

# RELATIONSHIP SURVIVAL GUIDE



William A. Howatt

# Relationship Survival Guide

**Howatt HR Consulting Inc.**

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After 18 years of being with my wife Sherrie,

I have learned I am just learning.

I am dedicating this book to her and the learnings she  
will continue to offer me over the rest of our lives.



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# Preface

*A new beginning happens only when there has been a decision to create one. – Dr. Bill*

SCIENCE has shown that, when we first meet a partner, we release pheromones – chemicals that, in essence, brainwash us. We become dull to our partner’s minor defects. In those early stages, we see only the good, but once we come down from this condition I call “love stoned,” we start to notice those imperfections and often try to change them. The truth is, we cannot change others; we can only change ourselves.

In all relationships, the power of first love may lose a little of its intensity, though the passion can always be there. The key to lasting love is to continue to reinvest in it. Unfortunately, once we get going in life and start adding mortgages, bills, career pressures, and children, the love drugs seem to wear off. Thus, the imperfections grow and add stress to a relationship. The key to a happy relationship is to keep the focus and passion alive; to have life balance and good communication; spend time with our partner; and accept them and ourselves as we are. We can all learn and grow, though we can’t change who we are.

This will be an interactive book that will require your participation, as well as your partner’s. It will provide you with knowledge and tools to self-evaluate and grow in your

relationship. No one can improve your relationship except you and your partner, and only the two of you can fix it if it is in trouble. When you follow this book's guiding principles, I believe that your chances for increased passion and love will be greater.

If you want to grow in your relationship and improve your love, the first step is to start with a willingness and attitude to let your love grow. You need to make a commitment to take action.

If you want to continue growth in your relationship, I encourage you to read, as well as work through the chapters. I say this, because no relationship changes unless there is motivation, focus, and action by the partners. I know of no magic. There are no shortcuts.

One important observation I have made is that all relationships that appear to be in trouble are no different than individuals who have concerns. The concerns will continue until the couple learns what they need to do to change. People often know what to do; the challenge is to get them to do it. J. D. Barrett says, "Human beings will only do what they want, and seldom do what they do not want."

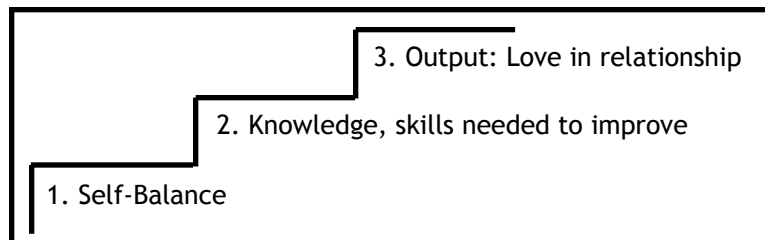
In all human interactions that form into a relationship, there are several things going on simultaneously that challenge its survival. I teach that human beings need to balance five areas of life:

- *Money* – cash flow, debt, savings, retirement, credit.
- *Career* – compensation, satisfaction, challenge, fulfillment.
- *Relationships* – family dynamics, children, spouse/partner, siblings, social/work peers.

- *Self* – real love in life, spirituality, fun, personal freedom, self-esteem/confidence.
- *Health and Wellness* – exercise, daily diet, healthy sleep and rest, low stress and healthy relaxation.

Look at the above list and ask yourself what areas you need to focus on most. It's common to find that many couples are focusing on money and their careers, rather than on their relationships.

The challenge to improve a relationship is that we need to start with ourselves. Once we do that, we can start to focus on increasing our output for love. For example, let's say you want to improve your relationship. In the graphic below, you will see three steps.



Regardless of whether both partners want more love, the first step is to look at yourselves first. Once you do this, you are able to take responsibility for your own actions and lives. Then your relationship will be ready for the new knowledge and tools, so you can start to learn the new behaviors that are needed for your love output in the third step to be greatly enhanced.

If one partner is having personal challenges, I encourage personal coaching to get a balancing plan in action. I also recommend reading books on self-balance, such as *My Personal Success Coach*, while working on the relationship.

Relationships need both partners working for the same end, that being love and acceptance. Nate Booth teaches us to use the Diamond Touch, rather than the Golden Rule. Instead of treating your partner the way *you* would like to be treated, treat *them* the way *they* want to be treated.

The first step is to be sure that you and your partner are working on the premise of helping each other to grow and improve and to get each other's needs met. I need to make the point again about individual balance. To achieve a balanced relationship, each person needs to be working on self-balance.

Unfortunately, in some relationships, one or both of the individuals have become involved in self-destructive behavior, such as drug or alcohol addictions, abusive behavior, gambling, or any behavior that inflicts pain on the other person. Before a relationship can be evaluated and before relationship coaching can be effective, these behaviors must be addressed. For example, if an individual stops alcoholic behavior, the relationship may return to quality or at least have a path to create quality. This process will work only if both partners feel motivated to try to improve the relationship.

It's also important to note that there are no guarantees. But, to quote an old friend, Bruce Dawson, "I can guarantee something will happen; what it is I do not know!" I hope it's what the couple is looking for and that both work to have what they both desire and dream of.

Before you start with the learnings and self-exploration, get your bearings. On Page xiv is a form for both partners to complete to get an indication of where you are starting. I recommend you each complete this chart separately and then compare your answers.

First, a few guidelines to consider when completing assignments in this book:

#### Agreements for Comparing Charts

I will not judge my partner.  
I will observe, and not give feedback.  
I will listen and learn.  
I will make a commitment to this process.  
I understand that this process is for love and growth.  
I will be kind and supportive.  
I want to learn and grow.

The first step to growing is starting. When you complete the chart, be honest with yourself.

All relationships need to have a set course of direction and a willingness to improve. The simple answer for too many is to quit. I believe that all couples need to work and pay attention to detail, so their relationship will continue to grow and improve. It's important for each partner to take charge of themselves first, then support the other, so they can build and improve together.

There is no bigger reward and joy in life than the love and support of a caring and loving partner. Before we can love someone else, it's important to first love and accept ourselves. Once we do, we have a foundation to build upon.

Find Your Bearings	
1.	Name: _____ Date: _____
2.	Number of years in this relationship _____
3.	What do you think needs to happen for your relationship to grow and improve? _____ _____
4.	What was great about your relationship and still is? _____ _____
5.	What do you want to obtain from this process? _____ _____
6.	Are you really motivated or are you trying to fake out your partner to improve your relationship? _____
7.	If you had a perfect relationship, what would it be like? Be detailed and specific. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
8.	Complete this sentence: I am happy and balanced. If not, I am going to: _____ _____ _____

What We Must Do	
Partner One	
Behaviors To Start	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Behaviors To Stop	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Behaviors to Continue	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Partner Two	
Behaviors To Start	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Behaviors To Stop	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Behaviors to Continue	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Signature _____ Date _____ Signature _____ Date _____ Both partners should sign, once they have read their answers to each other.	





# The Psychology of Relationships

*To improve love, we need to understand  
how we fall in love. – Dr. Bill*

**T**HE first step of any relationship is the pre-relationship. This is when you have a partner and you don't know it yet – the person is out there and waiting for you. Both of you have your own world and your own wants, needs, behaviors, beliefs, values, appearance, and social status, as shown in Figure 1-1. The important point is that you both are *individuals*.

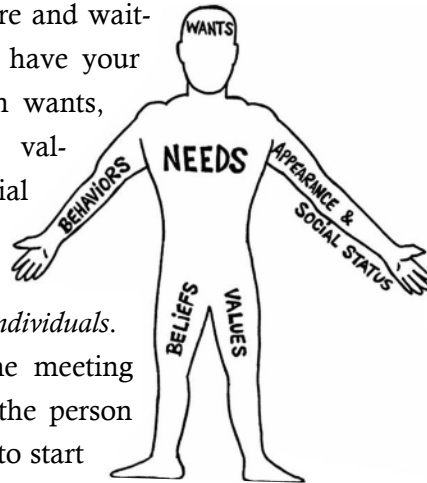


Figure 1-1 - Factors In an Individual's World

The second step is the meeting stage, where you choose the person with whom you are going to start a relationship. This can happen spontaneously, or it can be a process. However, both individuals have a set of criteria from which to make a decision.

As a relationship develops, you enter what I call the *relationship hourglass*, where you share values, rules, and beliefs,

and take actions to meet each other's individual needs and wants that you both accept and expect in a loving relationship (Figure 1-2).

For the relationship to last, the individuals need to have common interests. It's OK that each still has individual beliefs and desires, as long as they are not in ethical violation of the other person (e.g., abuse or drugs). The key is to have enough common ground – an overlap of *quality world pictures*.

Partners need to have a clear understanding of each other's:

- |                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| • Physical desires | • Values  |
| • Rules            | • Beliefs |
| • Roles            | • Goals   |

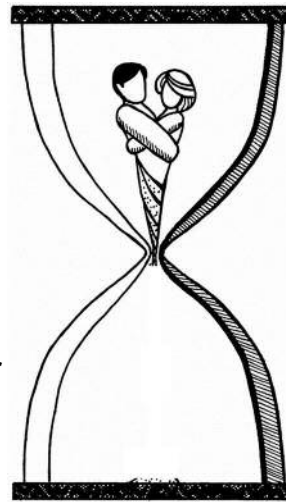


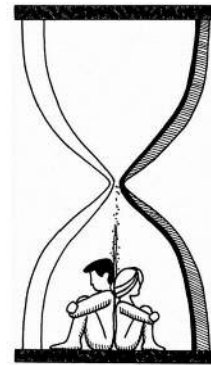
Figure 1-2 - Once two individuals have made the choice and established a relationship a kind of merger occurs.

As long as both perceive that there is enough common ground and that their human needs are being met, the relationship will proceed; but for it to last, both individuals need to ensure they are:

- *Loving* – being kind, polite, touching, seeing the other person in a way that meets his or her needs.
- *Evaluating* – measuring and checking that one is personally keeping up one's end of the relationship.
- *Not Hurting* – not judging, threatening, criticizing, or overpowering the other partner.

- *Communicating* – discussing and talking to each other, to be aware of each other's wants.
- *Negotiating* – compromising, to help the other partner meet individual wants; and knowing how to disagree in a healthy way.
- *Planning* – working together to plan what both individuals want (e.g., family, house), and working to achieve them.

The hourglass model gives an example of the process the relationship goes through to be successful. Once a relationship starts, it takes constant effort and commitment to keep it going. It also takes adjusting to each other's individual changes. As individuals evolve, the relationship changes as well; keeping the sand flowing is a full-time job. Usually, if couples can keep a commitment and keep working on their relationship, their sand will keep flowing and their relationship will be a satisfactory one.



However, if they let their sand run out, they will find each other looking in opposite directions and the relationship will be in trouble. The only way to get the sand flowing again is to turn the hourglass over and find common ground again.

All relationships are built on the principles of common wants – the pictures you have in your mind that are common with another person, such as children, family, and church.

But every couple also has its share of non-common ground that can put a strain on a relationship. The non-common ground can include partner weight, drinking habits, and attitude regarding housework. These bones of contention fall into what I call the 98-2 theory – 98 percent of the other person is acceptable to you, whether it falls within common ground or not. However, the 2 percent – the bones of contention – are what you focus on 98 percent of the time. If this cycle continues, the couple thinks the relationship is 98 percent wrong and will look for a solution that too often is separation or divorce.

Look at what you consider common and non-common ground in your relationship.

Common ground (pictures, wants) in your relationship:

---

---

---

Definitely not common ground (bones of contention):

---

---

---

### **In summary**

The key to keeping relationship sand flowing or to getting it moving is to take the actions of loving, evaluating, communicating, negotiating, and planning, and to stop the actions of hurting and ensure there is enough common ground. It's normal to have different wants, but both partners need to have enough common wants to keep their sand of love flowing.

**Exercise 1-1. How You Fell in Love****Review of How You Fell in Love**

What physical appearance criteria did your partner meet (if important)?

---

---

What beliefs did you have in common?

---

---

---

What dreams did you have in common?

---

---

---

What values did you have in common?

---

---

---

What attracted you to each other?

---

---

What did you enjoy doing together?

---

---

---

**Exercise 1-2. Brainstorm Common Interests**

In challenging times, we sometimes forget our common interests. To help get back to common ground, brainstorm and fill in the chart below.

Things I do that my partner likes.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Things we do together that we both enjoy. (They meet both persons' needs.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_





## Evaluating Your Relationship

*For a relationship to improve, you must have a clear picture of*

**I**F your child were to ask, “*What is a loving relationship and all that goes with it?*” what would you say? Ask yourself, *could a loving relationship be a behavior* – a behavior that considers all the actions, thoughts, and feelings (emotions and body) that you and your partner share?

The key action word is *loving*. If a loving relationship is a behavior with all these components, it would be what William Glasser, author of Choice Theory, calls a total behavior, meaning you can’t change one component without affecting all the others.

Glasser’s total behavior is explained by using the metaphor of a car. As you can see in Figure 2-1, each wheel of the car has a part to play. As with all front-wheel drive cars, the front wheels (acting, thinking) pull the rear wheels (feeling, physiology); and the rear wheels have no choice but to follow. The engine symbolizes the individual needs we all have (fun, freedom, love, self-respect, and survival). In fact, *all our behavior is driven by our best attempts to meet our basic needs*. The steering wheel represents our wants; they are the pictures we create in our head to fulfill our basic needs.

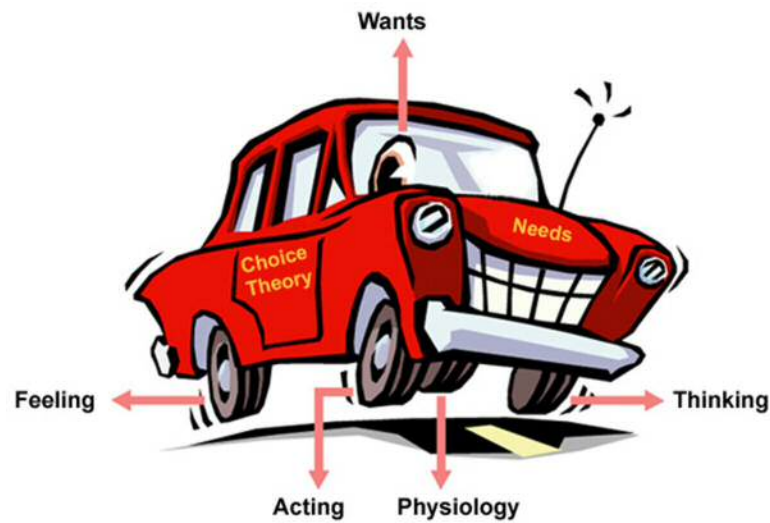


Figure 2-1 - Glasser's Total Behavior Car

No two people will drive their car exactly the same way, nor will two people in a relationship live the same way. What is challenging in a relationship is when partners are not even aware of each other's wants – much less interested in them. This is a true course for a crash.

All loving relationships have these four connected behaviors of acting, thinking, feeling, and physiology. The one we can always control is acting. We can control our actions, though we are not in 100 percent control of our thinking. You will have a hard time thinking happy thoughts if you are not in a happy *acting* relationship (e.g., no touchy kindness or *time with*). The actions of your relationship will influence how you think. When you are not thinking positively, you likely will have negative feelings (e.g., depression, sadness, and loneliness). When these feelings occur, your body will respond with physiological symptoms, such as headaches.

The first step, then, is to measure your actions (Table 2-1, Table 2-2). If you are not doing any of the eight positive actions in Table 2-1, I can predict how your relationship is going. Check items only if you do them regularly. Negative actions will eventually wear down a loving relationship. When you stop the negative actions, you can begin adding value and positive actions to the relationship, thus enhancing your love.

Positive Action Checklist	
	1. Do you hug?
	2. Do you kiss?
	3. Do you snuggle?
	4. Do you have fun together?
	5. Do you laugh together?
	6. Do you talk and acknowledge each other?
	7. Do you make love at least once a week?
	8. Do you do freely for your partner?

Table 2-1 — Positive Action Checklist

Negative Action Checklist	
	1. Do you yell at your partner?
	2. Do you complain to your partner?
	3. Do you judge your partner?
	4. Do you make your partner angry?
	5. Do you avoid your partner?
	6. Do you lie to your partner?
	7. Do you argue with your partner?
	8. Do you fight with your partner?

Table 2-2 — Negative Action Checklist

We have a tendency to keep score of what our partner does that we don't like, while not paying enough attention to things *we* do that our partner doesn't enjoy. For a relationship to bloom forever, partners need to build a large positive action list that becomes an automatic, unconscious habit. Table 2-3 will help make you aware of actions that are positive and negative in your relationship.

I want you to evaluate your present relationship for one purpose only – to determine where you are now, so you will know where both of you want to go.

It's important to define what you *need* to learn and what you *want* to learn in your relationship. The difference between them is this:

Negative and Positive Actions
<p>List one action your spouse does that you don't like:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What you are thinking when this happens: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What you feel and how your body responds: _____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Exploring the positive side, do the same exercise now, choosing an action your spouse does that you like: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What you are thinking when this happens: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What you feel and how your body responds: _____</p> <p>_____</p>

Table 2-3 – Negative and Positive Actions

*Need to Learn* – If you don't, the relationship will be over (e.g., anger control).

*Want to Learn* – If you do, these actions will add value and closeness (e.g., massage technique).

In Exercise 2-1, continue the process of evaluating your relationship to see what you both want and need to learn.

**In summary**

All relationships involve interactions that are, in essence, an assortment of behaviors between two people. One behavior for which we all strive is learning how to love our partner and how to continue learning as the relationship grows. While love may mean something different to each partner, learn how to love in a way that satisfies you both.

**Exercise 2-1.**

Behaviors I Need to Learn		
	Partner 1	Partner 2
1.		
2.		
3.		

Behaviors I Want to Learn		
	Partner 1	Partner 2
1.		
2.		
3.		

## MEASURES

The following section of measures provides an opportunity to evaluate what is and is not working in your relationship. The measures will help you identify areas that need to be improved and maintained. They are not psychological assessments; they are meant only as awareness tools, to help you assess where you are beginning, as you set out on your journey of improving your relationship. Each partner will benefit most from this process by doing the measures independently and then comparing results with the other.

**Exercise 2-2**

## Relationship Measure

Many of us search for balance in regard to money, career, relationships, self-worth, and health. Unfortunately, too many focus on money and career. This may be why we have so many people experiencing divorce, low self-esteem, and poor health. If you want to improve your relationship, it's important to first evaluate the areas of concern.

Before evaluating your areas of concern, ensure you are motivated and ready to move forward in building your relationship.

**Part 1 — Pre-Screen Measure**

1. What are two things you love about your partner?  
 a. \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If you can't think of two things, don't move on, for without at least two things, how can you build a relationship? This is a relationship must!)
2. Are you committed to improving your relationship?  
 YES    NO  
 (or maybe you are just going through the motions to prove it can't get better)  
 (If NO, don't move on. Stay here until you are committed.)
3. Will you follow through on your agreement and take action?    YES    NO  
 If YES, sign the Agreement Contract on the following page. If NO, don't move on.

### Our Agreement Contract

We agree to build the love in our relationship. We understand it will take the effort of two people. We are responsible for our own physical and mental wellness. It's our job to take care of ourselves, so that we can build our relationship. We will do what is necessary in this process to ensure we are healthy partners, knowing it takes two healthy individuals to make a healthy couple.

We will follow the model for three months. We understand that we can always go back to where we were. We are committed to building love.

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

### Relationship Measure – Part II

This is the actual measure to help you self-evaluate how your relationship is and the areas where stress may be coming from.

Following are measures to help assess where you are today in each of four areas described on the following pages.

Base your responses on the following guidelines:

**Very Untrue** – You totally disagree with the statement; it is not even close to what is happening in your life.

**Untrue** – The statement is not true to your life; however, you see that it's possible.

**True** – The statement is true for you, though you have some concern if you will keep it in your life.

**Very True** – The statement is totally true and you fully believe it will continue.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Money</h2> <p>Many couples battle about money due to different philosophies of how to spend and save. Healthy couples need to have money balanced.</p>				
Statements	Very Untrue <i>Score 0</i>	Not True <i>Score 1</i>	True <i>Score 3</i>	Very True <i>Score 5</i>
1. We both understand our home finances.				
2. We agree on how money is spent.				
3. We are both aware of our bank accounts.				
4. We feel comfortable talking about money.				
5. We do our financial planning together.				
6. We have a sound monthly budget.				
7. We don't fight over money – ever.				
8. We both understand our debt position.				
9. We both know how much money we have monthly.				
10. We both can spend money independently.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Careers</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Many couples battle over how their careers take time away from their relationship.</p>				
Statements	Very Untrue Score 0	Not True Score 1	True Score 3	Very True Score 5
1. We don't fight over how much either one of us works.				
2. We don't put our careers before our relationship.				
3. We support each other's careers.				
4. We promote each other's careers.				
5. We are interested in the details of each other's career.				
6. I feel good about what my partner's career is.				
7. I feel good about my career.				
8. I enjoy my career and see myself doing this same work in 10 years.				
9. I understand how to balance relationship and career.				
10. My partner agrees with my understanding of balancing relationship and careers.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

## Relationships

Many of us live in relationships that are not all that we really want. The reason usually involves communication around *time with*, sex, commonalities, beliefs, and dreams.

Statements	Very Untrue Score 0	Not True Score 1	True Score 3	Very True Score 5
1. My partner and I have similar beliefs and dreams.				
2. My partner and I have a great sex life.				
3. During sex, we talk openly about how to provide each other with pleasure.				
4. I am happy with our sexual intimacy and sexual activity.				
5. I spend lots of time with my partner in activities I enjoy.				
6. My partner would agree I spend lots of <i>time with</i> in activities we enjoy.				
7. My partner and I enjoy doing many things together.				
8. My partner and I are kind to each other.				
9. My partner cares about my needs on a daily basis.				
10. I care about my partner's needs on a daily basis.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Self</b></p> <p>Individuality in a relationship is important, as well as knowing we are valued, that we have the right to take care of ourselves and to like who we are, what we are, and how we exist.</p>				
Statements	Very Untrue <i>Score 0</i>	Not True <i>Score 1</i>	True <i>Score 3</i>	Very True <i>Score 5</i>
1. I have a great deal of self-confidence. My relationship is important in this factor.				
2. My relationship allows me to like who I am.				
3. I enjoy me and love who I am.				
4. I am proud of my relationship.				
5. My partner is my biggest fan, and that feels good.				
6. I am confident as a person.				
7. I like what I look like outside.				
8. I like what I look like inside.				
9. I am balanced personally.				
10. I am a good and kind person.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Health</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">In this hectic world, self-care is often missing in regard to exercise, diet, rest, and relaxation. For the body to run efficiently, we need to take care of it.</p>				
Statements	Very Untrue <i>Score 0</i>	Not True <i>Score 1</i>	True <i>Score 3</i>	Very True <i>Score 5</i>
1. I exercise regularly at least three times a week.				
2. I am in great shape for my age.				
3. I am happy with my weight.				
4. I am actively doing some exercise to stay healthy.				
5. I get enough sleep.				
6. I eat healthily daily.				
7. I am involved in activities that give me the chance to relax.				
8. I have lots of energy for my relationship.				
9. I believe my partner is healthy.				
10. I am happy with my partner's health level at this time.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

## Relationship Measure Scoring

Total your scores for each area and record them on the chart below.

	Very Untrue	Not True	True	Very True	TOTAL
<b>Money</b>					
<b>Career</b>					
<b>Relation- ship</b>					
<b>Self</b>					
<b>Health</b>					
<b>Totals</b>					

### SCORING GUIDE

<b>0-10</b>	This is a major concern area that needs immediate focus.
<b>16-26</b>	This area will need attention and focus.
<b>27-38</b>	This area will get to a more acceptable level with a little coaching.
<b>39-50</b>	This area has the potential to satisfy both partners. Continue to do what's working and don't take anything for granted. Relationship balance is present, because of effort and focus.

**Exercise 2-3**

## Partner Trait Measure

It's important to have the traits that build a loving relationship. The purpose of this measure is to assess how many of what I call "love traits" that you have, and how many you are acting on. The main purpose is to show what you need to focus on to help improve and grow your relationship.

Again, use the following four measures to help assess where you are today in each area described on the following pages.

**Very Untrue** — You totally disagree with the statement; it's not even close to what is happening in your life.

**Untrue** — The statement is not true to your life; however, you see that it's possible.

**True** — The statement is true for you, though you have some concern if you will keep it in your life.

**Very True** — The statement is totally true, and you fully believe it will continue.

<b>Partner Trait Measure</b>				
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Very Untrue Score 0</b>	<b>Not True Score 1</b>	<b>True Score 3</b>	<b>Very True Score 5</b>
1. I am accessible to my partner.				
2. I am closest to my partner.				
3. I am loving and passionate towards my partner in private.				
4. I am loving and passionate towards my partner in public.				
5. I am supportive of my partner's activities and desires.				
6. My partner feels safe with me.				
7. I am flexible with my partner.				
8. I am loyal and trustworthy.				
9. I am honest with my partner.				
10. I am tolerant of my partner.				
11. I am sensitive of my partner's feelings.				
12. I provide a caring attitude towards my partner.				
13. I am giving to my partner.				
14. I pay attention to my partner's needs.				
15. I help my partner.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<b>Partner Trait Measure</b>				
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Very Untrue Score 0</b>	<b>Not True Score 1</b>	<b>True Score 3</b>	<b>Very True Score 5</b>
16. I am humorous and fun with my partner.				
17. I am kind to my partner.				
18. I am responsible to my partner.				
19. I am creative with my partner.				
20. I can be silly with my partner.				
21. I am humble with my partner.				
22. I make myself available to my partner.				
23. I am confident with my partner.				
24. I am warm and patient with my partner.				
25. I am gentle with my partner.				
26. I am romantic with my partner.				
27. I am reliable for my partner.				
28. I am grateful for my partner.				
29. I am trusting for my partner.				
30. I am polite to my partner.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<b>Partner Trait Measure</b>				
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Very Untrue Score 0</b>	<b>Not True Score 1</b>	<b>True Score 3</b>	<b>Very True Score 5</b>
31. I am soothing to my partner.				
32. I am open-minded with my partner.				
33. I am assured by my partner.				
34. I am tender with my partner.				
35. I am spontaneous with my partner.				
36. I am forgiving of my partner.				
37. I am stable with my partner.				
38. I am brave with my partner.				
39. I am happy with my partner.				
40. I am excited about life with my partner.				
<b>Subtotals</b>				

<b>Partner Trait Measure</b>				
<b>Summary</b>	<b>Very Untrue</b>	<b>Not True</b>	<b>True</b>	<b>Very True</b>
<b>1-15 Subtotals</b>				
<b>16-30 Subtotals</b>				
<b>31-40 Subtotals</b>				
<b>Totals</b>				

The 40 partner traits will help determine how strong your relationship is and may point to specific areas of focus to make it even stronger.

### **Scoring Key**

Explore your answers and ask yourself what impact the traits have on your relationship. These are the building blocks that need to be in place for a relationship to grow.

A key trait not in the list is what I call “focus trait.” If you focus on yourself to the point you don’t look outside, you are sorting the world through yourself; you are self-serving. The focus trait needs to be balanced between your partner and yourself. You need to be able to see the world through your partner’s eyes, as well as your own. The 40 traits considered are the way to do this. You must look for the traits that will help build the loving that is needed for a lasting relationship.

SCORING GUIDE	
<b>0-60</b>	Your relationship is at serious risk. Act today to get on track.
<b>161-150</b>	Your relationship needs work. Listen and learn from your partner.
<b>151-200</b>	Your relationship has potential. Keep your focus and commitment.



# The Psychology of Behavior

I find it interesting that we meet someone, fall in love, recognize a few small imperfections, then believe we can change them. Have you ever tried to change your partner? Has it worked? Has your partner changed? Who really changed?

In this chapter, we will review the reality that we can't change our partners; they can only change if they want to. If they don't see the value in changing, they will not change. We can try to force them, e.g., withhold love and affection, although that will only build walls that will be difficult to remove.

We all need to understand how we create behavior that builds and dissolves love. The model I like to use to explain how we behave is based on William Glasser's Choice Theory. It starts with the set of genetic instructions we are born with to fulfill five basic needs:

- *Survival* – Unconsciously, we all drive our systems to meet our need for food, shelter, safety, and reproduction. Survival is our most dominant need; when

any of its wants is threatened, it overrides all other needs.

- *Self-worth (power)* – We all have a need to control ourselves in a manner to meet our want of achievement and recognition.
- *Freedom* – We all feel a need to have some choice in our life and a sense of freedom to carry it out.
- *Fun* – We all have a desire to have fun.
- *Love/Belonging* – All humans need at least one person in their life with whom they feel a bond and a meaningful relationship. This is the most dominant need in terms of bringing two people together.

We create behaviors to meet these needs and are continuously trying to control the world to meet them, whether we are aware of it or not. While our needs are the same, each of us has individual wants, or ways, in which to meet them. These wants, or individual pictures, are what we previously referred to as common ground, upon which relationships are built. It's important that partners understand that they don't have to be clones to be happy in a relationship.

Following is a neat exercise for you and your partner to see if you are on the same page in meeting your needs.

Fill in your wants; then have your partner do the same. These are what you want in order to fulfill each of your needs. Be specific. It's important that you do this alone, then give the chart to your partner to complete. Then compare the two. This is called 360-degree feedback. It's a good check to see if you are in touch with your partner's real wants.

Are We On the Same Page?	
Partner 1	Partner 2
Love Wants	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Power Wants	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Freedom Wants	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Fun Wants	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

For example, I want my wife to be loyal to meet my need for love. Let's explore this Choice Theory language to see what happens if I see she is not loyal in our relationship.

- Step 1. I see, hear, or feel my wife with someone else.
- Step 2. I evaluate what I am seeing, compared to what I want.
- Step 3. Once I judge it is not what I want, I have to react. I have to use an old behavior or create a new one.
- Step 4. I will react — actions, feelings and body physiology will all be involved.
- Step 5. I will continue to react until my need is met.

As you can see, this scene is not a happy one, but if my wife's needs are not met with me, she may look elsewhere. While she may not be loyal to me, she is being loyal to herself. To avoid this situation, I must be in touch with her needs. *People will not look outside a relationship to meet a need, if it is being met inside.*

Glasser explains that all behavior comes from what he calls our organized behaviors, meaning we either need to have learned them, or we create them by experimenting.

We gain new behaviors for a relationship through learning, which requires knowledge, skills, and attitude. Is it not frustrating to ask our partner for what we want and they do not provide it? The reason is that they may not have one of the following three points.

- *Knowledge* – does not know how to do it.
- *Skill* – has the knowledge, but not the skills.
- *Attitude* – has the knowledge and skills, however, does not want to do it.

The fact is that one can acquire knowledge and skills, but one needs to *want* to do something before agreeing to do it.

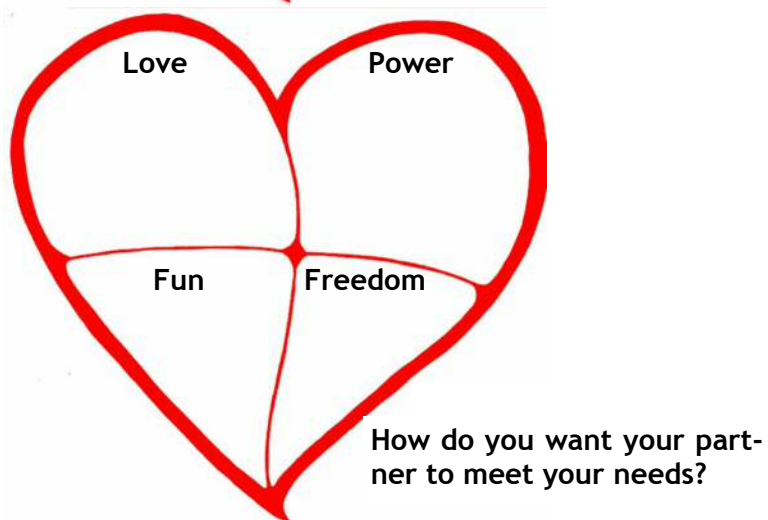
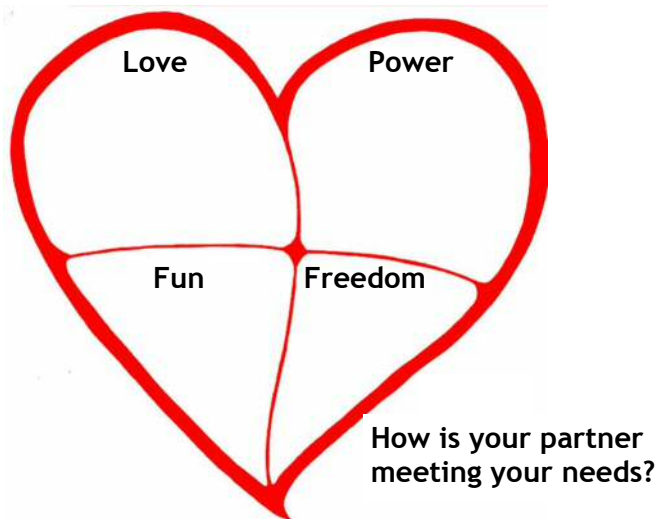
In relationships, the problem often is attitude. Remember the feeling you had when you met? The chances that you have amnesia now are slim. It's not that you have forgotten, it's that we usually lose focus on what's really important to us. Too often we organize what I call "get-equal behaviors," meaning that when our needs are not being met, we get equal by not meeting our partner's needs. This is a true sign that a relationship is in trouble or that trouble is on the way.

We need to be clear about what motivates our behavior and how our needs are being met or not.

As you compare notes with your partner, it will become clear that, for your relationship to improve, you will both need to have the attitude to want to meet each other's needs.

**In summary**

We all can learn new knowledge and skills to change a relationship, but if one does not have the desire, it will be a challenge. Learn what your partner wants, not what you think they want. With focus and time, you will build the loving relationship you both dream of. Be patient and enjoy the process.

**Exercise 3-1.**

Now, compare and look at the differences.

Each partner should do this exercise separately and then compare results, to learn from each other.



## Beliefs and Values

*A relationship is determined by the views of  
the parties involved. – Dr. Bill*

**W**E may have many different things we would like to do for our partners; but, for a host of reasons, we do not. The reason we don't behave the way we know we can is how we view the world. Our beliefs determine what we will and will not do. Through the years, we all have developed a menu of beliefs that have been influenced by social, geographical, cultural, and gender factors; but we are responsible for developing our own belief systems.

Values come from three places:

- *Beliefs* – what you were taught as a child as to what is important; how you perceived things should be.
- *Rules* – The rules you were taught as a child and the ones you made.
- *Past Experiences* – Events that you experienced personally or through someone else's eyes.

The above determine how you will form your value system as an adult and your values will determine what you want in a relationship.

The goal of this chapter is to help partners align their beliefs and values. We have already explained how important it is to have similar wants (common pictures) to have a solid relationship. To find your beliefs and values regarding a loving relationship, I suggest you review the following questions.

- What is important to you about a loving relationship?
- How do you know your relationship has what is important to you? (i.e., what actions have to happen to help you know?)
- Repeat to get 3-4 actions of how things need to be.

Partners should repeat this process so that each understands and fulfills their personal beliefs and values.

Values are the juice and passion that are the underlying forces to help ensure that needs are fulfilled. The above questions can be used to bridge the stressful topics in relationships, such as money, sex, parenting, work, and health.

Table 4-1 will help you start to explore your values. It's important to ensure they are not hurtful to your relationship. Fill in the chart and then have your partner fill it in. Next, compare your views on the question that is most important about your relationship and then discuss the importance of how the top two values of each person influence the relationship. Ask the following questions:

- Are there any values that are harmful or hurtful to myself or others?
- Does it matter to our relationship if we rank the same beliefs differently?

<b>Comparing Value Systems</b> <i>What is Important About a Relationship</i>	
Partner 1 Values	Partner 2 Values

Table 4-1 - Comparing Value Systems

Note: I suggest you do the above process for what is important about living, as well.

As with needs and wants, as long as partners have similar values, the order isn't as important. If the values are very different, the partners must see if there are any they are prepared to explore and change.

For relationships to be healthy, partners need to agree on a set of core values. If one partner thinks crime is OK and the other thinks not, there is obviously a value issue.

Core values are your personal overall guiding ethics. They are what you most often never negotiate (e.g., no drugs). In Table 4-2, explore and clearly define your core values. You may refer to them as your rules for living.

### **Double standards dissolve relationships**

Do you have a set of rules that you follow and different ones for your partner? Why? Where does it say that you have this right? Ponder this for a moment.

Exploring Core Values	
Partner 1 Values	Partner 2 Values
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Table 4-2 — Exploring Core Values

I find it interesting that many couples have a double standard in their relationships. It's quite simple to overcome – change the rules so that what's good for the goose is good for the gander. Though simple, it will take commitment. It's only fair to expect one set of rules, not two.

Ensure that rules are not a problem. Compare your rules so there are no double standards, which only create resentment (Table 4-3).

### Evolution of Relationship Rules

To change rules in a relationship, we first need to explore them.

- Do you both have the same set of rules? If not, why? Explain to the point that it makes sense to your partner. If it does not, change it.
- Are there double standards? If so, what are they? Are they helping to build love or barriers?

In Albert Ellis' A-B-C Theory, I have found the following helpful to teach how we can influence our values, based on

Determining Double Standards (Rules for Living)	
Partner 1	Partner 2

Table 4-3 – Determining Double Standards

our beliefs. To explain Ellis' theory in a simple manner, look at the metaphor of a relationship conflict.

- *Event* – Partner forgets your anniversary.
- *Your Actions* – You get angry, say a few choice words, and stamp off.
- *Illogical Belief* – You think your partner must not love you.

From Ellis' point of view, the following has happened.

- 1 = (A) the event that upset you.
- 2 = (C) the consequences of the event, your behavior (reaction), and feeling attacked.
- 3 = (B) your beliefs and your rules – (e.g., if a person cared, they would not forget). Ellis calls this the irrational belief.

Typically, we think it goes like the above. However, we first have the A (event) and the B (our belief and rule), leading to C (how we behave and feel).

The lesson is that we must not allow our irrational beliefs and rules to influence our behavior. When we expect the worst, we get the worst – what we focus on will expand. Too many people misunderstand a situation and imagine what it means, because of their irrational beliefs. We need to understand that our *thinking* affects our impressions and the way we ultimately behave.

What we can do is learn to change our beliefs. The meaning of beliefs comes from the questions we ask ourselves. As in the above example, you could ask the following questions:

- Where is the proof that my partner does not care?
- Could my partner just have forgotten?
- Is my partner trying and just missed an important detail?
- Is my partner focused on life and just losing track of time?

In other words, instead of not loving you, what else could it mean? Keep asking this question.

This will dispute the negative thoughts, so you are able to find new meaning and feeling. It helps stabilize your emotions and increase your emotional intelligence, so you don't have the sense that you are not in control.

**In summary**

Common beliefs and values are the basis of a healthy, balanced relationship. Behavior is determined a great deal by values, though ultimately we are motivated and driven to meet our basic needs (love, power, fun, freedom, and survival). How we meet our needs is determined by what we want in life. Our wants are filtered through our beliefs and values. The exercises at the end of this chapter will help clarify how you and your partner want to be treated, based on your values. The goal is to help you determine what is really important to each of you for building love.

**Exercise 4-1. Getting on the Same Page**

This exercise is intended to ensure that you and your partner are on the same page and working to build a loving relationship.

**Step 1 – Define your roles.**

Using the chart below, clearly define your roles in regard to duties at home and at work. Be descriptive about your tasks.

<p>Partner 1's job <u>is</u>: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Partner 2's job <u>is</u>: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Partner 1's job is <u>not</u>: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Partner 2's job is <u>not</u>: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Compare your responses. The first step is to get agreement on your roles, so make one chart that has your agreed-upon input.

**Step 2 — Define your rules.**

Rules for Our Relationship	
Partner 1	Partner 2

**Step 3 — Review relationship values.**

List below what is important to you about your relationship.

Relationship Values	
Partner 1	Partner 2

What actions have to happen to help you know that you have what is important in your relationship?

Partner 1	Partner 2

### How to Solve Values Conflict

When you and your partner have a values conflict, I suggest the following:

- Step 1 – Set an appointment time, when both of you will be ready to address the issue calmly.
- Step 2 – Set the ground rules for the meeting: non-judgmental; one speaks at a time, uninterrupted; both remain seated; no shouting; if one feels overwhelmed, they may call for time out.
- Step 3 – Each partner states their concern.
- Step 4 – Each partner offers a solution.
- Step 5 – Make an effort to meet each other's needs; if necessary, settle for a compromise.
- Step 6 – If you can't find middle ground; agree to disagree, if both are willing to work towards a solution over time. Make a commitment and action plan. Don't be ashamed to ask for help. You may want to try the Problem Solving Model in Chapter 9.



## Cosmetic Relationships

*When a relationship is built on appearance, and not love,  
it will fail. – Dr. Bill*

ONE of the conflicts that happens in many relationships is the struggle over having what I call a cosmetic relationship – one that attaches a huge value to physical appearances and social status. These two factors take a dominant role in too many relationships and may cause stress, especially when one person is too focused on this area.

Partners in a cosmetic relationship work hard to look good physically and to collect stuff, so that they can live better. Unfortunately, they forget to live, and continue to collect. All this leads back to one person's wants being different from their partner's. When it comes to stuff, looks, and money, couples need to be clear on their priorities or they will have serious problems.

How important are cosmetic factors to your happiness? If they are top priority and you both agree, then go for it; because it is in both of your value systems, even though your values may not be those of others. If cosmetics are top priority for only one partner, this needs to be addressed. (One caution: be honest and continue to communicate.)

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore whether your criteria for physical appearance and of social status are a problem. If they are, the goal is for you and your partner to find common ground.

Physical Appearance Screen
Are you happy with your appearance? _____
If not, what is the concern? _____ _____
Are you happy with your partner's appearance? _____
If not, what is the concern? _____ _____

Table 5-1 – Physical Appearance Screen

The cosmetic relationship can be appealing but explosive. Look at the factors of appearance and social status in Table 5-1 and evaluate them to see if they are a concern.

If physical appearance is a concern for you or your partner, cut out a picture of what you want your partner and yourself to look like. Now have your partner do this and compare the two. The object is to get the pictures out of your heads, so that you both can see them. Then decide if you are willing to do what needs to be done either to fit into the picture or change it. Consider the consequences if one or both of you does nothing.

How many of us fight over trying to keep up with the Joneses? Unfortunately, too many are more interested in what we have in regard to material items. The balance of having both a sense of self and social acceptance is impor-

## 5 – Cosmetic Relationships

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tant, though if we are worried about what we need to obtain and what others think, are we being motivated by greed or desire? Or maybe we are dreaming that stuff will make us happy?

All stuff is for one purpose only: to improve emotions. For example, people who have owned a boat say their happiest days were the day they bought it and the day they sold it.

Take a few moments now to examine your social status beliefs, Table 5-2.

Social Status Screen
Is social status a problem in your relationship? _____
If so, if it continues to be a problem, what is going to happen? _____
_____
_____

Table 5-2 – Social Status Screen

I believe we all can have stuff in a healthy way. The belief I like to share was taught to me by Wayne Dyer. To grow and obtain abundance in life, we need to:

- Not worry about what others think.
- Create a dream.
- Ask for the dream.
- Believe the dream will come true.

In other words, abundance is more than social status, although there is no reason we cannot have both. Before we

can accept our partner, we need to accept ourselves. Whether you want more sex appeal by losing 20 pounds or a job that pays more, cosmetics are thin and don't pass the ultimate test of self-acceptance. Consider the following poem:

### **The Man in the Glass**

*When you get what you want in your struggle for self  
And the world makes you king for a day,  
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself  
And see what THAT man has to say.  
For it isn't your father, mother or wife  
Whose judgment upon you must pass;  
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life  
Is the one staring back from the glass.  
Some people may think you a straight shootin' chum  
And call you a wonderful guy,  
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum –  
If you can't look him straight in the eye.  
He's the fellow to please – never mind all the rest,  
For he's with you clear up to the end.  
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test  
If the man in the glass is your friend.  
You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life  
And get pats on the back as you pass.  
BUT your final reward will be heartaches and tears –  
If you've cheated the man in the glass!*

– Author Unknown

So now, take a look at just how important the cosmetic factors of physical appearance and social status are to your relationship.

### **In summary**

## 5 – Cosmetic Relationships

Cosmetic Screen
How important are looks, stuff, and money to you? _____ _____
Is your relationship more than physical appearances and social status? _____
What if together you were able to get what you both want from each other? _____ _____ _____
What is your plan of action to get common ground on the issue if you are apart? Physical agreement plan: _____ _____ _____
Social agreement plan: _____ _____ _____

Table 5-3 – Cosmetic Screen

Cosmetic relationships are too often built on poor karma. Be clear in the kind of love you want in your life and see the power of a pure soul, rather than stunning looks and a golden bank account. Work together to set clarity and acceptance of self and others. Remember, wealth and beauty are determined by each of us, and we have the right to determine what is right for us. Yes, it's OK to want to look

good and to have stuff, and many people chase those dreams and find happiness. The cosmetic relationship is a problem when that's all that's measured. I want you to truly think about living and enjoying life.



## Relationship Challenges

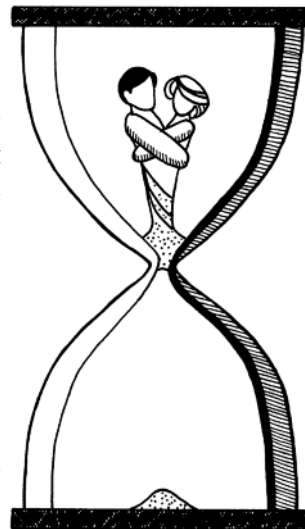
*A challenge is an opportunity to learn a new solution.*

– Dr. Bill

**E**VEN though partners overlap and have many similarities in a happy relationship, they still maintain their individuality as persons in a busy world. So there really are three in a relationship – him, her and them. All have needs to be met.

Let's explore some possible sand blockers – those challenges that influence a relationship negatively if not addressed effectively.

*Frustration/Fighting* – As earlier discussed, we all have basic needs and all our behavior is our best attempt (with information we have at that point in time) to meet one or more of them. Being frustrated can stop our love flowing. For example, I may want to go to a particular store for a number of reasons. My wife may want me to stay home and clean the basement. If I don't un-



derstand that it's OK to have different wants from my partner at any point in time, the automatic response will occur when I start to feel the difference between what I have and what I want. I may also learn and organize a host of less effective behaviors, i.e., get mad and yell when I'm not getting what I want. Though when I understand what frustration really is (and my wife does, as well), we have an opportunity to keep our love flowing without any major problems.

Ask yourself this question: "Am I in a relationship to get frustrated over little things, or for happiness and love?"

Frustration is internal. How we deal with it is where we can get into trouble. In the following box, list things that you get frustrated over in your relationship and which things lead to conflict. Frustration that's not resolved leads to fighting, so learn to address it before you turn little conflicts into wars. Now compare your list of frustrations to your

What Frustrates Me in My Relationship	
My Actions	My Partner's Actions

Table 6-1 – What Frustrates Me in My Relationship

needs.

When couples are meeting these needs, they will be more flexible to adjust to wants and will experience fewer frustrations. Use frustration not as a stop sign, but as a warning

sign that you both need to listen and hear each other's wants, so that you can help ensure each others' needs are met.

*I can change my partner, and/or my partner will change for me –*

Have you ever tried to change your partner to what you wanted? Has anyone ever tried to change you? How did it work out? How is a relationship different?

As stated before, we all are motivated internally to fulfill our own needs. Based on the belief of internal locus of control, you probably already have figured out you can't control others. Some people may perceive they are controlling, but they are not. The person in question is choosing to allow the controlling person to direct them.

When an individual who is being abused receives information that is meaningful, they will decide they deserve better and will leave the abusive situation. The problem, unfortunately, is that many abused people are doing the best they can with the information they have. Thus, they end up spending years or a lifetime living in abusive relationships.

When we try to change people, we are really only trying to meet our own needs; so we may have to change or at least add some helpful behaviors to the relationship so that it can improve. Be mindful to live your life in a healthy, fun, and safe way. If in danger, it's best to move away until it's truly safe.

*Fantasy or Reality –* Do you ever think about things that you would not tell anyone? Do you feel guilty about these thoughts? Fantasy (creative thinking) is a normal part of our behavior system. It's always working and coming up with new ideas or fantasies. In fact, we have no control over the

automatic thoughts that we create. What we have control over is acting on them. Is it guilt that stops us, or is it a difference between what we fantasize about and what we really want?

For example, the usual male or female will see an attractive member of the opposite sex and, without realizing it, start to think or even fantasize about that person. The problem is that some individuals act on their fantasies. Now, if we were to explore their relationship, we would most likely find that it is not fulfilling all of their perceived needs. What they really want is someone to satisfy a particular need. The majority of the population would say it was for sex, but I believe it's more than that. There's also a sense of belonging and caring that's received. Most affairs are for the sense of belonging and love, rather than sex.

This creative system we all have is really a wonderful thing; it's only a problem when we act on it, knowing the action we choose could hurt ourselves or others. Thus, what motivates us is our perception of how well our needs are being met.

*Sex* – Sex is important for a healthy relationship, but sex has many definitions. It doesn't mean orgasm. If it did, it would be named that. Sex is the act of love between two consenting partners who want to have a physical, emotional, and spiritual experience. One of the best lines I've heard in a movie was, "I make love to my wife from the first look in the morning, until I close my eyes at night." The notion is that sex is not love; it's only a tool of love.

The average couple has sex twice a month, and many think they don't have enough. The typical situation is that the male wants more sex; the female wants more romance.

Thus, they hit a roadblock.

Many couples are embarrassed to talk about sex. To improve or grow in your sex life, you need to define it, talk about it, and be willing to learn how to satisfy each other. However, satisfying a partner does not mean compromising or degrading yourself. I tell couples that sex life for them will be defined by what both are willing to do and accept.

Sex is something we need to define and do for each other. It may be a compromise. One time it may be lust; the next time, it involves romance. It will not improve unless you work at it. Appendix A will add some thoughts on improving your sex life, if this is a challenge area.

*The Sure Stoppers* – Sure Stoppers are behaviors that are destructive to a relationship. They include alcohol; drugs; emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; criminal behavior; gambling; and adultery.

Another factor often present in such circumstances is co-dependent behavior, which happens when one partner enables another to continue a destructive behavior. We have to ask if supporting our partner's self-destructive behavior is helping or hurting. Don't avoid addressing sure stoppers early on. Ask for help if you need to.

*Depression* – Depression is not a sign of weakness; it's a symptom that needs are not being fulfilled and that life is not balanced.

Symptoms of depression include: loss of appetite; suicidal thoughts; sadness; feeling of hopelessness; loss of interest in activities; feeling of low self-worth; sleeplessness; lack of energy; poor concentration; and social withdrawal. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, see your doctor for

a referral to a good coach or counselor.

Don't pressure your partner. Depression is treatable. The best that one can do is be supportive, accept that it's a real condition, and get help. Depression won't go away until one learns how to move beyond it and meet their needs in a healthy manner.

*Criticism* – I believe there are only two types of criticism:

- *Blunt criticism* – “don't do that, stupid.”
- *Constructive criticism* – your partner dresses up and asks you how she looks. You reply, “Honey, you look beautiful, but why the red stockings?”

Do you see a difference? How? Is it possible that both types could lead to pain? I believe that when they are not requested, both can be hurtful. If you love your partner, how is choosing to give them pain helpful to your relationship? Give criticism only when it's asked for – and with trust and love, it will be asked for.

When we judge others, we are first judging ourselves. Judgment serves no purpose and can only hurt love. Suspend judgment; judging loved ones stops the sand of love flowing. If you need to give feedback, have a weekly meeting and call it the love chat.

*Not Defining Roles* – All partners need to be clear on their roles. Couples often assume that each other knows what is expected. For example, she works; he stays at home. Her role is to make the money; his is to keep the house in order. This is a mistake. Roles are not just responsibilities. They include how we will behave within a relationship; what is

acceptable and what is not. Exercise 4-1 in Chapter 4 will help you define roles in your relationship.

*Anxiety* – Anxiety is much the same as depression, but it, too, is treatable and needs to be taken seriously. Saying “calm down” is not enough. Anxiety can lead to panic, fear, and phobias. Partners may lose patience with each other when one is feeling extremely anxious.

The symptoms of anxiety are:

- Excessive worry about life circumstances.
- Motor tension, such as restlessness, shakiness.
- Muscle tension.
- Shortness of breath.
- Trouble swallowing.
- Constantly feeling on edge.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Trouble falling asleep.
- Irritability.
- Quick and short-fused with loved ones.

Anxiety is real, and continually fighting over one partner’s irritability will not solve the problem. The best advice is to get some professional help and learn to overcome the concern.

*Lack of Time With* – The pattern of less *time with* a partner too often creates the breeding ground for losing common ground and failing to meet each other’s needs. For a relationship to grow, partners need to spend large amounts of time focused

on building love. When they stop, the relationship stops. Then it is a waiting game until the end comes.

**In summary**

All of the above relationship pitfalls usually have been created before you even started dating, meaning you were programmed as a child how to act in a relationship. Based on old unconscious reasons, this is where you start to form your beliefs and rules. To be successful in a relationship, you will need to address these issues and take action.

### Exercise 6-1. Finding the Facts

We often blow some things out of proportion. The exercise below provides a format to address a situation for what it really is, and not make it more than it is.

#### Step One – Assessment

1. Will I take action to improve this situation? YES NO
2. How have I attached meaning to this situation? How have I defined it? What does it mean to me?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What if I misunderstand the situation? Is this possible? YES NO  
If yes, expand on how you may have misunderstood.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What else could this situation mean?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How can I redefine it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What can I do to feel good in this situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What can I say to express my needs and keep my relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What have I learned that is positive from this situation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Step 2 – Instruction

**New outcome statement** (How to address my partner):

(Name)\_\_\_\_\_, I could use your help. May I have it, please?

**Script**

On (time and location), the following situation, from my perception, happened (explain briefly).

I may have misunderstood the meaning and your intentions to mean (what the original meaning was), I believe this was not your intention, because of our agreements.

I would like you to help me put together the real intentions of the situation. Could you help me? (Explore the real intentions.)

Thank you. In future, I would really like it if you would \_\_\_\_\_ (desired action), so we do not have more miscommunication. Would that be OK with you?



## Resolving Conflict

*Conflict is a part of relationships; however, there is no room for creating pain. – Dr. Bill*

ALL of us have had some type of disagreement with our loved ones – and the chances are we will have more in the future. In any healthy relationship, there's going to be conflict. In other words, partners may have a different point of view. One of the 20th century's most famous lawyers, Gerry Spence, states in his book *How to Argue and Win Every Time*, "We must argue – to help, to warn, to lead, to love, to create, to learn, to enjoy justice – to be."

Conflict becomes *unhealthy* when it's avoided or approached on a win-lose basis. Animosity will develop; communications will break down; trust and mutual support will deteriorate; and hostilities will result. The damage is usually difficult – sometimes impossible – to repair.

Conflict is *healthy* when it causes the parties to explore new ideas; test their position and beliefs; and stretch their imagination. When conflict is dealt with constructively, people can be stimulated to greater creativity, which will lead to a wider variety of alternatives and better results. Don't be afraid of conflict, as long as you have the love agreement:

“let’s agree to disagree until we agree,” meaning it’s OK to have your opinion.

Not to allow ourselves a vehicle to argue or work out conflict is an injustice and unacceptable. We would be robbing ourselves of an opportunity to show individual creativity and to strengthen one of the most important skills we need in life – expressing and defining our opinions or points of view. We must allow ourselves to argue where fear is reduced and learning and growth are supported.

For me, to argue is to have a difference of opinion. It doesn’t mean fighting, yelling, screaming, or threatening. An argument is a debate, not a war.

### **How communication breaks down**

One factor that often leads to conflict in a relationship is a breakdown in communications, so let’s look at how people miscommunicate and build conflict.

- Only looking at one’s own side of the story and not willing to learn the other person’s side.
- Trying to communicate from only one’s own position and not listening.
- Trying to express the need for more attention and feeling no one is listening.
- Trying to ask for help because of the pain they are in and are frustrated.
- Trying to find a new option for their life and are searching.

When we feel overwhelmed about a situation, it will expand and influence the quality of our relationships and life. Feel-

ing no one loves us often will lead us down a path of less effective behavior, such as depression, drugs, and alcohol. We need to have a way to measure whether we are communicating effectively with others, in order to avoid this path of pain.

The biggest measure is our attitude. If we have an attitude of gratitude and like to give to others, we are setting the stage for success and happiness. This attitude also opens up the opportunity for us to listen and to want to understand what others are communicating. Too many people look only to get what they want and stay stuck in their wants, thus setting the stage for communication breakdown.

As you can see in Figure 7-1, communication first breaks down when there is not enough common ground – rapport. To have healthy communication, people need to have an overlap of interests. If this is not present, one person starts to resist and resent the other one; and if rapport is not established, one will move to discredit the other. This is a concern, because once it's done, it forms a lasting impression.

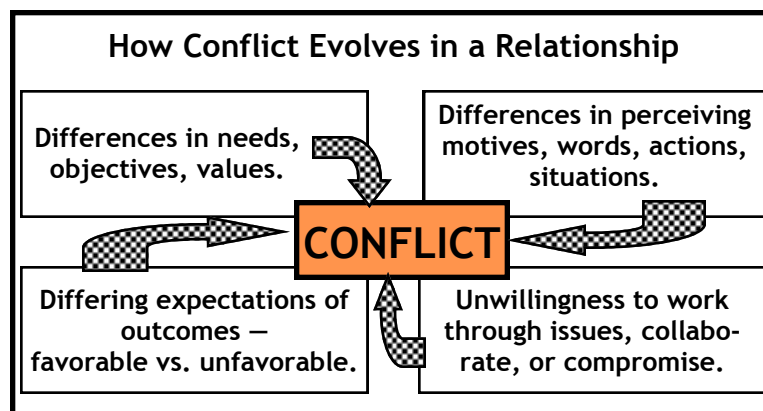


Figure 7-1 — How Conflict Evolves in a Relationship

What usually happens in this process is that we have a threshold for how long we will tolerate another person and the breakdown of communication. Once we go through the threshold and organize it as stress, we will look to eliminate the stress and focus on how to replace the situation with another. While each person has a unique tolerance threshold, with practice, it can be increased.

The basis for all good conflict resolution is to obtain a basic understanding of how communication works. At any time in communication, there's a tremendous amount of information being exchanged and processed at high speed between two people.

Much of this communication can be distorted by external, physiological, and psychological factors, and is part of the reason why there is a great deal of miscommunication between people. Also, people delete, generalize, and distort the content of what they are hearing.

As you are aware, many times you ask someone to do something, and the person responds as if they don't hear your point and only offers theirs. In fact, they have deleted the content of what you are asking. Be aware of this, re-frame your content, and try again. For example, "I appreciate your point, and I would like to suggest you now consider . . . because it will benefit you."

### **How do you address conflict?**

Before introducing various ways to address conflict, you need to have a clear idea of how you currently handle it in order to self-evaluate how effective your current model is working. Thomas and Kilman list five ways people react when faced with conflict.

- *Competing* – The partner will respond in an aggressive manner, perceiving that there is a power struggle with only a win-lose conclusion.
- *Collaborating* – The partner is assertive, but also highly collaborative: looks for a win-win solution.
- *Compromising* – The partner takes a middle-of-the-road stance, willing to give up something; never fully gives up nor collaborates.
- *Avoiding* – The partner avoids conflict and prefers apathy. This partner is seen as evasive.
- *Accommodating* – The partner is non-assertive and gives in to others all the time.

Which one represents your method of dealing with conflict? How is it working? I promote collaborating as the best option, and compromising as the next best alternative.

When you have a disagreement, use the following procedure:

*Step 1* – Set a meeting to talk. Choose a time that's convenient for both and when you can address the issue calmly.

*Step 2* – Set up boundaries for the meeting: no anger or judging; the rule is, each person speaks, one at a time.

*Step 3* – Review your relationship's agreed roles, rules, and values, to get clarification and the facts as to how the conflict interacts with your relationship agreements.

*Step 4* — Use Mandler's 9-Step Model for negotiating solutions. (I suggest you use the chart on Page 68.)

- a. Each side states dislikes.
- b. Each side states reasons for dislikes.
- c. Each side states likes.
- d. Each side states wants.
- e. Each side states reasons for wants.
- f. Both sides invent at least two options to solve the problem.
- g. Both sides choose an option they can live with.
- h. Each side summarizes and paraphrases the other's dislikes, reasons, likes, wants, and solutions.
- i. Both sides acknowledge the agreement with a hug or handshake.

### **Tips for Addressing Personal Frustration to Prevent Fights**

When dealing with negative remarks, remember to:

**Never Argue:** Focus on problem solving and avoid personalizing issues.

**Deal with the present:** Stay out of the past; it only helps build frustration. The past can't be changed – only the future can be created by walking forward in the present.

**Listen to your self-talk:** If you can upset yourself with negative self-talk, then you can have the same power to talk yourself into a positive mental state.

**Be aware of your body position:** Your body language may be incongruent to what you are saying. The body will never lie – only words do.

**See success in your future:** Imagine yourself getting through this point in time, having grown and learned. With positive thinking and consistent work, good things will happen.

Table 7-1 – Tips for Addressing Personal Frustration

*Step 5* – Once you reach agreement, set a meeting at a later date (within three days) to review it and to follow up.

Using guilt, fear, anger, threats, judgment, etc. to win only hurts relationships. I believe every time we do something nice we get one credit of love, and every time we judge or hurt, we lose 50. In other words, we can have a debt quickly if we are not careful. That makes it easier for disagreements to blow up and occur, and harder to make up.

### **Rules to overcome conflict**

For love to continue and to resolve all conflict in a healthy way, the following need to be in place:

- Desire to be kind and resolve conflict in a peaceful manner.
- Desire to communicate with partner.
- Desire and willingness to understand the other's point of view with empathy and true listening.
- Desire to not focus on right; focus on how both sides can have their needs met.
- Desire to be a team.
- Desire to be understanding and flexible.

*Caution:* For some conflicts, the relationship should not come together until the issue is totally resolved safely. Partners need to address serious issues such as abuse, violence, and drugs, and not put each other in positions of danger. In other words, it's OK to define safety borders. Table 7-2 will give you tips to overcome anger.

Many conflicts are caused by lack of skills for making decisions. The following decision making model may be of value.

### **A guide to making challenging decisions**

We all have to make challenging decisions from time to time, but often the difficulty isn't in not knowing what to do; it's taking the action to do it. "Should I do this or that – I can't think, so I'll do nothing." Sound familiar? Just as the key to strengthening a muscle is to train it and practice, the more decisions you make, the easier the process will become.

I have developed a process to help stimulate your mind to make decisions, and I encourage you to use it. It will help identify where you are and what your options are. When necessary, don't hesitate to ask for a second opinion from someone whose judgment you trust. It often helps clear what I call the "emotional dust."

#### **Tips for Dealing With An Angry Partner**

Have a strategy to deal with someone's anger if you want to keep things from becoming personal. Huxley offers the following suggestions that can be used with angry people.

- a. **Affirm the other's feelings.** Affirming another's anger is showing them you are aware of it and are willing to respond.
- b. **Acknowledge your own defensiveness.** Let them know what you are feeling.
- c. **Clarify and diagnose.** Give and receive feedback and find out what they need and want.
- d. **Renegotiate the relationship.** Plan together how similar situations will be dealt with.

Table 7-2 – Tips for Dealing With an Angry Partner

**Making a decision today**

The following is a model for making challenging decisions (use the template on Page 69):

1. Clearly define the decision you need to make today.
2. List three possible choices you can make.
3. List the pros and cons of each choice and the actions you would need to take with each.
4. Write down the choice that jumps out now. To help you be clear, review the cons and state the action needed to overcome them.
5. List two people you can consult to help explore the best decision for you at this point in time. (Skip this step if you can make the decision yourself.)

Once you make your decision, make a plan to put it into action:

- What will you do?
- Where will you do it?
- How will you do it?
- When will you do it?

Be clear in the value of this decision in your life today. How has it helped you as a person?

All decisions require you to make a choice. Not making a choice is a decision. Some decisions we need to make are harder than others, but through practice we learn how to do it. I encourage people to think before they react, so they are making a healthy choice.

**In summary**

Conflict can be healthy and provide a relationship with an opportunity for learning and growth. Use this chapter as a tool to reduce conflict and disagreements and to help you make decisions as a couple. Again, it's OK to disagree. It's not OK to avoid addressing and resolving small issues before they grow into serious ones.

<b>Exercise 7-1 – Mendler’s Model for Negotiating Solutions</b>	
<b>Partner 1</b>	<b>Partner 2</b>
<b>Dislikes</b>	
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Reasons for Dislikes</b>	
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Likes</b>	
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Wants</b>	
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Reasons for Wants</b>	
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Options to Solve the Problem</b>	
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Summarize, Paraphrase the Other’s Dislikes, Reasons, Likes, Wants, Solutions</b>	
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Choose an Option You Can Live With</b>	
_____	_____
Signature _____	Signature _____
Date _____	Date _____

### Making Challenging Decisions

1. Clearly define the decision you need to make today.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. List three possible choices you can make.

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

3. List the pros and cons of each choice, and the actions you would take with each.

#### Choice A

Pros	Cons
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Action I would take: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Choice B

Pros	Cons
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Action I would take: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Making Challenging Decisions — 2

#### Choice C

Pros	Cons
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Action I would take: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Write down the choice that jumps out now. To help you be clear, review the cons and state the action needed to overcome them. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Cons	Actions to Overcome Cons
1. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
2. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
3. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

**Making Challenging Decisions – 3**

5. List two people you can consult to help explore the best decision for you at this point in time. (Skip this step if you can make the decision yourself.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Make an action plan to carry out your decision:

A. What will you do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Where will you do it?

\_\_\_\_\_

C. How will you do it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. When will you do it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Measure your outcomes. This is important to evaluate your decisions.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Solving Problems

*“Finding a problem is easy; solving it is rewarding.”*

— Dr. Bill

ONE of the biggest challenges in a relationship is solving personal problems, which may take many forms, such as:

- *Money* – Poor financial position; debt problems.
- *Career* – Not satisfied with position.
- *Relationships* – Not getting along with peers, or problems at home.
- *Self* – Not confident about abilities.
- *Health* – Having health concerns.

Whether the problem is yours personally or is that of your partner, the only way to resolve it is to take some action. The following six-step model will help you address problems that you might face personally, or that you may be called upon to help your partner resolve.

*Step 1 – Be kind.* This first step makes the rest easy. For you to ever be successful in helping to solve a partner's problems,



Figure 8-1 – Quality World With Common Interest

you must be perceived as kind and truly wanting to help. This will allow you to build rapport, so you will find your common ground (e.g., sports, music, other hobbies). So work to find common ground first, before you attempt to assist with particular concerns.

To help yourself, you need to believe that you like yourself (have self-rapport) and that you can get through this. Note: Form 8-1 is the worksheet for this section.

*Step 2 – Define Concern Areas.* To solve a concern, you need to be clear about what it is, so answer the following questions:

- Who is involved?
- What is involved?
- Where is it involved?

- What needs to be resolved?
- What are the timelines and consequences?

It's important that the concern is clearly defined. You can't resolve an issue if you don't have a clear definition of what needs to be addressed.

*Step 3 – Assessing Motivation.* There are times when people are not ready or prepared to do anything about their problem or concern. If your partner is not prepared to address an issue, you must allow them to experience the consequences, as long as the safety of self and/or others is not at stake (e.g., abuse, violence).

The following will assist you in assessing your partner's readiness for change and provide a model to help move them through change (see Figure 8-2). I define change as: when people learn one or more new behaviors that help them believe they are in better control of their life.

One major frustration is when a partner refuses to believe they have any issues that require them to change, or show a lack of motivation for change. Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross call this the Precontemplation Stage. It has been defined as the Unwillingness to Change Stage, where the person is not psychologically ready, nor motivated, to address the presenting issue, or has had insufficient time to process the information and does not yet see the value in a new behavior. Therefore, they do not yet show a willingness to change their present position.

Once the person starts to have dialogue and show willingness for change, they are in the Contemplation Stage. This has been defined as the Exploration for Change Stage, where people start to make inquiries and begin to explore

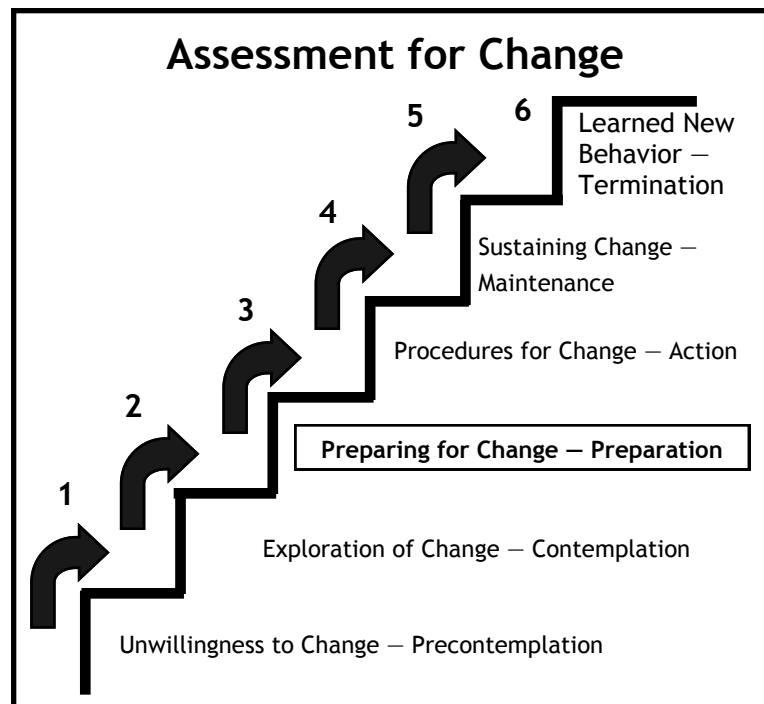


Figure 8-2 – Assessment for Change

the “what ifs” and the potential; the effort required; and the new skills, knowledge, and attitude they will need to achieve the desired change.

The point where the person is concentrating and focusing on making change is the Preparation or Preparing for Change Stage. Your main function here is to act as a resource and instructor to assist the person in developing the foundation skills necessary to be successful in the process of learning new behaviors.

When the person is finally ready to initiate change, they are in the Action or Procedures for Change Stage. At this point, they are usually highly motivated to set a specific goal that is to reduce the area of concern.

One important caution is that when you are in the action stage and your partner is still in contemplation, there will be resistance. You need to start from where they are, and then move forward. You cannot force solutions.

*Step 4 – Define the goal.* Once you know the problem, it's important to be clear on your desired outcomes (objective and goal). The goal then is for you to define what you want in the short term, as well as the long term.

I suggest that all short-term goals be no longer than two weeks; long-term goals no longer than two months. This is a timeframe where you will not be focused on the issue any more, and the outcome you have for the long term has become habit.

*Step 5 – Action.* Once you set your goal, it's important to put together your plan of action steps that will allow the goal to become a reality. A plan needs to be SIMPLE (Simple to do; Immediately done and started today; Measurable, so you can see your progress; Possible (not just a dream); Legal (does not break any law); Ethical (does not compromise your values). When you make your plan, it needs to be well thought out and have a clear path of steps to attain your desired goals.

*Step 6 – Follow-up.* Whatever your plan is, it's important to follow up. A set follow-up schedule is important. I suggest you measure your short-term goals daily to ensure you are on course. This daily evaluation will help you measure how close you are to your ultimate long-term goal, which is a permanent solution, and new habit, if applicable.

**In summary**

This chapter provided the steps to solve a challenge. A challenge can't be solved unless you start to take action. Without motivation, desire, effort, patience, and time, the chances for success will be greatly reduced. Your challenges may take time to be resolved – some more than others. Give yourself and your partner the opportunity, and you will be surprised at what is possible.

**Relationship Problem Solving Checklist**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you developed a rapport with your partner, so it is safe to address this concern?

Circle:        Yes    No

If yes, evidence to support this perception \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_If no, what is your perception? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. **Concern Areas (problem)**

Partner's perception \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you agree with your partner's perception? Yes No

Your perception \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. **Motivation for Change**

What stage is the individual in? Circle appropriate category and provide a brief note to support the assessment.

Pre-contemplation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Contemplation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Preparation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Goals Wanted** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Short-Term Goals Identified?      Yes      No

Short-Term Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

Long-Term Goals: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**5. Action Plan** (be specific – time, categories, evaluation, and action plan)

Note: referrals if using.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Follow-ups and Evaluation**

(List dates, times, and initial and date on completion.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Signatures**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Addressing Change

*“Relationships stop changing when they are over.” – Dr. Bill*

**I**N all relationships, people change, meaning the relationship changes. Change can be defined as “addressing any life event – minor or major – that involves some loss or change that comes from an internal or external influence – that once the change occurs, the person will need to compensate in some manner for the change.”

All change can at first be perceived as exciting or painful. The important point of change is that it can only be defined by the individual. Seldom do people see an event the same way, and we all move through the cycle of change a little differently.

You will have many changes in your relationship, such as:

- Children.
- Money.
- Change of interests.
- Job.
- Children grow up.
- Family dynamics.

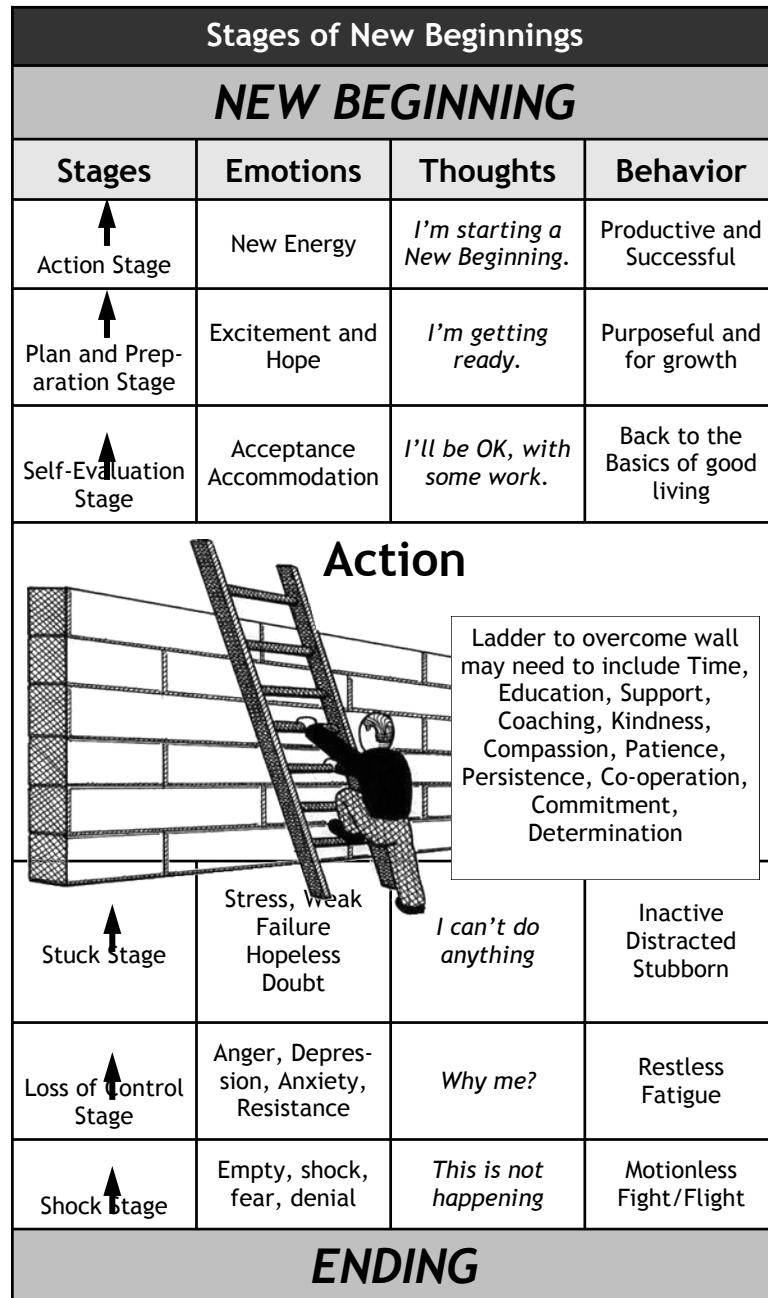


Figure 9-1 – Stages of New Beginnings

- Health issues.
- Moving.
- Friends come and go.
- Growing old.

This list could go on for quite a while. The point is that change will happen in any relationship. The challenge is to overcome it and to be proactive with the change. The key to dealing with any change is to be aware that: 1) it always will be present; 2) how we respond to any change is our choice; 3) with proactive action, we can always start a new beginning.

Because change involves effort and work, which often means new learnings, some will find it easier to get mad or depressed, or even quit. The fact to remember is that the choice is yours.

To address change, I have developed a model I call New Beginnings because, in essence, all change is a new beginning. In life, there is a beginning, middle, and end to most everything we do. Thus, to address change, we need to understand that everything has an ending. The problem is that, with most change, we are not always consciously aware of how we have or have not chosen the time, place, or situation for the ending.

Common Examples of Change	
<b>M</b> <b>A</b> <b>J</b> <b>O</b> <b>R</b>	Loss of job
	Loss of relationship
	Loss of a friend
	<div>minor</div> <div>Loss of planned date</div>

Table 9-2 — Common Examples of Change

This model is intended to be a map, so that you know the territory and can find your bearings as you seek a new beginning.

As you can see in Figure 9-1, there is a transition before you move from an ENDING to A NEW BEGINNING. This is similar to what the famous psychiatrist Viktor Frankl called the GAP – the point between receiving information and making a choice to react to it. In this period, whatever we do with the information we receive is our choice. This is why, when people lose a job, some get drunk, depressed, angry – or say “so what,” and find a new job. We need to learn that we can only control our present actions, and that we always have choice.

Once we can understand the metaphor that in life there is always a BEGINNING, a MIDDLE, and an ENDING to everything we do, we are more ready to move through the process.

### **How the model works**

It's not necessary to go through all stages. Some people will stay in the first stage (shock) for a long period of time until they acquire the knowledge and skills to move forward. Others will process the change so quickly that they will jump through all the stages and appear to be off to a new beginning. Although some people are able to do this incident-free, it's also normal for a person who goes through the stages really quickly to have a delayed reaction (e.g., 30 days up to 6 months), then return to the first or some other stage. This is why many people get lost in life, because they have had a major change and still have not fully processed it. Too many people get comfortable and settled in one of the early stages

when faced with change they did not want, and expect to spend years of their life at that stage. For example, a divorcee may stay in the stuck stage for years and feel hopeless about future relationships.

For people who have been struck by major events, such as loss of a spouse or marriage, the effects can go on for years. If they are not treated or coached, they may never move on. In some cases, a person may have two or three major events and be in different stages of the change process for each. For example, a change in a relationship can have a major impact on change at work. This also can complicate the process of moving to a new beginning, and is where life balance is important.

Since we all interpret and store information of previous experiences and learnings differently, some may go from endings to new beginnings easily and effortlessly. In fact, for some, a new beginning is so exciting, they force endings.

One of my concerns when coaching people is that if they stay in the stuck stage too long, they risk creating new habits of ineffective behavior, such as addictions (alcohol, tobacco, food, etc.) to cope with being stuck. The key to change is to be aware that it is a process.

We seldom ever are in one stage of change at one time. For example, if you lose your job and relationship in the same month, notice in Figure 9-1 how you can be in different stages. Once we realize that we can be in several stages of change at one time, we then can become aware that if we address the major issues first, then the little or less intense issues are easier to resolve.

As we grow and experience life, we are continually measuring our time on earth. But if you notice, time is really

only a linear measurement – a key processor of all change (Figure 9-3). The key to new beginnings is continuing to look forward to the future if you have a major change in life.

We will have many events on our timeline of life. The adage “time heals all” may or may not be true, but sometimes the ending of something may either leave you with the impression that you are small and trying to climb Mount Everest, or as tall as the Jolly Green Giant stepping over a cornfield. The key is to be sure to understand that we have to respect the process of change, but that we all are individuals and that no two people will go through the process the same way. While there are clear markers, individuals will not go to the exact spot or stay in the same stage for the same length of time. All we know is that, no matter what the

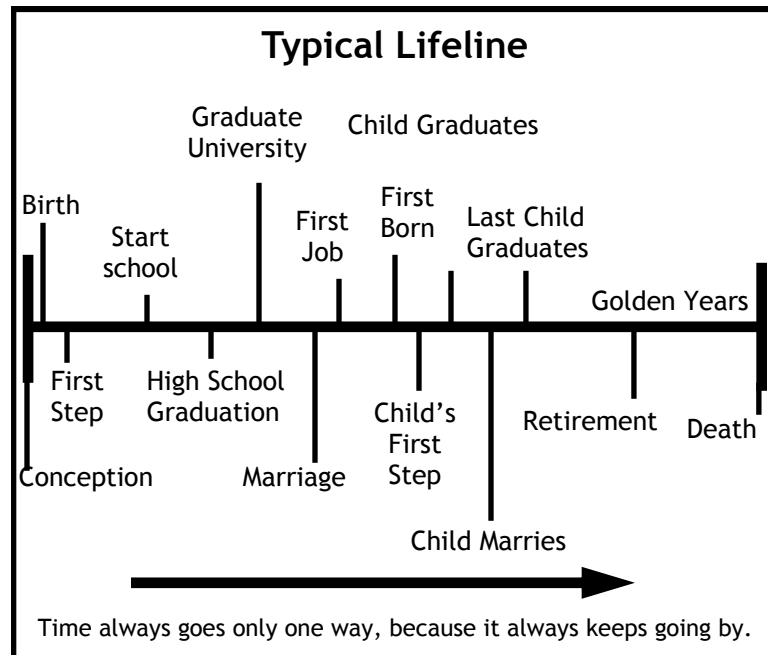


Figure 9-3 – Typical Lifeline

situation or issue, time will not stop for us nor can we rewind it. Be mindful that change is a process; and, no matter how we progress, time will not accommodate us by stopping.

In any event, there will be a gap between an ending and a new beginning. The gap, though, is a variable that can be a millisecond or a decade, depending on you. It also depends on the resources and support you have, and very specifically, the “stakes.” For example, a loss of a spouse of 30 years of marriage will be a much more difficult loss than for a child who loses a favorite toy. The challenge is to not judge, but to understand that no matter what has happened, only the person involved can ultimately choose what direction to take.

As you can see, for the above example of linear time, I use several examples to show how we are always changing. The point is that many people get stuck in these difficult phases of their lives because they cannot cope with natural changes or other types of upsets and challenges. The sands of time will continue to flow, and we will continue to be faced with challenge and change. Change is not a problem in itself; what we do with the change may be the problem.

### **The philosophy of change**

Change is always going to happen, but how we move through the stages of change will be influenced by our personality, which takes into account our beliefs and belief systems. When faced with change, we need to be able to:

- *Maintain our life principles.* This takes into account all the life habits we can benefit by, such as honesty, integrity, quality, hard work, community, and love.

- *Adjust to our environment.* We cannot expect that our relationship will always be the same as the day we met. Old habits may be comfortable; however, to adjust to the world, we need to have intelligence, emotional stability, flexibility, and willingness to create new habits. Because there is a lesson to learn with every change in life, this belief system will help us benefit from change. As we grow, our relationship needs to grow and change with us.

### **Personality traits of addressing change**

I have found the following types of personality determine how people respond to change:

- *Avoiders* – do not like any kind of change. They hide, fight, and resist any change. These people do not look for change, thus they get hit hard when change occurs.
- *Out of Tuners* – These people don't pay attention to signs of potential change, so they are not ready. It's not that they resist change, but they find it hard to focus on what they will need to do. They are not really motivated to focus on what is happening.
- *Step Behinders* – These people operate in a reactive style. They don't change until others have changed and they start to notice they are falling behind. So they create a knee jerk reaction to try to get caught up.
- *Visionaries* – These people are consistently studying where change is going to happen and how they can

be a step ahead. They look at change as an opportunity and find it exciting and an adventure.

- *Benders* – These are the rubber people. They are flexible, able to be like a chameleon, and change to fit the situation.

From the above five personality traits, self-evaluate who you are in regard to addressing change.

The world will not stop for us; we will always have endings and opportunities for new beginnings. I think about Thomas Edison, who made 10,000 attempts before he perfected the light bulb. He obviously took every attempt not as a failure, but as an ending of one try. He never thought of his disappointments as failures. He saw them as profound learnings that were motivating and valuable. He focused on his belief system and kept his vision.

To adapt to change, we need to be mindful of where we really want to be; and, with communication, passion, desire, focus, and determination, we will always be able to find some positive learnings in any change. It may take us a long time; however, if we are willing, we will find them.

### **Addressing change**

Whenever you are faced with a challenge in life, consider the following plan of action (see Form 9-1).

1. Define and write out what change has occurred.
2. Ask two close friends to help you with your explanation to get accurate feedback, so you stay with the facts and see the change for what it really is.

3. Review the gap between the ending of the old and the beginning of the new, and recognize what your personality style is and what choices you have.
4. Once you have determined where you are in the gap, ask yourself the following:
  - A. Where am I now?
  - B. Where do I want to go?
  - C. What do I need to get there?
  - D. Am I willing to do it?
5. Once you have established this, make a plan to start on the road to close the gap between the ending and the start of your new beginning. (If stuck, use the Problem Solving Model in Chapter 8.)

The purpose of any plan is to give you a direction and a focus. If you follow the above, you will be closer to a new beginning. The most important lesson with change is that we all have what Frankl called the Ultimate Freedom. Regardless of the events of life, Frankl, while in Nazi prison camps, made the famous statement, “You can control my body, but you cannot control my mind.” Even in his desperate situation, having the traditional worth of human life discarded, Frankl showed the world that, no matter how extreme the change, once we recognize that we always have choice, we are well on the road to a new beginning.

### **In summary**

Change in relationships will continue. The model I have designed is to be used as a template to self-evaluate where you are, so that you know where you can go. It’s also to normalize the fact that change is challenge. As Scott Peck says, “It

may be easy, but not simple,” meaning we know what to do, but we need to be motivated to take action and use change as a way to grow and learn. With any change, we obtain learnings that will always be with us to serve or hurt us. We have the final choice. We need to be mindful of how we change, so we can be flexible and adjust.

### Template for Working Through Change

1. Define the change: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What two friends can you talk to, to get their input and feedback? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
When? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is it about your personality that may influence you (Avoider, Out of Tuner . . .)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What can you do to overcome this trait, if it is a concern?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Take stock of where you are now:
  - A. Where am I now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Where do I want to go? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - C. What do I need to get there? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - D. Am I willing to go? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your plan to overcome this challenge?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





## Final Thoughts

A relationship cannot be taken for granted. Anything in life worth having takes effort, focus, work, commitment, and time. The quotes below, I believe, sum up this book.

*It is love, not reason, that is stronger than death.*

— Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

*Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction.*

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *Wind, Sand, and Stars*

*There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved.*

— George Sand

*Love conquers all things; let us too surrender to Love.*

— Virgil, *Eclogues*

I truly wish you both the best of luck. Love is a wonderful experience. Enjoy it, and celebrate it daily!

— **Dr. Bill**





## Tips for Improving Your Sex Life

Many couples have sex without exploring the kind of sex that will provide them with pleasure and excitement. Below are some points to help you improve your sex life.

- Talk openly about sex; what you want and need. Be specific.
- Have a discussion about sex in regard to defining the word. For example, does sex mean orgasm? Does it mean love? Define why and what you want from sex.
- Explore what each other calls great sex. Break it down to the specific details (e.g., position, type, length, time).
- Find out each other's sex wants and needs. How much do you each need to be satisfied? Be clear; be honest.
- Discuss how to ask for sex. Is it done through actions, (e.g., romance), talking (e.g., are you frisky?), touch (e.g., a hold or touch that stimulates the process) or scheduling (e.g., Saturday, at 7 a.m.).

- If orgasm is a problem, talk about it; don't hide, it can be helped. See a doctor or sex therapist.
- Be creative, focus on passion. Get out of your box. In fact, blow it up!
- Stay active. Exercise will increase energy, as well as the chance of liking your body.
- Sleep and eat right.
- Find out how to have sex when you want it.
- Try the sex game.
- Balance your personal life. Define and create happiness for yourself.
- Create a safety net for both of you, so you can see that sex is wonderful and magical.
- Practice makes perfect – so practice what each other wants.
- Sex is healthy and reduces stress.
- Be congruent and don't compromise yourself.
- Take a course on how to improve your sex life.
- Read books on massage and sexual positions.
- Practice touching each other in non-sexual ways.
- Solve whatever is bothering you. Resentment will reduce the desire for passion.

### **Sex Game**

Rules: Each month, each partner gets three cards. Any card may be returned freely.

- 1) Each side makes three cards of what they want:

Example:

Male:   a. Intercourse on top  
          b. Intercourse on bottom  
          c. Back Rub

Female: a. Foot massage  
          b. Love making dinner, wine, and holding  
          c. Back rub

- 2) Each side can present the card any time that is reasonable, and the request will be carried out, without debate.
- 3) No rejection; no excuses, ever.
- 4) Done with passion and love.

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