

Preventing Roommate Syndrome:

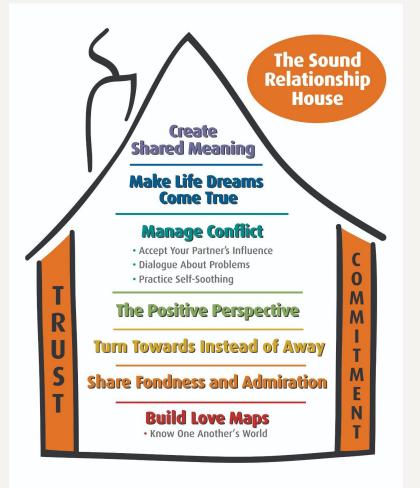
Balancing love and everyday life

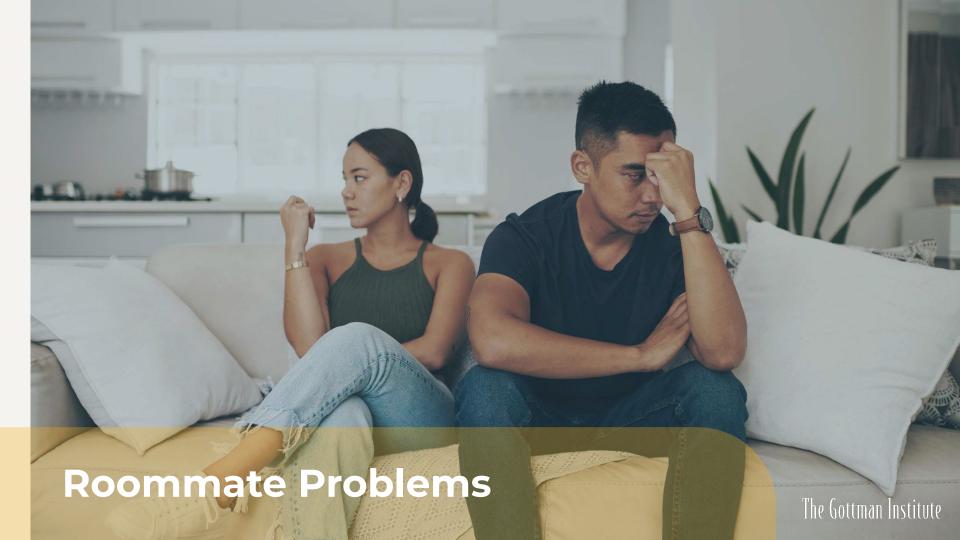
Genesis Games, LMHC



What is roommate syndrome?

What couples are at a higher risk?





Roommate Problems

- The types of issues you might encounter living with a roommate:
 - Household chores
 - Paying bills
 - The use of common areas
- These problems don't provide an opportunity for growth because they are logistical in nature
- They are a distraction from relational issues
- Often caused by a desire for control



The Gottman Institute

Impact of Roommate Problems in the Relationship

- Tension & disconnection
- Distraction from more important issues
- Lack of vulnerability
- Sense of not being adequate or "good enough"
- · Parent-child dynamic develops over time
- Decrease fondness and admiration
- Lack of support and resentment due to mental load and/or lack of appreciation





Resolving Roommate Problems

- Practice self-soothing techniques:
 - Deep breathing
 - Mindfulness break
- Team approach
- Accountability & curiosity
- Accepting influence
- Focus on:
 - The issue & your experience with it
 - Not on your partner's character flaws, etc
- · Provide potential solutions & compromise
- Co-create a dynamic that works





"Almost all of us have at least one additional exquisite sensitivity - a raw spot in our emotional skin - that is tender to touch, easily rubbed, and deeply painful. When this raw spot gets abraded, it can bleed all over our relationship. We lose our emotional balance."

Sue Johnson

Relational Problems

- These are problems that have to do with our core values and identity, and/or deep emotional wounds
- Conversations can feel redundant & they escalate quickly
- These issues don't have a simple one time and done solution
- They require repeated conversations and attempts at compromising
- You learn to live with these issues



Common Relational Problems

- Building trust
- Togetherness vs independence
- · Relational pace
- Boundaries with extended family
- · Sexual preferences, desire, & ability
- Parenting styles
- How much money we make & how we spend it
- Religious or cultural differences
- Navigating a mental or physical health diagnosis



Roommates don't talk about hard stuff.

If you don't want to feel like roommates, you need to stop avoiding relational problems.

Impact of Relational Problems on the Relationship

- Emotional distance
- Rejection
- Resentment
- Sense of inadequacy or not being "good enough"

None of this is sexy; therefore, eroding "the spark."



"Mutual understanding: this is the healthiest and most productive goal of all conflict. That may surprise you. The goal of conflict is not to win or convince the other person that you're right or even to be the same. In creating compromise we have to understand each other's core needs on the issue we're discussing, as well as each other's areas of flexibility. However, the goal is not to become identical, it's to understand each other."

John Gottman, Eight Dates: Essential Conversations for a Lifetime of Love

Antidote to Relational Problems

EMOTIONAL SAFETY:

Freedom to share thoughts, feelings, and ideas without fear of being judged or ridiculed.

LOVE MAPS:

Knowing the past, present, and future of the other.

Feeling known, understood, and embraced.

"Distressed partners may use different words but they are always asking the same basic questions, 'Are you there for me? Do I matter to you? Will you come when I need you, when I call?' Love is the best survival mechanism there is, and to feel suddenly emotionally cut off from a partner, disconnected, is terrifying."

Sue Johnson

Tips for Addressing Relational Problems

- Self-Soothing techniques
- Accepting Influence
- Flexibility & curiosity
- Slim down your list of non-negotiables

Dreams Within Conflict - DIY

- · Partners will take turns being the speaker and the listener
- · The speaker identifies the dream within the conflict.
 - Justice
 - Exploring my physical body
 - Adventure
 - · Becoming all I can be
 - Togetherness as a family

Dreams Within Conflict - DIY

- · Speaker is not persuading, just telling the story of their dream
- Listener is listening to understand with curiosity:
 - Not looking for solutions
 - Not defending themselves
 - Suspending judgment

Dreams Within Conflict - DIY

- · Listener is asking questions:
 - The story behind the dream?
 - Why is this dream so important for you?
 - Is there a fear or disaster scenario in not having this dream honored?
 - How do you feel about it?
 - How is your dream being threatened





