

Marriage: The Foundation

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About Me

- MA in Professional Counseling
- PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision
- Specialization in Couples and Family Therapy
- Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor (LPC-S) and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)
- Certified Daring Way Facilitator
- Counselor for over 10 years
- Married with 2 kids



Disclaimer

- Educational presentation
- Not providing counseling
- Can definitely answer questions
- Can make referrals as needed for counseling



No Couples Therapy If:



- Untreated severe mental illness, especially psychosis
- Either partner is having a continued affair
- Either partner wants a divorce
- Active substance abuse*
- Domestic violence*

*Additional interventions needed to be able to use couples therapy

Kulakowski, L., Brohl, K., & Ledford, R. (2014)

Statistics

US divorce rates:

- First marriage: 50-67%
- Half of all divorces occur in 1st 7 years
- Second marriage: same or about 10% higher

Couples therapy:

• About 35% of couples therapy is effective

Gottman - After 1 year, 30-50% relapse

• Getting couples therapy is highly correlated with divorce

• Meta-analytic study: 84% better off, couples therapy is effective
(Shadish & Baldwin, 2002)



Benefits and Risks



People who are happily married live longer, healthier lives

- More health-conscious
- Better immune system functioning


An unhappy marriage → more illness, shorter lives

- Chronically stressed → increased chances of illness by 35%, can shorten life by 4 years
- Children → depression, aggression, truancy, low school achievement

Myths about Marriage

- Anger is destructive.
 - Provides information about emotional and physical boundaries and safety
- Conflict is dysfunctional
 - Can actually deepen intimacy and connection
- Affairs cause divorce
 - Symptom of relationship disconnection and loneliness
- Gender differences cause marital problems.
 - Determining factor of marital satisfaction for women and men is the quality of the couple's friendship.





"Happy marriages are based on a deep friendship."
- Gottman & Silver


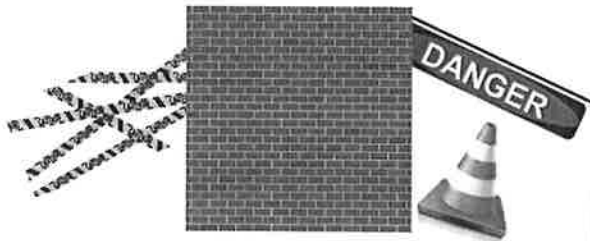


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Barriers to Connection



Vulnerability

- Definition:
 - Uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure
 - The courage to be seen
 - Being authentic

WHAT MAKES YOU vulnerable MAKES YOU BEAUTIFUL (BRENE BROWN)

Key to Connection: Empathy (Brené Brown)



Empathy

- Authentic connection is about "feeling felt"
- The ability to perceive a situation from the other person's perspective; to see, hear, and feel the unique world of the other
- Elements of Empathy (Wiseman and Neff)
 1. Perspective Taking
 2. Stay Out of Judgment
 3. Recognize Emotion
 4. Communicate Emotion
 5. Mindfulness

Compassion



Compassion is knowing our darkness well enough that we can sit in the dark with others, and its not a relationship between the wounded and the healed, it's a relationship of equals.

--Pima Chodron

Relationship Practice: Connection

Empathy Exercise:

- Ask for what you need. – Establish key phrase.
- Resist the impulse to fix it, minimize it, or make it go away.
- Sit with them in it. Allow them to feel it.
- Empathize with their feelings.
- Help them identify options – ONLY if they ask.
- Empower them to make their own choices.

Put yourself in
THEIR
shoes



Relationship Practice: Building Friendship

Love Map Exercise:

- Carve out time
- Each person write down 20 numbers between 1-60
- Answer the questions that correspond to the numbers
- Score as correct / incorrect
- Partner with highest score wins

Mindfully Develop and Maintain Connection Rituals:

- Date night
- Talking about your day before bed

Relationship Practices: Positive Perspective

Appreciations Exercise:

- Throughout the day, look for 2-3 things you appreciate about your spouse / what they did and tell them before bed each night
- Acknowledge how artificial it will feel
- Follow up discussions -- how it felt to hear it, how it felt to notice it



References and Resources

John Gottman: The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse

- *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*

Sue Johnson: Emotion-Focused Therapy and Demon Dialogues

- *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*

Dan Siegel: Neuroscience

- *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*
- *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*

References and Resources

Brené Brown: Empathy and Vulnerability

Audio CD

- *The Gifts of Imperfect Parenting: Raising Children with Courage, Compassion, and Connection*

Books

- *I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't): Making the Journey from "What Will People Think?" to "I Am Enough"*
- *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*
- *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to be and Embrace Who You Are*
- *Rising Strong: The Reckoning, The Rumble, The Revolution*

Daring Way 3 –day intensive

www.daringway.com

THE SOUND RELATIONSHIP HOUSE THEORY

Developed by John Gottman, Ph.D. and Julie Gottman, Ph.D.

Pioneers in relationship science, Drs. John and Julie Gottman have revolutionized our understanding of marriage, relationships, and couples therapy. They draw upon four decades of breakthrough research with more than 3,000 couples. The Sound Relationship House Theory is the foundation of the Gottman Method, which uses a practical approach to help couples break through barriers to achieve greater understanding, connection, and intimacy in their relationships.

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW TO MAKE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WORK?

Build Love Maps

- Maintain awareness of your partner's world

Share Fondness and Admiration

- Make deposits into the Emotional Bank Account

Turn Towards Instead of Away

- Accept bids for emotional connection

The Positive Perspective

- A positive perspective occurs when the friendship of your marriage is strong

Manage Conflict

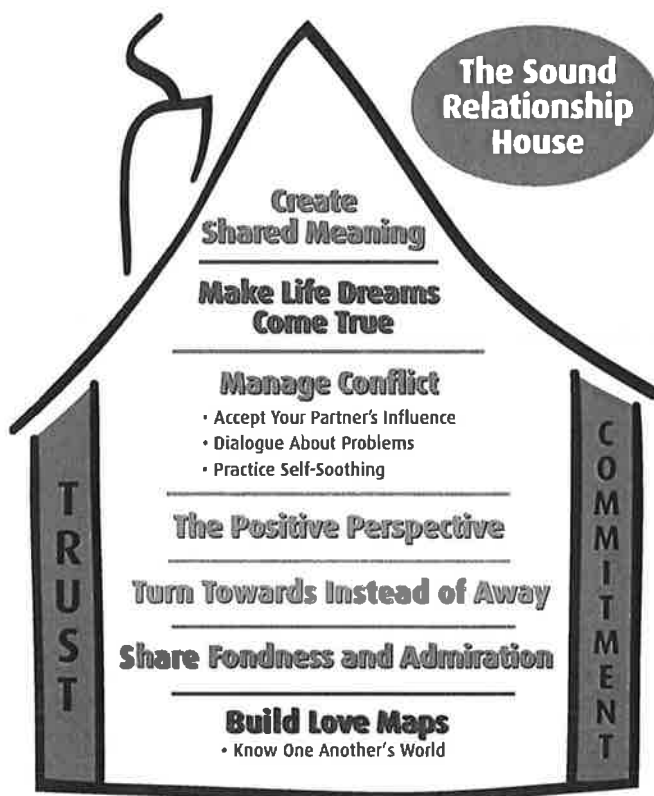
- Accept influence from your partner: be open to compromise
- Discuss your problems: take turns listening to one another about perpetual issues
- Practice self-soothing: keep yourself calm

Make Life Dreams Come True

- Find ways to support each other's life goals and dreams

Create Shared Meaning

- Build a shared sense of purpose. What is your mission and legacy?



WHAT ABOUT TRUST AND COMMITMENT?

5 ways to build trust, love, and loyalty in your relationship:

1. Make trustworthiness a main priority in your relationship
2. Act to maximize your partner's well-being
3. Know that trust is built in small positive moments
4. Avoid negative comparisons
5. Generate frequent thoughts and acts that cherish your partner's positive qualities and minimize your focus on their negative faults

THE LOVE MAPS QUESTIONS

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.

1. Name two of my 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 dream 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 people I most admire. (4)
49. Name my favorite ice cream flavor. (2)
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?
53. Name one of my 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 teams is my favorite? (2)

ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Now that you understand the concept of Love Maps, we will provide you with a list of open-ended questions to ask your partner. These are questions that can't be answered with a quick "yes" or "no." You and your partner will take turns being the speaker and the listener. After your partner answers your question, follow up with an open-ended question of your own, then answer the original question you asked your partner. Then your partner asks you an open-ended question, and so on. These questions take longer to answer, so you don't have to answer all of them in one sitting. This will be an enlightening way to build your love maps over time.

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 your physical home? Would you make changes if you could?
4. How do you think your life would be 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? Hopes?
7. How are you feeling about your jobs 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 skills, what would they be?
13. When it comes to the future, what do you worry about the most?
14. Who do you consider your best friends or 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 in another 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 last year for you?
30. What adventures would you like to have in your life right now?

All of the above questions will help you develop greater personal insight and a more detailed map of each other's life and world. Getting to know your spouse better and sharing your inner self with your partner is an ongoing process. In fact, it's a lifelong process. So think of questions to ask your partner; the key to sustaining a happy marriage is to periodically ask what's going on in their life.