

Conversations that **Matter**

Work, **Time**, Money, **Health**

Fun & Recreation, **Friends & Relatives**

Spirituality & Growth, **Home & Housework**

Marriage Commitment

Death & Dying, **Sexual Intimacy**

Children

CREATING WE

Couple Communication,
Relationship Skills, and Contracting

Participant Workbook

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“With everlasting appreciation to those who teach me love. Stephanie, my wife, partner and best friend - the answer to my every dream and prayer; our three sons, Alex, Michael and Zachary, teachers and treasures who fill my life with joy, gratitude and abundance; and Maybelle Charley whose love, laughter and life of service inspire s me always.”

- Seth Eisenberg, March 2012



CREATING WE

A Purpose Built Families Participant Workbook for Strengthening Relationships, Families and Communities

With profound appreciation for the contributions of Virginia Satir, Daniel Casriel, Lori Heyman Gordon, George Bach, Williard Harley, Gary Chapman, John Gray, and each of those pioneers whose passion for understanding and empowering fulfilling human relationships illuminated our path.

Purpose Built Families Foundation is the sole provider of training, certification, and licensure for PAIRS trainers and facilitators worldwide. Our global community of providers delivers PAIRS classes in accordance with rigorous ethical and licensing standards designed to ensure consistent excellence in program delivery and the satisfaction of every program participant.

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Creating We Tools

Exercises for Confiding, Clarifying, and Connecting

LEARNING TO LEVEL, PAGE 6. Conversations that matter begin with begin able to speak and listen with empathy and concern for the other person, sharing what's true for you, and using your intelligence to find solutions that give your dreams the best chance of coming true.

LOVE BANK, PAGE 10. Build a positive balance in your relationship Love Bank Through regular deposits that let others know they're important and cared about. Become comfortable confiding what makes you feel cared about and asking other what makes them feel cared about. Love has the best chance of thriving in relationships in which we're a pleasure to each other.

DAILY TEMPERATURE READING, PAGE 13. One of the most important PAIRS tools for regularly watering the garden of your relationships by setting aside time free distractions (15-20minutes) on a regular basis to focus on each other and taking turns confiding: (1) Appreciations (sincere and specific -- create a habit of affirming other and expressing gratitude), (2) New Information (What's happening in your life? What's on your mind?), (3) Puzzles (anything you're wondering about), (4) Concerns with Recommendations (focus on the behaviour not the person, include how you feel, and clearly recommend what you want instead), and (5) Wishes, Hopes and Dreams (for today, this week, this lifetime, or anywhere between).

TALKING TIPS, PAGE 14. Ten Steps for exploring different dimensions of a concern or complaint. Can be done by yourself or to confide in your partner. When used for confiding, partner's role is to listen attentively to each sentence stem and repeat back with empathy what was expressed without judging, criticizing, adding anything, or reacting. At the end of this confiding exercise, you can reverse roles, have a conversation about whatever was shared, or simply appreciate each other for sharing and listening.

EMPTYING THE EMOTIONAL JUG, PAGE 17.

Make room for positive emotions by regularly exercising -- with permission -- feelings such as anger, sadness, worry and fear with empathy and encouragement from your partner. One person asks questions according to the script and listens while the speaker searches inside for emotions that may be getting in the way of love, pleasure, and happiness. Always keep in mind that our emotional reactions are about us, not others. Being able to listen with empathy without trying to fix, contradict, or judge emotions expressed by another person is a powerful process of deepening empathy, acceptance, love, joy, and improving decision-making.

POWERGRAM, PAGE 17. Head off power struggles before they begin by agreeing what decisions require agreement or discussion and which ones can be made independently. Remember to revisit your Powergram regularly as circumstances change. A key step to identifying issues requiring greater attention and discussion.

JOURNALING, PAGE 17. Reflect on your goals, values, and ambitions and create a journal that can be shared and revisited as you sculpt a roadmap to dreams come true.



Welcome to **Creating We**

One of the stories that has a long stuck with me begins with a man in a marriage seminar asking “Isn’t it true that in marriage two become one?”

The course leader paused for a moment before replying, “Yes, but which one?”

Over the past 15 years, I’ve had the privilege of getting to know thousands of couples and singles who have participated in PAIRS (“Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills”) marriage and relationship skills training classes. I’ve seen the pain of broken dreams and promises more times than I can remember. I’ve also witnessed countless examples of courage, commitment, love and many, many couples, often beyond the brink, who found themselves and each other again. Much of that journey is connected to realizing the wishes, hopes and dreams that are most meaningful along with practical, usable skills for confiding, listening with empathy, understanding emotions in ourselves and others, and discovering the joy that can come from embracing differences instead of allowing them to become a source of conflict and distance.

Time and again, I’ve seen that as people embrace the scared wonder and miracle of their own lives, they become more accepting of others, including the gifts and challenges that make each of us truly one-of-a-kind.

Embracing that miracle in ourselves and others is very much the foundation of the work required to create and sustain relationships that have the greatest potential to be a source of love, pleasure, happiness and fulfillment for both partners.

I’m not talking about the infatuation stage of love, but much deeper experience of love, intimacy acceptance and connection than many people will ever know.

For those who find their way, the rewards are beyond measure.

“Creating We” is meant as a companion workbook for couples and singles who have participated in PAIRS Classes. It’s a step-by-step guide to conversations that matter with the people who matter most in our lives.

I hope you will approach the pages that follow as a detective on your own behalf, giving yourself permission to stand in the future, imagine the happiness, love and fulfillment that is possible for all of us, and consider the answers that give your most cherished dreams and aspirations the chance to come true.

With much appreciation,



Seth D. Eisenberg
President/CEO





Creating We

In addition to the knowledge and skills you will discover in **PAIRS Essentials**, you can practice and deepen your experience through online adaptations of the exercises at apps.pairs.com. You may also receive important follow-up and supplemental information from **Purpose Built Families Foundation** to reinforce your workshop experience. You can remind your instructor to email us your class roster promptly to be sure you receive **PAIRS Love Notes** and other follow-up from **PAIRS** by email shortly after this class. Please also complete and return the brief survey you will receive. **You are important to us!**

Learning to Level

Communicating in a way that you have the best chance of being heard, understood and offers the same for the other person is vital to conversations that matter. Virginia Satir, a pioneer in the field of humanistic psychology, identified what she called “stress styles” of communication that can get in the way of working through the natural issues that arise in close relationships.

THE PLACATER. A person using this style acts one way outwardly but feels different inside. When placating, it may be quite natural to say things like, “I’m sorry,” “It’s all my fault,” “I just want to take care of you,” etc., etc., while inside they feel very different. Although the Placater’s sense of empathy and concern for the other person is a positive quality, that’s only if and when it’s sincere. Acting one way on the outside while building up anger and resentment inside will eventually lead those feelings to leak, explode or implode, leaving others not knowing what happened.

THE BLAMER. A person using this style tends to think the best defense is a good offense. That person can be quick to point the finger at others, saying things like, “It’s all your fault,” “If you hadn’t done that, this would have never happened,” etc. The Blaming style cancels out or disregards

feelings in others in an effort to communicate, “It’s not my fault.”

Very quickly, loved ones can stop confiding in people who behave as

blamers, making it nearly impossible to create an environment in which it’s safe to be emotionally-open and problem-solve. Effective communication requires empathy and concern for the other person and the relationship.

THE COMPUTER. While many professions teach us to keep our feelings to ourselves and not pay much attention to the feelings of others, that’s not helpful when it comes to our closest relationships. The Computer style will try to ignore feelings altogether and just focus on the facts, rules, protocols, etc. All human beings have feelings. They come from our unique personality, perspective, life experiences. We are each, however, responsible for what we do with and about our feelings. Conversations that matter have to include the ability to confide how we feel and be sensitive to the feelings of others. It’s helpful to use your knowledge and experience to find solutions, so long as that includes being aware of your feelings and those of the people you love.

THE DISTRACTER. A person using this style would like nothing more than to ignore everything: their feelings, other people’s feelings, and the issue, thinking, “Let me just find some escape so that I don’t have to deal with any problems or disagreements.” Sometimes that escape can be into endless work, projects, shopping, gambling, drugs, sex, alcohol or other self-destructive behaviors that become “the problem.” While it’s important to take time to intentionally bring fun and pleasure to relationships, that shouldn’t become a way of hiding from the issues or each other.

LEVELING. This is the style for conversations that matter. A person using this style speaks and listens with empathy and concern for the other person, sharing what’s true for you, and using your intelligence to find solutions that give your dreams the best chance of coming true. As you become comfortable using the Leveling style, consider how you’re protecting the Five Freedoms.



THE FIVE FREEDOMS

The **FREEDOM to see and hear** what is here
instead of what should be, was, or will be.

The **FREEDOM to say** what one feels and thinks,
instead of what one should.

The **FREEDOM to feel** what one feels,
instead of what one ought to.

The **FREEDOM to ask** for what one wants,
instead of always waiting for permission.

The **FREEDOM to take risks** in one's
own behalf, instead of choosing to be only
“secure” and not rocking the boat.

Developed by **Virginia Satir**

Three Hopes

**Everything good I ever wanted
in my life, I will find with you.**

**All the good things
I have, I will keep.**

**All the upsetting, unhappy things
that happened to me before,
will NOT happen with you.**

Three Fears

**Good things I hoped for will not
or are not happening.**

Good things I had, I will or am losing.

**Upsetting, hurtful things that happened
before are happening again with you.**

CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

01

Disagreements, differences, even a relationship crisis or breakdown can be opportunities to improve understanding, connection, relationship satisfaction, pleasure and resilience. These five questions can help.

1. What are you getting in your relationship that you do want?

2. What do you want from the relationship that you are not getting?

3. What are you getting in the relationship that you don't want?

4. What are you giving in the relationship that you don't want to give?

5. What would you like to give your partner if things were better between you?

The Love Bank

**Think of your relationship as a Love Bank.
Learn to build the balance of your love account
through regular deposits.**

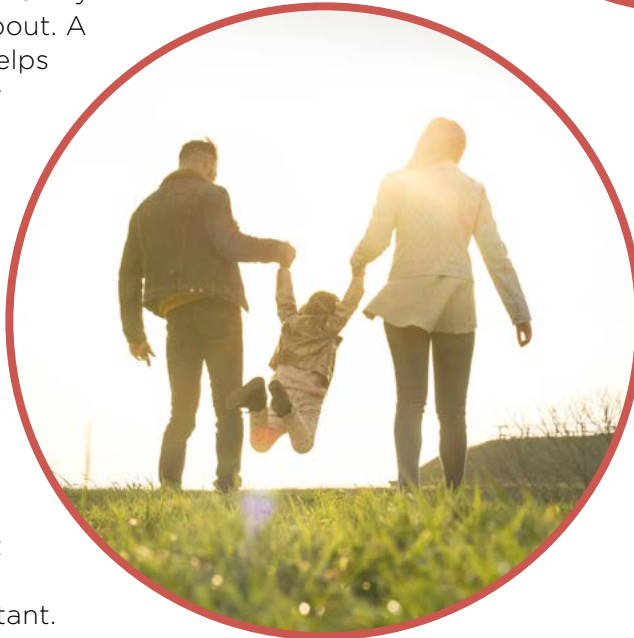
We make deposits into our Love Bank when we do things that leave our partner, family members or friends feeling cared about. A positive balance in the Love Bank helps provide important protection to our relationships.

You can make deposits by giving compliments, showing appreciation and gratitude (sincere and specific), spending time together, being affectionate, helping out with tasks that are important to your partner, and giving gifts ... the actions that express love to your partner.

Making Love Bank deposits is about doing the things that leave others feeling cared for, valued, and important. Often what makes others feel cared about is different than what we want for ourselves. What we experience as pleasure often changes. Don't assume that what was a pleasure in the past is what's a pleasure today. Become comfortable asking and confiding what fills your Love Bank.

The Love Bank has a five-to-one rule: we must make at least five positive deposits in the Love Bank to neutralize one withdrawal, such as criticizing, making a negative observation, or disappointing someone.

Discovering what it takes to fill your Love Bank with actions that communicate, "I care!" will help your relationship grow in love, pleasure and connection. Make a commitment to keeping the balance high.



Stages of Relationship

Illusion

We are in love and hope that everything will be fine. We are looking for what is right in the other person and finding it. This stage can end as something happens that we didn't expect or something we did expect doesn't happen, leading to disappointment and...

Disillusion

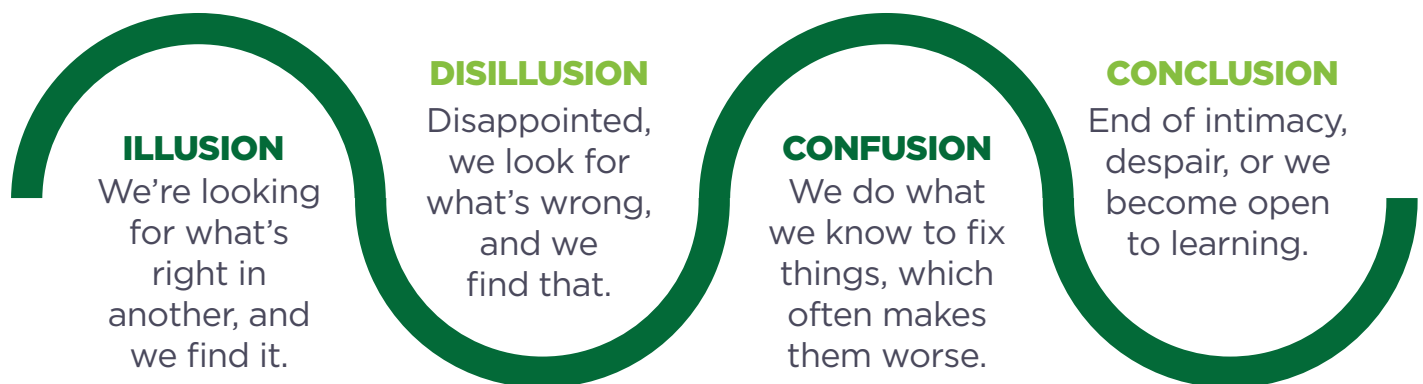
We begin to look for what is wrong, and we find that. Every human being has strengths, challenges, and the potential for growth. It's easy to find what's wrong with another person when that's what we're looking for. That leads to the next stage, where we use whatever we know -- often including "dirty fighting" and "power struggles" -- to try to get what we want.

Confusion

What is wrong, and how do I change it? Anger, pain, sadness, and disappointment leak out in a variety of ways, such as blame, sarcasm, labeling, name calling, withholding, the silent treatment, etc. All of which lead to a...

Conclusion

That often becomes despair, the end of intimacy, trust, confiding, and joy. Or you open yourself to learn the skills to deal with conflict fairly and non-destructively and with goodwill -- so you don't need to lose each other and dreams that were once cherished.



Good Talking

Making Sure the Intended Message is Received

GOOD TALKING IS DIRECT

To send a message that other people can be sure to “catch”, you need to say what you mean. Don’t “talk around” the subject. Don’t just drop hints or make other people guess. Get to the point!

GOOD TALKING IS CLEAR

Make certain that people can understand what you’re saying and don’t just have a “snowy picture” of it. You need to describe things well. You need to make sure that you aren’t confusing your listener!

GOOD TALKING IS SPECIFIC

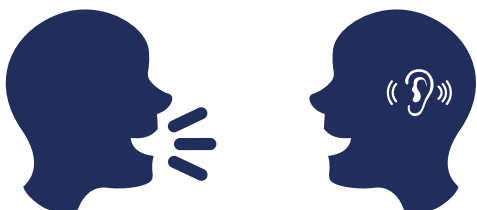
Sending a message well means giving your listener all the necessary information. Don’t be vague or general when you talk. Include details that can help the other person know exactly what you’re talking about.

GOOD TALKING IS HONEST

For your message to do the most good, it needs to be honest. Don’t say something you really don’t think or feel, or that doesn’t match the facts.

GOOD TALKING IS TACTFUL

Being tactful means being kind. You have to think about others’ feelings and rights before you speak. You do want to be direct, clear, specific, and honest with them, but you don’t want to say things -- accidentally or on purpose -- that will hurt them unnecessarily. Words can hurt.



Good Listening

Listening to Understand

GOOD LISTENING IS ACTIVE

Good listening is more than just waiting until you can talk or until the other person stops talking or truly says something that interests you. Good listening is doing your best to hear, understand, and help the person who is talking to fully express what they want you to know.

GOOD LISTENING IS ATTENTIVE

To listen well, you need to concentrate on what the other person is saying. Make sure you get the full message that they are sending. Don’t try to guess what they mean. Don’t try to do something else at the same time -- like planning what you want to say next -- you will probably miss something important!

GOOD LISTENING IS OPEN

Good listening means giving the other person the freedom to speak and giving you the freedom to learn something. To do this, you need an open mind -- one that doesn’t refuse to hear certain things. After the speaker finishes, you can decide whether you agree or you don’t agree with what was said. But while the speaker is talking, you need to agree to fully listen.

GOOD LISTENING IS RESPECTFUL

Good listeners never interrupt a speaker in the middle of a sentence. They only start speaking after the other person finishes a sentence and pauses. This way, they make certain that they hear everything the other person wants to say and that they don’t make the other person feel worthless or angry.

GOOD LISTENING IS CAREFUL

To be a good listener, you need to ask the speaker right away about anything that you didn’t hear well, that isn’t clear, or that you didn’t quite understand. Learn more at apps.pairs.com/good_listening.

Daily Temperature Reading

The **Daily Temperature Reading**, also known as the “**DTR**,” is a tool for watering the garden of your most important relationships. With practice, the DTR becomes a habit, making it natural to look for -- and express -- appreciations to one another, keep each other up-to-date on the developments in our lives, ask questions about anything we’re wondering about so we don’t have to assume, express concerns directly along with specific recommendations for change, and talk about our individual and shared goals for the future. Many graduates have said using the DTR on a regular basis was the most important tool for intentionally creating and sustaining thriving relationships.



Daily Temperature Reading

With appreciation to Virginia Satir



- Appreciations
- New Information
- Puzzles
- Concerns
with Recommendations
- Wishes, Hopes, Dreams



PAIRS Talking Tips for Confiding

PAIRS Talking Tips is a valuable tool for confiding and listening to avoid misunderstandings, misperceptions or incorrect assumptions. Talking Tips helps you (a) explore different facets of an event that was upsetting, (b) assure full, accurate, honest information is shared, and (c) encourages good-will, empathy and understanding as resources to find solutions that serve the relationship.

The Speaker begins by identifying the specific behavior or action that was upsetting. The Speaker starts with “I notice...” filling in whatever triggered the concern, and then continues by going around the wheel clockwise completing each sentence stem with what applies to the situation. Stay on one issue only.

After each sentence stem (see example, next) The Speaker stops to allow the Listener to reflect on what was just said by the Speaker, and repeat back what was heard. This allow the Speaker to know the information shared was heard accurately. Sometimes, when the listener repeats back what was heard, the Speaker may realize that what was heard is not what was said or perhaps not what was meant. In this case, the

Speaker goes back to the stem and repeats or rephrases so the Listener can repeat back what was heard until it is accurate. Remember, Talking Tips is not a conversation; it's important for the Speaker to appreciate the Listener for taking the time to listen and repeating back what the Speaker is expressing. So after the Listener hears each statement correctly, the Speaker should say something like, “Yes, thank you”.

For the Speaker, **Talking Tips** is not a time to attack, guilt-trip, put down or break significant relationship news. For the Listener, this is not a time for discussion, argument, defensiveness, explanations, rebuttals, keeping score or emotional reactions. Talking Tips is an exercise in confiding that helps promote goodwill and allows many misunderstandings to be averted and resolved.

At the end of the exercise, after the Speaker has confided using each of the sentence stems and the listener has clearly heard, repeated and understood each one, acknowledge each other with an embrace or other sincere expression of appreciation for both listening and confiding.

Talking Tips



- 1 | **notice**...
- 2 | **assume** this means...
- 3 | **think**...
- 4 | I am **frustrated** by...
- 5 | I am **hurt** by...
- 6 | I **worry** about...
- 7 | I **want**...
- 8 | I **appreciate** you for...
- 9 | I **realize**...
- 10 | I **hope**...

PAIRS Talking Tips Example

Listener repeats back each sentence, reversing pronouns.

SPEAKER: I notice that you often are late coming home, and you don't call.

LISTENER: You notice that I am often late getting home, and I'm not calling.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I assume this means that you don't think this matters to me.

LISTENER: You assume this means that I don't think it matters to you.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I think that you lose track of time when you get very busy.

LISTENER: You think that I lose track of time when I am really busy.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I am frustrated by waiting with plans on hold until you get home.

LISTENER: You are frustrated by being kept waiting with planning 'til I get home.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I am hurt by your apparently not thinking enough of my feelings.

LISTENER: You are hurt that I seem to not be thinking about your feelings.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I worry that I'll stop planning to do things together.

LISTENER: You are worried that you'll stop planning for us to do things together.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I want, if you will be more than 30 minutes late, that you call and tell me.

LISTENER: You want me to call you if I'm going to be more than 30 minutes late.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I appreciate that you work very hard and can lose track of time.

LISTENER: You appreciate that when I'm working hard, I can lose track of time.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I realize that this doesn't happen all that often.

LISTENER: You realize that this isn't something that happens all that often.

SPEAKER: Yes, thank you. I hope that we can enjoy our evenings together much more now.

LISTENER: You hope that now we will be able to enjoy our evenings together more.

REMEMBER to share a hug, caring touch, or other sincere expression of gratitude when you finish. Done with goodwill, confiding and listening with empathy are both meaningful gifts to the relationship. Practice, practice, practice!

Emptying the Emotional Jug

- Make sure you have enough time to give your undivided attention, which should be a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes. Listener must be fully present to Speaker without distractions. Many find it helpful to sit face-to-face, holding hands through the exercise.
 - The Listener is fully present with empathy-not judgement, defensiveness, or the need to “fix it,” disqualify, minimize feelings, or interject their own experience.
 - As you’re getting comfortable with this exercise, practice Emptying the Emotional Jug with issues that are not about the Listener. This is a confiding exercise, not a discussion. The Listener’s task is to listen with empathy. The Listener should not question or interject into the Speaker’s statements.
- The Speaker should avoid statements that feel like an attack to the Listener. As the listener is discovering their ability to listen with empathy without responding, questioning, or interjecting, avoid issues that can feel like an attack on the Listener.
- If you are the Speaker, simply express what you feel at each step of the exercise. The purpose of this exercise is to “empty your emotional jug”, not to get into a discussion. State the feelings in your gut, using feelings words, not what you think.
 - Listener should use non-verbal signs to show you you are listening and that you have empathy, After completing Emptying the Emotional Jug, tangibly show appreciation to each other for sharing, listening and making room for positive feelings.

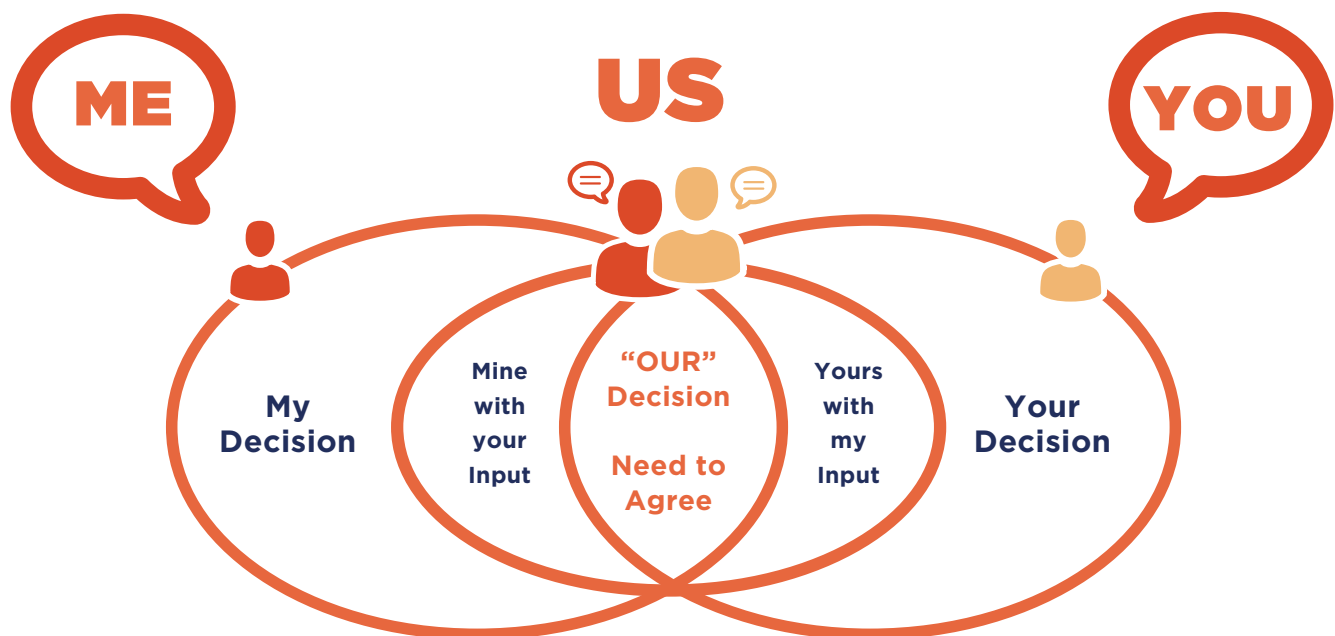
Emptying The Emotional Jug



Powergram - Who Decides?

The **Powergram** is a tool for Clarifying “Who Decides”. Each relationship is unique. Discussing decisions you want to be able to make independently, with input, and by mutual agreement is important for knowing what needs to be negotiated. Consider the areas of personal and joint responsibility in your relationship and talk together about where you see each area. For example, how will you make financial decisions? Who decides about groceries? Work schedules? Vacations? Laundry? Educational issues for the children? Religion? Friends? Time with extended family, etc, etc, etc. Revisit your Powergram as circumstances change.

Powergram



(Mine / **Ours** / Yours) Needs to be able to be discussed

The Joy of Marriage

Rabb Sidney Greenberg

The joy of marriage is, to begin with, the joy of not being alone. It is the joy of companionship and intimacy and having a person and place to come to. It is the joy of structure and order, of comfort, security and stability. It is the joy of having someone to help with the burdens and drudgery of daily life. It is the joy of making a home and creating a family. It is the joy of being a parent and raising children.

It is the joy of defining your relationship with respect to others and society at large. It is the joy of loving someone so much that you want to celebrate that love and commitment publicly. It is the joy of taking a risk, making a leap of faith, going all the way. It is the joy of believing in someone and something above and beyond yourself. It is the joy of building something lasting and substantial.

It is the joy of having a best friend who is also your lover, and a lover who is also your best friend. It is the joy of sleeping with someone who warms your heart as well as your bed. It is the joy of making love without awkwardness, self-consciousness or shame. It is the joy of developing a private vocabulary and doing some of your best talking without words.

It is the joy of having someone real to hold when you wake up sweating during a dark night of the soul. It is the joy of having someone who truly cares, someone who will stand by you when you get sick, or falter or fail. It is the joy of having someone you believe, and who believes in you, tell you at times that you're the best, and at other times, that you can be much better.

It is the joy of outgrowing your adolescent self-absorption and getting on with life. It is the joy of being faithful and honoring a vow. It is the joy of ennobling yourself through discipline and sacrifice. It is the joy of having a common history and mutual memories and the sense of having traveled far together. It is the joy of being a separate individual and yet also part of a whole. It is the joy of fighting and making up, of going apart and coming together again. It is the joy of learning to yield and to compromise, to care and to love. And finally, it is the joy of giving.



Using Creating We

The following subjects are those which typically cause the most stress and misunderstanding in close relationships. In order to define your expectations and clarify your needs regarding each of the following areas, please fill in the worksheet pages for each of the subjects listed below.

- **WORK**
- **TIME**
- **MONEY**
- **HEALTH**
- **FUN & RECREATION**
- **FRIENDS & RELATIVES**
- **SPIRITUALITY & GROWTH**
- **HOME & HOUSEWORK**
- **DEATH & DYING**
- **SEXUAL INTIMACY**
- **MARRIAGE/COMMITMENT**
- **CHILDREN**
- **MISCELLANEOUS**

Go through first and answer only those questions that address a topic that is important to you, whether or not it is a source of conflict or disagreement in a relationship. Be sure to include any topics that are a source of struggle and conflict. Then go back and address the remaining questions. If a question does not directly address your situation, feel free to modify the question so that it fits for you.

When you are complete, write any additional expectations/needs you become aware of at the end of the relevant section or on the MISCELLANEOUS page.

We appreciate your feedback on additional and improved questions.

Singles should go ahead and investigate your responses to the MARRIAGE and CHILDREN areas for clarity about your wishes and desires for the future.



WORK

1. Am I more comfortable with a job that has flexible hours, with might include evening and weekend work, or do I prefer a standard 40-hours week?

2. Is it more important that I have a job that is satisfying and creative or one that produces a high income? Or do I need to have both?

3. Am I doing the kind of work that I want yo do? If not, what type of work would I prefer?

4. Am I more comfortable moving around from job to job to broaden my life experience, or are loyalty to a company and stability more important to me?

5. Do I enjoy a high-pressure environment at work, or does that cause stress for me?

WORK

6. Is it important that I move up the ladder in my career (including titles and professional recognition), or is personal enjoyment and satisfaction a higher value for me?

7. Am I counting on my job to satisfy my need for creativity, or do I have other hobbies or activities that provide a creative outlet?

8. Is it meaningful for me to be able to discuss details of my work with my partner, or would I prefer to “leave it all at the office”?

9. In what ways do I want my partner to be involved or interested in my work?

10. Do I need further training to be able to do a job I would prefer?

11. If I had any other expectations about work, what would they be?

TIME

1. Do I need time to myself away from work and family? If so, what are my needs?

2. How much time do I prefer to spend with my partner each day?

3. What are my priorities for how I spend my time away from work?

4. How much do I want my partner to consult me before making plans that involve me? What about plans that do not involve me?

5. If there are children in the family, what are my expectations around their time demands and needs? How much time should children spend interacting with their parents? How much time should they be self-sufficient?

TIME

6. Do I prefer following a plan or schedule most of the time, or to “play it by ear” and “go with the flow”? For example, do I prefer to plan our weekends or be more spontaneous?

7. If I had any other expectations about time, what would they be?



MONEY

1. To what degree is the money I earn a barometer of my feeling of success in life?

2. What do I consider the ideal financial situation for me?

3. How should income/expenses be shared with my partner? How do I value the time I or my partner spend working to care for home and children relative to income producing activities?

4. Should our individual assets be merged or maintained as separate assets? Do I want a prenuptial agreement? How should future inheritances be handled?

5. How important to me is maintaining a good credit rating?

MONEY

6. What are my values regarding savings and emergency funds?

7. Who do I prefer be in charge of paying bills and managing household finances? Must I have a partner who I can trust to pay bills on time?

8. How much is it important for me to contribute regularly toward a retirement fund?

9. What type of financial planning do I want to have? Do I prefer making these decisions alone or with professional help?

10. What types of investments do I prefer?

MONEY

11. Am I comfortable having debts/loans or do I prefer a cash basis? In other words do I prefer to save up for purchases or do I prefer to take out loans and/or use charge cards?

12. Does it matter to me that my partner and I have similar philosophies about money?

13. What is my philosophy about contributing to charity?

14. If I had any other expectations about money, what would they be?

Love and Survival

Dean Ornish, M.D.

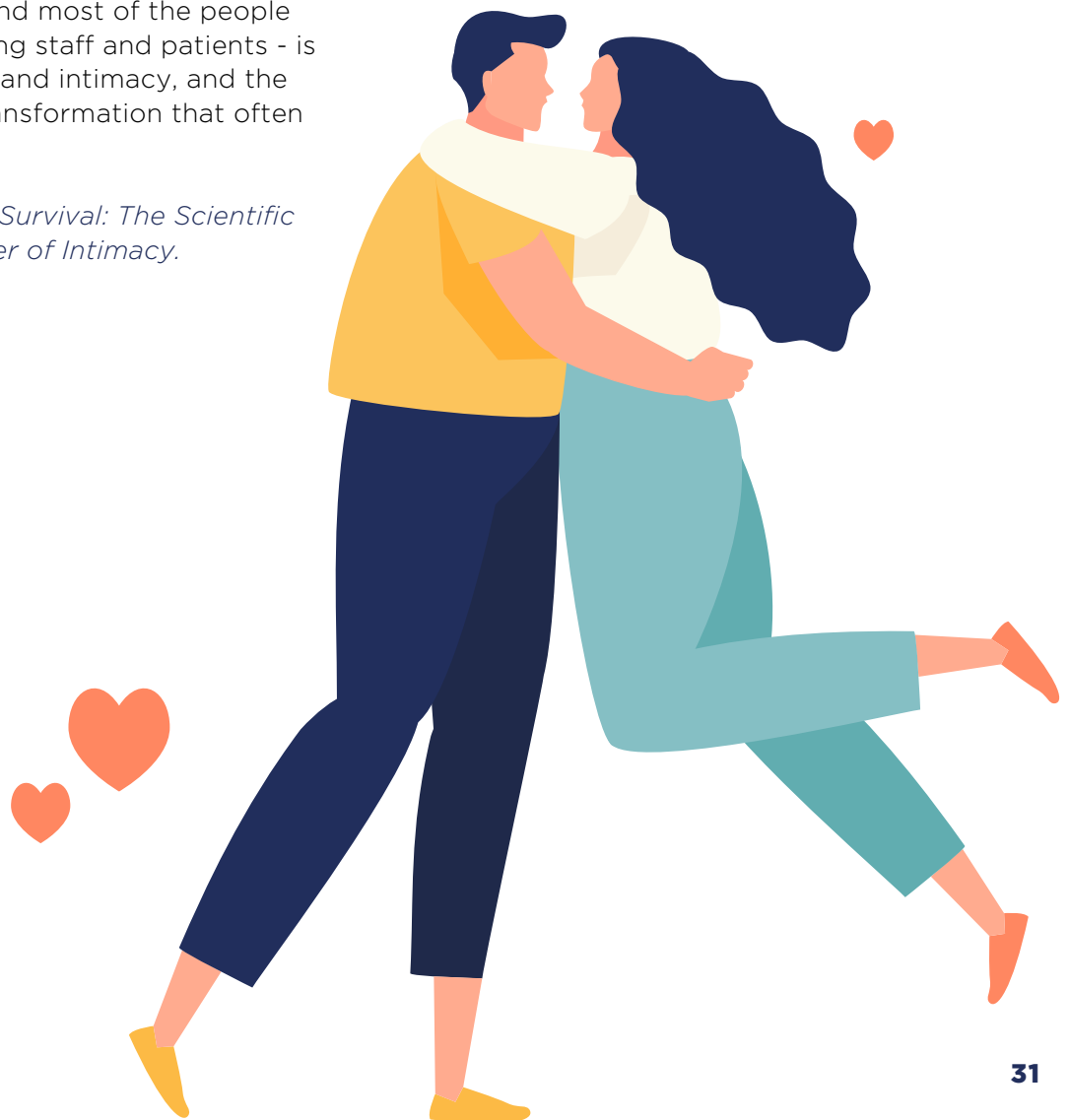
Love and survival.

What do they have to do with each other? Our survival depends on the healing power of love, intimacy, and relationships. Physically. Emotionally. Spiritually. As individuals. As communities. As a country. As a culture. Perhaps even as a species.

There is more scientific evidence now than ever before demonstrating how simple changes in diet and lifestyle may cause significant improvements in health and well-being.

As important as these are, I have found that perhaps the most powerful intervention - and the most meaningful for me and most of the people with whom I work, including staff and patients - is the healing power of love and intimacy, and the emotional and spiritual transformation that often result from these.

Excerpted from Love and Survival: The Scientific Basis for the Healing Power of Intimacy.



HEALTH

1. How do I feel about getting sick? Can I expect it as part of life, or do I feel stressed, angry or guilty when I'm sick?

2. How do I want to be treated when I'm sick? Do I prefer to be pampered and catered to, or do I prefer to be left alone?

3. Do I think people should just "ride out" an injury or illness, or is it better to seek medical attention right away?

4. How do I think I/we should react when our children get sick?

5. How do I think I/we should react if our parents become infirm? Am I comfortable taking care of them or another relative in need? In what way? What about nursing homes?

6. What are my perspectives on health and health insurance?

HEALTH

7. How much daily rest and sleep do I believe is healthy for me?

8. Do I use rest or health issues as an escape from communicating or dealing with others? If so, what issues do I avoid the most?

9. How important is it that I share similar fitness/health goals with my partner?

10. How much time do I want to exercise on a daily/weekly basis?

11. Am I pleased with my current level of health/fitness? If not, what is my plan for health improvement?

12. If I had any other expectations about health, what would they be?

FUN & RECREATION

1. What are my favorite recreational activities?

2. How important is it to me to have fun/recreational time? How much time?

**3. How much of our fun and recreational time do I want us to spend together?
How much apart?**

**4. How much money do I want to spend on fun and recreation? Do I want to
budget and save for this purpose?**

**5. Are there any recreational activities that I would especially like for us to do
together? How often?**

FUN & RECREATION

6. If money and time were no object, what is the most fun thing I can imagine doing?

7. How much vacation time do I want us to have each year? How much of it with or without children?

8. Do I want us to have regular “date nights”? If so, how often and for how long? What activities do I want to do?

9. If I had other expectations about fun/recreation, what would they be? Do I need further training to be able to do a hob I would prefer?

FRIENDS & RELATIVES

1. Do I prefer a large circle of friends, or a smaller circle of very close friends?

2. Which is more fun: lively events like picnics, parties, sporting events or quiet evenings alone or with another couple? Or do I prefer a balance of both?

3. What do I prefer to do when socializing with friends?

4. How much time do I like to spend each week socializing with family and friends?

5. When we are out with friends do I expect my partner to stay near and pay attention to me? Or do I prefer to mingle and dance with others?

FRIENDS & RELATIVES

6. What are my expectations around each of us socializing without the other? How much time am I comfortable with? What kinds of activities?

7. How important is it to me to have close relationships with my relatives? My partner's relatives?

8. Is it important to spend holidays with family? If so, what is the best way to distribute our time with each of the families?

9. How should I/we react to relatives wanting to get overly involved in our relationship?

10. How much involvement do I want there to be between our children and their grandparents?

11. If my partner has an "ex," how close a relationship between them am I comfortable with?

FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

12. If I had any other expectations about friends and relatives, what would they be?



Additional Resources

SPIRITUALITY & GROW

1. How is religion/spirituality, if it is, important in my relationships?

2. Can I be comfortable with a partner who has different beliefs?

3. Is it vital to me that my partner and I be able to talk openly and honestly about our religious/spiritual beliefs?

4. What are my hopes for my own spiritual growth?

5. Do I believe that it is important to engage in adult education programs for spiritual/personal growth? If so, what type and how often?

SPIRITUALITY & GROW

6. Is it important to me to attend religious services? How often? Where?

7. What spiritual/religious practices matter to me? How important is it that my partner share these?

8. Do I value socializing with others who share my spiritual orientation?

9. Do I believe in converting others to my religious/spiritual beliefs?

10. If I had any other expectations about spirituality, what would they be?

HOME & HOUSEWORK

1. Do I care whether I live in a house, apartment, or townhouse?

2. Does it matter to me that we own our home? Why or why not?

3. Do I care about having land? A garden? A specific location?

4. What would be my ideal home/property?

5. How important is it to me to have a vacation property or second home?

HOME & HOUSEWORK

6. Do I prefer to stay in the same place for a long time or moving to experience different locations, climates, and environments?

7. Inside the home, do I prefer an elegant look or a more casual decor?

8. How much do I want to entertain at home? Whose responsibility would I like it to be to prepare for the entertainment at home?

9. Do I think a home is mainly just a place to eat and sleep or do I want it to be the focal point of my free time?

10. Do I want to do maintenance and upkeep, lawn care and housecleaning, or do I prefer to have other people do it?

HOME & HOUSEWORK

11. How do I want household chore responsibilities to be divided?

12. If I had any other expectations about home and housework, what would they be?

13. What are my expectations around the presence and care of pets?

14. Do I have any other significant expectations regarding home and housework?



I am me...

Virginia Satir

In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me.

Everything that comes out of me is authentically me because I alone chose it - I own everything about me -- my body, my feelings, my mouth, my voice, all my actions, whether they be to others or to myself - I own my fantasies, my dreams, my hopes, my fears - I own all my triumphs and successes, all my failures and mistakes.

Because I own all of Me, I can become intimately acquainted with me - by so doing I can love me and be friendly with me in all my parts.

I know there are aspects about myself that puzzle me, and other aspects that I do not know - but as long as I am friendly and loving to myself, I can courageously and hopefully look for solutions to the puzzles and for ways to find out more about me.

However I look and sound, whatever I say and do, and whatever I think and feel at a given moment in time is authentically Me.

If later some parts of how I looked, sounded, thought and felt turn out to be unfitting, I can discard that which is unfitting, keep the rest, and invent something new for that which I discarded.

I can see, hear, feel, think, say, and do. I have the tools to survive, to be close to others, to be productive, to make sense and order out of the world of people and things outside of me.

I own me, and therefore I can engineer me - I am me and I AM OKAY

Virginia Satir, a pioneer in humanistic psychology and first chairperson of PAIRS, wrote this poem when she was working with an angry fifteen-year-old girl who had a lot of questions about herself and life.



DEATH & DYING

1. Is it important to have financial and estate planning taken care of? Or would I rather not deal with these matters at all and just “let the chips fall where they may”?

2. Do I want to confide and openly discuss my feelings, including fears and hopes, about death with my partner?

3. Is there a way of dying that I am afraid of and want to avoid?

4. What are my wishes about funeral arrangements (cremation, burial, memorial services) for myself? Do I know what my parents want?

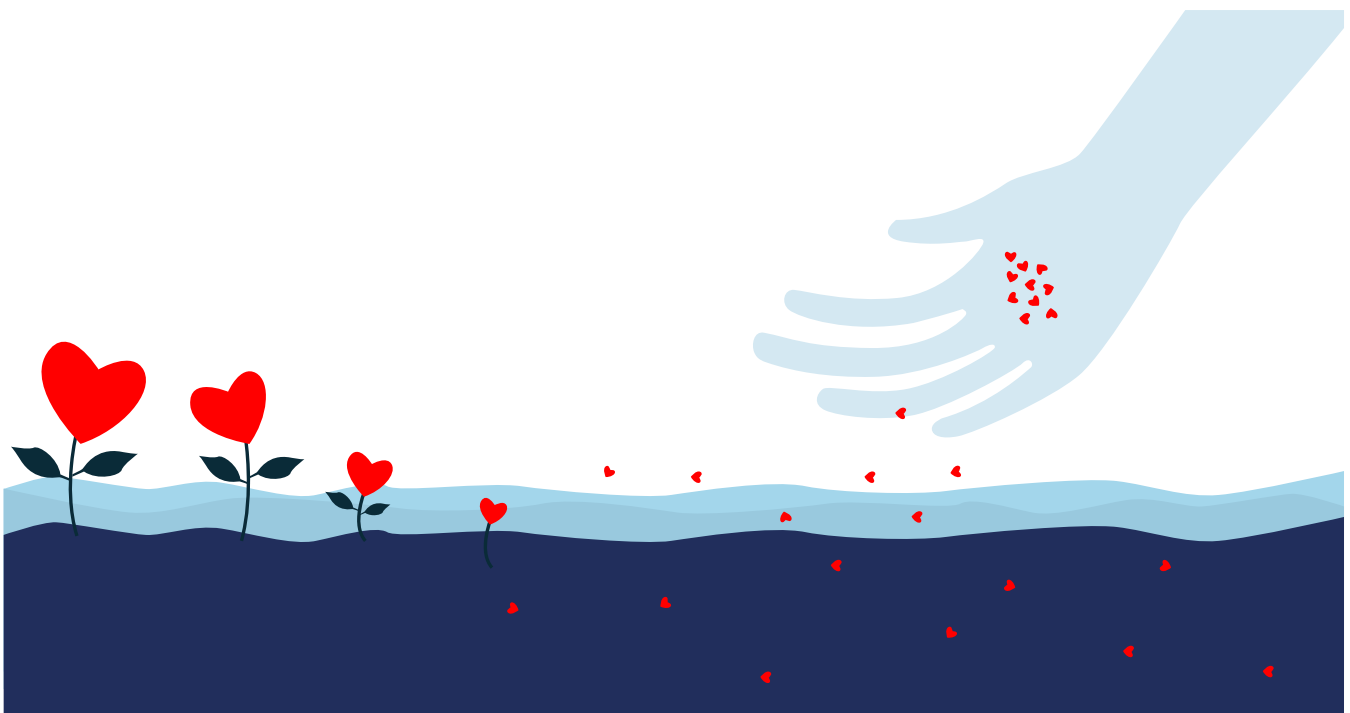
5. Do I believe in a Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney for Health-care (a contract which states your wishes to be or not to be kept artificially alive in certain terminal situations , and allows me to name someone to make medical decisions on my behalf if I am unable to)?Do I have one? Is it important that my partner have one so I know his/her wishes?

DEATH & DYING

6. Do I want to be an organ donor? Does my partner wish to be an organ donor?

7. If I were in mourning/grief, how and by whom would I want to be supported and comforted?

8. If I had any other expectations about death and dying, what would they be?



SEXUAL INTIMACY

1. How important do I want sexuality to be in my relationship?

2. What are my expectations regarding the frequency and types of sexual intimacy/activity with my partner?

3. How much value do I place on honestly and openly communicating my sexual preferences with my partner?

4. Do I want my partner to honestly share sexual preferences with me?

5. How important is it to be able to share/act out sexual fantasies together?

SEXUAL INTIMACY

6. How much of the time do I want my partner to initiate sexually? How often do I want to be the initiator?

7. Do I want to confide any feelings of attraction towards others with my partner? Do I want to know about my partner's attractions to others?

8. What are the physical and emotional limits I am comfortable with regarding my own and my partner's relationships with others?

9. What are my non-negotiable "walking issues" regarding sexual activities?

10.If I had other expectations about sexual intimacy, what would they be?

MARRIAGE AND COMMITMENT

1. What do I think is the most important thing in sustaining a healthy marriage or committed relationship?

2. What other interests or people could interfere with our relationship?

3. What does fidelity mean to me?

4. What are the caring behaviors that let me know that I am loved and cherished?

5. How important is to me that my spouse and I confide most things to each other?

MARRIAGE AND COMMITMENT

6. How essential is it to me that we both be committed to a lifetime partnership? If it is not essential, what are the honorable conditions for ending our partnership?

7. If I had any other expectations regarding marriage and commitment, what would they be?



CHILDREN

1. What do I believe about the importance of having/not having children?

2. How often and how should children be shown affection?

3. What are my role expectations for us around child-rearing?

4. How should we handle disagreements about how to educate or discipline our children?

5. Am I comfortable actively participating in all areas/ stages of our children's growth? If not, what areas/ages do I prefer not to?

CHILDREN

6. If our child has a minor illness or injury, how should they be treated? Who should be responsible? Who should stay home from work?

7. What are my beliefs about private vs public education? If a child is considered gifted, are accelerated classes and skipping grades good ideas? What about classes for children with special needs?

8. What values or religious/spiritual beliefs are important to convey to children? How should this be done?

9. What role should stepparents have in raising stepchildren: decision making, financial support, discipline?

10. What is important to me regarding shared parenting with former spouses who are biological parents?

CHILDREN

11. Is it vital to me that my children achieve higher education? If so, what financial or other plans do I want to make to support their education?

12. What is my opinion about grown children living at home? What kinds of support do I believe is appropriate to give grown children?

13. If I had any other expectations about children, what would they be?



Why a Good Marriage Will Break Your Heart

David Schnarch

Loving is not for the weak. We encourage people to love and desire their partner, never really realizing what we're encouraging them to do. Desire involves wanting and longing. Who among us really wants to want? Who is ready to crave their partner, without the guarantee that the partner will always be there to satisfy their longings?

The reason there are so many mediocre marriages isn't because so many people are pathological or have imaginary "family diseases." It's because the really good marriage will break your heart. In a long term marriage, one partner will bury the other.

The more a person wants and loves a partner, the more painful it will be when he or she loses them. There are all too few people developed enough to stand by themselves, hold their own hand through the loss of a partner, and accept Life on its own terms.

This situation also spells out its solution. It's growing up to the point that you're willing to tolerate the loss of a beloved irreplaceable partner.

There's only one way to avoid that inevitable loss, and many people follow that strategy: Don't love your partner too well, so that by the time they die, they won't mean as much to you anymore.

Like many aspects of life, the choice is not whether or not you're willing to be anxious. The choice is which anxiety you're going to have, and you're going to have them, whether you like it or not. You can lose your partner a little every day, or all at once. Nobody ever gets to have a better partner than they are willing to give up.

Willingly loving someone, knowingly setting yourself up for loss - that's hard for people. It goes beyond resolving sex problems or personal insecurities. It's an issue of integrity.

Marriage is a people growing machine. It pulls and it pushes you to the point where you can embrace the processes of Life and Love on their own terms.

Like intense intimacy and eroticism, real love is not for kids. It's not for "wounded children" who can't soothe themselves. It's for adults only. We may not like the process, but it makes us capable of profound adult desire.

*Excerpted from **Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships**.*

Additional Resources

Make a list of resources that can contribute to your growth and success individually, as a couple, and as a family. Include contact information and notes about how each resource can benefit you and your relationship. Consider people, agencies and organizations who may be able to provide support, encouragement and resources on behalf of your most meaningful goals and dreams.

Additional Resources



