2)
40. What kinds of books do I most like to read? (3)
41. What is my favorite TV show? (2)
42. Which side of the bed do I prefer? (2)
43. What am I most sad about? (4)
44. Name one of my concerns or worries. (4)
45. What medical problems do I worry about? (2)
46. What was my most embarrassing moment? (3)
47. What was my worst childhood experience? (3)
48. Name two of the people I most admire. (4)
49. Name my major rival or enemy. (3)
50. Of all the people we both know, who do I like the least? (3)
51. What is one of my favorite desserts? (2)
52. What is my social security number? (2)
53. Name one of my favorite novels. (2)
54. What is my favorite restaurant? (2)
55. What are two of my aspirations, hopes, wishes? (4)
56. Do I have a secret ambition? What is it? (4)
57. What foods do I hate? (2)
58. What is my favorite animal? (2)
59. What is my favorite song? (2)
60. Which sports team is my favorite? (2)

Play this game as frequently as you'd like. The more you play, the more you'll come to understand the concept of a love map and the kind of information yours should include about your spouse.

EXERCISE 2: ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Updating your love map is as important as the map itself. The process entails asking open-ended questions, and then remembering the answers. An open-ended question is one that can't be answered with a quick "yes" or "no." Instead, it invites your partner to offer up his or her experiences, opinions, and emotions. Asking an open-ended question demonstrates genuine interest in your partner's life and inner world.

Instructions: Below is a long list of open-ended questions. Choose four to ask each other. Switch off being the speaker and the listener. After your partner answers your question, follow up with an open-ended question of your own. Then answer that original question you asked your partner. Now it's your partner's turn to ask you an open-ended question and so on. Of course, you don't have to limit yourselves to just four of these questions. Over time, you can go through all of them—it can be entertaining and enlightening.

1. How would you like your life to be different three years from now?
2. Do you see your work changing in the future? How?
3. What is your opinion of our physical home? Would you make changes if you could?
4. How do you think your life would have been different if you lived 100 years ago?
5. How would you compare yourself as a mother (father) to your own mother (father)?
6. What kind of person do you think our child(ren) will become? Any fears? Any hopes?
7. How are you feeling about your job these days?
8. If you could redo a five-year period of your life, which would you choose?
9. How are you feeling right now about being a parent?
10. If you could change one thing in your past, what would it be?
11. What is the most exciting thing happening in your life right now?
12. If you could instantly possess three new skills, which would you choose?

13. When it comes to the future, what do you worry about most?
14. Who do you consider your best friends or closest allies? Has that list changed recently?
15. What qualities do you value most highly in friends right now?
16. What were the best and worst things that happened to you when you were a teen?
17. If you could live during any other time in history, when would you choose and why?
18. If you could choose a different career or vocation, what would it be, and why?
19. What is the one thing you would most like to change about your personality? Why?
20. Do you feel like certain things are missing from your life? What are they?
21. Do you think you've changed in the last year? How so?
22. If you could design the perfect home for us, what would it be like?
23. If you could live another person's life, whose would you choose?
24. Have any of your life goals recently changed?
25. What are some of your life dreams now?
26. What are your goals for us as a family?
27. What goals do you have just for yourself right now?
28. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
29. What have been the highlights and low points of the past year for you?
30. What adventures would you like to have in your life right now?

The love map questions above are useful for creating a broad outline of your current lives. But love maps shouldn't just be broad—they should also be deep. The next exercise will ensure that yours are.

EXERCISE 3: WHO AM I?

The more you know about each other's inner world, the more profound and rewarding your relationship will be. This questionnaire is designed both to guide you through some self-exploration and to help you share this exploration with your partner. Work on this exercise even if you and your spouse consider yourselves open books. There's always more to know about each other. Life changes us, so neither of you may be the same person who spoke those wedding vows five, ten, or thirty years ago.

Many of the questions in this exercise are powerful. Please make sure you have enough time and privacy to do them justice. In fact, it may be best to reserve this exercise for an uninterrupted stretch when you do not have work to do, deadlines to meet, e-mails to send, or children (or anybody else) to look after. Most likely, you won't be able to complete this questionnaire in one sitting, nor should you try. Instead, break it up by section and proceed slowly and together.

Answer the questions in each section as candidly as you can. You don't have to answer every aspect of each question—just respond to the parts that are relevant to your life. Write your answers in a private journal or notebook. If writing so much is hard, you can do it in outline form—but the process of writing this down is important to the success of the exercise. When you're ready, exchange notebooks and share with each other what you have written. Discuss each other's entries and what this added knowledge implies for your marriage and the deepening of your friendship.

My Triumphs and Strivings

1. What has happened in your life that you are particularly proud of? Write about your psychological triumphs, experiences that exceeded your expectations, periods when you came through trials and tribulations even better off.
2. How have these successes shaped your life? How have they affected the way you think of yourself and your capabilities? How have they influenced your goals and the things you strive for?

3. What role has pride (that is, feeling proud, being praised, expressing praise for others) played in your life? Did your parents show you that they were proud of you when you were a child? How?
4. How have other people responded to your accomplishments? Did your parents show that they loved you? How? Was affection readily expressed in your family? If not, what are the effects and implications of this for your marriage?
5. What role does pride in your accomplishments play in your marriage? What role do your own strivings have in your marriage? What do you want your partner to know and understand about these aspects of yourself, your past, present, and plans for the future? How do you show pride in each other?

Injuries and Healing

1. What difficult events or periods have you gone through? Write about any significant psychological insults and injuries you have sustained, your losses, disappointments, trials, and tribulations. Include periods of stress and duress, as well as any quieter periods of despair, hopelessness, and loneliness.

Also include any deep traumas you have undergone as a child or adult. For example, harmful relationships, humiliating events, even molestation, abuse, rape, or torture.

2. How have you survived these traumas? What are their lasting effects on you?
3. How did you strengthen and heal yourself? How did you redress your grievances? How did you revive and restore yourself?
4. How did you gird and protect yourself against this ever happening again?
5. How do these injuries and the ways you protect and heal yourself affect your marriage today? What do you want your partner to know and understand about these aspects of yourself?

My Emotional World

1. How did your family express the following when you were a child:
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Affection
 - Interest in one another
 - Pride in one another
2. During your childhood, did your family have to cope with a particular emotional problem, such as aggression between parents, a depressed parent or a somewhat emotionally wounded one? What implications does this have for your marriage and your other close relationships (friendships, relationships with your parents, siblings, children)?
3. What is your own philosophy about expressing feelings, particularly sadness, anger, fear, pride, and love? Are any of these difficult for you to express or to hear your spouse express? What is the basis of your perspective on this?
4. What differences exist between you and your spouse in the area of expressing emotion? What is behind these differences? What are the implications of these differences for you?

My Mission and Legacy

1. Imagine that you are standing in a graveyard looking at your own tombstone. Now write the epitaph you would like to see there. Begin with the words: "Here lies . . ."
2. Write your own obituary. (It does not have to be brief.) How do you want people to think of your life, to remember you?
3. Now you're ready to write a mission statement for your own life. What is the purpose of your life? What is its meaning? What are you trying to accomplish? What is your larger struggle?
4. What legacy would you like to leave when you die?

5. What significant goals have you yet to realize? This can be creating something or having a particular experience. Minor examples are learning to play the banjo, climbing a mountain, and so on.

Who I Want to Become

Take a moment now to reflect on what you have just written. We are all involved in becoming the person we most want to be. In that struggle, we all have demons to fight and overcome.

1. Describe the person you want to become.
2. How can you best help yourself become that person?
3. What struggles have you already faced in trying to become that person?
4. What demons in yourself have you had to fight? Or still have to fight?
5. What would you most like to change about yourself?
6. What dreams have you denied yourself or failed to develop?
7. What do you want your life to be like in five years?
8. What is the story of the kind of person you would like to be?

FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION QUESTIONNAIRE

To assess the current state of your fondness and admiration system, answer the following.

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. I can easily list the three things I most admire about my partner. **T F**
2. When we are apart, I often think fondly of my partner. **T F**
3. I will often find some way to tell my partner “I love you.” **T F**
4. I often touch or kiss my partner affectionately. **T F**
5. My partner really respects me. **T F**
6. I feel loved and cared for in this relationship. **T F**
7. I feel accepted and liked by my partner. **T F**
8. My partner finds me sexy and attractive. **T F**
9. My partner turns me on sexually. **T F**
10. There is fire and passion in this relationship. **T F**
11. Romance is definitely still a part of our relationship. **T F**
12. I am really proud of my partner. **T F**
13. My partner really enjoys my achievements and accomplishments. **T F**
14. I can easily tell you why I married my partner. **T F**
15. If I had it all to do over again, I would marry the same person. **T F**
16. We rarely go to sleep without some show of love or affection. **T F**
17. When I come into a room, my partner is glad to see me. **T F**
18. My partner appreciates the things I do in this marriage. **T F**
19. My spouse generally likes my personality. **T F**
20. Our sex life is generally satisfying. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

10 or higher: This is an area of strength for your relationship.

Because you value each other highly, you have a shield that can protect you from becoming overwhelmed by any negativity that also exists between you. Although it might seem obvious to you that people who are in love have a high regard for each other, it's common for spouses to lose sight of some of their fondness and admiration over time. Remember that this fondness and admiration is a gift worth protecting. Completing the exercises in this chapter from time to time will help you to reaffirm your positive feelings for each other.

Below 10: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Don't be discouraged by a low score. There are many couples in whom the fondness and admiration system has not died but is buried under layers of negativity, hurt feelings, and betrayal. By reviving the positive feelings that still lie deep below, you can vastly improve your marriage.

EXERCISE 1: "I APPRECIATE . . ."

From the list below, select five appreciations you would like to express toward your partner in your own words, adding an example of when your partner demonstrated each action or displayed the positive qualities you are appreciating. In my workshops, I can see the benefit of this exercise immediately. Couples who began the session sitting stiffly and awkwardly suddenly relax. The room fills with laughter. Watching these couples while they engage in this exercise, I can tell that they are rediscovering something they had misplaced.

Thanks for making dinner. It was delicious.
Thanks for taking care of the kids.
Thanks for being such a great dad.
Thanks for cleaning up the kitchen.
Thanks for doing the laundry.
Thanks for supporting me when I talked about my stress.
Thanks for doing the dishes.
Thanks for listening to how my day went.
Thanks for being understanding when I talked about that rude person
I met.
I enjoyed making love to you.
I really appreciated you being so affectionate lately.
I really enjoyed the conversation at dinner.
Thanks for being such a great mom.
Taking a walk together was really nice.
I really appreciated your giving me a hug.
That is a fantastic color on you.
Thanks for spending time with me.
Thank you for caring about what I need.
Thanks for bringing me flowers.
Thank you for desiring me.
It matters to me a lot when you are so great with the kids.
The way you treat my family means a lot to me.
Thanks for making me feel like I come first in your life.
Thanks for putting on music that I love.
Thanks for all the driving you are doing.
Thanks for working so hard for our family.
Thank you for taking me out to dinner. That was great.
Thanks for taking a bath with me.
You taste delicious.
Thank you for listening to me.
Thanks for calling the plumber (electrician, handyman, carpenter,
gardener, etc.).
Thank you for just being there when I felt sad.
Thank you for being empathetic with me.
Thank you for being on my side.
Thanks for taking the kids to the pediatrician.

Thank you for comforting me.
Thank you for being gentle with me.
I had fun at the party. Thank you for being with me.
You are a great kisser.
Thank you for holding me.
Thanks for spending time with the kids.
Thanks for saving money for us.
Thank you for laughing.
Thank you for telling me what you need.
Thanks for driving me.
Thanks for giving me some time to myself.
I can hardly keep my hands off you.
Thank you for greeting me so warmly when I come home.
I really appreciate that drive we took.
Thanks for taking over the chores.
I loved the picnic we had.
You look great tonight.
Thanks for taking care of me when I was sick.
Thank you for telling me how you feel.
I love touching you here.
I appreciate what a loyal partner you are.
You smell so good.
Thank you for loving me.
Thanks for making our home so beautiful.
Thanks for spending time with my family.
Thanks for making coffee for me.
Those pastries were delicious. Thanks for getting them.
Thanks for calling the doctor when I needed an appointment.
Thanks for the way you are paying the bills.
Thanks for sticking up for me when I got criticized.

EXERCISE 2: THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Below is a version of the questionnaire that led Rory and Lisa to reconnect with their fondness and admiration for each other. Completing this questionnaire together will bring you face-to-face with the early years of your relationship, and help you remember how and why you became a couple. You will need a few hours of uninterrupted time to complete this exercise. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions—they are merely meant to guide you in recalling the love and perspective on marriage that led you to join your lives in the first place. Be sure to direct your thoughts toward positive memories—you definitely don't want to turn this exercise into a gripe session!

Part One: Your History

1. Discuss how the two of you met and got together. What were your first impressions of each other? What made your spouse stand out?
2. What do you remember most about beginning to date? What types of activities did you do together? What were some of the highlights?
3. How long did you know each other before you married? Talk about how you made the decision to marry. Was it easy or difficult? Were you in love? Of all the people in the world, what led you to decide that this was the person?
4. Share memories of your wedding and your honeymoon if you had one. What do you each remember most?
5. Recall your first year of marriage. Were there any adjustments you needed to make?
6. What about the transition to becoming parents? What was this period like for each of you?
7. Looking back over the years, what moments stand out as really happy times in your marriage? What is a good time for you as a couple? Has this changed over the years?
8. Many relationships go through periods of ups and downs. Would

you say that this is true of yours? Can you describe some of these periods?

9. Looking back over the years, what moments stand out as the really hard times? Why do you think you stayed together? How did you get through these difficult times?
10. Have you stopped doing things together that once gave you pleasure? Explore these with each other.

Part Two: Your Philosophy of Marriage

11. Why do you think some marriages work while others don't? Discuss two couples you know who you agree have a particularly good or bad relationship. What is the difference between these two marriages? How does yours compare to each of them?
12. Talk about your parents' marriages. Would you say they were very similar to or different from your own marriage?
13. Draw a chart or timeline of your marriage, noting its major turning points, ups, and downs. What were the happiest times for you? For your partner? How has your marriage changed over the years?

Most couples find that recalling their history recharges their relationship. Answering these questions often reminds couples of the love and great expectations that inspired their decision to marry in the first place. This can give couples who thought their marriage was over the glimmerings of hope that lead them to struggle on to save it. Just repeating the two exercises above from time to time may be enough to salvage and strengthen your fondness and admiration for each other.

Learning to Cherish Your Partner

How often do you think happily about your partner when you're *apart*? Do you reflect with pride on his or her many wonderful traits? Such thoughts comprise *cherishing*, which is a critical component of a couple's fondness-and-admiration system. Cherishing is a habit of mind in which, when you are separated during the course of the day, you maximize thoughts of your partner's posi-

tive qualities and minimize thoughts of negative ones. This active focusing on your partner's merits allows you to nurture gratefulness for what you have instead of resenting what is missing. Many couples do not realize they are neglecting to cherish each other. Fortunately, this is easily corrected. The following exercises can help you get into this crucial habit.

EXERCISE 3: CHERISHING YOUR PARTNER

Part One: From the list below, check ten qualities that you cherish in your partner. For each, note one recent occasion when your partner displayed it. Then say to yourself, "I am really lucky to be with my partner." Keep this list handy, and use it when you are alone to focus on your fond feelings toward your partner and trigger a sense of gratitude.

Part Two: Write your partner a love note expressing how much you cherish him or her for these qualities. Read it aloud to your partner during a romantic date.

WHAT I REALLY CHERISH ABOUT MY PARTNER IS THAT SHE OR HE IS SO:

Active	Caring	Determined
Adaptable	Cheerful	Devoted
Adventurous	Clever	Diligent
Ambitious	Commanding	Disciplined
Appreciative	Compassionate	Discriminating
Authentic	Confident	Dynamic
Aware	Conscientious	Eager
Balanced	Considerate	Easygoing
Bold	Courageous	Empathetic
Brave	Creative	Energetic
Bright	Curious	Enterprising
Calm	Daring	Ethical
Capable	Dedicated	Exuberant
Careful	Dependable	Fair

Fascinating	Loyal	Self-sufficient
Feisty	Mature	Sensitive
Flexible	Mellow	Sharp
Forgiving	Motivated	Sincere
Friendly	Natural	Skillful
Fun	Neat	Smart
Funny	Nurturing	Sociable
Generous	Observant	Spiritual
Gentle	Open-minded	Spontaneous
Giving	Optimistic	Stable
Gutsy	Organized	Steady
Happy	Original	Strong
Hardworking	Outgoing	Studious
Healthy	Patient	Successful
Honest	Peaceful	Supportive
Honorable	Perceptive	Surprising
Humble	Persevering	Sympathetic
Humorous	Persistent	Talented
Idealistic	Pleasant	Thorough
Imaginative	Positive	Thoughtful
Independent	Practical	Tireless
Ingenious	Principled	Tolerant
Inquisitive	Private	Trusting
Insightful	Problem-solving	Trustworthy
Intelligent	Proud	Truthful
Interesting	Quick-witted	Understanding
Intuitive	Quiet	Unique
Inventive	Rational	Unselfish
Joyful	Reasonable	Upbeat
Kind	Reflective	Vigilant
Knowledgeable	Reliable	Warm
Laid-back	Resilient	Wise
Lighthearted	Resourceful	Witty
Likable	Respectful	Worthy
Lively	Responsible	Other _____
Lovable	Self-confident	
Loving	Self-sacrificing	

EXERCISE 4: A SEVEN-WEEK COURSE IN FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION

This exercise is designed to get you into the habit of cherishing your partner. If you are angry, stressed, or feeling distant from your spouse, you may tend to focus on his or her negative characteristics. This leads to distress-maintaining thoughts, which in turn leave you feeling ever more distant and isolated in your marriage. This exercise counteracts that tendency by training you to focus on your partner's positive characteristics, even if you aren't having such a great day together.

For each day below there is a positive statement, or thought, followed by a task. Think about each statement, and say it to yourself many times throughout the day while you and your spouse are apart. In some cases, the thought may not seem to apply to your spouse or your marriage, especially if your fondness and admiration have dimmed. Keep in mind that the statement does not have to describe the typical state of affairs between you at the present time. If you can think of a single instant or episode where the statement applied, focus on that memory. For example, if you're not feeling overly attracted to your spouse these days, focus on one area of his or her anatomy that does appeal to you. Also be sure to complete the simple task that follows each positive statement. Do the exercise each day, no matter how you happen to feel about your relationship or your spouse. Don't stop even if you just had a major blowup or are feeling very distant from each other.

Although this exercise might sound silly or hokey, it is based on a wide body of research into the power of rehearsing positive thoughts. This approach is one of the tenets of cognitive therapy, which has proven highly successful in helping people overcome depression. When people fall into a depression, their thinking may become disordered—they see everything in an extremely negative light, which just adds to their sense of hopelessness. But if, over time, they deliberately accustom their mind to a different, positive way of thinking, the sense of hopelessness can be lifted.

This exercise is an experiment in offering the same hope to marriage. What you're really doing is rehearsing a more positive way to

think about your partner and your relationship. Like any rehearsal, if you do it often enough, the words (and more important, the thoughts) will become second nature.

Note: Since most couples spend time apart on Monday through Friday, those are the days that are specified in the schedule below. You can switch the actual days around to better fit your schedule (if, for example, you work on the weekends), as long as you do the exercise five days a week.

Week 1

MONDAY

Thought: I am genuinely fond of my partner.

Task: List one characteristic you find endearing or lovable.

TUESDAY

Thought: I can easily speak of the good times in our marriage.

Task: Pick one good time and write a sentence about it.

WEDNESDAY

Thought: I can easily remember romantic, special times in our marriage.

Task: Pick one such time and think about it.

THURSDAY

Thought: I am physically attracted to my partner.

Task: Think of one physical attribute you like.

FRIDAY

Thought: My partner has specific qualities that make me proud.

Task: Write down one characteristic that makes you proud.

Week 2

MONDAY

Thought: I feel a genuine sense of “we” as opposed to “I” in this marriage.

Task: Think of one thing that you both have in common.

TUESDAY

Thought: We have the same general beliefs and values.

Task: Describe one belief you share.

WEDNESDAY

Thought: We have common goals.

Task: List one such goal.

THURSDAY

Thought: My spouse is my best friend.

Task: Think about a secret you've shared with your partner.

FRIDAY

Thought: I get lots of support in this marriage.

Task: Think of a time when your spouse was very supportive of you.

Week 3

MONDAY

Thought: My home is a place to come to get support and reduce stress.

Task: List a time when your spouse helped you reduce stress.

TUESDAY

Thought: I can easily recall the time we first met.

Task: Describe that first meeting on paper.

WEDNESDAY

Thought: I remember many details about deciding to get married.

Task: Write a sentence describing what you remember.

THURSDAY

Thought: I can recall our wedding and honeymoon.

Task: Describe one thing about them you enjoyed.

FRIDAY

Thought: We divide up household chores in a fair way.

Task: Describe one way you do this on a regular basis. If your partner doesn't share chores, think of other ways he or she contributes. If you don't do your share, decide on a chore you will take on (such as doing the laundry).

Week 4

MONDAY

Thought: We are able to plan well and have a sense of control over our lives together.

Task: Describe one activity you planned together.

TUESDAY

Thought: I am proud of this marriage.

Task: List two things about your marriage that make you proud.

WEDNESDAY

Thought: I am proud of my family.

Task: Recall a specific time when you especially felt this pride.

THURSDAY

Thought: I don't like things about my partner, but I can live with them.

Task: What is one minor fault you have adapted to?

FRIDAY

Thought: This marriage is a lot better than most I have seen.

Task: Think of a marriage you know that's awful.

Week 5

MONDAY

Thought: I was really lucky to meet my spouse.

Task: List one benefit of being married to your spouse.

TUESDAY

Thought: Marriage is sometimes a struggle, but it's worth it.

Task: Think of one difficult time you successfully weathered together.

WEDNESDAY

Thought: There is a lot of affection between us.

Task: Plan a surprise gift for your mate for tonight.

THURSDAY

Thought: We are genuinely interested in each other.

Task: Think of something to do or talk about that would be interesting.

FRIDAY

Thought: We are good companions.

Task: Plan an outing together.

Week 6

MONDAY

Thought: There is lots of good loving in my marriage.

Task: Think of a special trip you took together.

TUESDAY

Thought: My partner is an interesting person.

Task: Plan something to ask your mate about that interests both of you.

WEDNESDAY

Thought: We respond well to each other.

Task: Write and share a love letter to your spouse.

THURSDAY

Thought: If I had it to do over again, I would marry the same person.

Task: Plan an anniversary (or other) getaway.

FRIDAY

Thought: There is lots of mutual respect in my marriage.

Task: Consider taking a class together (sailing, ballroom dancing, etc.).

Or tell your spouse about a time recently when you admired something he or she did.

Week 7

MONDAY

Thought: Sex is usually (or can be) quite satisfying in this marriage.

Task: Plan an erotic evening for the two of you.

TUESDAY

Thought: We have come a long way together.

Task: Think of all you have accomplished as a team.

WEDNESDAY

Thought: I think we can weather any storm together.

Task: Reminisce about having made it through a hard time.

THURSDAY

Thought: We enjoy each other's sense of humor.

Task: Plan to watch a comedy together.

FRIDAY

Thought: My mate can be very cute.

Task: Get very dressed up for an elegant evening together. Or if you don't like that kind of thing, plan another kind of evening out you would enjoy.

By the end of the seven weeks, you're likely to find that your perspective on your partner and your marriage is far sunnier.

Singing each other's praises can only benefit your marriage. But in order to ensure that the gains continue, you need to put your respect and affection to work. In the next chapter you'll do just that, by using them as the foundation for revamping—or reviving—your marriage's sense of romance.

IS YOUR MARRIAGE PRIMED FOR ROMANCE?

To get a good sense of how your relationship is faring (or is likely to fare in the future), answer the following questions.

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. We enjoy doing small activities together, like washing the dishes or watching TV. **T F**
2. I look forward to spending my free time with my partner. **T F**
3. At the end of the day, my partner is glad to see me. **T F**
4. My partner is usually interested in hearing my views. **T F**
5. I really enjoy discussing things with my partner. **T F**
6. My partner is one of my best friends. **T F**
7. We are spiritually very compatible. **T F**
8. We just love talking to each other. **T F**
9. When we go out together, the time goes very quickly. **T F**
10. We always have a lot to say to each other. **T F**
11. We have a lot of fun together. **T F**
12. My partner tells me when he or she has had a bad day. **T F**
13. I think my partner would consider me a very close friend. **T F**
14. We tend to share the same basic values. **T F**
15. We like to spend time together in similar ways. **T F**
16. We really have a lot of common interests. **T F**
17. We have many of the same dreams and goals. **T F**
18. We like to do a lot of the same things. **T F**
19. Even though our interests are somewhat different, I enjoy my partner's interests. **T F**
20. Whatever we do together, we tend to have a good time. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

12 or higher: Congratulations! Turning toward is an area of strength in your marriage. Because you are so often “there” for each other during the minor events in your lives, you have built up a hefty emotional bank account that should support you over any rough patches in your marriage (and keep many at bay). It’s those little moments that you rarely think about—when you forward a joke that’s making the social-media rounds, set the table together, or have a quickie catch-up call while you’re both still at work—that make up the heart and soul of a marriage. Having a surplus in your emotional bank account is what makes romance last and gets you through hard times, bad moods, and major life changes.

Below 12: Your relationship could stand some improvement in this area. By learning to turn toward each other more during the minor moments in your day, you will make your marriage not only more stable but more romantic. Every time you make the effort to listen and respond to what your spouse says, to help him or her, you make your marriage a little better.

EXERCISE 1: THE EMOTIONAL BANK ACCOUNT

Keeping an account in your head of how much your partner has been connecting with you in little ways can greatly benefit your marriage. But for some couples, the concept works best if they make their emotional bank account “real.” You can do this by drawing a simple ledger and giving your partner one point each time he or she has turned toward you during the course of the day. You probably wouldn’t want to document every encouraging nod you receive during a conversation. But you would include entries for such events as “Called me at work to see how my meeting went” and “Took our van to the car wash.”

Share your ledgers with each other, but be careful not to turn this into a competition or a *quid pro quo* where you track each other’s account “balance” and keep tabs on who has done what for whom. That approach defeats the purpose of this exercise. **The goal is to make small improvements by noticing how your partner has been turning toward and giving.** If you’ve gotten out of the habit of

thanking your partner for turning toward you, it may take some time to see the benefits of this exercise. The big challenge is to notice when your partner *does* turn toward you. Remember: unhappy couples tend to underestimate how often this occurs.

Below is a long list of activities that some couples do together—everything from walking the dog to going bowling. Choose the three that you most appreciate your partner having done in the past. You can also circle an item if you and your spouse have done it jointly. Then simply thank your partner for having turned toward you in these ways.

1. Reunite at the end of the day and talk about how it went.
2. Shop for groceries. Make up the shopping list.
3. Cook dinner, bake.
4. Clean house, do laundry.
5. Shop together for gifts or clothes (for self, kids, or friends).
6. Go out (no kids) for brunch or dinner, or to your favorite haunt or bar.
7. Watch or read the news together.
8. Help each other with a self-improvement plan (e.g., a new class, weight loss, exercise, a new career).
9. Plan and host a dinner party.
10. Call and/or think about each other during the workday.
11. Stay overnight at a romantic hideaway.
12. Eat breakfast together during the workweek.
13. Go to a church, mosque, or synagogue together.
14. Do yard work, shovel the walk, do home repairs, do car maintenance and washing.
15. Perform committee work in the community (e.g., volunteering).
16. Exercise together.
17. Go on weekend outings (e.g., picnics, drives).
18. Stay in touch with/spend time with kin (parents, in-laws, siblings).
19. Watch TV or stream videos.
20. Order takeout.
21. Double-date with friends.
22. Talk or read together by an open fire.
23. Listen to music.
24. Go dancing or attend a concert, nightclub, jazz club, or theater.

25. Host your child's birthday party.
26. Take your child to lessons.
27. Attend your child's sporting event or performance (recital, play, etc.).
28. Pay bills.
29. Write letters or cards.
30. Work at home, but still be together in some way.
31. Go to a party.
32. Commute to work together.
33. Celebrate milestones in your children's lives (confirmation, graduation).
34. Celebrate other milestones in your lives (e.g., promotion, retirement).
35. Play computer games, surf the Internet.
36. Supervise your children's playdates.
37. Plan your future together. Dream.
38. Walk the dog.
39. Read out loud together.
40. Play a board game or a card game.
41. Put on plays or skits together.
42. Run errands together on a weekend.
43. Engage in hobbies (e.g., painting, sculpting, making music).
44. Talk over drinks (alcohol, coffee, or tea).
45. Find time to just talk without interruptions—find time for your spouse to really listen to you.
46. Gossip (talk about other people).
47. Attend a funeral.
48. Help out other people.
49. Hunt for a new house or apartment.
50. Test-drive new cars.
51. Other _____.

Now, share your top three choices with each other so that you both know which “turning toward” activities have scored you the most emotional points.

EXERCISE 3: TALKING IT OUT

If one of you is feeling rebuffed by the other lately, or overwhelmed by your spouse's need for closeness, fill out the form below and then share your answers. There is no answer key for these questions; they are merely a point of departure for discussions with your spouse. The bottom line of this approach is that there isn't one reality when a couple misses each other in little ways. There are two equally legitimate perspectives. Once you understand and acknowledge this, you'll find that reconnecting just comes naturally.

DURING THIS EPISODE I FELT:

1. Defensive.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
2. Hurt.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
3. Angry.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
4. Sad.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
5. Misunderstood.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
6. Criticized.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
7. Worried.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
8. Righteously indignant.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
9. Unappreciated.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
10. Unattractive.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
11. Disgusted.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
12. Disapproving.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
13. Like leaving.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
14. Like my opinions didn't matter.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
15. I had no idea what I was feeling.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
16. Lonely.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all

WHAT TRIGGERED THESE FEELINGS?

1. I felt excluded.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
2. I was not important to my spouse.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
3. I felt cold toward my spouse.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
4. I definitely felt rejected.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
5. I felt overwhelmed by demands.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
6. I felt no affection toward my partner.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
7. I felt that my partner was not attracted to me.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
8. My sense of dignity was being compromised.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
9. My partner was being domineering.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all
10. I could not get my partner's attention.	A great deal	Definitely	A little	Not at all

Now that you've identified your emotional reaction, it's time to see whether your response is rooted in your past. Look over your answers to the "Who Am I?" exercise on page 10. See if you can find connections there between earlier traumas or behavior and your current reaction. Use the following checklist to facilitate this search for links between the past and present.

WHEN MY PARTNER (OR I) TURNED AWAY IT REMINDED ME OF:

(check all that apply)

- ☐ The way I was treated in my family growing up.
- ☐ A previous relationship.
- ☐ Past injuries, hard times, or traumas I've suffered.
- ☐ My basic fears and insecurities.
- ☐ Things and events I have not yet resolved or put aside.
- ☐ Unrealized hopes I have.
- ☐ Ways other people treated me in the past.
- ☐ Things I have always thought about myself.
- ☐ Old "nightmares" or "catastrophes" I have worried about.

After you've read each other's answers, write out a short description of your point of view and then your partner's perspective. I hope you will come to see that your respective views of what happened and why are really not matters of "fact." We are all complicated creatures whose actions and reactions are governed by a wide array of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories. In other words, reality is subjective, which is why your partner's take may be different from yours without either of you being right or wrong.

It's natural to make the fundamental error of assuming that the distance and loneliness are all your partner's fault. In truth, they're nobody's fault. In order to break the pattern, you both need to admit playing some role (however slight at first). To do that, read the following list and circle all that apply to you and that may have contributed to the turning away or the feelings of being swamped and smothered recently. (Do not try to do this if you are still upset. Follow the steps for self-soothing in **chapter 9**, including letting go of thoughts that maintain the distress, such as thoughts of righteous indignation or innocent victimhood.)

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. I have been very stressed and irritable. | Yes, definitely | Maybe a little |
| 2. I have not expressed much appreciation toward my spouse. | Yes, definitely | Maybe a little |

3. I have been overly sensitive.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little
4. I have been overly critical.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little
5. I have not shared very much of my inner world.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little
6. I have been depressed.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little
7. I would say that I have a chip on my shoulder.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little
8. I have not been very affectionate.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little
9. I have not been a very good listener.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little
10. I have been feeling a bit like a martyr.	Yes, definitely	Maybe a little

OVERALL, MY CONTRIBUTION TO THIS MESS WAS:

HOW CAN I MAKE THIS BETTER IN THE FUTURE?

WHAT ONE THING COULD MY PARTNER DO NEXT TIME TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM?

As you work through the exercises above, you'll become more adept at turning toward each other regularly, and the bond with your spouse will deepen. This more profound friendship will be a powerful shield against conflict. It may not forestall every argument, but it can prevent your differences of opinion from overwhelming your relationship.

POSITIVE SENTIMENT OVERRIDE QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the following questions based on your recent interactions with your partner. Circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

WHEN MY PARTNER IS IN A BAD MOOD I USUALLY:

1. Feel like I am going to get blamed for some problem. **T F**
2. Want to find out just what my partner is feeling. **T F**
3. Fear a storm of negative emotion may be headed my way. **T F**
4. Assume my partner may simply be a little stressed. **T F**
5. Assume I am about to get personally attacked. **T F**
6. Believe that I can probably help my partner feel better. **T F**
7. Expect that my personality is about to get criticized. **T F**
8. Want to comfort my partner, if I can. **T F**
9. Just want my partner to be more positive. **T F**
10. Think to myself, “Something awful must just have happened.” **T F**

Scoring: Count up the number of times you circled F for the odd-numbered items, and add to that total the number of times you circled T for the even-numbered items. The result is your Positive Perspective Score. (Find out how your partner scored, if he or she is open to sharing.)

6 or higher: You and your partner have a strong friendship, which should greatly benefit your relationship.

Below 6: Your relationship needs work on at least one of the three principles: building love maps, nurturing fondness and admiration, and turning toward. Consider spending some more time on the exercises in chapters 4–6. I hope your current score motivates rather than frustrates you. Although it can take time to master these skills, remember: even small changes can improve a marriage dramatically. This means that every day offers you significant new opportunities to move your relationship forward.

One of the ways that a couple's underlying friendship creates PSO is by helping to balance the power between partners so that neither feels slighted. When you honor and respect each other, you're usually able to appreciate each other's point of view, even if you don't agree with it. When there's an imbalance of power, there's almost inevitably a great deal of marital distress. My next principle focuses on what can happen if one spouse is unwilling to share power with the other—and how to overcome this difficulty. Although power-mongering is more common in husbands, there are wives who have just as hard a time acceding to their spouse's wishes, so my fourth principle really applies to everybody.

ACCEPTING INFLUENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Read each statement and circle T for "true" or F for "false."

1. My partner is really interested in my opinions on our basic issues.
T F
2. My partner usually learns a lot from me even when we disagree.
T F
3. My partner wants me to feel that what I say really counts. **T F**
4. My partner wants me to be influential in this marriage. **T F**
5. My partner can listen to me, but only up to a point. **T F**
6. My partner thinks I have a lot of common sense. **T F**
7. My partner tries to communicate respect even when we disagree.
T F
8. If my partner keeps trying to convince me, he or she eventually wins out. **T F**

9. My partner doesn't reject my opinions out of hand. **TF**
10. My partner doesn't think I am rational enough to take seriously when we discuss our issues. **TF**
11. My partner believes in lots of give and take in our discussions. **TF**
12. My partner is very persuasive and usually wins our arguments. **TF**
13. My partner wants me to have an important say when we make decisions. **TF**
14. My partner usually thinks I have good ideas. **TF**
15. My partner thinks I am basically a great help as a problem-solver. **TF**
16. My partner tries to listen respectfully even when we disagree. **TF**
17. My partner usually thinks his or her solutions are better than mine. **TF**
18. My partner can usually find something to agree with in my position. **TF**
19. My partner thinks I'm usually too emotional. **TF**
20. My partner thinks he or she needs to make the major decisions in our relationship. **TF**

Scoring: Give your partner 1 point for each "true" answer, except for questions 5, 8, 10, 12, 17, 19, and 20. Then subtract 1 point for each "true" answer to questions 5, 8, 10, 12, 17, 19, and 20.

6 or higher: This is an area of strength in your marriage. Your partner willingly cedes power to you, a hallmark of an emotionally intelligent marriage.

Below 6: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Your partner is having some difficulty accepting influence from you, which can make a marriage dangerously unstable. Your partner should reread this chapter if he or she is still unclear about why power-sharing is essential. Then the following exercises will help you move forward.

EXERCISE 2: THE GOTTMAN ISLAND SURVIVAL GAME

Imagine that your cruise ship just sank in the Caribbean, and you awaken to find yourselves on a deserted island. The cast members of *Lost* are nowhere in sight—the two of you are the only survivors. One of you is injured. You have no idea where you are. You think there's some chance that people know of the ship's distress, but you're not sure. A storm appears to be on the way. You decide that you need to prepare to survive on this island for some time and also to make sure you'll be spotted by a rescue party. There is a bunch of stuff from the ship on the beach that could help you, but you can only carry ten items.

Your Mission

STEP 1: Each of you writes down on a separate piece of paper what you consider the ten most important items to keep from the inventory list below, based on your survival plan. Then rank-order these items based on their importance to you. Give the most crucial item a 1, the next most crucial a 2, and so on. There are no right or wrong answers.

Ship's Inventory

1. Two changes of clothing
2. AM/FM and shortwave radio receiver
3. Ten gallons of water
4. Pots and pans
5. Matches
6. Shovel
7. Backpack
8. Toilet paper
9. Two tents
10. Two sleeping bags
11. Knife
12. Small life raft, with sail
13. Sunblock lotion

14. Cookstove and lantern
15. Long rope
16. Two walkie-talkie sender/receiver units
17. Freeze-dried food for seven days
18. One change of clothing
19. One fifth of whiskey
20. Flares
21. Compass
22. Regional aerial maps
23. Gun with six bullets
24. Fifty packages of condoms
25. First-aid kit with penicillin
26. Oxygen tanks

STEP 2: Share your list with your partner. Together come up with a consensus list of ten items. That means talking it over and working as a team to solve the problem. Both of you need to be influential in discussing the problem and in making the final decisions.

When you've finished, it's time to evaluate how the game went. You should both answer the questions below.

1. How effective do you think you were at influencing your spouse?
 - a) Not at all effective
 - b) Neither effective nor ineffective
 - c) Somewhat effective
 - d) Very effective
2. How effective was your spouse at influencing you?
 - a) Not at all effective
 - b) Neither effective nor ineffective
 - c) Somewhat effective
 - d) Very effective
3. Did either of you try to dominate the other, or were you competitive with each other?
 - a) A lot
 - b) Somewhat

- c) A little
 - d) Not at all
4. Did you sulk or withdraw?
- a) A lot
 - b) Somewhat
 - c) A little
 - d) Not at all
5. Did your partner sulk or withdraw?
- a) A lot
 - b) Somewhat
 - c) A little
 - d) Not at all
6. Did you have fun?
- a) Not at all
 - b) A little
 - c) Somewhat
 - d) A lot
7. Did you work well as a team?
- a) Not at all
 - b) A little
 - c) Somewhat
 - d) A great deal
8. How much irritability or anger did you feel?
- a) A lot
 - b) Some
 - c) A little
 - d) None
9. How much irritability or anger did your partner feel?
- a) A lot
 - b) Some
 - c) A little
 - d) None

10. Did you both feel included?

- a) Not at all
- b) A little
- c) A reasonable amount
- d) A great deal

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “a” answer, 2 points for each “b” answer, 3 points for each “c” answer, and 4 points for each “d” answer. Tally your score.

If your final number is over 24, you’re doing a good job of accepting each other’s influence and working together as a team. If you scored 24 or lower, your marriage needs further work in this area.

QUESTIONNAIRE: ASSESSING YOUR MARITAL CONFLICTS

Now that you have a greater understanding of the differences between solvable and perpetual problems, it’s time to categorize your own marital issues in this way. By doing so, you’ll know which strategies to use to cope with them. Below is a list of seventeen common causes of conflict in a marriage. For each, mark whether it is a perpetual problem in your marriage, a solvable problem for you, or not a problem right now. If it is either a solvable or a perpetual problem, check all of the specific subareas that you think are currently troublesome.

I. We are becoming emotionally distant.

Perpetual ____ Solvable ____ Not a problem right now ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We have difficulty just simply talking to each other.
- ☐ We are less in touch with each other emotionally.

- ☐ I feel taken for granted.
- ☐ I feel my spouse doesn't know me right now.
- ☐ My spouse is (or I am) emotionally disengaged.
- ☐ We spend less time together.

Comments:

2. There is spillover of nonmarital stresses (such as job tension) into our marriage.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We don't always help each other reduce daily stresses.
- ☐ We don't talk about these stresses together.
- ☐ We don't talk together about stress in a helpful manner.
- ☐ My spouse doesn't listen with understanding about my stresses and worries.
- ☐ My spouse takes job stress or other tensions out on me.
- ☐ My spouse takes job stress or other tensions out on the children or others.

Comments:

3. Our marriage is becoming nonromantic and passionless; the fire is dying.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ My spouse has stopped being verbally affectionate.
- ☐ My spouse expresses love or admiration less frequently.
- ☐ We rarely touch each other.

- ☐ My spouse or I have stopped feeling very romantic.
- ☐ We rarely cuddle.
- ☐ We have few tender or passionate moments.

Comments:

4. We are having problems in our sex life.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ Sex is less frequent.
- ☐ At least one of us gets less satisfaction from sex.
- ☐ We have problems talking about sexual problems.
- ☐ Each of us wants different things sexually.
- ☐ Desire is less than it once was.
- ☐ Our lovemaking feels less loving.

Comments:

5. Our marriage is not dealing well with an important change (such as the birth of a child, a job loss, a move, an illness, or the death of a loved one).

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We have very different views on how to handle things.
- ☐ This event has led my partner to be very distant.
- ☐ This event has made us both irritable.
- ☐ This event has led to a lot of fighting.
- ☐ I'm worried about how this will all turn out.
- ☐ We are now taking very different positions.

Comments:

6. Our marriage is not handling well a major issue about children.
(This category includes whether to have a child.)

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We have very different goals for our children.
- ☐ We differ on what to discipline children for.
- ☐ We differ on how to discipline our children.
- ☐ We have issues on how to be close to our kids.
- ☐ We are not talking about these problems well.
- ☐ There is much tension and anger about these differences.

Comments:

7. Our marriage is not handling well a major issue or event concerning in-laws or another relative(s).

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ I feel unaccepted by my partner's family.
- ☐ I sometimes wonder which family my spouse is in.
- ☐ I feel unaccepted by my own family.
- ☐ I feel my partner takes sides against me.
- ☐ There is tension between us about what might happen.
- ☐ This issue has generated a lot of irritability.
- ☐ I worry about how this will turn out.

Comments:

8. One of us is flirtatious outside the marriage, or may have had a recent affair, and/or there is jealousy.

Perpetual ____ Solvable ____ Not a problem right now ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ This area is the source of a lot of hurt.
- ☐ This is an area that creates insecurity.
- ☐ I can't deal with the lies.
- ☐ It is hard to reestablish trust.
- ☐ There is a feeling of betrayal.
- ☐ It's hard to know how to heal over this.

Comments:

9. Unpleasant fights have occurred between us.

Perpetual ____ Solvable ____ Not a problem right now ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ There are more fights now.
- ☐ Fights seem to come out of nowhere.
- ☐ Anger and irritability have crept into our marriage.
- ☐ We get into muddles where we are hurting each other.
- ☐ I don't feel very respected lately.
- ☐ I feel criticized.

Comments:

10. We have differences in our basic goals and values or desired lifestyle.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ Differences have arisen in life goals.
- ☐ Differences have arisen about important beliefs.
- ☐ Differences have arisen on leisure-time interests.
- ☐ We seem to want different things out of life.
- ☐ We are growing in different directions.
- ☐ I don't much like who I am with my partner.

Comments:

11. Very disturbing events (for example, violence, drugs, an affair) have occurred within our marriage.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ There has been physical violence between us.
- ☐ There is a problem with alcohol or drugs.
- ☐ This is turning into a marriage I hadn't bargained for.
- ☐ Our marriage "contract" is changing.
- ☐ I find some of what my partner wants upsetting or repulsive.
- ☐ I am now feeling somewhat disappointed by this marriage.

Comments:

12. We are not working well as a team.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We used to share more of the family's workload.
- ☐ We seem to be pulling in opposite directions.
- ☐ My spouse does not fairly share in housework or child care.
- ☐ My spouse is not carrying his or her weight financially.
- ☐ I feel alone managing this family.
- ☐ My spouse is not being very considerate.

Comments:

13. We are having trouble sharing power and influence.

Perpetual ☐ **Solvable** ☐ **Not a problem right now** ☐

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ I don't feel influential in decisions we make.
- ☐ My spouse has become more domineering.
- ☐ I have become more demanding.
- ☐ My spouse has become passive.
- ☐ My spouse is "spacey," not a strong force in our marriage.
- ☐ I am starting to care a lot more about who is running things.

Comments:

14. We are having trouble handling financial issues well.

Perpetual ☐ **Solvable** ☐ **Not a problem right now** ☐

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ One of us doesn't bring in enough money.
- ☐ We have differences about spending or saving money.
- ☐ We are stressed about finances.

- ☐ My spouse is financially more interested in self than in us.
- ☐ We are not united in managing our finances.
- ☐ There is not enough financial planning.

Comments:

15. We are not having much fun together these days.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We don't seem to have much time for fun.
- ☐ We try but don't seem to enjoy our times together very much.
- ☐ We are too stressed for fun.
- ☐ Work takes up all our time these days.
- ☐ Our interests are so different, there are no fun things we like to do together.
- ☐ We plan fun things to do, but they never happen.

Comments:

16. We are not feeling close about spiritual issues these days.

Perpetual ____ **Solvable** ____ **Not a problem right now** ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We do not share the same beliefs.
- ☐ We do not agree about religious ideas and values.
- ☐ We differ about the specific house of worship.
- ☐ We do not communicate well about spiritual issues.
- ☐ We have issues about spiritual growth and change.
- ☐ We have spiritual issues involving family or children.

Comments:

17. We are having conflict(s) about being a part of and building community together.

Perpetual ____ Solvable ____ Not a problem right now ____

Check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

- ☐ We feel differently about being involved with friends and other people or groups.
- ☐ We don't care to the same degree about the institutions that build community.
- ☐ We have different opinions about putting time into the institutions of community (political party, school, hospital, house of worship, agencies, and the like).
- ☐ We disagree about doing projects or working for charity.
- ☐ We disagree about doing good deeds for others.
- ☐ We have different views about whether to take a leadership role in the service of our community.

Scoring: For each of the general areas that cause you problems, count up the number of specific bones of contention that you've checked. If you've marked more than two, then this is an area of significant conflict in your marriage. For solvable problems, you'll find advice in chapter 9. But if some of your problems are perpetual, follow the advice in chapter 11 as well. No doubt you'll discover that your marriage, like most, is coping with both types of problems.

HARSH START-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

To get a sense of whether harsh start-up is a problem in your marriage, answer the following questions.

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

WHEN WE BEGIN TO DISCUSS OUR MARITAL ISSUES:

1. My partner is often very critical of me. **T F**
2. I hate the way my partner raises an issue. **T F**
3. Arguments often seem to come out of nowhere. **T F**
4. Before I know it, we are in a fight. **T F**
5. When my partner complains, I feel picked on. **T F**
6. I seem to always get blamed for issues. **T F**
7. My partner is negative all out of proportion. **T F**
8. I feel I have to ward off personal attacks. **T F**
9. I often have to deny charges leveled against me. **T F**
10. My partner's feelings are too easily hurt. **T F**
11. What goes wrong is often not my responsibility. **T F**
12. My spouse criticizes my personality. **T F**
13. Issues get raised in an insulting manner. **T F**
14. My partner will at times complain in a smug or superior way. **T F**
15. I have just about had it with all this negativity between us. **T F**
16. I feel basically disrespected when my partner complains. **T F**
17. I just want to leave the scene when complaints arise. **T F**
18. Our calm is suddenly shattered. **T F**
19. I find my partner's negativity unnerving and unsettling. **T F**
20. I think my partner can be totally irrational. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

Below 5: This is an area of strength in your marriage. You and your spouse initiate difficult discussions with each other gently—without being critical or contemptuous. Because you avoid being harsh, your chances of resolving your conflict or learning to manage it successfully together are dramatically increased.

5 or higher: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Your score suggests that when you address areas of disagreement with your spouse, one of you tends to be harsh. That means you immediately trot out at least one of the four horsemen, which automatically prevents the issue from being resolved.

REPAIR ATTEMPTS QUESTIONNAIRE

To assess the effectiveness of repair attempts in your own relationship, answer the following.

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

DURING OUR ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT:

1. We are good at taking breaks when we need them. **T F**
2. My partner usually accepts my apologies. **T F**
3. I can say that I am wrong. **T F**
4. I am pretty good at calming myself down. **T F**
5. We can maintain a sense of humor. **T F**
6. When my partner says we should talk to each other in a different way, it usually makes a lot of sense. **T F**
7. My attempts to repair our discussions when they get negative are usually effective. **T F**
8. We are pretty good listeners even when we have different positions on things. **T F**
9. If things get heated, we can usually pull out of it and change things. **T F**
10. My spouse is good at soothing me when I get upset. **T F**
11. I feel confident that we can resolve most issues between us. **T F**

12. When I comment on how we could communicate better, my spouse listens to me. **T F**
13. Even if things get hard at times, I know we can get past our differences. **T F**
14. We can be affectionate even when we are disagreeing. **T F**
15. Teasing and humor usually work to get my spouse over negativity. **T F**
16. We can start all over again and improve our discussion when we need to. **T F**
17. When emotions run hot, expressing how upset I feel makes a real difference. **T F**
18. We can discuss even big differences between us. **T F**
19. My partner expresses appreciation for nice things I do. **T F**
20. If I keep trying to communicate, it will eventually work. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

13 or higher: This is an area of strength in your marriage. When marital discussions are at risk of getting out of hand, you are able to put on the brakes and effectively calm each other down.

Below 13: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. By learning how to repair your interactions, you can dramatically improve the effectiveness of your problem solving and develop a more positive perspective on each other and your marriage.

FLOODING QUESTIONNAIRE

To determine whether flooding is a significant problem in your relationship, answer the following questions.

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. Our discussions get too heated. **T F**
2. I have a hard time calming down. **T F**
3. One of us is going to say something we will regret. **T F**
4. My partner gets too upset. **T F**
5. After a fight, I want to keep my distance. **T F**
6. My partner yells unnecessarily. **T F**
7. I feel overwhelmed by our arguments. **T F**
8. I can't think straight when my partner gets hostile. **T F**
9. Why can't we talk more logically? **T F**
10. My partner's negativity often comes out of nowhere. **T F**
11. There's often no stopping my partner's temper. **T F**
12. I feel like running away during our fights. **T F**
13. Small issues suddenly become big ones. **T F**
14. I can't calm down very easily during an argument. **T F**
15. My partner has a long list of unreasonable demands. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

Below 6: Flooding is not a significant problem in your marriage. You are able to confront differences of opinion with your spouse without feeling overwhelmed. This means that you are not feeling victimized or hostile toward your spouse during disagreements. That's good news since it indicates that you are able to communicate with each other without negativity getting out of hand. As a result, you're better able to resolve conflicts (and avoid gridlock over issues that are unresolvable).

6 or higher: Your score suggests that you tend to get flooded during arguments with your spouse. Flooding almost guarantees that your discussion won't end the conflict. You are feeling too agitated to really hear what your spouse is saying or to learn any helpful conflict-resolution skills. Read on to find out how to cope with this problem.

EXERCISE 5: PROCESSING A PREVIOUS EMOTIONAL INJURY

As you work through this exercise, remember that all experience is subjective. There is no God-camera that has recorded the ultimate Truth of what happened between you. Each of your perceptions is equally valid. So your aim isn't to persuade or to debate whose perceptions were more accurate. Instead, your goal is to gain greater understanding of each other's subjective reality and of how the issue was handled. That's how you process past emotional injuries. (Note: You'll see that parts of this exercise are similar to the briefer "Talking It Out" exercise in chapter 6. That's because the processes for working through minor and major conflicts share much in common.)

STEP 1: Choose a specific incident to work through. Select a conflict that you both feel you can now discuss with some emotional distance. For the purpose of this exercise, imagine that you are sitting in the balcony of a theater during the intermission, discussing what happened during Act One—except that Act One was the unfortunate incident and you were the actors on stage.

STEP 2: Decide who will speak first. For this exercise, you will take turns being speaker and listener. Don't switch roles until the speaker is finished talking. When you're the listener, sit back and take in what your partner has to say *without interrupting*.

STEP 3: Say out loud what you were feeling then. When you are the speaker, list aloud all of the feelings you had to any degree during the argument or regrettable incident. (See the list below for help.) *Do not discuss why you had these emotions.* When you are the listener, don't comment on your partner's emotions.

DURING THAT ARGUMENT I FELT:

1. Abandoned
2. Afraid
3. Alienated
4. Angry
5. Ashamed
6. Both of us were partly right
7. Criticized
8. Depressed
9. Defensive
10. Disapproving
11. Disgusted
12. Disloyal
13. Exhausted
14. Flooded
15. Foolish
16. Frustrated
17. Guilty
18. Hopeless
19. Hungry
20. Hurt
21. I had no idea what I was feeling
22. I had no influence
23. I was right and you were wrong
24. Like an innocent victim
25. Like leaving
26. Like my opinions didn't matter
27. Like you didn't even like me
28. Lonely
29. Misunderstood
30. Morally justified
31. Out of control
32. Overwhelmed with emotion

33. Powerless
34. Remorseful
35. Righteously indignant
36. Sad
37. Shocked
38. Stubborn
39. Stupid
40. Taken for granted
41. Tense
42. Tired
43. Ugly
44. Unappreciated
45. Unloved
46. Unsafe
47. Worried
48. Other (write down any additional emotions you had)

STEP 4: Share your subjective reality and what you needed.

Now let your partner know why you think you had those feelings at the time. In talking about your reality, be like a reporter. Avoid attack, blame, or criticism. Don't in any way attribute intentions or motivations to your partner. Only discuss yourself. Use "I statements" ("I heard you say . . .") not "You statements" ("You said . . ."). Also, tell your partner what you think you might have needed at the time of the incident. For example, if in Step 1 you said you felt that your opinions didn't matter, perhaps, in retrospect, what you needed was to hear your partner say your opinions *were* valued. Or, if you felt sad, perhaps you needed to feel comforted.

Here are some examples of common needs people might express during this exercise:

IN RETROSPECT . . .

1. I needed to feel like you were listening.
2. I needed to feel like you were being patient with me.
3. I needed to feel like you wouldn't overreact.
4. I needed you to tell me you loved me.
5. I needed a break from talking.

6. I needed to feel like you validated my point of view, even a little bit.
7. I needed to feel like you respected me.
8. I needed to feel I had your support and empathy.

STEP 5: Identify and explore your triggers. So often our negative reactions during an argument are rooted in those “enduring vulnerabilities”—issues or responses that we are, perhaps, overly sensitive to. As you rewind the videotape of your own memories, stop at a place when you felt some of the same emotions as you did during the argument you’re now processing. It might be a time in your childhood or in a past relationship. For example, some people are particularly anxious about being abandoned by a loved one because as a child their parents were unreliable. By becoming more aware of your triggers, and your partner’s, you can better avoid unduly upsetting each other when you’re having a disagreement. It’s important to tell your partner the story of these enduring vulnerabilities so that he or she understands why you have particular triggers.

Separately, both of you should circle your response(s) to the following.

DURING THAT ARGUMENT I FELT:

1. Excluded.
2. Like I was not important.
3. Cold (very unemotional) toward you.
4. Strongly rejected.
5. I was being criticized.
6. Like I had no affection toward you.
7. Like you weren’t attracted to me.
8. My sense of dignity was being compromised.
9. Like I was being bullied.
10. I could not persuade you at all.
11. Other (write down any additional feelings you had).

After you’ve told your partner the history of these triggers, do some more self-exploration. Look over your answers to the “Who Am I?” exercise on page 10. See if you can find connections there

between earlier traumas or behavior and this argument you had with your partner. Use the checklist below to facilitate this search for links.

MY REACTIONS WERE ROOTED IN:

(check all that apply)

- ☐ The way I was treated in my family growing up.
- ☐ A previous relationship.
- ☐ Past injuries, hard times, or traumas I've suffered.
- ☐ My basic fears and insecurities.
- ☐ Things and events I have not yet resolved or put aside.
- ☐ Unrealized hopes I have.
- ☐ Ways other people treated me in the past.
- ☐ Things I have always thought about myself.
- ☐ Old "nightmares" or "catastrophes" I have worried about.

MY SPECIFIC TRIGGERS DURING THIS INCIDENT MIGHT HAVE BEEN:

- ☐ I felt judged. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt excluded. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt criticized. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt flooded. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt ashamed. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt lonely. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt belittled. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt disrespected. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt powerless. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt out of control. I'm very sensitive to that.
- ☐ I felt hopeless. I'm very sensitive to that.

When you are the listener, respond to your partner with understanding and empathy. Summarize what you heard in a sentence, such as: "I can see why that's a big trigger for you. Hearing the story of that trigger helps me understand you better. And I get why these are enduring vulnerabilities for you."

STEP 6: Acknowledge your role in what happened. After you've discussed each other's answers in the steps above, I hope you've come to see that we are all complicated creatures whose actions and reactions are governed by a wide array of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories. It's natural to believe that your partner was solely responsible for the fight, but that is erroneous thinking. To break this pattern, you both need to admit some role (however slight at first) in creating the conflict.

The first (and easiest) step is to describe what your state of mind may have been like at the time of the regrettable incident—that is, what may have set you up for the reaction you had. Try to recall which of the following were true for you and circle all that apply.

1. I had been very stressed and irritable.
2. I hadn't expressed much appreciation toward you.
3. I had been overly sensitive.
4. I had been overly critical.
5. I hadn't shared very much of my inner world.
6. I was depressed.
7. I wasn't being a very good listener.
8. I was feeling a bit like a martyr.
9. I had needed to be alone.
10. I had been preoccupied.
11. I had not wanted to take care of anybody.
12. I had not had much confidence in myself.
13. I had been running on empty.
14. I had felt taken for granted.
15. I had not been emotionally available.
16. I had taken you for granted.
17. I had not made time for good things between us.
18. Other _____.

Next, tell your partner what you want to apologize for. Begin by telling your partner what your specific regrets are and what you see as your contributions to the event. Then clearly apologize to your partner. Saying you're sorry is magical in a relationship. Examples:

I WANT TO APOLOGIZE AND I AM SORRY THAT:

1. I overreacted.
2. I was really grumpy.
3. I was defensive.
4. I was so negative.
5. I attacked you.
6. I didn't listen to you.
7. I wasn't respectful.
8. I was unreasonable.
9. Other _____.

Finally, the partner accepts the apology. (The speaker can then respond with "Thank you.") If the partner finds it hard to fully accept the apology, this indicates more work needs to be done on the exercise.

STEP 7: Looking Ahead: Constructive Plans. Take turns each answering these two questions:

1. What's one thing I can do to avoid having this kind of regrettable incident or argument again?
2. What's one thing my partner can do to avoid having this kind of regrettable incident or argument again? (Be as agreeable as possible to the plans suggested by your partner.)

When you have mastered the general problem-solving skills outlined in this chapter, you'll discover that many of your problems find their own solutions. Once you get past the barriers that have prevented clear communication, difficulties are much easier to resolve. In fact, the next chapter offers some creative and simple solutions to some of the most common conflicts couples face—money, sex, housework, kids, work stress. But remember: These remedies work only for problems that can be solved. If compromise still seems like a distant goal to you, then the problem you are grappling with may not be solvable after all. That means it's time to turn to the advice on coping with perpetual problems in chapter 11.

QUIZ: ELECTRONIC DISTRACTIONS

1. I worry that my partner spends too much time attending to e-mail or other online tasks.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
2. Often when I want to talk to my partner, he or she is busy texting or on the web.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
3. Because of digital distractions, I find it hard to feel like I come first to my partner.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
4. I feel that my partner wants to zone out far too much with TV or digital media.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
5. It hurts me when I come into a room and my partner hardly notices me because he or she is immersed in social media.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
6. I feel that because of electronic media my partner isn't really fully available to me.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
7. Digital media seem to burn up whatever time there is for the two of us.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
8. My partner is too distracted by all of the electronic options and social media to be able to be fully present with me.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
9. Attention to social media or other such distractions is a real issue between us.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
10. Sometimes I would like to come first in my partner's attention rather than tech.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)

Scoring. Add up the points (indicated in each column).

0 to 10. Being too “plugged in” is not a serious issue for the two of you.

11 to 20. Your score suggests that your relationship might benefit from some extra problem solving in this area. Apply the negotiating advice in the preceding chapter (on solvable problems) to the activities that are causing the most conflict (such as setting limits for when and where to text, answer cell phones, respond to e-mails, play video games, etc.). Being up front and loving as you discuss your needs can keep these issues from overwhelming your relationship.

21 to 30. Your score suggests that excessive attention to social media and related distractions may be interfering with your relationship. See if you can agree on a specific daily time limit for engaging in these activities. Stick to this schedule for a week, say, and then reevaluate your feelings about the issue. Sometimes couples use diversions as a way to avoid communication and connection. If you need extra help in this area, begin by reading or rereading chapter 6, “Turn Toward Each Other Instead of Away.” Be sure to work through the exercises in that chapter. If differences in this area remain unsolvable, follow the advice in chapter 11, “Overcome Gridlock.”

EXERCISE 1: IN-LAW PROBLEMS

If you are having ongoing problems with a family member, fill out this brief questionnaire. It will focus you on these relationships so that you can determine whether your sense of “we-ness” as a couple needs to be strengthened when it comes to a particular relative. You should both jot down your answers to this form on separate paper.

I. Think of your relationship with various members of your spouse’s family. If you feel that your partner isn’t necessarily on your side in any of these relationships or that there are ongoing issues with a particular family member, check off the appropriate box.

- ☐ Spouse’s mother
- ☐ Spouse’s stepmother
- ☐ Spouse’s father
- ☐ Spouse’s stepfather
- ☐ Spouse’s brother(s) _____
- ☐ Spouse’s sister(s) _____
- ☐ Other family member _____

Describe the successes so far:

Describe the conflicts that remain:

2. Think about your spouse's relationship with your kin. If you feel that your spouse isn't necessarily on your side in any of these relationships or that there are ongoing issues with a particular family member, check off the appropriate box.

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Stepmother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Stepfather
- ☐ Brother(s) _____
- ☐ Sister(s) _____
- ☐ Other family member _____

Describe the successes so far:

Describe the conflicts that remain:

Now get together with your spouse and read over each other's responses. Discuss what can be done to increase the amount of support and solidarity you are getting from each other. Try not to be defensive if your spouse perceives a problem and you don't. Remember that much about relationships has to do with perception. So, for example, if your wife believes that you side with your own mother against her, that's something you need to work on in your marriage, even if you don't agree with her perception of the situation.

Who Does What List

CAR CARE

Car maintenance (oil change, registration, etc.)	Now:	Ideal:
Refilling gas tank	Now:	Ideal:
Car insurance	Now:	Ideal:

CARE OF THE HOME

Remodeling	Now:	Ideal:
Home maintenance	Now:	Ideal:
Buying furniture	Now:	Ideal:
Buying appliances	Now:	Ideal:
Watering houseplants	Now:	Ideal:

CHILD CARE

Preparing meals and lunches	Now:	Ideal:
Supervising homework	Now:	Ideal:
Bathing	Now:	Ideal:
Bedtime	Now:	Ideal:
Discipline (determining and implementing)	Now:	Ideal:
Caring for sick child	Now:	Ideal:
Dealing with child's emotions	Now:	Ideal:
Interacting with schools	Now:	Ideal:
Planning birthdays	Now:	Ideal:
Shopping	Now:	Ideal:

CHILDREN'S SCHEDULING AND TRANSPORTATION

Making doctor appointments	Now:	Ideal:
Transportation to and from doctor	Now:	Ideal:
Transportation to and from school/day care	Now:	Ideal:
Transportation to and from playdates/after-school activities	Now:	Ideal:
Attending teacher conferences	Now:	Ideal:
Scheduling and attending special events	Now:	Ideal:

COMMUNICATIONS

Keeping in touch with family/friends	Now:	Ideal:
Taking phone messages	Now:	Ideal:
Returning phone calls or e-mails	Now:	Ideal:

ENTERTAINMENT

Planning get-togethers with friends	Now:	Ideal:
Making dinner reservations	Now:	Ideal:
Planning “date nights”	Now:	Ideal:
Prepping home for parties	Now:	Ideal:
Choosing travel destinations	Now:	Ideal:
Reserving travel tickets	Now:	Ideal:
Planning romantic vacations	Now:	Ideal:
Planning family vacations	Now:	Ideal:
Planning romantic weekends	Now:	Ideal:

FINANCES

Financial planning	Now:	Ideal:
Managing investments	Now:	Ideal:
Bill-paying	Now:	Ideal:
Taxes	Now:	Ideal:
Handling legal matters (e.g. wills, living trusts)	Now:	Ideal:

FOOD

Planning menu	Now:	Ideal:
Grocery shopping	Now:	Ideal:
Cooking	Now:	Ideal:
Doing dishes/running dishwasher	Now:	Ideal:
Emptying dishwasher	Now:	Ideal:

HEALTH

Coordinating medical care	Now:	Ideal:
Managing health insurance	Now:	Ideal:

HOUSECLEANING, REGULAR

General tidying up	Now:	Ideal:
Making beds	Now:	Ideal:
Cleaning kitchen, general	Now:	Ideal:
Vacuuming	Now:	Ideal:

Sweeping	Now:	Ideal:
Washing floors	Now:	Ideal:
Cleaning bathrooms	Now:	Ideal:
Taking out garbage and trash	Now:	Ideal:
Recycling	Now:	Ideal:
Laundry	Now:	Ideal:
Folding laundry	Now:	Ideal:
Putting away clean clothes	Now:	Ideal:
Putting out clean towels	Now:	Ideal:
HOUSEWORK, PROJECTS		
Home repairs	Now:	Ideal:
Washing/waxing floors	Now:	Ideal:
Washing windows	Now:	Ideal:
Changing lightbulbs	Now:	Ideal:
Appliance repairs	Now:	Ideal:
Defrosting and cleaning refrigerator	Now:	Ideal:
Yard and garden work	Now:	Ideal:
Other:		
_____	Now:	Ideal:
_____	Now:	Ideal:
_____	Now:	Ideal:

QUIZ: QUALITY OF SEX, ROMANCE, AND PASSION IN THE RELATIONSHIP

For each item, check the one box below that applies to your relationship right now:

I WOULD SAY THAT:

- I. ☐ A. Our relationship is romantic and passionate.
☐ B. Our relationship is becoming passionless—that is, the fire is going out.

2. ☐ A. My partner is verbally affectionate and compliments me.
☐ B. My partner is not very verbally affectionate or complimentary toward me.
3. ☐ A. My partner regularly or often tells me, "I love you."
☐ B. My partner rarely tells me, "I love you."
4. ☐ A. My partner expresses respect and admiration toward me.
☐ B. My partner rarely expresses respect and admiration toward me.
5. ☐ A. We do touch each other tenderly a fair amount.
☐ B. We rarely touch each other these days.
6. ☐ A. My partner courts me sexually.
☐ B. My partner does not court me sexually.
7. ☐ A. We do cuddle with each other.
☐ B. We rarely cuddle with each other.
8. ☐ A. We still have our tender and passionate moments.
☐ B. We have few or no tender or passionate moments.
9. ☐ A. We often kiss each other passionately.
☐ B. We rarely or never kiss each other passionately.
10. ☐ A. My partner surprises me with romantic gifts.
☐ B. My partner rarely or never surprises me with romantic gifts.
11. ☐ A. Our sex life is fine.
☐ B. There are definite problems in this area.
12. ☐ A. The frequency of sex is not a problem.
☐ B. The frequency of sex is a problem.
13. ☐ A. Being able to just talk about sex, or talk about sexual problems, is not a serious issue between us.

- ☐ B. Being able to just talk about sex, or talk about sexual problems, is a serious issue between us.
14. ☐ A. Differences in desire are not a big issue in this relationship.
☐ B. Differences in desire are a big issue in this relationship.
15. ☐ A. The amount of emotional connection during sex is not a problem.
☐ B. The amount of emotional connection during sex is a problem.
16. ☐ A. My partner is satisfied with our sex life.
☐ B. My partner is not satisfied with our sex life.
17. ☐ A. I do feel romantic toward my partner.
☐ B. I do not feel very romantic toward my partner.
18. ☐ A. I feel passionate toward my partner.
☐ B. I feel passionless—that is, my own fire is going out.
19. ☐ A. My partner is romantic and passionate.
☐ B. My partner is passionless—that is, the fire is going out in my partner.
20. ☐ A. The satisfaction I get from sex is not a problem.
☐ B. The satisfaction I get from sex is a problem.
21. ☐ A. We have made sex and romance a priority in this relationship.
☐ B. We have not made sex and romance a priority in this relationship.
22. ☐ A. I definitely know how to turn my partner on sexually.
☐ B. I do not really know how to turn my partner on sexually.
23. ☐ A. My partner definitely knows how to turn me on sexually.
☐ B. My partner does not really know how to turn me on sexually.

24. ☐ A. I feel desired by and sexually desirable to my partner.
☐ B. I do not feel desired by and sexually desirable to my partner.
25. ☐ A. Overall we can and do talk easily and comfortably about our sexual needs.
☐ B. Overall we do not talk, or we do not talk comfortably, about our sexual needs.
26. ☐ A. Overall we know and respect each other's sexual fantasies.
☐ B. Overall we do not know or do not respect each other's sexual fantasies.
27. ☐ A. Overall we are good sexual partners.
☐ B. Over all we are not very good sexual partners.

Scoring: Add up all of the times you answered “A.”

27: Congratulations! The quality of sex, romance, and passion in your life together is as good as it gets.

20–26: The quality of sex, romance, and passion in your relationship is pretty good right now, but talking more directly about your sex life would likely improve it. Read on to see how to accomplish this in an effective, positive, and gentle manner.

11–19: The quality of sex, romance, and passion in your relationship could stand some real work. But the situation probably isn't critical yet. You are hardly alone—many couples have difficulty in this area. The ideas and tips below will help you learn to talk more effectively to each other about your sexual needs and desires.

0–10: Currently, the quality of sex, romance, and passion seems to be a very serious issue between you. The advice in this chapter will be helpful, but it may be more beneficial to first review chapter five (nurturing your fondness and admiration) and chapter six (turning toward each other) before concentrating on specific sexual issues.

RITUALS OF CONNECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. We see eye to eye about the rituals that involve family dinnertimes in our home. **T F**
2. Holiday meals (like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Passover) are very special and happy times for us (or we both hate them). **T F**
3. End-of-the-day reunions in our home are generally special times. **T F**
4. We see eye to eye about the role of TV in our home. **T F**
5. Bedtimes are generally good times for being close. **T F**
6. During the weekends, we do a lot of things together that we enjoy and value. **T F**
7. We have the same values about entertaining in our home (having friends over, parties, and so on). **T F**
8. We both value, or both dislike, special celebrations (like birthdays, anniversaries, family reunions). **T F**
9. When I become sick, I feel taken care of and loved by my spouse. **T F**
10. I really look forward to and enjoy our vacations and the travel we do together. **T F**
11. Spending our morning time together is special to us. **T F**
12. When we do errands together, we generally have a good time. **T F**
13. We have ways of becoming renewed and refreshed when we are burned out or fatigued. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer. If you score below 3, your relationship could stand some improvement in this area. Turn to the shared-meaning exercise (**chapter 12**), and focus on the “rituals” section.

ROLES QUESTIONNAIRE

To get a sense of how well you create shared meaning by supporting each other's roles, read each of the following statements and circle T for "true" or F for "false."

1. We share many similar values in our roles as parents. **T F**
2. We share many similar values in our roles as spouses. **T F**
3. We have many similar views about what it means to be a good friend to others. **T F**
4. My partner and I have compatible views about the role of work in one's life. **T F**
5. My partner and I have similar philosophies about balancing work and family life. **T F**
6. My partner supports what I see as my basic mission in life. **T F**
7. My partner shares my views on the importance of family and kin (sisters, brothers, moms, dads) in our life together. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each "true" answer. If you score below 3, your relationship could stand some improvement in this area. Turn to the shared-meaning exercise, and focus on the "roles" section.

SHARED GOALS QUESTIONNAIRE

To get a sense of how well you create shared meaning through goals, read each of the following statements and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. We share many of the same goals. **T F**
2. If I were to look back on my life in very old age, I think I would see that our paths had meshed very well. **T F**
3. My partner values my accomplishments. **T F**
4. My partner honors the personal goals I have that are unrelated to our marriage. **T F**
5. We share many of the same goals for others who are important to us (children, kin, friends, and community). **T F**
6. We have very similar financial goals. **T F**
7. We tend to have compatible worries about potential financial disasters. **T F**
8. Our hopes and aspirations, as individuals and together, for our children, for our life in general, and for our old age are quite compatible. **T F**
9. Our life dreams tend to be similar or compatible. **T F**
10. Even when they are different, we have been able to find a way to honor our life dreams. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer. If you score below 3, your relationship could stand some improvement in this area. Turn to the shared-meaning exercise, and focus on the “goals” section.

SHARED VALUES QUESTIONNAIRE

To get a sense of how well you create shared meaning through values, read each of the following statements and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. We see eye to eye about what home means. **T F**
2. Our philosophies of what love ought to be are quite compatible. **T F**
3. We have similar values about the importance of peacefulness in our lives. **T F**
4. We have similar values about the meaning of family. **T F**
5. We have similar views about the role of sex in our lives. **T F**
6. We have similar views about the role of love and affection in our lives. **T F**
7. We have similar values about the meaning of being married. **T F**
8. We have similar values about the importance and meaning of money in our lives. **T F**
9. We have similar values about the importance of education in our lives. **T F**
10. We have similar values about the importance of fun and play in our lives. **T F**
11. We have similar values about the significance of adventure. **T F**
12. We have similar values about trust. **T F**
13. We have similar values about personal freedom. **T F**
14. We have similar values about autonomy and independence. **T F**
15. We have similar values about sharing power in our marriage. **T F**
16. We have similar values about being interdependent, being a “we.” **T F**
17. We have similar values about the meaning of having possessions, of owning things (like cars, nice clothes, books, music, a house, and land). **T F**
18. We have similar values about the meaning of nature and of our relationship to the seasons. **T F**
19. We have a similar level of sentimentality and need to reminisce about things in our past. **T F**

20. We have similar views about what we want in retirement and old age. **T F**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer. If you score below 3, your relationship could stand some improvement in this area. In the following shared-meaning exercise, focus on the “values” section.