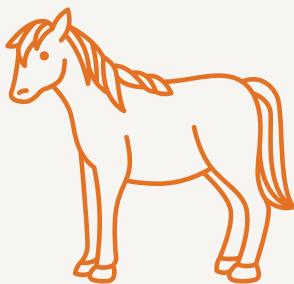
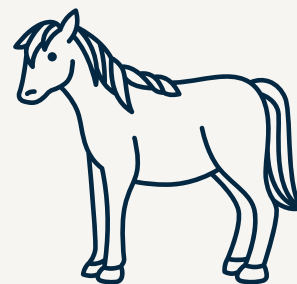


# The 4 Horseman

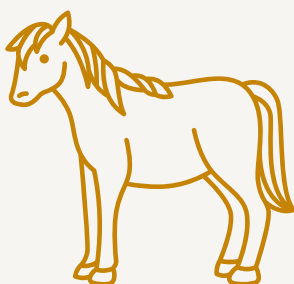
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, as described by Dr. John Gottman in his research on relationships, are the four behaviors that predict divorce with over 90% accuracy. By recognizing and addressing the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, couples can avoid the negative impact they can have on a relationship and build a more stable and supportive partnership.



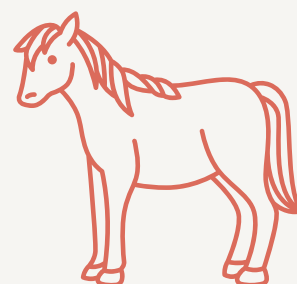
**Criticism:** This refers to attacking your partner's character or personality, rather than addressing specific behaviors. For example, saying "You never listen to me"



**Contempt:** This is the use of sarcasm, eye-rolling, or insults to show disrespect and undermine the dignity of your partner.



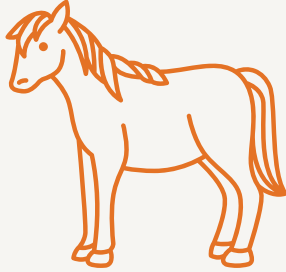
**Defensiveness:** This is a self-protective stance where one partner avoids taking responsibility for their actions and instead shifts the blame onto their partner.



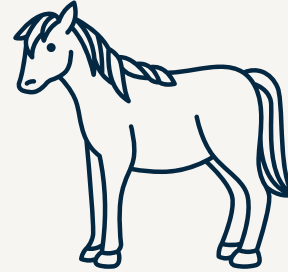
**Stonewalling:** This is when one partner withdraws emotionally and becomes distant, which can include physical withdrawal such as leaving the room, or emotional withdrawal such as refusing to engage in the conversation.

# Identifying the 4 Horseman

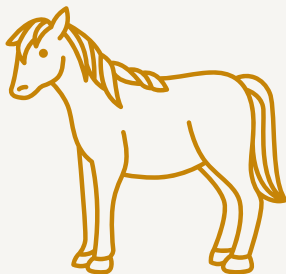
Can you identify any or all of the horsemen in your relationship? What can you do to combat these behaviors? Write your answers on the line.



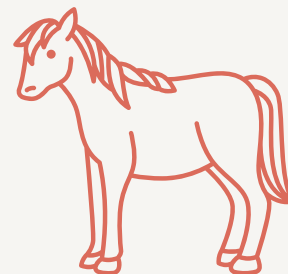
Criticism



Contempt



Defensiveness



Stonewalling

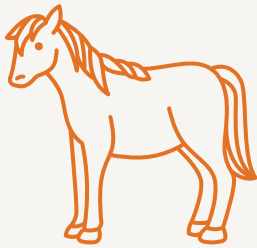
How do you feel when these behaviors occur in real-time in our relationship?

# Antidotes

The initial key to conflict management lies in recognizing and countering The Four Horsemen when they emerge during your discussions. Failing to do so may jeopardize the future of your relationship. However, for each horseman, there exists an antidote.

## Horsemen:

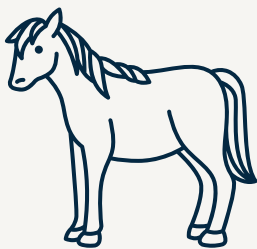
## Antidote:



### Criticism

Instead of attacking your partner's character, express complaints in a non-blaming way. Use "I" statements to share your feelings and needs positively. For example, instead of saying, "You always talk about yourself. Why are you always so selfish?" say, "I'm feeling left out of our talk tonight and I need to vent. Can we please talk about my day?"

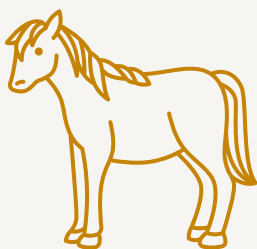
### Gentle Start-Up



### Contempt

Counteract contempt by showing appreciation and respect regularly. The more positive interactions you have with your partner, the less likely you'll feel or express contempt. Avoid sarcasm, name-calling, and hostile humor. For instance, instead of saying, "You forgot to load the dishwasher again? Ugh. You are so incredibly lazy," say, "I understand that you've been busy lately, but could you please remember to load the dishwasher when I work late? I'd appreciate it."

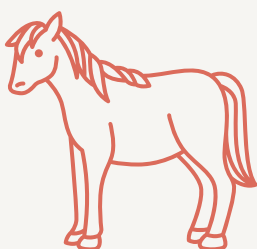
### Build a Culture of Appreciation & Respect



### Defensiveness

Instead of becoming defensive and blaming your partner, accept responsibility for part of the conflict. Even if you don't agree entirely, acknowledging your role in the issue helps prevent escalation. For example, instead of saying, "It's not my fault that we're going to be late. It's your fault since you always get dressed at the last second," say, "I don't like being late, but you're right. We don't always have to leave so early. I can be a little more flexible."

### Take Responsibility



### Stonewalling

When feeling overwhelmed, take a break to self-soothe before continuing the discussion. Physiologically calming down is crucial for productive conversations. Call a timeout, spend at least twenty minutes engaging in soothing activities like reading or listening to music, and avoid thoughts of righteous indignation or victimhood. For example, say, "Honey, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I'm feeling overwhelmed and I need to take a break. Can you give me twenty minutes and then we can talk?"

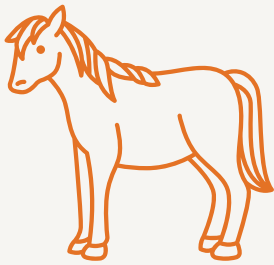
### Physiological Self-Soothing

# Using the Antidotes

THINK OF A TIME EACH OF THE 4 HORSEMEN APPEARED IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP. REFLECT AND WRITE DOWN WHAT ANTIDOTE STRATEGIES AND PHRASES YOU COULD HAVE USED TO ADDRESS THE HORSEMEN.

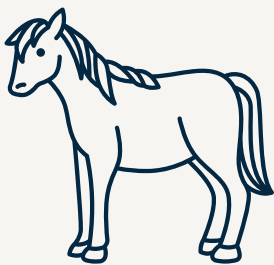
**Horsemen:**

**Antidote:**



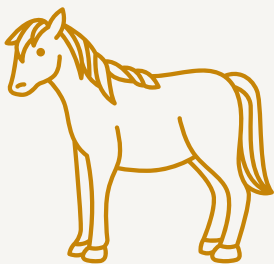
**Criticism**

**Gentle Start-Up**



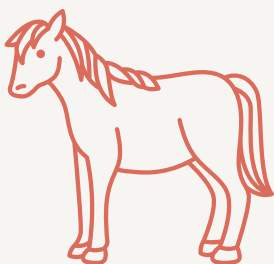
**Contempt**

**Build a Culture of Appreciation & Respect**



**Defensiveness**

**Take Responsibility**



**Stonewalling**

**Physiological Self-Soothing**

# THE ORIGINS OF A HORSEMAN

This worksheet aims to help you explore the origins of your default conflict reaction, focusing on one of the four horsemen by Dr. John Gottman. By understanding where your reaction might have originated, you can gain insights into your emotional triggers and work towards more constructive responses during conflicts. Select one of the following horsemen as your default reaction for this exercise: Criticism, Defensiveness, Contempt, or Stonewalling.

Think about past conflicts or arguments where your chosen horseman reaction surfaced. Identify the triggers or factors that seem to activate your default reaction. Are there specific words, actions, or behaviors from your partner that provoke this response?

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Reflect on your childhood experiences and upbringing. Are there any connections between your current default reaction and the way conflicts were handled in your family or with significant caregivers during your childhood?

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Explore your emotional needs in relationships. Are there unmet emotional needs that might contribute to your default reaction during conflicts?

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What alternative responses could you practice to replace your default reaction during conflicts? How do you plan to seek support or guidance as you work on changing your default reaction?

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# The Gentle Start Up

In the Gottman approach, a "gentle start-up" refers to a communication technique used by couples to address issues or conflicts in a calm and constructive manner. It involves expressing concerns or making requests in a way that is respectful and non-blaming, which helps create a positive and receptive atmosphere for discussions. A gentle start-up sets the tone for productive conversations and reduces the likelihood of the conversation escalating into an argument.

## Here's a simple explanation of a gentle start-up:

Imagine you want to discuss a concern with your partner, such as feeling overwhelmed with household chores. Instead of starting the conversation with blame or criticism, a gentle start-up would involve expressing your feelings and needs in a non-accusatory way.

Instead of saying, "You never help with anything around the house! You're so lazy," which can lead to defensiveness, a gentle start-up would be, "I've been feeling quite overwhelmed with all the chores lately, and I could use some help. Can we talk about how we can divide them more evenly?"

## Key elements of a gentle start-up include:

1. **Using "I" Statements:** Begin your sentences with "I feel" or "I need" to express your emotions and desires without sounding accusatory.
2. **Specific and Concrete:** Be clear about the specific situation or behavior you want to discuss. Avoid vague or general criticisms.
3. **Focus on Behavior, Not Character:** Address the specific issue or behavior you want to change rather than attacking your partner's character or personality.
4. **State Positive Needs:** Express what you need or desire from your partner, fostering a sense of collaboration and teamwork.
5. **Pick the Right Time:** Choose an appropriate time to have the conversation when both of you are relatively calm and can give each other undivided attention.



The gentle start-up technique promotes effective communication, reduces defensiveness, and increases the likelihood of a positive outcome in conversations between partners. It sets the stage for open and respectful dialogue, fostering emotional intimacy and understanding in the relationship.

# How to Build a Culture of Appreciation & Respect

Building a culture of appreciation and respect in a relationship entails fostering an environment where both partners feel deeply valued, loved, and cherished. This involves expressing gratitude and acknowledging each other's positive qualities and contributions. Such a culture acts as a powerful support system during difficult times and strengthens the emotional bond between partners.

To achieve this, several key aspects come into play. Firstly, acknowledging that nobody is perfect and having realistic expectations of each other and the relationship is vital. Embracing imperfections and flaws in your partner demonstrates profound love and unity.

Secondly, showing appreciation through heartfelt words, thoughtful actions, and affectionate gestures is essential. When complimenting your partner, be specific and detailed, focusing on the qualities you admire and cherish.

Being attentive to your partner's bids for attention, which can be as simple as questions or as complex as emotions, is another crucial aspect. Responding positively, whether with a warm smile, kind words, or validating their feelings, fosters emotional safety and strengthens the connection.

Creating an emotional safe haven within the relationship allows both partners to express themselves without fear of judgment or criticism. This emotional safety encourages personal growth, vulnerability, and open communication.

Establishing appreciation rituals, such as sharing two things you appreciate about each other before bedtime, contributes to a positive atmosphere and directs attention to the relationship's strengths and love.

By actively integrating appreciation and respect into the relationship, partners enhance each other's emotional well-being and build a stronger foundation for enduring love and intimacy. Regularly expressing appreciation and respect nurtures the relationship, making it more resilient and better equipped to face life's challenges together.

E.g. John and Sarah have been married for five years. They understand that building a culture of appreciation and respect is crucial for their relationship's well-being. One evening, as they are having dinner together, Sarah notices that John seems a bit stressed and tired from work. Instead of overlooking it, she decides to express her appreciation for him.

"John," she says with a warm smile, "I just want you to know how much I appreciate everything you do for us. You work so hard to provide for our family, and I admire your dedication and commitment. Thank you for being such a loving and caring partner."

John's face lights up, feeling seen and valued by his wife. He replies, "Thank you, Sarah. Your words mean a lot to me. Your support and understanding always help me feel better, even on tough days."

In this simple interaction, John and Sarah demonstrate the key aspects of building a culture of appreciation and respect. They acknowledge each other's efforts and imperfections, express heartfelt appreciation through words, and respond positively to each other's emotional bids. This fosters emotional safety and strengthens their emotional bond, making their relationship more resilient and fulfilling.

# Building a Culture of Appreciation & Respect Worksheet

Building a culture of appreciation and respect in your relationship is a powerful way to nurture love, strengthen emotional bonds, and create a positive atmosphere for growth. Use this worksheet to identify opportunities for expressing genuine appreciation, admiration, and respect towards your partner.

Review the list below and select at least five ways you can express genuine appreciation, admiration, and respect for your partner. Choose actions that align with your partner's preferences and personality:

- a) Express affection: Verbally express your love and affection for your partner.
- b) Exchange tender touch: Offer hugs, kisses, or gentle touches to show your affection.
- c) Kiss one another passionately: Surprise your partner with a passionate kiss.
- d) Give compliments: Offer sincere compliments on your partner's appearance, actions, or qualities.
- e) Surprise presents: Give thoughtful gifts that show you care, focusing on the sentiment rather than the price tag.
- f) Share silly and/or romantic poems: Write or find poems that express your feelings for your partner.
- g) Ask, "What can I do next week to make you feel more loved?": Initiate a conversation about your partner's needs and desires.

Note how you plan to implement these practices, add your own ideas to implement:

Commit to practicing at least one of the appreciation actions you selected every day for the next week. Pay attention to how your partner responds to your gestures of appreciation. Notice the positive impact it has on your relationship and emotional connection and note it here:





# TURN TOWARDS







The "turn towards" technique is a fundamental aspect of building and maintaining a strong relationship, as demonstrated by Dr. John Gottman's research. It involves responding positively to your partner's bids for attention, affirmation, affection, or any other positive connection. Turning towards bids is essential for creating a supportive and loving environment in a relationship.

## HERE'S HOW TO USE THE "TURN TOWARDS" TECHNIQUE:

1. **Understand Bids:** Bids are any attempts from one partner to connect with the other. They can be simple gestures like a smile or more complex requests for advice or help. It's crucial to recognize and appreciate these bids as they serve as opportunities for connection.
2. **Make Bids:** Both partners should be comfortable making bids for connection. Practice being open and vulnerable with each other by expressing your needs and desires. Use clear communication to express what you want or need from your partner.
3. **Recognize Subtext:** Bids often have a secondary layer or subtext, which may not be explicitly stated. Learn to pay attention to your partner's non-verbal cues and understand the underlying emotions or messages they are conveying.
4. **Pay Attention:** Turning towards starts with being attentive to your partner's bids. Be present in your interactions and make a conscious effort to respond to their bids positively.
5. **Respond Wholeheartedly:** When your partner makes a bid, respond wholeheartedly. Show them that you value their connection by being attentive, engaged, and responsive to their needs.
6. **Share Responses:** Regularly discuss bids and responses with your partner. Share how you felt when your bids were acknowledged and how you can improve your responsiveness to each other.
7. **Reflect on Your Behavior:** Take time to reflect on your own bid-making behavior. Ask yourself questions like: How do I make bids? Can I improve my bid-making skills? How good am I at recognizing the difference between text and subtext in my partner's bids?
8. **Avoid Turning Away:** Turning away from bids can be harmful to the relationship. Avoid dismissing or ignoring your partner's attempts to connect, as this can lead to feelings of rejection and disconnection.
9. **Focus on Turning Towards:** Strive to be intentional about turning towards your partner's bids. Aim to respond positively and supportively, building a sense of trust and emotional intimacy.
10. **Be Mindful of Reactions:** Be aware of your impulse to turn away or against your partner's bids. Instead, practice turning towards them with empathy and understanding.



# GUIDELINES FOR TIME OUTS

-  Recognize the Need: When you feel overwhelmed, flooded with emotions, or on the verge of reacting negatively, acknowledge the need for a timeout. It's essential to take a break before the conflict escalates further.
-  Communicate Respectfully: Use "I" statements to express your feelings and intentions clearly. For example, say, "I'm feeling overwhelmed, and I need to take a break. Can we pause the discussion for twenty minutes and then come back to it?"
-  Agree on Timeout Rules: Discuss and agree on a specific duration for the timeout. The Gottman approach suggests at least twenty minutes to allow enough time for physiological self-soothing.
-  Physiological Self-Soothing: During the timeout, engage in calming activities that help you relax and lower your stress levels. Avoid thoughts of indignation or victimhood during this period.
-  Avoid Rumination: Refrain from replaying the argument in your mind during the timeout. Focus on soothing and distracting activities like reading, listening to music, or exercising.
-  Regroup and Reconnect: After the agreed-upon time, reconvene to continue the conversation in a more respectful and rational manner. Remember that the goal is to find a resolution and understanding, not to win an argument.

E.g. John and Sarah were in the middle of a heated argument about their upcoming vacation plans. The tension in the room escalated, and both of them could feel their emotions intensifying. Recognizing the need for a timeout to avoid further conflict, John took a deep breath and calmly said, "I'm feeling overwhelmed, and I need to take a break. Can we pause the discussion for twenty minutes and then come back to it?" Sarah understood the importance of de-escalating the situation and agreed to the timeout.

During the timeout, John went to another room to engage in physiological self-soothing. He decided to do some deep breathing exercises and listened to calming music on his headphones. Sarah, on the other hand, took a walk outside to clear her mind and get some fresh air.

After twenty minutes, John and Sarah reconvened. They both felt calmer and more composed. They resumed the conversation in a more respectful and understanding manner. By taking the timeout, they were able to prevent the argument from escalating further and found a productive way to discuss their vacation plans without unnecessary conflict.

# Physiological Self-Soothing to Calm Down



**Deep Breathing:** Practice deep breathing exercises to slow down your heart rate and promote relaxation. Inhale deeply through your nose, hold for a few seconds, and then exhale slowly through your mouth.



**Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Tense and relax different muscle groups in your body, starting from your toes and working your way up to your head. This technique can release physical tension and promote relaxation.



**Mindfulness Meditation:** Practice mindfulness by focusing on your breath or sensations in the present moment. This helps to shift your focus away from negative thoughts and emotions.



**Listening to Calming Music:** Listen to soothing or instrumental music that helps you feel relaxed and at ease. Music has a powerful impact on our emotions and can help reduce stress.



**Visualization:** Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a peaceful and calming place, such as a beach or a forest. Visualization can transport your mind to a tranquil setting, reducing stress levels.



**Physical Exercise:** Engage in physical activities like walking, jogging, or yoga, which release endorphins and promote a sense of well-being.



**Taking a Warm Bath or Shower:** A warm bath or shower can be incredibly relaxing and comforting, helping to release tension and promote relaxation.



**Progressive Counting:** Count slowly from 1 to 10 or from 10 to 1, focusing solely on the counting. This can help distract your mind from stressful thoughts.



**Engaging in a Hobby:** Spend time doing something you enjoy, such as reading a book, painting, gardening, or cooking.



**Spending Time in Nature:** Spending time outdoors and connecting with nature can have a calming and grounding effect on your emotions.



**Petting an Animal:** Interacting with a pet, such as stroking a cat or playing with a dog, can release oxytocin, a hormone that promotes relaxation and bonding.



**Using Aromatherapy:** Light scented candles or use essential oils with calming scents like lavender or chamomile to create a soothing atmosphere.

# What is the Sound Relationship House?

The Sound Relationship House is a metaphorical representation of a strong and secure partnership, as introduced by Dr. John Gottman in his book "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work." It comprises seven floors, each representing essential aspects of a healthy and happy relationship.

**Floor 1: Build Love Maps** This floor is the foundation, where partners get to know each other deeply by creating a "Love Map." It involves understanding each other's likes, dislikes, dreams, and experiences. A solid knowledge of your partner's inner world fosters emotional connection and intimacy.

**Floor 2: Share Fondness and Admiration** On this level, partners express appreciation and affection for each other. They vocalize the qualities they admire in one another, fostering a positive and loving atmosphere.

**Floor 3: Turn Towards** Partners respond to each other's bids for attention, support, and comfort. When one partner reaches out, the other turns toward the bid, creating a safe space for open communication and emotional expression.

**Floor 4: The Positive Perspective** Couples maintain a positive outlook on their relationship, giving each other the benefit of the doubt and seeing the best in each other. This optimistic perspective strengthens their bond and unity.

**Floor 5: Manage Conflict** Conflict is inevitable in any relationship, but partners learn to navigate it constructively. This involves accepting each other's influence, engaging in dialogue, and using self-soothing techniques to remain calm during disagreements.

**Floor 6: Make Life Dreams Come True** In this level, partners support each other in achieving their life goals and dreams. They work together as a team to encourage personal growth and success.

**Floor 7: Create Shared Meaning** At the top level, couples build a shared inner world through rituals and symbols that define them as a unit. These Rituals of Connection express their identity as a couple and foster a sense of belonging.

**The Weight-Bearing Walls of Trust and Commitment:** Trust and commitment are the pillars that hold the entire Sound Relationship House together. They form the foundation of a healthy and supportive relationship, where partners have faith in each other and pledge to grow together in love.



# THE SOUND RELATIONSHIP HOUSE

CREATE SHARED MEANING



MAKE DREAMS A REALITY



MANAGE CONFLICT HEALTHILY



THE POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE



USE THE TURN TOWARDS TECHNIQUE



SHARE FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION



BUILD LOVE MAPS

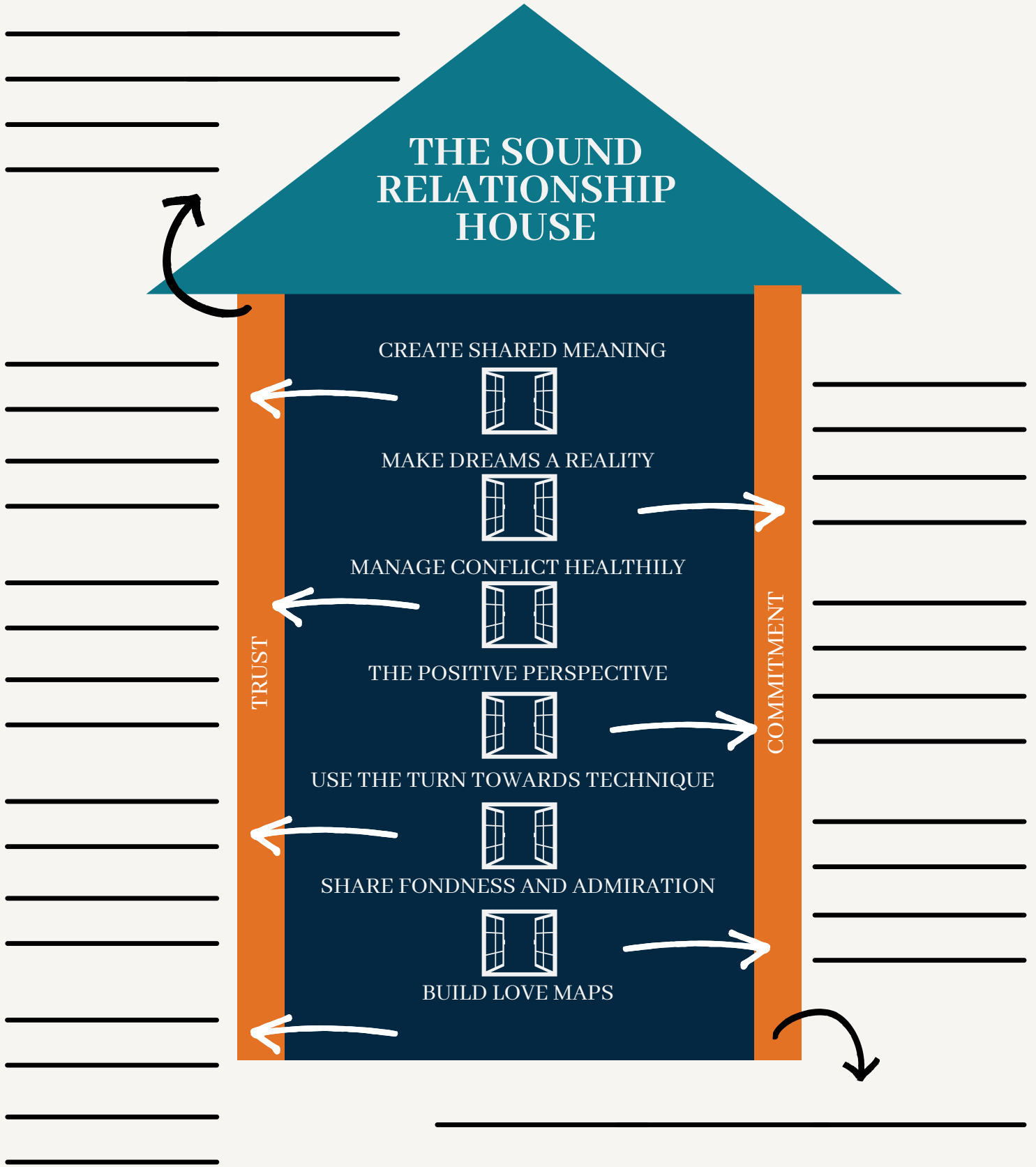
TRUST

COMMITMENT

A visual representation of the Sound Relationship House. The house features seven floors, each representing essential aspects of a healthy and happy relationship.

# YOUR SOUND RELATIONSHIP HOUSE

WRITE SUGGESTIONS ON HOW YOU CAN PRACTICALLY IMPROVE ON AND IMPLEMENT THESE ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP USING THE GOTTMAN SOUND RELATIONSHIP HOUSE.



# THE 5 STEPS OF HEALTHY CONFLICT

1

**Soften Your Start-Up:** Begin conflict discussions with a soft start-up, avoiding criticism, contempt, defensiveness, or stonewalling. Take responsibility for your feelings and use "I" statements to express your needs. Be polite and appreciative in your communication to foster a positive atmosphere.

2

**Learn to Send and Receive Repair Attempts:** Recognize and respond to repair attempts from your partner. Repair attempts are efforts to de-escalate tension and find solutions. Encourage open communication by acknowledging and accepting repair attempts even if they initially seem negative or unexpected.

3

**Soothe Yourself and Each Other:** In intense conflicts, take a 20-30 minute break if you or your partner feel flooded with emotions. Focus on the positive aspects of your relationship individually during this time. Learn to soothe each other by asking what triggers flooding and how you can comfort one another during these moments.

4

**Compromise:** Understand that compromise is crucial for conflict resolution. It involves negotiating and finding ways to accommodate each other's needs without expecting one person to change completely. Accept influence from your partner, and be willing to work together to reach a mutual understanding.

5

**Address Emotional Injuries:** After arguments, recognize that emotional wounds may be left behind, even if the issue has been resolved. Engage in processing and talking about these emotional injuries to heal and strengthen your emotional bond. Use exercises, like the ones in "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work," to facilitate emotional healing.

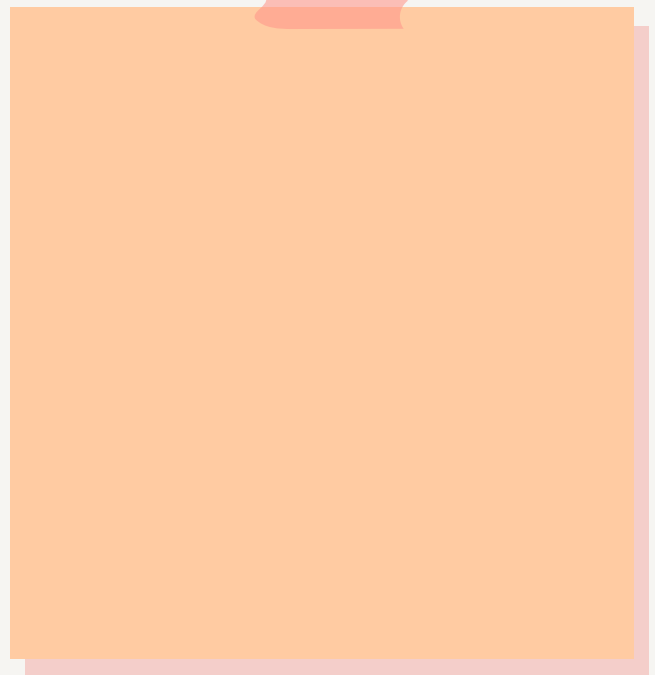
**By implementing these steps, you can improve the way you handle conflicts and create a healthier pattern of communication in your relationship. Remember that not all problems can be fully resolved, but by mastering these problem-solving skills, many difficulties can find workable solutions and contribute to a stronger, more fulfilling relationship.**

# Me, Myself and I

I-Statements are a powerful communication tool that can help you express your feelings, needs, and concerns assertively and respectfully during conflicts. This worksheet aims to assist you in practicing I-Statements to improve your conflict management skills and foster better communication with your partner.

Think of a recent conflict or disagreement with your partner that you would like to address using I-Statements. Choose a situation that is not too emotionally charged to ensure a constructive conversation.

Practice how you could have constructively managed the situation by using I-statements: Write down your "I" Statements using the following formula: "I feel [emotion] when [specific situation or behavior] because [impact on you or your needs]." For example: "I feel hurt when you cancel our plans without telling me because it makes me feel unimportant and not valued."





# 5 Rituals of Connection

## DAILY SCREEN-FREE MEALS



Whenever possible, eat meals together without distractions from TV or cell phones. Use this time to connect and engage in meaningful conversations.

## STRESS-REDUCING CONVERSATIONS



Set aside 30 minutes each day for a stress-reducing conversation where you and your partner discuss external stressors. Focus on actively listening and showing compassion to each other.

## EXERCISE TOGETHER



Make wellness a joint goal by exercising together regularly. Whether it's going for a walk, biking, or trying new activities, sharing these experiences can bring you closer.

## SIX-SECOND KISS



Share a daily six-second kiss to increase emotional and physical intimacy. Physical contact like holding hands and hugging can reduce stress and improve relationship satisfaction.

## CONTINUE DATING



Keep the spark alive by regularly going out or staying in for date nights. Stay curious about each other through open-ended conversations and fun activities that bring joy and laughter.

# EXAMINING YOUR RITUALS

How often do we share meals together throughout the day? Is there a specific mealtime that holds particular importance for you?

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How do we say goodbye to each other when we have to be apart? Are there any rituals that can help us feel more emotionally connected during separations?

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How do we approach financial discussions and decisions together? Are there any rituals we can establish to make these conversations more constructive and harmonious?

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How do we currently celebrate special occasions? Are there any traditions we had in the past that we'd like to bring back or new ones we'd like to create?

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How do we handle errands and chores together? Are there any rituals we can implement to make these tasks more enjoyable and cooperative?



Do we share any hobbies or interests? How can we nurture these shared hobbies as a ritual in our relationship?

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# SHARED MEANING

Shared meaning in couples counseling refers to the mutual understanding and agreement between partners about the values, beliefs, goals, and vision for their relationship. It is an essential component for a healthy relationship, as it provides a shared sense of purpose, direction, and connection between partners.

Creating shared meaning in a relationship involves developing a deep and meaningful connection with your partner, beyond just the surface-level activities and experiences. It is about creating an inner life together, a culture rich with symbols, rituals, and shared goals that bind you as a couple. This spiritual dimension of a relationship fosters a sense of union and understanding of what it truly means to be together.

One way to create shared meaning is by discussing each other's dreams and aspirations, which often have roots in your pasts. By understanding each other's dreams, you can support and encourage one another to pursue them, building a shared vision for the future.

Another important aspect of creating shared meaning is to establish traditions and rituals that are meaningful to both partners. This involves reflecting on the traditions and rituals you each had while growing up and exploring how they shaped your experiences. By sharing your best and worst memories and understanding what these rituals symbolize to each of you, you can create new and special traditions of your own.



# LOVE MAPS

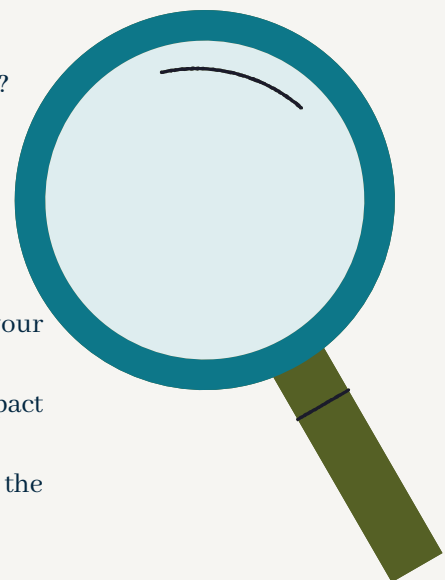
In the Gottman Method, Love Maps refer to a deep understanding of your partner's inner world, including their thoughts, feelings, dreams, and life experiences. It involves being familiar with your partner's likes, dislikes, and important life events. Love Maps are a key component of a strong and lasting relationship as they help foster emotional intimacy and connection between partners. By regularly updating and maintaining Love Maps, couples can stay attuned to each other's changing needs and continue to build a strong foundation of emotional intimacy.

## HOW TO DEVELOP LOVE MAPS

1. Show genuine curiosity and interest in your partner's inner world. Ask open-ended questions about their thoughts, feelings, dreams, and experiences. Be attentive and actively listen to their responses without judgment.
2. Openly share your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences with your partner. Being vulnerable and sharing personal information encourages your partner to do the same, creating a reciprocal atmosphere of trust and intimacy.
3. Make it a habit to regularly check in with each other about your lives, feelings, and experiences. Schedule time for meaningful conversations to keep your Love Maps up to date. This can be done during meals, walks, or designated "relationship time."
4. Show empathy and validate your partner's feelings and experiences. Acknowledge their emotions and demonstrate understanding, even if you don't necessarily agree. This fosters emotional connection and strengthens your bond as a couple.


## EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE LOVE MAPS

- What are your current dreams and aspirations?
- What is something you've been excited about lately?
- What activities or hobbies make you feel most alive and fulfilled?
- What are some of your favorite childhood memories?
- What are your biggest fears or insecurities?
- How do you typically cope with stress or difficult emotions?
- What are your top three priorities in life right now?
- What are your favorite ways to relax and unwind?
- Can you share a meaningful experience or turning point in your life?
- What do you think is your greatest strength, and how does it impact your life?
- What are some of your long-term goals or aspirations for the future?
- Describe your ideal day from morning to night.



# LOVE MAPS

These prompts can be used as a guide for or a starting point for developing love maps. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's backgrounds, experiences, values, and aspirations. Read the prompt examples and write your answers below.



If you could have any superpower, what would it be, and how would you use it to make the world a better place?

Imagine you could live in any fictional universe from books, movies, or TV shows. Which one would you choose, and why?


Share a vivid childhood dream or recurring dream you had, and discuss its significance to you.

If you could instantly become an expert in any field or skill, what would you choose, and how would you use your expertise?

If you were to create an art piece that represents your life story, what elements would it include, and what message would it convey?

If you could create your dream home, what would it look like, and where would it be located?

Now switch your worksheet with your partner's and reflect on your answers. Did you learn anything new about your partner? Is there anything that surprised you?



# RECOGNIZING BIDS

Recognizing bids is essential for fostering healthy and satisfying relationships. Bids can come in various forms, and being aware of them allows you to respond to your loved ones in a supportive and positive manner. Here are some ways to recognize bids based on the information provided:



**Verbal Bids:** Verbal bids are straightforward and easily recognizable. They involve direct communication and may include statements, questions, or invitations. Examples of verbal bids include asking someone to chat sometime or requesting assistance with a specific task.



**Nonverbal Bids:** Nonverbal bids are expressed through body language, facial expressions, and vocalizations. They may not be as explicit as verbal bids, but they are equally important. Examples of nonverbal bids include affectionate touching like hugging or holding hands, playful gestures like tickling or dancing, and vocalizations such as laughing or sighing to invite interaction or show interest.



**Affiliating Gestures:** Affiliating gestures are a type of nonverbal bid that involves actions that connect or assist another person. They include simple acts of kindness, such as opening a door, offering a seat, or pointing to something of shared interest. These gestures show care and consideration for the other person's well-being.



**Playful and Affectionate Behaviors:** Bids for connection can also be expressed through playfulness and affection. For instance, playful touching like bopping or wrestling and affectionate behaviors like blowing a kiss or a gentle back rub are bids that seek interaction and closeness.

By being attentive to these various types of bids, you can better understand when your loved ones are reaching out for connection. Responding to bids positively and supportively strengthens your relationship and creates a pattern of healthy interactions. Similarly, recognizing when you make bids and understanding how your bids are received can help improve communication and emotional connection with those you care about. Remember, bids can be both subtle and overt, so being attuned to the various ways people reach out for connection is key to nurturing strong and lasting relationships.

# 3 WAYS TO MAKE BETTER BIDS

Clear, specific, and positively expressed bids increase the likelihood of turning towards each other, fostering a happy and healthy relationship where both partners feel understood and supported.

## USE CLEAR AND VERBAL COMMUNICATION

When making a bid for connection, it's essential to be clear and explicit about your needs. While nonverbal bids can be meaningful, some partners may have difficulty understanding them. By using words to express your desires and intentions, you reduce the chances of miscommunication. For example, instead of sighing while doing the dishes, directly ask your partner if they have time to help you dry or suggest an arrangement to share household tasks more equitably.

## BE SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR NEEDS

Take the time to identify exactly what you need in a given moment and communicate it clearly. Avoid vague or ambiguous bids that may lead to confusion. For instance, if you've had a rough day and need emotional support, tell your partner, "Today was challenging. Can I talk to you about it?" If you simply want some cuddle time on the couch, express that explicitly. By being specific, you help your partner understand how they can respond and support you effectively.

## EXPRESS NEEDS POSITIVELY

Turning against bids can lead to conflict and emotional distance in a relationship. Avoid expressing your needs in a negative or critical manner. Instead, frame your bids in a positive and constructive way. For instance, if you miss your partner's presence after a busy week, refrain from making critical statements like, "You're never home" or "I'm doing everything by myself around here." Instead, make a better bid by expressing your positive need for emotional connection, such as, "I miss you. Can we schedule a date night?" or "It's been a while since we had lunch together. Are you free next week?" This approach fosters a loving and understanding atmosphere, promoting emotional connection rather than conflict.

# A RELATIONSHIP QUIZ

Complete the quiz to discover how well you potentially know your partner and your relationship? Answer each question with "Yes," "No," or "N/A" (Not Applicable). Be honest and provide the most accurate response that applies to your current relationship.

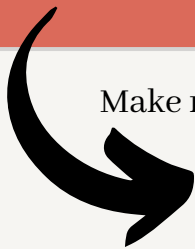
Section 1: Knowledge about Your Partner	Yes	No	N/A
Do you know your partner's favorite hobbies and interests?			
Do you know your partner's dreams and aspirations for the future?			
Do you know your partner's favorite childhood memories?			
Do you know your partner's pet peeves or things that annoy them?			
Do you know your partner's favorite type of music or movies?			
Do you know your partner's love language (e.g., acts of service, words of affirmation)?			
Do you know your partner's current stressors or challenges in life?			
Do you know your partner's fears or insecurities?			
Do you know your partner's favorite foods or restaurants?			
Do you know your partner's preferred way of resolving conflicts?			
Section 2: Knowledge about Your Romantic Relationship	Yes	No	N/A
Do you know your relationship anniversary or the day you became a couple?			
Do you know your partner's feelings about the level of emotional intimacy in your relationship?			
Do you know your partner's thoughts on future commitments, such as marriage or living together?			
Do you know your partner's definition of trust and how it applies to your relationship?			
Do you know your partner's communication preferences during times of disagreement?			



Do you know your partner's thoughts on important relationship milestones (e.g., moving in together, having children)?			
Do you know your partner's long-term relationship goals and aspirations?			
Do you know your partner's perspective on balancing individuality and togetherness in the relationship?			
Do you know your partner's expectations about physical affection and intimacy?			
Do you know your partner's thoughts on the role of technology and social media in your relationship?			
<b>Section 3: Knowledge about Your Friendship</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Do you know your friend's favorite books or authors?			
Do you know your friend's proudest achievements or moments in life?			
Do you know your friend's biggest fears or anxieties?			
Do you know your friend's favorite hobbies or pastimes?			
Do you know your friend's thoughts on their career or future plans?			
Do you know your friend's preferred way of receiving support during tough times?			
Do you know your friend's opinions on important social or political issues?			
Do you know your friend's thoughts on personal growth and self-improvement?			
Do you know your friend's preferred communication style and how often they like to connect?			
Do you know your friend's favorite ways to have fun or unwind?			
<b>Section 4: Knowledge about Your Values</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Do you know your own core values and beliefs?			
Do you know your partner's core values and how they align with your own?			
Do you know your friend's core values and how they align with your own?			

Do you know your shared values as a couple or a friendship group?			
Do you know how your values influence important decisions in your relationship and friendship?			

Scoring	Yes	No	N/A
For each "Yes " give yourself 1 point. For each "No" or "N/A," give yourself 0 points.	1	0	0



Make notes and tally here

30-35 points: Excellent knowledge about your partner and relationship/friendship. You have a strong understanding of each other's preferences, thoughts, and values. Keep up the great communication!

20-29 points: Good knowledge, but there is room for improvement. Focus on increasing communication and learning more about each other to strengthen your relationship/friendship.

10-19 points: Fair knowledge, significant opportunities for improvement. Consider investing more time in open conversations to deepen your connection and understanding.

0-9 points: Limited knowledge. It's crucial to improve communication and actively learn about each other to foster a stronger bond and healthier relationship/friendship.

**Remember, relationships require ongoing effort and communication. Use the quiz results as a starting point to identify areas that may need improvement and create opportunities for deeper connections with your partner and friends. Regularly engage in meaningful conversations, ask open-ended questions, and show genuine interest in each other's lives to enhance your relationship/friendship.**

# IDENTIFYING AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

This worksheet is meant to be a tool for open and constructive communication. Approach these prompts with empathy, understanding, and a willingness to work together to strengthen your relationship.

Circle only 1 area you feel you need to improve on in your relationship and answer the questions about the area you selected.

- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Emotional connection
- Quality time
- Shared activities
- Individual needs & boundaries
- Romance
- Appreciation
- Showing affection
- Trust
- Transparency
- Relationship goals
- Managing stress & responsibilities
- Intimacy

How would you describe our [selected topic] style?

Are there any aspects of our [selected topic] that you find challenging?

How would you suggest improving [selected topic]?

Are there ways you can better support your partner as you work on improving [selected topic]?

How can you ensure you will work on improving the [selected topic] in your relationship? What can do you that is in your control to improve [selected topic]?

# SHIPWRECKED!

Picture yourself and your partner stranded on a tropical desert island after a shipwreck. It's just the two of you, and you need to prepare for survival and potential rescue. A storm is approaching, and you must decide on the ten most important items to keep from the ship's inventory found on the beach. Each of you individually writes down your choices and ranks them based on importance.

- Two changes of clothing
- AM-FM and short-wave radio receiver
- Ten gallons of water
- Pots and pans
- Matches
- Shovel
- Backpack
- Toilet paper
- Oxygen tanks
- Freeze-dried food for seven days
- One change of clothing
- One-fifth of whiskey
- Flares
- Compass
- Regional aerial maps
- Gun with six bullets
- Fifty packages of condoms
- First-aid kit with penicillin
- Two tents
- Two sleeping bags
- Knife
- Small life raft, with sail
- Sunblock lotion
- Cookstove and lantern
- Long rope
- Two walkie-talkie sender-receiver units

Share your individual lists and collaboratively create a consensus list of ten items - write it down below. Both partners should have equal influence in the process.



How did you influence each other's choices? Was any attempt to dominate or compete? Did you feel included, or did you encounter any areas of tension, such as sulking, withdrawal, or expressing irritability/anger?



# PRACTICAL EXERCISE TO TURN TOWARDS

Each partner should fill out the questions below separately. Afterwards, move on to page 2 of this exercise.

1.

## DURING THIS WEEK 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. Unappreciated.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
4. Unattractive.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
5. Sad.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
6. Lonely.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
7. Criticized.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
8. Worried.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
9. Misunderstood.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
10. Like leaving.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all

2.

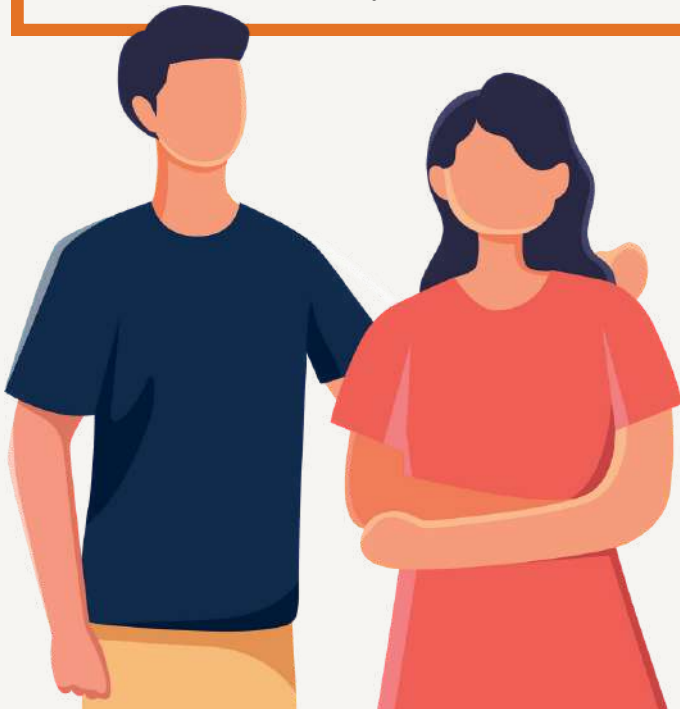
## WHAT TRIGGERED THESE FEELINGS?

1. I felt excluded.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
2. I felt that my partner was not attracted to me.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
3. I was not important to my partner.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
4. I felt no affection toward my partner.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all
5. I definitely felt rejected.  
A Great Deal   Definitely   A Little   Not at all

3.

## THESE RECENT FEELINGS ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP COME FROM:

- 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



# PRACTICAL EXERCISE TO TURN TOWARDS

After each partner has filled out the questions on page 1, follow the following steps to reflect and practice turning towards one another.



**Share your answers:** Starting with the first set of questions about the feelings experienced during the week, take turns sharing your responses. Be honest and open about your emotions and avoid judgment or criticism during this sharing process.



**Discuss what triggered these feelings:** Move on to the second set of questions that explore the triggers behind the emotional reactions. Discuss whether any past experiences, traumas, or unresolved issues are connected to the current situation.



**Reflect on past influences:** After identifying the potential links between past and present feelings, use the list provided to facilitate your search for connections between earlier experiences and your emotional reactions.



**Acknowledge complexities and differences:** Understand that both of you are unique individuals with diverse perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories. Embrace the fact that differences in emotional reactions are not necessarily matters of "fact" but rather reflections of your individual complexities.



**Practice turning toward each other:** As you work through this exercise, aim to become more skilled at turning toward each other regularly. Show respect and appreciation for each other's points of view, and work together to honor and understand each other's emotions and experiences.



**Embrace empathy and understanding:** Throughout the exercise, prioritize empathy and understanding, even if your emotional reactions differ. This exercise is an opportunity to deepen your emotional connection and strengthen your ability to navigate conflicts and emotions as a team.

Notes: