



How to Make a Marriage Last

by Ken Johnston

“Make a Marriage Last”

<http://www.Relationship-Insurance.com>

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(Nobody likes to read this kind of stuff. We wish we didn't have to do it.)

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Introduction to: The Secrets to Love and Marriage

Love and marriage go together. Half of all marriages fail because they can't protect the love they begin with. Discover how to keep a happy marriage. Learn to protect and grow your love and marriage.

But first, relax a little. Everyone says that a good marriage takes a lot of work. Our job is to turn that 'work' into fun. If you are serious about your marriage, it's helpful if you can start by relaxing. The first three things you need to do are relax, decide not to aim for perfection, and laugh a lot. Click on: relax, be imperfect, and laugh

Amazingly, there are happy marriages

Sadly, many couples have never seen a loving happy marriage up close. Some can't even imagine that there are any loving happy marriages. We are surrounded by the quotes and jokes about love and marriage. Explore some samples of the quotes and jokes that show us how marriage is ridiculous.

How To keep A Happy Marriage

Here is the secret formula for a happy marriage. Start marriage with lots of love. Protect that love and actively take steps to grow it. Avoid fights, harsh words, any expressions of disgust or contempt that erode the bundle of love you had when you married. Learn to recognize bad feelings about your partner and cope with them immediately. Learn to accept, forgive and forget any foibles, failings, or flaws in your partner and yourself. That's all. Pretty simple, huh? Don't worry, we'll show you how, step-by-step and we'll hold your hand the whole way.

Relax, Be Imperfect, and Laugh

Marriage is a wonderful and serious thing, but it's also pretty ridiculous. To take a man and a woman, with all their differences, and bond them together full time for a long time (and expect smooth sailing), is pretty silly. Laughing helps. To make it work, you need to relax, be imperfect, and laugh a lot.

Why marry? The genes make you do it.

There are 50 different answers to the question, "Why Marry?" Every theorist has a different reason. The fact is, we don't exactly know. We just know that with our DNA, our genes and our hormones, we humans — like many other species — are driven to pair-bond (find a mate). Culturally, we formalize our pairing with marriage (often, but not always).

Men and women are a total misfit

Surely, you've heard that "Men are From Mars and Women are from Venus." John Gray, who created the metaphor, has book after book about how different men are from women. Gray says it's like two different alien species coming together in a marriage.

When women talk together, they 'know' how men are, and they roll their eyes. and say "Just like a man." When men talk together, they 'know' how women are, and they roll their eyes, and say "Just like a woman."

Marriage is actually very good for us!

All of the studies show that we married people are healthier, happier, and wealthier. We give our children two parents, and we have larger combined families to create a wider support base. So, if we're driven to marry, and it's really very good for us to be married, just imagine how much better it would be if we could make the marriage happy, loving, and lasting.

Nobody can do marriage perfectly

You must understand this: no one can do marriage perfectly. There is no point in trying to be a perfect spouse. You'll just get an ulcer or IBS or something else from trying to do the impossible. It is much wiser to relax, accept your imperfections, and laugh as often as you can.

There are happy marriages, and we'll give you the formula that will help you create one for you and your partner. Read on.

Marriage Jokes and Quotes

Marriage jokes are used by every stand-up comic. Everybody laughs at marriage. Yet, everyone wants to be married. Are we conflicted? Yes. My life is about helping people have happy marriages that last. I take marriage very seriously. Yet, I laugh at marriage jokes. Go figure. Well, to help you relax and laugh about a serious subject, here are some marriage jokes.

Marriage Jokes About Marriage, Wives and Husbands

My wife and I have the secret to making a marriage last. Two times a week, we go to a nice restaurant, a little wine, good food ... she goes Tuesdays, I go Fridays.

Marriage is a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution yet.

"I am" is reportedly the shortest sentence in the English language. Could it be that "I do" is the longest sentence?

By all means marry; if you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.

Getting married is very much like going to a restaurant with friends. You order what you want, then when you see what the other person has, you wish you had ordered that.

My spouse and I were happy for twenty years. Then we met.

I love being married. It's so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life.

We always hold hands. If I let go, she shops.

A man doesn't know what happiness is until he's married. By then it's too late.

Marriage is nature's way of keeping us from fighting with strangers.

More Marriage Jokes About Marriage, Wives and Husbands

My spouse and I have been married for forty-seven years and not once have we had an argument serious enough to consider divorce; murder, yes, but divorce, never.

Marriage is very much like a violin; after the sweet music is over, the strings are attached.

It is true that love is blind but marriage is definitely an eye-opener.

Love is one long sweet dream, and marriage is the alarm clock.

Do you know what it means to come home at night to a woman who'll give you a little love, a little affection, a little tenderness? It means you're in the wrong house.

Marriage is give and take. You'd better give it to her or she'll take it anyway.

They say when a man holds a woman's hand before marriage, it is love; after marriage, it is self-defense.

Marriage Jokes and Quotes that can Inspire

Not everything said about marriage is negative. To better prepare you for discovering the secret to a happy marriage that lasts, we've included some wise and inspirational quotes as well.

A good marriage is the union of two good forgivers. (Ruth Bell Graham)

It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Marriage is one long conversation, checkered with disputes. (Robert Louis Stevenson)

The first duty of love is to listen. (Paul Tillich)

Chains do not hold a marriage together. It is threads, hundreds of tiny threads, which sew people together through the years. (Simone Signoret)

For a marriage to have any chance, every day at least six things should go unsaid. (Unknown)

The development of a really good marriage is not a natural process. It is an achievement. (David and Vera Mace)

People think they have to find their soulmate to have a good marriage. You're not going to "find" your soulmate. Anyone you meet already has soulmates. Their mother. Their father. Their lifelong friends. You get married, and after 20 years of loving, bearing and raising children, meeting challenges - then you'll have "created" your soulmate. (Diane Sollee from "Smart Marriages")

I have no way of knowing whether or not you married the wrong person, but I do know that many people have a lot of wrong ideas about marriage and what it takes to make that marriage happy and successful. I'll be the first to admit that it's possible that you did marry the wrong person. However, if you treat the wrong person like the right person, you could well end up having married the right person after all. On the other hand, if you marry the right person, and treat that person wrong, you certainly will have ended up marrying the wrong person. I also know that it is far more important to be the right kind of person than it is to marry the right person. In short, whether you married the right or wrong person is primarily up to you. (Zig Ziglar)

And my favorite:

It is necessary but insufficient to stay married for the children's sake. It is also necessary to stay happily married for the children's sake. I'm so glad someone noticed that marriage doesn't have to make you miserable. It is just so easy to be happy I don't understand why it isn't more popular. (Frank Pittman)

Finally, it's time to get to the point

Now, you're relaxed, you've had a laugh or two, you've been inspired a little, and you're ready for the secret formula for how to keep a happy marriage that lasts.

Make a Marriage Happy

To make your marriage last, make it happy. It's much easier to make a marriage happy when you learn the simple steps summarized on this page.

Start Your Marriage With Lots Of Love

You make a marriage happy when it's filled with love. Most marriages begin with each person having a big bundle of good feelings toward the other. Attraction, infatuation, and romance are not love, but they all play a part in building the collection of good feelings that is real love. (This is all explained in the next section: "What is love.")

The success of some arranged marriages proves that you don't have to start with a big bundle of love. However, to make a marriage happy, you need to build love as you go.

Our advice: start the marriage with as big a bundle of real love as you can.

Actively Grow Your Love Continually

Love is a collection of positive memories of shared experiences. You grow your love by remembering, re-experiencing, marking, or talking about those loving memories.

Such things as diaries, photos, blogs, and love letters all help to keep growing your bundle.

You grow your love by continuing to have more positive shared experiences with your partner.

You grow your love by keeping some romance alive in your lives.

Avoid fights or harsh words that could erode your love bundle

Identify the irresolvable issues in your marriage and agree to never, ever, fight about any of those. Treat those issues with humor, acceptance, and grace. This will eliminate 70 to 90 percent of the fights you might otherwise have.

You'll still have your fights, spats, and tiffs. Research proves you can make a marriage happy — even with lots of disagreements — if you begin and end each 'issue' discussion in a positive and respectful way.

Hurtful fights, expressions of disdain, disgust, or contempt, all erode your love bundle and hurt your efforts to make a marriage happy.

Cope Immediately With Bad Feelings About Your Partner

As quickly as you realize you're experiencing bad feelings toward your partner, shift to an easy coping strategy, which will limit the damage that bad feelings about your partner can do to your happiness and your love bundle.

You protect your loving feelings and make a marriage happy, by coping to minimize the damage that bad shared experiences can do.

Practice Accepting, Forgiving, and Forgetting

Accepting, forgiving, and forgetting are powerful tools you need to make a marriage happy.

Failing to accept or forgive — and never forgetting — will damage and can even destroy your bundle of loving feelings. They are the perfect recipe for *unhappiness* for you, your partner, and your marriage.

You accept, forgive, and forget, not because your partner deserves it, but because you want to make a marriage happy, and Ruth Bell Graham said, "A good marriage is the union of two good forgivers."

You *accept* what you can't or won't change, otherwise you make yourself miserable.

You *forgive* because you want to maintain your love for your partner and make a marriage happy.

You *forget* because the happiest person is the person with the happiest memories.

This Book Explores Each Step

This page has been an overview of the secrets to make a marriage happy. The steps discussed above are explored in far greater depth in this e-book.

Our mission is to help couples build happy marriages that last. We encourage you to make that part of *your* personal mission: to have a happy marriage that lasts.

If you do make having a happy marriage that lasts a part of your personal mission, we're delighted you found us. We should team up.

There is too much information in this book to absorb in one reading, so if you like where we're headed, you might bookmark the page, so you can get back here again easily.

Introduction to: What is Love?

Every experience of your loved one creates a memory. Love becomes a bundle of feelings, created by the collection of memories of your loved one.

Marriages *fail* because people don't know what their bundle of love is and how to protect it. Marriages become *happy* when couples understand what love is and how to add to their bundle.

Is physical attraction love?

Love at first sight is simply attraction. Attraction can make your knees weak. It can make you speechless. It can hit you over the head like a baseball bat. It can be magical. But, you don't really need it to make a marriage last.

How about infatuation. Is that love?

Common definitions, such as "puppy love," or "having a crush," don't help us, because they don't recognize the power of infatuation to make you crazy.

A better definition is: temporary insanity that makes a person deaf, blind, and dumb. It's a form of madness, even though it feels wonderful and is an amazing feeling. You see no faults. It feels like love, but it isn't.

Infatuation turbo-charges your experiences with your lover so that an ordinary moment becomes an extraordinary memory.

Sadly, infatuation always goes away, and all of a sudden your loved one is simply a normal human being. To have a happy marriage, you need to know the real truth about infatuation.

Isn't there romantic love?

Ah, Romance. Moonlight and roses. Dancing in the dark. The thrill of the kiss. "Our song." Holding hands at midnight. An old fashioned love song. Romance isn't love, but it creates those magical memories of shared experience that become part of your collection of memories that is true love.

Guys will dance with you, bring flowers, call you just because they're thinking of you, and do tons more romantic things while you're dating. After the honeymoon, those things tend to fade away. That's normal. That's the way most marriages are.

Few marriages have much romance left after the honeymoon. If you want to make the marriage last, you can agree to carry some of the romance into and throughout your marriage. Read the following article: "What is Love?"

What Love Is

Once you know what love is, you'll know how to *keep it growing*, instead of letting it slip away. That's how to make a marriage last.

Love is a Collection of Memories

Every experience you have of your loved one creates a memory. Hopefully most of them are positive memories. Every memory comes attached to the *feeling* you felt when you had that experience. That what love is.

I use the term 'collection' when I'm talking about memories, because each memory is a discreet item you can recall one at a time.

Each memory comes with a feeling, some with good feelings, some not so good. The sum total of all the good and bad feelings connected to your partner becomes your "bundle" of love.

I call the bundle of feelings a 'bundle' because the feelings get all mixed up together and become one big bundle of feelings, even though the memories can be recalled one at a time. The feelings are not as discreet as the memories. That is, they become all mixed together. One big bundle — that's what love is.

The collection of memories produces your bundle of love

I apologize for these unromantic words, 'collection,' and 'bundle.' I wish there were better words to use to tell you what love is.

It's important to understand that the love you feel for your partner is a giant glob of feelings, some good and some not so good. All of the feelings were created by the experiences *of*, *about*, and *with* your partner.

If Harold imagines how wonderful it would be to hold Agnes tight and kiss her, he is creating an experience *of* Agnes. It will create a memory, and it produces a positive loving feeling. It adds to his bundle.

If Agnes talks about Harold to her best friend and tells her how wonderful he is, she is having an experience *about* Harold. She is creating a memory that produces a positive feeling. It adds to her bundle.

When Harold and Agnes kiss in a romantic place, it creates memories of a positive experience *with* each other. The memory creates a positive feeling. They are both adding to their bundles.

Their marriage will last if they protect their bundles

Harold and Agnes *get* married because they each have a bundle of loving feelings. By knowing that each experience together in the future will produce a memory — and add a good feeling or a bad feeling to their bundle — they can understand the secret to making a marriage last.

Harold and Agnes will *stay* married if their bundles grow over time. They need to find ways to add positive shared experiences, so their bundle will grow.

Harold and Agnes also need to know how to preserve their bundle from eroding. They need to know what to do when they have a fight. They need to learn to cope with the bad feelings a fight produces.

They need to know how to have fewer fights than other couples have. They need to know how to begin and end each 'issue' discussion on a positive and respectful note. They can even turn what might be a fight for another couple into a positive shared experience that will add to the love in their bundles.

What's the proof that love is a collection of memories?

You only need to visit a nursing home to see examples of people who have lost access to their memories. Alzheimer's, dementia, and other things that cause memory loss show us that when a woman cannot recognize a man as her husband, she feels no love for him. Her bundle of love has disappeared because she has no memory of her husband, good or bad. Mothers or Fathers can't recognize and remember their children.

You can only feel love if you can recall the memories of, about, and with the person, pet, or place.

In Summary, here's what love is

Love is a bundle of feelings attached to a collection of memories of experiences of, about, and with your partner.

Attraction, infatuation, and romance all play a role in super-charging the experiences, so the memories and feelings are so much stronger, but they are not love.

Physical Attraction

Physical attraction can be so powerful it takes your breath away. It can make your knees weak. You may not be able to speak, or even think. Learn what's magical about it, and how it can hurt you.

"Love at first sight" isn't really love. It's attraction. It's important to know the difference between attraction and love. People who don't understand the difference can find themselves running off to elope with a stranger — because of attraction — not love.

Attraction is a physical response — you feel it!

You look at someone, or hear his or her voice, and the physical attraction is immediate. In one case it can be mild. In another, it can be strong, and in yet another it can be intense.

Somehow (and nobody knows quite how), we're each "imprinted" at an early age — possibly as young as three or as old as eight or nine — with the imprint that will determine the person you will find attractive later in life.

You seem to have a mental picture of the person who is just "right" for you. Not only is there a picture, but also there is an imprint for the "right" voice: the sound, the tone, and the pace. You're imprinted not only with picture and sound, but odor, taste, and feel.

You're always on the lookout for people who match your attraction imprinting.

Before and even after you're married:

You — without even realizing it — automatically scan each person (of the right sex for you), and you feel physical attraction when you see, hear, or meet (or smell, touch, or taste) someone who matches some of the features for which you are imprinted. The closer that person comes to matching your imprint, the more intense the feeling. A complete match is not necessary for attraction. Just one or two key variables may be enough to give you the feeling of being attracted.

Good and bad news about attraction

Attraction is probably a genetic "leftover" from the time before humans learned to speak. Its purpose was to start the process of getting two pre-verbal cave dwellers to become a couple and raise children.

Because the whole attraction process is buried deeply into our brains, it's pretty automatic, so we don't have much control over it. It happens whether we like it or not.

That means that you might be happily married, in love with your partner, and BOING!, the bells go off when you meet someone who closely matches your imprinting.

The good news is that attraction is a wonderful, delightful, and exciting experience.

The bad news is that some people confuse attraction with love and think they should act on the feeling of attraction.

You can't make a marriage last if either party confuses attraction with love and wants to start a new relationship with the latest person to "ring their bell."

If you're married, and you feel attraction for another person, enjoy the feeling, but do not act on the feeling. Some people feel guilty. They think they may not love their partner if they feel attracted to someone else.

Don't feel guilty. And, don't make your partner feel guilty if your partner feels a powerful attraction for another person. It's human. It's automatic. You can't help it. But, you can understand it, and choose not to do anything about it.

Attraction isn't love; it's simply physical attraction

Physical attraction can be so powerful that it feels like love — but it isn't. We now know that love is the bundle of feelings that come from memories of positive shared experiences.

You can't be in love with this stranger you've just met, who "rings your bell." You have no shared positive experiences. You have no memories with feelings attached. You have no bundle of love on which to base a marriage.

Do not make the disasterous mistake of running off to be with this stranger based solely on the primeval physical attraction your imprinting causes you to feel. **Do Not!**

Teenagers should be taught about attraction so they understand the physical attraction they feel the first time somebody matches their imprinting.

Some of the variables in physical attraction

Here are some of the physical attraction variables that are important to different people. A few of these may be critical variables to you, but each is critical to someone.

- Hair: length, type (curly, straight, long, short), color, texture
- Facial features: shape, width, length
- Skin color: texture and feel
- Body shape: sexual features, legs, neck, lip tension, taste
- Feel of the skin and flesh: hardness, softness
- Voice tone: timbre, pace, softness, hardness, high or low
- Sense of humor: laugh, giggle
- Smell: skin, hair, breath
- Gestures: head, hands, and arm movements
- Posture: carriage, roundness, straightness
- Tension level of the body: relaxed, tense
- Height: tall, short, medium
- Weight: light, heavy
- Energy level: calm, intense, easy-going, hard driving
- Gait: walking, running
- Confidence level: cocky, shy, confident

What attraction variables are you imprinted with?

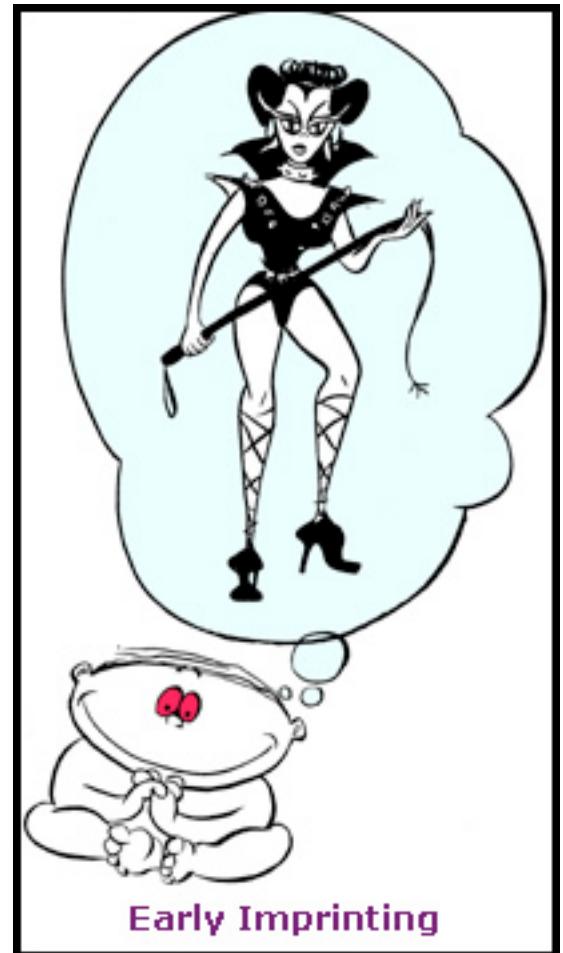
Just for fun. Take a few minutes to find out what you are imprinted for.

Bring to mind two different people to whom you have felt physical attraction. Go over the previous list and see which items were similar between the two. Then take a third person and go over the list again.

If you have items that match on three people, the odds are good that those items are part of your imprinting. If there is a resounding "yes" for you on any one item, then that item is important to you.

This is a fun and useful exercise. After you're married, you need to be aware of the power of attraction. When you find yourself strongly attracted, enjoy the feeling, but do nothing else. It's normal. It's natural. You have no control over it.

You do, however, have complete control over what you do after feeling attracted.



If being attracted to someone outside your relationship is a concern, please read the "Couple's Pledge" in Appendix A at the end of this book.

Love vs Infatuation

It's easy for others to tell whether you are in love or just infatuated. But, it can be hard for *you* to tell the difference.

You can't tell the difference because when you're "crazy in love." You've lost your senses. You've lost your mind. Infatuation is a delightful form of madness. It's like a short term mental illness, where you lose your ability to reason.

Here's how to tell the difference

Love is real, and if you take good care of it, it will last a lifetime. And love can grow.

Infatuation is unreal. The madness of infatuation creates many unrealities. You perceive your love object as vastly more wonderful than is real. You perceive your feeling of infatuation as though it will last forever.

Once infatuation peaks, it starts disappearing until it's gone. *It always goes away.*

After infatuation goes away, reality comes back to you. You see that your love object has faults, flaws, and the normal number of human quirks. You can't see that when you're infatuated.

After infatuation disappears and reality returns, any bonds you formed with your partner during your madness will stay with you forever. It's those bonds, the memories and the feelings that make up your bundle of love that might lead to marriage and a committed relationship.

So, love is real, and it lasts.

Infatuation is magical, mystical, very unreal, and it always goes away.

Is it Love or Infatuation?

It's hard to tell the difference between love and infatuation, because they are so intertwined. I'll do my best to unscramble them for you.

Love is a collection of memories of shared experiences of, about, and with your partner. The memories come with feelings attached, which come together in a giant bundle of feelings of love.

Infatuation is a hormonal state that turbo-charges those shared experiences.

Example: Agnes and Harold are enjoying mutual infatuation. They go to dinner. You and I might think that everything about the experience was ordinary, yet to them everything about the experience creates a magical memory.

The food was the best they ever tasted. The music was incredibly good. In fact, one song became "Our Song." They danced. It was heavenly holding each other in their arms. They'll never forget what they whispered into each other's ears.

Okay, you got the idea. A shared positive experience creates memories with attached feelings. This is true of experiences Agnes and Harold shared before they came down with infatuation, and it will be true throughout their married life.



The hormonal, unreal state of infatuation turbo-charges those shared positive memories, and allows them to create huge, fantastic, powerful memories, with wonderfully strong feelings attached.

Because of the infatuation, the bundle of love that they will carry into their marriage will be much larger than it would have been if neither had come down with infatuation.

"Is it love or is it infatuation?" isn't exactly the right question

This question suggests that they are opposed. They aren't. They are vastly different. One goes, the other stays. One is real, the other is unreal.

But while under the influence of infatuation, normal every day experiences take on an intensity that creates very strong positive feelings that will last, even when the infatuation disappears.

It isn't "love vs infatuation;" they work together. Infatuation super-charges everyday experiences to create the strong memories and feelings that become real love.

The Dangers of Infatuation

If you don't know the difference between love and infatuation, you could conclude that your loving feelings went away when the infatuation disappeared. Brides have mistakenly canceled weddings, thinking their love was gone, when the infatuation left.

If you think infatuation is love, you can do crazy things under its influence. You might just be tempted to run off to a desert island with your new infatuee.

For many people, strong attraction can lead almost immediately into infatuation, and then all thinking and reality testing goes out the window.

All the things that were important in your life before, are no longer important. School, work, family, hobbies, plans and ambitions all seem so unimportant now that you're infatuated with your new attractive stranger.

Remember! Infatuation is madness. You can't think straight, so don't do anything you'll regret when infatuation leaves you and reason returns.

Wait until your feet are back on the ground, you've got your senses back and you can make reasoned, rational decisions. You've got time. If there is real love under all the hormones, your bundle will be there when your madness leaves.

If you have concerns about infatuation outside your present relationship, please read Appendix A "The Couple's Pledge," at the end of this book.

Definition of Infatuation

We need a new definition of infatuation, because the common definitions don't help us. I'll show you what I mean.

One dictionary's definition of infatuation: "Be inspired by an intense, but short lived, passion or admiration for." That's only a tiny part of the story.

Wikipedia's definition of infatuation is much more complete, but they don't define infatuation, they instead, refer to it as "Limerance" a word first coined by Dorothy Tennov a professor of psychology.

Here's an excerpt of Wikipedia's "Limerance"

"Limerence is a state of mind characterized by intrusive thinking, longing, uncertainty, hope, misperception, fantasies, and passion.

Limerence has been described as 'having a crush,' 'infatuation,' 'passionate love,' 'puppy love,' 'romantic love,' or 'being in love.'

It is important to note that limerence is neither love nor sexual attraction. Love, sexual attraction, and limerence can all exist without each other or any or all of them can coexist together."

Additionally, Tennov lists certain basic components that expand the definition very helpfully.

Limerence has certain basic components

- intrusive thinking about the limerent object
- acute longing for reciprocation
- some fleeting and transient relief from unrequited limerence through vivid imagining of action by the limerent object that means reciprocation
- fear of rejection and unsettling shyness in the limerent object's presence
- intensification through adversity
- acute sensitivity to any act, thought, or condition that can be interpreted favorably, and an extraordinary ability to devise or invent "reasonable" explanations for why neutral actions are a sign of hidden passion in the limerent object
- an aching in the chest when uncertainty is strong

- buoyancy (a feeling of walking on air) when reciprocation seems evident
- a general intensity of feeling that leaves other concerns in the background
- a remarkable ability to emphasize what is truly admirable in the limerent object and to avoid dwelling on the negative or render it into another positive attribute.

I consider this list to be a wonderfully accurate listing of the characteristics of infatuation. They are all present when a person experiences infatuation.

My Definition of Infatuation: Temporary Insanity

I define infatuation as "Temporary insanity that makes a person deaf, blind, and dumb."

Infatuation is a form of madness. (It is also the about the most wonderful, amazing, incredibly good feeling we can have.)

Infatuation feels like love, looks like love, and is very commonly mistaken for love — but *infatuation isn't love*. We know it can't be love, because it *always fades away* and doesn't come back — with the same person. Whereas love will stay after infatuation disappears.

Infatuation feels so good that some people even become serial infatuators, jumping from partner to partner, always seeking the high that infatuation brings. Infatuation can be addictive.

Infatuation makes even insignificant things seem "magical"

My definition of infatuation includes it's role as an intensifier of feelings.

Infatuation does powerful, magical things. Infatuation 'magnifies' the intensity of feelings you get from shared experiences with your partner. Real love is the sum of the positive bonds you build up from shared positive experiences with your partner. The size of the good feeling is intensified, or 'magnified' by the madness of infatuation.

Infatuation blinds you to your partner's human-ness

My definition of infatuation includes the insanity it produces: Infatuation is a form of madness because you lose touch with reality.

Eventually, you're going to realize that your partner *isn't* the most perfect, beautiful or handsome, and loving person in the whole world.

You'll see that your partner is really just a person with the normal number of flaws and idiosyncrasies.

While you're infatuated, however, you're 'blind' to your partner's faults, weaknesses, and failings. It seems your partner is perfect in so many ways.



Infatuation makes you 'dumb' and 'deaf,' too

Infatuation makes you 'dumb' because you lose touch with things that are really important to you in your life, like your education, your parents and family, your friends, your career, your goals, your values, and much more.

Life becomes temporarily all about your partner and those other things seem to fade in importance.

Infatuation makes you 'deaf' to the opinions and observations of family and friends who care a great deal about you.

Infatuation always goes away. While it seems painful at the time, it's a good thing that the madness fades away and reality returns.

No one could go through life with the intensity of focus infatuation brings. During infatuation, you could talk all night. You can survive with almost no sleep. You can ignore your responsibilities. You may pay no attention to your health.

Not everybody gets infatuated with their partner. You still can have a wonderful life-long, bonded relationship with your partner without ever having been infatuated. But, If you don't know or realize what infatuation is, you can make some very big mistakes.

Jeanette

Jeanette was happily married, raising a family, but had never felt the madness of infatuation with her husband. So, when she began to feel infatuated with a coworker, she thought that finally, she had found her true love, and she must have missed true love in her marriage.

Poor Jeanette simply didn't understand what infatuation was. She didn't realize that what she had with her husband was real love, and what she had with her coworker was simply infatuation that would soon fade away.

Alicia

Alicia didn't realize that infatuation would fade away, and when it did a few months before her wedding, she thought she had fallen out of love with her fiancé.

She got cold feet and canceled her engagement. She had simply begun to see him as a real person, not the unreal person she had conjured up under the influence of infatuation.

Infatuation and You

May you have the good fortune to experience infatuation with your partner. May you cherish the incredibly intense memories of shared bonding experiences you have while infatuated.

May you wisely accept the return of reality and lovingly accept that your partner is simply a person with all the strengths and failings of any normal human.

While bonded with your partner, may you *never* experience the madness of infatuation again — with someone else. And, if you do, may you turn away, run with the wind, and know that infatuation with another person is madness gone astray.

If you need to find out how to get over an unwanted infatuation, read Appendix B: "Help Me, Please."

Romantic Love

Agnes is strongly attracted to Harold. Harold is infatuated with Agnes. They're dancing cheek to cheek to a romantic love song. The lights are subdued, the dinner was delicious. He brought her flowers.

What are they feeling? They're feeling romantic love. The romantic aspects of the experience serve to further turbo-charge Harold's infatuation. The romantic aspects serve to make Harold even more attractive to Agnes.

In other words, romance serves to heighten whatever feelings each has for the other. Romance creates strong positive memories of a shared experience.

Remember, *real love is the memory of positive shared experiences*, along with the bundle of feelings that are attached to those experiences.

You could say that romance helps produce stronger bonds of love.

Quit ducking the question. Is Romantic love real love?

No. We've already described real love as the collection of memories and the bundle of loving feelings of happy shared experiences.

Romance serves to make stronger memories and add to the bundle of love with which the couple will begin their marriage, but it isn't the real love we're looking for.

It's sad to say, but most couples let the romance fade away after the honeymoon. The guy no longer likes to dance. He rarely brings flowers. He doesn't call her just to hear her voice. He only calls her when he has something to say.

If the romantic love disappears after the honeymoon, does it mean the real love has gone?

No, of course not. Even the happiest marriages of the most loving couples sometimes let the romance fade away. They still love each other. They just don't have all that much romance anymore.

If real love lasts, and romantic love fades away, they can't be the same thing.

Can you still have romantic love after the honeymoon?

Yes, you can. To make your marriage last, your goal is to keep adding to the bundle of loving feelings. Romance helps create new positive memories of shared experiences and the loving feelings that are attached to the memories.

We strongly recommend that couples plan to keep some romance in their marriage. The whole next page is filled with thoughts about that.

Before you go there, it's important to understand how you and your partner change after the honeymoon.

You came together as a couple and decided to marry for a number of reasons:

- Somehow, we humans are genetically and hormonally driven to find a mate. It's a basic human need.
- Possibly, you found each other attractive. Attraction is built in to us as youths.
- Probably, one or both of you experienced infatuation. That's a hormonal madness.
- Courting rituals create romantic experiences. Those rituals are built in to us.

Then, you marry, and have a honeymoon (or not).

You've got all your needs met; the drive is gone.

Reality has set in. You've responded to all those human genetic and hormonal drives and urges. You've found your mate and you've settled down. There's no more thrill of the hunt. There's no more urgency in attracting and being attractive. The infatuation is long gone.

We humans are driven by our needs. When we're hungry we eat. By eating, we've responded to the need and we're no longer hungry. We want sex. Then we have it. Now, we aren't needy. We need to work, so we find work. Once we have work, we're satisfied.

The need to meet, court, and mate drove us to marry. Now, we don't have those same needs again. They've been satisfied.

Most people turn their attention to other things, things that satisfy some other need they have. Most people take their relationship and their partner for granted.

Those people have a 50% chance of making their marriage last.

Some people — hopefully you're one of them — commit to make their marriage happy and to make it last. Those people are willing to commit 5 minutes a day to learn the skills and habits that make a marriage last.

**If you're interested in how to do that, go to
[Join the Team](#)**

Keep Romance Alive

You're fighting a tough battle. It's normal and natural for romance to fade as the years go by in your marriage. The good news is that it can be done. If you and your partner both want to keep romance as the magical spice for your marriage, you can do it. Millions before you have done it. You can, too.

Keep romance alive by understanding how it will change.

The things you do to keep romance alive change over time as your relationship matures. Before the wedding, romance is an extension of courting. Dining, moonlight, music, romantic settings, flowers for no reason, phone calls to hear your voice. All of these things and much more are part of the courting process, products of attraction and maybe infatuation.

Romance after a few years of marriage may be holding hands when you take a walk. Or, sitting quietly together as you read, and from time to time reading excerpts to each other. As long as you understand how romance matures with time, you won't have expectations of a lifetime of dancing, candlelight, and love songs.

Some people can even keep up the dancing, candle light, and love songs. It just takes work. If you both decide it's worth it, we can help.

Why does it take work to keep romance alive?

Romance after marriage is no longer driven by genes and hormones. So, you have to substitute commitment and effort. The easiest way to do that is to make it a habit.

Doris and Bill have had a weekly lunch date for nearly 50 years. It's a deeply ingrained habit. Stan and Norma go out to dinner, then to a play or opera, or to a lecture at least once a month. They've been doing it for many, many years. They are committed to it. They've made it a habit.

You and your partner could decide to do something you both enjoy. Make a habit of it, and each time you do it, you will both know that this is the spice of romance that you've added to your marriage.

Introduction to: Love after marriage

This section is about how to grow your love, protect it from marriage problems that erode it, and minimize the damage that fights, arguments, quarrels, or spats can do to your love.

How to grow your love

Discover the formula for growing your love after marriage. Here are the tips and techniques people use to protect their love and keep it growing. One key is to polish and refresh those memories of happy shared experiences.

Marriage problems that erode your love

There is a complete list of the ways people actively — and without meaning to — erode their love, or their partner's love, or both. Identify any of the ways that either you or your partner might use that will chip away at the loving feelings you both shared.

Coping with marriage problems to minimize damage

Few couples realize how vital coping is to the success of their marriage. Cope with marriage problems and you'll have one of those "magical marriages."

Grow Your Love

After reading "What is Love?," you know that real love is a collection of memories of positive experiences connected to your partner. You start your marriage with a vast bundle of feelings connected to the memories. We call this bundle "real love."

Remembering and reliving a memory

Memories fade over time, unless they are remembered and relived. If you are terrifically organized, you might make a list of your top 100 memories of you and your partner. Then, you could start at the top of your list and remember and relive each experience that made you happy.

Photos, scrapbooks, diaries all contain links to those memories. Even without those links, you can remember many, many times when you shared a connection to your partner.

By remembering and reliving the memories, you keep them fresh and you keep them close. Each time you refresh a memory you're adding to your bundle of love.

Sharing a memory with someone else

Every time you share a memory with your partner or a friend, you are reliving it and refreshing it. You are adding to your bundle.

Each telling brings the memory more alive. You get to experience the good feelings attached to that memory again and again.

Writing about a memory

You bring a memory to life when you write it down. You could start a diary of loving memories. You could begin a journal of your memories. You could start a blog and share your happy, loving memories with anyone who happens on it.

One wonderful woman told me, "Because of the war, he shipped out soon after our marriage. I kept my love alive by remembering and reliving the happy experiences we shared before we were parted. I wrote him daily, recounting my memories and the love I felt. When he returned, our love was stronger than when he left."

Create New Happy Memories

Add to your bundle of love by continually adding positive shared experiences. (Sometimes you have to fight all of the other demands on your time to make sure you put aside time to do something with your partner that you both enjoy.)

If you keep romance alive in your marriage, with regular dates, you can do the things that lovers and loving couples do to keep the fires of love alive. *Keep adding new memories* and your love bundle will keep growing.

Rewrite History — Turn Bad Memories Into Good

Studies of the happiest people show clearly that they have the ability to take bad memories and find the good in them. If you have any bad memories of shared experiences with your partner, find some good in each one. Something you learned. Something that made you better or stronger. Something that helped make you more resilient.

Anytime one of the bad memories comes to mind, pair it with the good you found in it, and with time and practice you'll only have good memories associated with your partner.

Protect your love: cope immediately with any bad feelings

Coping takes the sting out of a fight, harsh words, or other marriage-damaging event. Coping switches immediately away from the strong negative emotions and uses questions and reason to handle bad experiences.

The opposite of coping is reliving or re-experiencing the bad experience. Every time you mentally replay the harsh words or damaging actions by your partner, you are eroding your bundle of love. Your goal is to grow your love. Mental replays of bad experiences don't do that. (Be sure to read all the Coping articles that start on page 41.)

Practice Accepting, Forgiving, and Forgetting

Accepting, Forgiving, and Forgetting are the strongest tools in your arsenal. They will help you grow your bundle and keep it from eroding. As Ruth Graham Bell said, *"A good marriage is the union of two good forgivers."*

A happy marriage — that lasts — is built on an ever-growing bundle of love. Sometimes it takes distorting history, accepting the unacceptable, forgiving the unforgivable, and forgetting the unforgettable. All of these are a small price to pay for the genuine joy that comes from a happy loving marriage that lasts.

Problems in marriage ...

... are almost always caused by these 10 marriage killers

Discover what researchers have found that causes problems in marriage. If you or your partner are using any of these 10 marriage killers: stop right now and protect your love.

1. Fighting, arguing, believing that you're right

The number one cause of problems in marriage come from fights or arguments which lead to harsh words and hurtful statements. When each of you believes you're right, it makes the other person wrong.

Avoid problems in marriage by identifying the irresolvable issues and agreeing never, ever to fight about those. It's hurtful, damaging, and totally a waste of time, love, and energy. (This will cut the number of fights by from 70 to 90 Percent.)

2. Being contemptuous of your partner

Contempt is the worst of the communications that cause problems in marriage. Contempt, scorn, or disdain show open disrespect of your partner. When you do have to fight or argue — and you will — never, ever display contempt.

3. Displaying disgust toward your partner

Disgust causes problems in marriage, because it shows an acute 'dislike' of your partner. It shows you are revolted, sickened, or repelled by your partner. This is the opposite of love. This erodes both of your bundles of love. Just as you control yourself so as to never strike each other physically, you must learn to control your words, gestures, and expressions — if you really care about having a happy marriage that lasts.

4. Becoming defensive, rather than listening

Defensiveness causes problems in marriage. A minor disagreement can escalate into a hurtful exchange if you respond to criticism by being defensive. To have a happy marriage — that lasts — learn to respond to criticism by listening, not going on the defensive.

5. Criticizing, rather than complaining

Criticizing causes problems in marriage because it makes your partner wrong. It's fine to complain, because that's about you. A complaint is about you being unhappy. A criticism is about your partner being wrong. It's about blaming your unhappiness on your partner. That won't get you a happy marriage that lasts. Criticizing is one of the major causes of problems in marriage.

6. Stonewalling: not being open to discussion

Stonewalling is a serious cause of problems in marriage. Stonewalling is ignoring your partner totally — not listening or responding when your partner is speaking, complaining, or even criticizing. The message stonewalling gives is "you're not important" or "I can totally ignore or disregard what you say or feel." This isn't being there for your partner. This isn't expressing love toward your partner. This can lead to real problems in marriage.

7. Making mountains out of molehills

Take something trivial and make it hugely important, and you have the recipe for problems in marriage. Save your influence for things that are important. Practice accepting, forgiving, and forgetting the little things. Do as Richard Carlson says in his book, "Don't sweat the small stuff ... and it's all small stuff."

8. Comparing your partner to other people

One way to have problems in marriage is to compare your partner to someone else: "You're just like your father." or "You sound like your mother." Or, "Why can't you be more like Mel?" You love your partner. Your partner is incomparable. If you want a happy marriage that lasts, you'll give up the idea of ever comparing your partner to someone else.

9. Judging your partner by your expectations

If you really want to start problems in marriage, judge your partner by your own expectations.

If your partner is different in some way than what you expected, you've got two choices. You can be surprised, or you can be upset. We recommend you be surprised, because surprises make you happy. If you choose to be upset or disappointed, we suggest you cope with that feeling, or replace it with surprise.

10. Judging Your Partner by Your Rules

Everybody is entitled to his or her own rules. I can't expect you to live by mine. You can't expect me to live by yours. So, unless you want to create problems in marriage, don't expect your partner to live by your rules.

Sally was all over Walter because Walter was not as neat as Sally. Sally had rules about picking up: everything must be in its place, and never leave things on the kitchen sink overnight.

This difference in neatness (which, by the way, is an irresolvable difference), almost drove them apart. Sally criticized. Walter became defensive, and over time he just tuned her out and turned to stonewalling.

Finally, they learned about irresolvable differences and agreed never, ever again to fight about neatness issues. Sally still wanted us to acknowledge that she was really "right" about being a stickler for neatness.

We helped Sally understand that both of them were "right." Sally, however, was judging Walter by *her* rules. And that will virtually always lead to problems in marriage.

Now You Know 10 Ways To Create Problems In Marriage

If you recognized yourself or your partner, in any of those 10 marriage killers, and you really want your marriage to be happy and to last for the rest of your life, learn how to stop doing what you were doing. Do something more productive, and learn to cope with those things your partner does. Luckily, coping is the next topic on ways to Grow Your Love.

Cope with Marriage Problems

We've talked about how to increase love in your marriage, and then about avoiding the ten marriage killers. However, the most valuable marriage tips are about *coping* with any marriage problem.

Amazingly, the evidence indicates it's often the little things that kill marriages. Here's a quote from a study called: "Social Allergies in Romantic Relationships."

"Wet towels on the bathroom floor cause mild irritation. But the reaction gets stronger each time it happens. Through repeated exposure it may produce a social allergy — a reaction of hypersensitive annoyance or disgust."

Learn what coping is and how to do it

You cope when you learn to handle any bad feeling you get. You neutralize it. You can even turn it into a laugh. You don't let it grow until it's a "hypersensitive annoyance" or "disgust."

Coping is managing, handling, and dealing with the little things and not allowing them to become big things. Coping is vitally important, because it's the way you keep a marriage happy, and stay positive enough to begin each 'issue' discussion on a positive note.

If you don't cope well, you run the risk of building ever larger feelings of resentment, dissatisfaction, or annoyance with the partner you vowed to love forever.

What's the Secret to Coping?

Until the publication of our copyrighted *Coping* program, most coaches and counselors offered happy marriage tips that were basically affirmations or clichés. "In a hundred years it won't matter," or "Don't sweat the little things," or "Don't make mountains out of mole-hills."

In our unique *Coping* program we offer four simple questions to ask yourself as soon as you become aware that you're having a bad feeling about your partner. These questions serve to take you out of your feelings, and move you to your reasoning self. They lead to one of four simple choices that are the wisest possible choices to resolve the bad feelings and cope successfully with any marriage problem.

Introduction to: Coping With Marriage Problems

To grow your love after marriage, you need a strategy that minimizes the damage done by those things that decrease the love. Coping is the answer. Immediately after feeling bad feelings, we suggest you ask yourself four easy questions, and make one of four wise choices.

The first of the four questions is: "What's happening?"

The first question any time you have a bad feeling, is: "What's Happening?" The answer usually relates to that bad feeling you're having.

Then, ask: "How did I create this feeling?"

Scientists tell us that we create our feelings by our thoughts. Coping question number two causes you to ask yourself what thoughts you're having that create this bad feeling toward your partner.

You don't need to know the answer to this question to cope with marriage problems. Experts use this question to help individuals who get stuck in their thinking. You can learn how to answer it if you want.

Then, ask: "Is this what I want?"

You've created some kind of bad feeling that's associated with your partner. It's important to ask "Is this feeling what I want for my life?" This question keeps you grounded and in touch with what you want for your life.

Next, ask: "What Can I Do?"

The full question is "What can I do to move closer to what I want for my life?" This question leads to four possible wise choices (Act, Ask Accept, Forgive). You'll go through the choices top to bottom to see which will move you closer to what you want. (More on the choices later.)

We don't know what else you want for your life, but we would guess you "Want a happy marriage that lasts."

The Payoff if You Cope Quickly and Effectively

The payoff from the coping process is huge. Few people appreciate the enormous value of coping well. It's simple to learn, and the effects are immediate. The results are important. To learn more about coping, read on.

Cope with Marriage Problems: Overview

Master the coping skills that will help you cope with marriage problems and protect your marriage. Coping is a major factor in building the love in your marriage.

The idea is to protect your love by coping with marriage problems that can arise from those terrible moments when you lovers exchange harsh words or hurtful comments. Coping is a great way to protect your love from any significant damage.

When to use emotion, and when to use reason

Coping requires a switch from the emotional you, to the reasoning you. Some people pride themselves in always being emotional. Others take pride in always being rational and using reason. Both are cheating themselves.

Happy people use emotion when the emotions are positive; they use reason when the emotions are painful or negative.

If you build this simple habit of switching from emotion to reason and back again to cope with marriage problems, you'll automatically become a much happier person. You'll cope effectively with anything that happens in your life, as well as your marriage.

You'll also have a fuller, more satisfying and successful life, using your full capacities of both emotion and reason.

Jump from emotion to reason to cope with marriage problems

Emotions and reasoning are in different parts of your mind, and even in different parts of your brain. The emotional part is great to use when people, events, or situations are positive, good, or happy. Feel the joy. Feel the win. Feel the love.

The reasoning side of your mind is best used to solve problems, answer questions, ask questions, and deal with adversity.

The simplest way to switch, then, is to use any bad feeling as a trigger to switch to "asking and answering" some important questions. Keep these questions with you; practice using them anytime you have a bad feeling. Then, when the pressure is on — and your marriage is under threat — you'll have practiced them and made them a habit.

You cope with marriage problems by *switching from feeling bad feelings to asking questions*.

The Four Questions That Will Evoke Reason

We'll explore the four questions that will help you cope with the bad feelings from marriage problems one by one. They're carefully designed to produce the best possible outcomes. Here they are.

1. What's happening?
2. How am I creating that bad feeling?
3. Is that bad feeling what I want for my life?
4. How can I move toward what I do want for my life?

1. What's happening?

You cope with marriage problems by immediately asking yourself, "What's happening?" Actually, until you've mastered coping, you probably won't make an immediate switch. At first, the emotions will be too strong, and they will carry you into replaying, or reliving, or remembering whatever caused the bad feelings. (This is where the damage is done, and why it's so important to stop replaying the hurts, and so important that you cope with marriage problems to minimize the damage.)

"What's Happening," is the first question because it engages the question/answering machinery in your mind, which is on the rational and reasoning side.

Generally, the answer to *"What's Happening,"* will be something like, "I'm feeling really angry." or "I'm feeling really hurt." or "I'm feeling really defensive."

"What's Happening," helps you cope by focusing on resolving or fixing the situation, rather than continuing to feel bad about it.

2. How am I creating this bad feeling?

This question won't really be answerable until you learn about the Sage Model. The Sage Model is a model of the mind that allows you to see how you are producing a bad feeling. It may be something like attaching too much importance to something that could be seen as trivial. Or, it may be something like using your expectations or your rules to judge your partner.

Until you want to learn how you really are creating your bad feelings, it will be sufficient just to ask the question, even though you won't have much of a specific answer to yet yet.

It's important to remind yourself that YOU are creating that bad feeling, somehow. Maybe you don't know exactly how yet, but it is a good reminder that we all create our own feelings, by our thoughts.

It will also help you reaffirm that when you're ready, you can begin changing your thought process to minimize the number of bad feelings you produce for yourself.

3. Is this (the bad feeling) what I want for my life?

If you are learning to cope with marriage problems, then it seems obvious that you don't want a life or a marriage filled with bad feelings. So, the answer to this is virtually always, "No. I don't want a life filled with bad feelings like this."

This question also has the added value of helping bring to mind what you *do* want for your life. In other words, you begin making all your choices with your *long term goals* and values in mind.

4. What can I do to move toward what I want for my life?

This fourth question leads you into problem solving. Problem solving can be overdone, but when something is going wrong between you and your partner, you will cope with marriage problems better by asking questions than by dwelling on bad feelings.

Four wise choices to answer the fourth question: "What can I do?"

To make coping simpler to master, we've limited your choices to four wise choices:

- A. If Action will move me toward what I want for my life, ACT.
- B. If discussion or negotiation will move me toward what I want for my life, ASK, or begin negotiations to resolve the difficulty.
- C. If Action or Asking won't help, I will choose to ACCEPT whatever it is I cannot or will not change.
- D. If Forgiveness will move me toward what I want for my life, I will FORGIVE.

A. ACT When action will move me toward what I want for my life

If I did something wrong, I'll ACT to undo it. If I've criticized, I'll change to complaining. If I've displayed disgust or contempt toward my partner, I'll apologize, I'll display appreciation, I'll clean up whatever mess I've made.

B. If ASKing will help to cope with marriage problems ...

I'll ASK. Maybe I need to negotiate some win-win resolution of a conflict. Maybe I need to ASK what I can do to resolve the problem. Maybe I'll ASK my partner to help me work on some issue.

Maybe I'll ASK my partner to please take out the garbage, or to please, in the future, put the toilet seat down.

C. I'll ACCEPT what I can't or won't change

When neither Act nor Ask will do any good, I'll ACCEPT whatever I need to accept to cope with marriage problems.

ACCEPTance is one of your most powerful tools to cope with marriage problems. Acceptance also is a generous gift you can give to others and to yourself.

Remember the ancient serenity prayer?

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

D. When FORGIVENess is called for, forgive

Remember that accepting, forgiving, and forgetting are the most generous gifts you can bring to a marriage. They also will make you happier. They will make your marriage happier, and certainly will make it last longer.

By practicing on small bad feelings, you will quickly master the ability to use these four questions and four choices to cope with marriage problems easily, happily, and generously.

Coping Resources

If you decide one day to join the team of people working together to make happy marriages, and make marriage last, you'll have full access to the audio/video coping course, and book two of the "Metamating Series," that teaches how to answer the second of the four questions: "How am I creating this bad feeling?"

Question #1: What's Happening?

You can use the four coping questions anytime you have a bad feeling about anything. Once you've made the coping questions automatic, you'll want to practice coping with all the bad feelings you experience. Who knows? You might even become a happy, happy person.

Some people, unfortunately, experience lots of bad feelings about people, events, and things. If that's your situation, you might just start learning to cope by practicing on marriage problems and bad feelings about your partner. Let's explore the first question in detail.

Immediately ask, "What's Happening?"

The first question: "What's happening?" helps you become hyper-aware of your bad feelings. Asking "What's Happening?" works like magic. Instantly, you're moved away from the emotional part of your mind (and brain) to the rational, reasoning part.

The question itself focuses your attention on you, your thoughts, and the feelings your thoughts are producing.

Many people report that they feel an instant clarity of thought, and relief from the bad feeling that prompted the question.

Answers to: "What's Happening?"

You ask "What's happening?" in order to identify the feeling you're getting and the thoughts you were having when you got the bad feeling.

Some possible answers: "I'm feeling *really* angry toward my partner." or, "I'm feeling *disappointed* in my partner." or "I'm feeling really *frustrated* by my partner."

You'll often find a pattern to your answers. If you do, *pay attention*. For example, you might be constantly feeling angry, or sad, or disappointed, or unloved, or lonely, or resentful toward your partner.

If you keep having the same bad feeling over and over, many experts call this, your "favorite miserable feeling" (favorite, because you have it a lot).

When you can verbalize the bad feeling you're having and the thoughts you were thinking, you're ready for the second question.

Next: "How Am I Creating The Bad Feeling I'm Feeling?"

Question #2: "How am I creating this bad feeling?"

The answers for this question are understood by advanced students of the *Coping* program, and also the experts working with people who are having trouble coping.

However, we recommend that everyone continue to use the question as one of the four questions in the coping process, because it reminds you that any bad feelings you have come from your own thoughts: *your thoughts produce your feelings*. We include it because it may make you curious enough to want to find out how you produce the thoughts you have.

So, after you've identified the bad feeling you're having (question number one), remind yourself that you are causing that feeling by the thoughts you are having (question number two).

The Sage Model Is A Map Of The Mind

To answer that second question, you really need one more tool: the Sage Model, commonly called, "The Map."

The Sage Model is fully explained in book II of the *Metamating Series*, which is a series of six books you get when you Join the Team of other couples learning *How To Make A Marriage Last*.

The Sage Model is mostly used by advanced students and experts to coach people who struggle with accepting and forgiving their partner.

There is a graphic depicting the model (Sage Model). It can be intimidating when you first see it, but it turns out to be very easy to learn and use, with a little coaching. If you are reading this book on-screen, print it out so that you can look at it from time to time.

For our purposes here, we'll simply show how it can be used to help people cope with marital issues. When you finish reading through the story about Doris, you can see the places on the map that Doris examined for how she might cope with her bad feelings (look for the red arrow).

Situation: Doris Couldn't Accept Her Husband Leaving Wet Towels On The Floor

After you've read the tips that follow, you'll see that eventually, Doris has to choose between accepting that her husband is going to leave wet towels on the floor — or — build up a pool of resentment and frustration toward the man she loves.

As Doris proceeded through the steps in the *Coping* process, she concluded that her wisest choice was to accept her husband and his bad habit with the towels. However, she just couldn't do it.

Doris wrote, "I know I have to accept it, but I can't do it. I can't accept living with a slob."

Using the Sage Model and its various sections, her coach found at least four different ways that she could modify her thoughts. Doris could:

1. *give wet towels less importance* than she had been giving them (reduce her "importancizer").
2. *modify the scope* and see that wet towels was just one of hundreds of things her husband did, and it was enormously outweighed by the other hundred more positive things he did.
3. *expand the time component of the thought* until she saw that over the next 50 years of living together, the couple would face many more challenging and rewarding issues than wet towels.
4. *examine her assessment of her husband as a slob*, and see that he isn't really a slob; he just has this one sloppy habit.

Doris found one of these very easy for her to do. She changed her thought about the towels, and was easily able to accept this annoying habit in her husband.

This example illustrates the power of the map and a coach, to help a committed person like Doris become able to cope, even though the issue, at first, seemed beyond her ability to cope.

Don't get hung up on the Sage Model

Some people think the Sage Model is the greatest creation they have ever seen. Others think it is "inane," "stupid," or "useless," and they don't use it at all.

You don't have to know the Sage Model — or how to use it — to learn the powerful skills of coping. It's useful for experts who coach people who get stuck. It's also a wonderful discovery for curious people who are fascinated to learn how they think.

We say that it's no big deal. Use it or not. The important thing is the four questions of *Coping*; the Sage model is really only interesting to help answer the second question.

The real coping work is done by questions Three and Four.

Question #3: Is this what I want?

This coping question causes you to consider what you want for your life. Use it to see if the feeling you're creating is really what you want.

Usually, the answer to this question is "No. I don't want a life filled with bad feelings."

When that happens, you're aware that the bad feeling you're feeling toward your partner is at odds with your life goals.

You know that your thoughts create your feelings, so immediately you see that it is you and your thoughts — not your partner — who is responsible for your bad feelings.

What *do* you want for your life?

Maybe you're one of those lucky people who has carefully chosen what you want for your life.

More than likely, you're one of the vast majority that has never taken the time or discipline it takes to clarify what you want to achieve in your life, and how you want to live it.

We suggest — when you get some time — that you examine your life, set some goals, and choose what you want for your life.

For our purposes, however, we know one thing that you would like: we know you want a happy marriage that lasts.

Bad feelings don't create a happy marriage that lasts

Happy marriages that last are built on *good* feelings associated with your partner and your marriage.

Bad feelings toward your partner are something you don't want for your life.

Until you identify everything you want for your life, we'll go forward with that: You want a happy marriage that lasts a lifetime.

Never lose sight of your goal

Notice that Coping question number three reminds you — every time you ask it — that one of the high priorities in your life is to have a happy marriage that lasts.

You can't let it slip away like a diet gone bad, or a gym membership gone unused.

Your goal is always with you, every time you have a bad feeling and every time you have thoughts that put your happiness or your marriage at risk.

You are reminded of it every time you ask the question: "Is This What I Want For My Life?"

That question helps you realize that you can resolve the bad feeling yourself. But, how?

Coping question number three leads you to the final coping question: "How can I move closer to what I want for my life?"

The next article helps you to choose a way that you can move closer to what you do want for your life.

Question #4: "What Can I Do To Get Closer To What I Want For My Life?"

You see your partner's wet towel on the floor ... again. Ask Coping Question number four:

"What can I do that will bring me closer to what I want for my life?"

In other words, you consider the *consequences* of any choice you make. What can you do that will bring you closer to your goal of a happy marriage that lasts?

In reality there are unlimited ways to answer the question, but the Coping process helps narrow the choices, and only gives you four wise choices.

You can

1. ACT
2. ASK
3. ACCEPT or
4. FORGIVE

1. ACT when ACTION will bring you closer to your goal

Let's consider some actions you could take:

- You could scream, complain, nag, or whine about the newest case of the wet towel on the floor.
- You could pick up the wet towel and put in his underwear drawer to dampen his shorts.
- You could pick it up, put it away, and remember to criticize him for being a slob.
- You could pick it up and put it on the towel rack where it belongs, making no mention of it.
- You could ignore it and wait for him to see it, pick it up, and hang it where it belongs.

If you ask yourself, "What action could I take that would lead to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?" you would probably rule out the first three actions.

You could choose to pick it up yourself without comment (number 4).

Ignoring it might make you unhappy, but if ignoring it is easy for you, then your choice may be not to act (number 5).

2. ASK when ASKing will bring you closer to your goal

If you decided that action wasn't your wisest choice, then consider question two: "Will ASKing or negotiating about this issue bring me closer to my goal?"

Let's consider how you might ASK to resolve the bad feeling you're having:

- "Would you mind picking up your towel? I don't want a wet spot on the rug."
- "Would you please pick up your towel? I'm your wife, not your mother."
- "Could we schedule a time to discuss how best I can help you remember to pick up your towel?"
- "Would you be willing to accompany me to the marriage counselor? Maybe she has an answer to what you are saying to me by leaving your wet towel on the floor."

If you chose anything but the first choice, you need to get some instruction in coping, because the other three choices will either lead to trouble, or are definitely overkill.

3. If ACTION or ASKing won't resolve the issue, ACCEPT what can't or won't be changed

The wet towel example should have been resolved by action, or asking. But, suppose you picked up the towel and put it away without comment. That's wonderful. Action taken, problem solved.

Now suppose you ended up with some bad feelings about having to pick up after your "slob" of a husband, who is "always" being "thoughtless" and leaving you to pick up after him, as though you were his "maid."

Actually, these bad feelings are no longer caused by a dropped wet towel.

The bad feelings you are having now are caused by your being resentful toward your partner because YOU CHOSE to pick up the towel and put it away with no comment.

When you review the questions about this NEW bad feeling, ASK yourself:

1. What's happening?

"I'm feeling resentful toward my partner because I chose to pick up his towel."

2. How Am I Creating This Feeling?

"I'm having thoughts which accuse him of "always" being "thoughtless." My judgement is that he is a "slob." I'm feeling angry that he expects me to be his maid."

3. Is This What I want For My Life?

"No, I don't want a life filled with angry accusations and feelings of being mistreated."

4. What Can I do To Get Closer To What I Want For My Life?

- Will ACTION take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?
- Will ASKING take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?
- Will ACCEPTING take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?
- Will FORGIVING take me closer to my goal of a happy marriage that lasts?

ACTION won't resolve these bad feelings. The feelings aren't caused by the towel. You chose to put it away.

ASKING won't resolve these bad feelings. Your husband is no longer involved in these bad feelings.

ACCEPTING is a wonderful idea. You can ACCEPT your husband for "occasionally" being untidy. You can think about how you appreciate him for all the wonderful things he brings to your life.

4. FORGIVE when you can. Be as forgiving a person as you can be.

Forgiving is always a great choice. You can FORGIVE your husband for his occasional lapses. You can forgive yourself for choosing to do a nice thing and then getting angry and resentful about it.

Someone said, "A happy marriage is the union of two forgivers." There is no greater gift you can give someone than forgiveness. Forgiveness also benefits you.

There's another useful quote: "Failure to forgive is the worst form of self-punishment." In other words, you don't forgive because the person deserves it; that may not be so. You forgive because forgiveness relieves you of the pain created by hanging on to anger, disgust, or hatred.

To Summarize

In summary, ACT when action will resolve the bad feeling. ASK when negotiations will resolve the issue and your bad feelings.

When neither acting or asking will resolve the issue or your bad feelings, simply ACCEPT what can't or won't be changed.

If forgiveness is called for, FORGIVE to resolve your bad feelings.

Coping successfully is the single most important thing in a happy marriage

It's been proven that marriages are killed by the little things:

- An angry start to a discussion, and the harsh words that follow, e.g. contempt, disgust, defensiveness, stonewalling, etc.
- Letting little things build into large resentments
- Failing to appreciate
- Failing to listen
- Failing to give the marriage the priority it deserves.

Coping is an all-purpose tool. It resolves bad feelings about little things and big things. It is the single most important tool that you and your partner can use to achieve your goal of a happy marriage that lasts.

There is a huge payoff for coping well. To learn about that payoff read the next article: "Payoff from Coping Well."

The Payoff for Coping Well

If you cope with marriage problems immediately and completely, you'll have marriage magic.

- You'll have fewer and weaker bad feelings associated with your partner. You preserve your bundle of love.
- You'll avoid those ugly and hurtful fights that stem from distorted thoughts.
- You'll find it easier to stay positive. This keeps your positivity ratio higher.
- You'll find it easier to be optimistic. A Happier "now" gives you visions of a happier future.
- You'll find it easier to be appreciative. If you squelch the bad thoughts about your partner, you're open to be appreciative of the good things about your partner.
- You'll be slower to anger. You won't have the huge bundle or resentments that make people explode in anger at the slightest thing.
- You'll have happier memories. True and lasting love is based on shared happy memories. Your love will grow over time. Your marriage will be happier, and much more likely to last.

If you cope with marriage problems, you can achieve what others will see as "marriage magic."

Fewer and weaker bad feelings toward your partner

Cope with marriage problems quickly by using the coping questions. The four questions and four choices will immediately resolve any bad feelings you were having about your partner.

The episodes of bad feelings will be far weaker because they won't fester and grow as you think, rethink, and relive any bad scenes with your partner. Your coping will minimize the damage that bad episodes do to your love bundle.

You'll have fewer episodes of bad feelings. Many bad episodes in marriages are caused by someone collecting all of the bad feelings from the past and over-reacting to small things in the present.

Those who've learned to quickly cope with marriage problems don't carry those big bunches of bad feelings forward. Thus, you'll be slower to anger, more loving, and the bad patches will come less and less often.

No Mistakes Based On Distorted Thoughts

No one likes to think their thoughts may be distorted. However, those who learn the Sage Model quickly discover the ways in which they accidentally distort their thoughts.

For example, the husband who thinks, "She never wants to make love to me," quickly discovers his distortion in the word "never." If he reframes the thought to: "She doesn't want to make love to me as often as I want to make love to her," he takes the distortion out of the thought.

When he takes the distortion out of the thought, the bad feelings get resolved, and the issue appears in a new form, which has solutions.

Coping with marriage problems makes it easier to be optimistic

Successful coping with marriage problems means that the marriage 'issues' that will arise will be resolved with win-win solutions. When a couple can effectively resolve their differences, it's much easier for each of them to feel optimistic about the future of the relationship.

It's Easier to Stay Positive

Happy marriages have a mutual positivity ratio of 5 positives for every negative. If you cope quickly with marriage problems it's easier to stay positive and give your partner 5 positives for every negative.

Any discussions of marriage 'issues' must be begun and ended on a positive note in order to achieve a successful resolution.

By being more positive and staying positive, you're ready to successfully resolve any issues which require asking for what you want or negotiating win-win solutions.

Coping with marriage problems makes it easier to be appreciative

Couples who don't effectively cope with marriage problems build resentments, frustrations, and angers that grow larger and larger.

You've seen it. We've seen it. Couples with large bundles of resentments are divorces waiting to happen.

When you've got a huge bundle of anger or resentment, it's hard to think positively about your partner and to express the appreciation your partner needs and deserves.

When you cope effectively, you resolve the bad feelings. They don't grow. You're free to notice the great things your partner does for you and your marriage. It's easy to be appreciative. It's comfortable to express that appreciation.

Cope with marriage problems and you'll be slower to anger

People who've collected tons of bad feelings about their partners become explosive. They tend to have "hair triggers" and explode at the slightest hint of something they don't like.

People who cope with marriage problems don't build that bundle of resentment. They don't have "hair triggers." They don't explode easily. That makes it possible for them to begin and end 'issue' discussions on a positive note and not explode during the discussion at any imagined criticism.

When you cope with marriage problems quickly you might even become so slow to anger that you're "laid back."

Cope with marriage problems and you'll collect happy memories

Love is the bundle of feelings associated with the memories of positive prior experiences of, about, and with your partner.

When you cope with marriage problems, you'll resolve the bad feelings immediately. You'll be much more open to creating good feelings of, about, and with your partner.

These good memories and feelings join the past memories of happy experiences of, about, and with your partner. Your love grows.

This is the end of the section of this site about Coping.

In summary, I'll say that there is nothing more important than effective coping if you want to build a happy marriage that lasts.

The entire in-depth training program of 6 Audio-visual modules, plus a complete text and workbook is available to members on Relationship-Insurance.

Introduction to: The Happy Marriage Recipe

The happy marriage recipe almost sounds too easy. There are four steps.

1. Make Friends With Your Partner

The idea is to be respectful toward your partner, and make friends with your partner. You may have started out as lovers, and not necessarily friends. Some people would argue that you are spouses, not friends.

2. Next, Maintain a Positivity Ratio of 5 to 1

The happy marriage recipe calls for 5 times as many positive messages as negative ones. This means that in all the little interactions with your partner, you give at least 5 positive messages for each negative message. And, the messages need to be the same weight.

We'll show you the weights, and how the experts keep score. For example, you'll discover that you need to give your partner at least 5 messages of validation or affection, to make up for one message of contempt.

3. Next, Handle Irresolvable Issues with Grace and Humor

Estimates vary, but experts believe that between 70% and 90% of the fights that married couples have, are about issues that are irresolvable — issues that are never going to change. Fighting won't help anything.

To do this, first, couples need to identify the issues that are irresolvable. Then, they agree to never, ever fight about any of those issues. That takes care of the damage that constant unproductive fighting does.

To turn a bad thing into a good thing, the couple will grow to treat the issue — when it arises — with humor and grace. Humor and demonstrating respect and grace, are all positive messages. So, a fight you avoided turns instead into messages that add to your love bundle.

4. Begin and End Issue discussions on a Positive Note

"A positive note" means a positive, respectful manner. If you aren't in that mood, defer your 'issue' discussion until you are. Prepare and practice loving, respectful ways to begin and end any marital issue discussions. This will make them positive experiences, even if the discussion produces some compromise on what you wanted, or what was wanted of you. Continue with the next article: *Become Friends with Your Partner*.

Become Friends with Your Partner

Research shows that marital conflicts that start out positively generally end positively. The issue typically gets resolved — or at least doesn't damage the relationship.

The same research shows that conflicts that start out negatively, generally get more and more negative — fights and arguments — and generally the issue *doesn't* get resolved.

Worse yet, the research shows that conflicts that start negatively are the leading indicator to relationships that end in divorce — possibly because issues don't get resolved; the bad feelings build up and the relationship turns miserable.

The good news, is that conflicts that begin positively are likely to end with the issue resolved, and that builds another positive bond between the partners.

So, the reason to be friends with your spouse is: you need to be friends to be able to settle conflicts positively, and make your marriage happier and happier over time.

Why is it so difficult to be friends with your partner?

Here is a short review of why it isn't just an automatic thing to be friends with your spouse.

From childhood boys are friends with boys, and girls are friends with girls.

Prior to puberty boys and girls don't want to have much to do with each other. Boys and girls don't respect gender differences. Boys laugh at girls doing “girlish” things, and girls laugh at boys doing “stupid boy” things.

Then comes puberty and boys and girls get more interested in each other. Girls talk with their girl friends about boys, and boys talk to their friends about girls. Boys are friends and girls are friends, but typically, a boy and a girl together are different.

Today's young people do a better job than prior generations of making friends with both boys and girls, so maybe it will be easier for them to feel comfortable being friends with their partner when they marry. But, a lot of couples, in many cultures, have little experience with cross-gender friendships.

The point here, is that men and women are markedly different. They want and need different things from their friends, and they may have little experience being friends with each other.

Men find it easy to be friends with men. They share experiences unique to men. They have many shared beliefs, judgments, expectations and assessments about women. They know "guy" stuff. When a guy complains, he's usually looking for solutions.

Women find it easy to be friends with women. They share experiences unique to women. They have many shared beliefs, judgments, expectations, and assessments about men. They know "women" stuff. When a woman complains, she usually just wants to be listened to.

What's is it Like to Become Friends With Your Partner?

John and Julie Gottman (and others), who research marriage and relationships say that the key to a great marriage is a great friendship. Friends like being together. You're friends when your partner wants to be with you. How satisfying do you make it for your partner to spend time with you? You need to become friends with your partner.

Think a moment about you and your best friend, and how you are together. Do you listen to one another? Do you pay attention to what your friend says? Do you have a sense of what your friend is feeling? Does your friend listen, pay attention, and have a sense of what you are feeling and thinking? That's what friends do for each other.

When your best friend screws up, do you blame or criticize? No, you empathize. When you're not getting what you want from your friend, do you whine and complain? Not if you want to keep your friend.

Now, think about how you are with your partner. Do you treat your partner the way you would treat your friend? Why not?

Most people say things like, "I wouldn't be happy if my partner wasn't more than a friend. I married my lover." Or, "You don't have sex with your friend. A lover is different than a friend."

Of course, your marital partner is different from your friend. But, there's no reason you can't also be friends with your partner. And, you'll spend a whole lot more time being with your partner than you ever will with any friend. So, you want to become friends as well as lovers.

You give your friend respect and admiration. If you didn't, you wouldn't have that friend. That's the least that friends do for each other. We're talking about how marriages go sour, and the number one reason is: you've stopped being friends with your lover (or you never were friends). If that fits you, then decide to make friends with your partner.

Men: To Become Friends With Your Wife, What Do You Need To Know About Women?

You need to know that women are different, and it's okay to be different. Those differences aren't wrong. They're just differences. You need to know that you may be with your wife for maybe 80 years, and you will never, ever, understand her.

Be interested in your wife. Ask questions. Lots of questions. Be curious. Listen to what she says. Learn how she thinks. Discover how she feels. Notice the differences between you. Respect those differences. Your marriage needs those differences. Someone in every marriage need to think, act, and feel the way she does.

Here are some useful rules:

1. Always let her influence any important choice you make.
2. When she needs to complain, listen, nod, and don't offer suggestions.
3. Never ridicule, mock, or disrespect her because she is a woman (or, any other woman just for being a woman).
4. Use every opportunity to show that you respect and admire her.
5. Keep your ratio of positives to negatives higher than 5 to 1.
6. Tell her frequently how much you appreciate what she brings to your marriage

Women: To Become Friends With Your Husband, What You Need To Know About Men?

You know that men are different, but you need to learn that those differences must be respected and appreciated. He's not wrong because he's a guy. He's just different.

Because men seem less complex than women, you may think you understand him. That's an illusion. Get used to the idea that you will never understand him. Accept that.

For example, after men get through their day's activities — whether work, or chores, or play — they generally need time to decompress. In cave man days, they would simply stare into the fire. Today, they'll hide behind a newspaper or TV.

They don't need lots of questions or attention. It has nothing to do with you. It's a "guy" thing. He'll be available when he's finished. (Just accept that you may never understand this behavior.)

Here are some useful rules:

1. If you're feeling mad, bad, or sad, it's okay to complain, but never criticize.
2. When he's complaining, he may be open to suggestions.
3. Never ridicule, mock or disrespect him just because he's a man (or, any other man just for being a man).
4. Pay little attention to his faults and flaws. Pay lots of attention to his strengths.
5. Keep your ratio of positives to negatives higher than 5 to 1.
6. Tell him frequently that you appreciate what he brings to the marriage

What's the Payoff For Working To Become Friends?

When you become friends, you get a whole reservoir of good and loving feelings about your partner. Then, when conflicts occur you each start with positive feelings, and your conflict discussions are unlikely to damage the relationship.

It's time to mention that an estimated 70% of your conflict issues may never be resolved. So, both of you need to learn how to figure out which issues those are, and learn how to laugh about them, rather than fight about them.

If you and your partner have many conflict issues that will never be resolved, and will be with you throughout your relationship ... it is very smart to become friends.

Friends can laugh together about their differences. Friends give each other space to be different. Couples who make an effort to become friends generally find themselves lifelong friends.

You'll both be richer for always being with your friend.

The next article in the series is "Positive Relationship Signs."

Positive Relationship Signs

What are positive relationship signs? Those are the signs that show you (and anybody who pays attention to your interactions with your partner), that your relationship is healthy and positive.

Positive relationship signs are those words, attitudes, gestures, facial expressions, and body language that a married couple give to each other.

To have a happy marriage that lasts, you each need to give each other 5 positives for every negative. Researchers would call this a positivity ratio of 5 to 1 or more.

You Need A Positivity Ratio of 5 to 1 or Higher

When you talk about positive relationship signs, you have to think of Drs. John and Julie Gottman at the Gottman Institute.

Those folks at the Gottman Institute in Seattle are amazing. They bring couples into an apartment like a "love lab," and study them by taping, watching, and listening to every gesture.

They have codes for every little thing that happens between the couple. They can predict with over 90% accuracy whether the marriage will end in divorce ... or not.

One of the exercises is to ask the couple to discuss a conflict issue for 15 minutes. Amazingly, within the first three minutes the researchers can tell how the discussion will end, and whether it will strengthen or damage the relationship.

They did this with a group of newlyweds, and then followed those couples over 6 years and verified their predictions. Over 90% accurate! They're making a science out of relationships.

We use the word positivity to mean keeping the exchanges between you and your partner 5 times more positive than negative. That's right. If you express positive feelings toward your partner 5 times as often as negative feelings, you'll have a positive ratio of 5 to 1. That's positivity.

Positivity is so important, that if you keep your ratio at 5 to 1 or more, your marriage is almost divorce proof. A positivity ratio of 5 to 1 is one of the keys to a marriage that gets happier and happier throughout your marriage.

If both partners have a positivity ratio of 5 to 1, you've got a sure thing. But, if one can keep his or her positivity ratio above 5 to 1, the positivity draws the other partner into positivity too. It's very hard to be negative toward someone who is being positive toward you.

Every positive expression isn't equal, and neither is every negative. So, we'll show you the different codes that researchers at Gottman use. First, we'll list the positives ... because that's what we want to focus on.

Positive Relationship Signs

Positive relationship signs even include signs that are Neutral ... something like an 'uh-huh' is still a little positive. It's worth 1/10th of a point (.1)

An expression of interest, like "really" or "tell me more" is +2.

Validation, such as "you're right about that" is +4.

Affection, from an "I love you" to calling your partner "sweetheart" is a +4.

Humor is good for +4 and surprise or joy like, "Wow, that's great" is good for +4

Positive Point Values:

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Neutral | + .1 |
| Interest | +2 |
| Validation | +4 |
| Affection | +4 |
| Humor | +4 |
| Surprise/joy | +4 |

Here are some Not-So Positive Relationship Signs

Here are the minuses ... or negatives. Each of these is worth -1.

If you express anger toward your partner, you'd have to give 5 points worth of positives to stay above 5 to 1.

So if you whine, or are domineering, or sad, you'd have to express affection and interest totaling +6 to stay positive.

The Minus 1's

Anger
Domineering
Whining
Sadness

Moderately Negative Relationship Signs

Here are the Minus-2's. Stonewalling, which is withdrawing and ignoring what your partner is saying, is a minus-2, and so are Defensiveness, Criticism and Belligerence.

If you go picking a fight, or criticize, 'BOOM' that's -2, and to keep your ratio positive, you'd have to make up 10 points of validation, affection, interest, or humor.



Minus-2s

Stonewalling
Defensiveness
Criticism
Belligerence

Really Really Negative Relationship Signs

We call the minus 2's 3's and 4's "land mines," because they are so damaging that they quickly foretell the death of the marriage.

Showing disgust toward your partner is a -3 and you'd have to express 15 points of positives to make up for that.

Worse, and for some, even more difficult to forgive, is displaying contempt at -4.

It takes 20 points of positives to make up for one contemptuous remark or dismissive body language.

“Land Mines”

Disgust: -3

Contempt: -4

What if You've Shared Some Not-so Positive Relationship Signs?

What's important about these positive and negatives is the ratio. Some couples, whom Gottman describes as “volatile” actually may use lots of negatives, but they also are generous with their positives ... so they keep their ratio above 5 to 1.

You can get away with a few land mines if you are terrific at expressing affection, laugh a lot, and leave no doubt that under the negatives is a strong base of love.

Ways To Build The Positivity Ratio

Two of the most powerful positive relationship signs are fondness and admiration.

We call this the appreciables list. Just for fun you may want to make a list of all the things that you appreciate about your partner, your relationship, your intimacy, your touching, your affection, and your partners respect, admiration, and caring for you.



If you could make a point of expressing one thing you appreciate, respect, or admire about your partner, every day, you'd build up so much positivity that you're sure to succeed in your relationship.

Wow. One "appreciable" a day. What's so hard about that?

An appreciable a day:

"Today I was thinking how much I appreciate _____ about you."

"Today I couldn't help think how much I admire you for the way you _____."

"Today, I was remembering how sexy you were when _____."

Just one of those could be worth 80 points when you add the whole conversation up. That would give you a little leeway to be human and get angry, or grumpy sometimes.

Some more positive relationship signs are admiration, appreciation, and fondness. These builds huge globs of positivity.

Touches, kisses, and little touches of affection all build positivity quickly.

More positive relationship signs

Admiration
Appreciation
Fondness

Turn Toward Your Partner

Other positive relationship signs that build positivity is what Gottman calls "turning toward" instead of "turning away."

Turning toward means being interested in your partner. This isn't the big "I love you thing." This is saying, "Really" when your partner says something. Or, "Tell me about that" or even "Huh."

If you say something and your partner makes no response — even to register that you spoke — you get the feeling that you could be in the company of a house plant.

Turning Toward not Turning away

"Really?"
"Tell me about it"
or even "Uh-huh."

Do not be like a house plant

You add to your positivity by being interested or curious about what your partner thinks, feels, or has opinions about anything. "What do you think about that?" could start a conversation, or extend one.

So could "How do you feel about that?" Or "What's your opinion?"

Summary of Positive Relationship Signs

Positivity at a ratio of 5 to 1 or more is a key factor in whether your relationship will last. It is really, really important. It can get you through the most challenging difficulties. And, it makes your married life so much more pleasant than negativity.

We've discussed several ways in which you can increase your positivity, and it will also increase your partner's, as well.

We talked about building a list of appreciables that you can use to think about daily, and to express to your partner as often as possible. Things you admire, appreciate, and care for in your partner.

Finally, you've learned that it's important to listen, respond, show interest, and affirm what your partner is saying.

I hope it's clear to you now why it is so important that you and your partner become friends. Friends give each other many more positive relationship signs.

To continue with the next article in the series Happy Marriage Recipe: Reduce Anger in a Relationship.

Reduce Anger in A Relationship

Anger in a relationship stems most frequently from irresolvable issues. Issues that can be resolved seldom create nearly as much anger in a relationship.

Sally was a neat-nick. Her motto was "a place for everything and everything in it's place."

Walter wasn't a slob, but he was comfortable with things being a little messy.

When they married, Sally began nagging Walter to "Pick up after yourself." But, Walter often didn't pick up after himself. So Sally picked up after Walter.

They didn't realize it, but they were dealing with an irresolvable issue. Sally was a little overboard about neatness, and she expected Walter to be the same. He wasn't. Walter began to be irritated by what he called "Sally's compulsive behavior." He vowed never to be "obsessed with neatness," like he thought Sally was.

Sally started to get really angry at Walter every time she had to pick up his glass, or put a CD back in it's sleeve. She thought "He's doing this on purpose," and "He expects me to pick up after him. I'm his wife, not his mother."

So, Sally was accumulating a lot of anger; she frequently snapped at Walter for no reason that Walter could see. So, Walter began to get angry at Sally because of her snappishness, and because she still nagged and criticized him for being "a slob."

When Sally and Walter learned about irresolvable issues, they finally realized they had been dealing with one.

Sally practiced better ways of dealing with Walter's messiness, and began handling those situations with humor and grace. The laughing brought them closer together, and Walter even got a little less messy.

Stop wasting your breath ... and hurting your marriage

The marital researchers at the Gottman Institute in Seattle studied hundreds of newlywed couples for up to six years. They discovered that about 70% of the conflict issues that couples had when they were newlyweds, remained 6 years later. In other words, most of the things couples fight about don't get resolved.

Here's what this means to you ... and your marriage. If you have the same fights over and over, you are wasting your breath. And, you're hurting your marriage. You're fighting an endless fight. We call it a circle dance.

We say that 80% of the problems in your marriage come from 20% of the issues. If you end the circle dance, 80% of your problems will disappear. But, you can't end it until you identify the issues. Failing to identify your circle dance issues will, without fail, lead to an increased amount of anger in a relationship.

Identify unchangeable differences ... and accept them

With Patty and Steve, the circle dance was about money: how much to spend and how much to save. With Eric and Millie it was about how to discipline the kids. With Dave and Sandra, it was about his drinking. With Mike and Taisha, it was about her wanting to stop working and be a stay-at-home mom.

With you and anybody, there will be irresolvable issues. Maybe you could figure it out in advance, but sometimes they just appear after the wedding. So, if you've got a circle dance with your present partner, don't even imagine that it would be better with someone else. It may be different, but researchers tell us that any two people will have marital issues that cannot and will not be resolved.

So, if you can't resolve it, and want to minimize anger in a relationship, what do you do?

Obvious irresolvable issues

You'll minimize anger in a relationship if you spot the obvious irresolvable issues before you marry. If you don't think you could ever accept an issue, don't get married. If, however, you know the issue faces you — and you choose to marry in spite of it — then the only reasonable solution is to accept it, and treat it with humor and grace.

One of you will be

- neater than the other
- more careful with money than the other
- less ambitious than the other
- more concerned with status than the other
- smarter than the other
- more open to new things and new experiences than the other
- closer to their family than the other.

The important thing to notice is that you're not necessarily "right" about how you are.

And, your partner is not necessarily "wrong" about the way he or she is.

You are simply different. And, different is actually a good thing, because it can keep each partner from going overboard on that thing.

Mary married Steve partly because he was good with money and she knew she wasn't. She thought he'd be good for her.

Sam married Angie partly because she was an extrovert and had tons of friends. Sam was an introvert with few friends.

We can all see what issues will arise for them that could produce anger in a relationship.

Steve could "go crazy" when he sees how Mary wastes money. Or, he could accept it and treat it with humor and grace. "I hold her hand because when I let go, she shops."

Angie could "go crazy" when Sam seldom wants to go out with friends, preferring a quiet night at home. Or, Angie could accept the way Sam is with humor and grace, enjoying her friends without requiring Sam to be different than he is.

Irresolvable issues that come up later in the marriage

Some issues can't be spotted ahead of the marriage. Here are some examples:

One of you will be:

- more lenient in disciplining the children than the other
- more willing to invite an aged and ailing parent to move in with you
- more willing to move out of state when the other one gets a promotion.

It doesn't matter when the irresolvable issue shows up. Your partner wasn't hiding their position on the issue from you. You weren't hiding your position from your partner. Don't get ensnared by imagining motives that were never there.

So, these issues are irresolvable. What do you do to minimize anger in a relationship?

Breathe deeply, wish it weren't so, then appreciate something about your partner.

To minimize anger in a relationship

We suggest that you simply accept that you and your lover have an issue that cannot and will not be resolved. Here are some helpful tips:

1. Agree to disagree.

Clear the air with your partner. Explain that you now realize that the two of you have one of those circle dances going and that it is harmful for your marriage to fight endlessly about something that won't change. Make it clear that neither of you is to blame (or that there is some blame on both parts).

If your partner won't agree, and you want to break up your circle dances by yourself, simply stop doing what you do when your partner does what your partner does.

Dances can't continue with just one dancer. One way to do it is to say something like, "I love you, and I'd feel safer if we don't have the same fight over and over again. Let's talk about something else."

2. Decide to accept some or all of your partner's position on your conflict issue.

Do this out of love and respect for your partner.

Decide to lighten up on your position on the conflict issue. No matter how important it has always seemed to be, it isn't as important as your marital happiness.

This will be hard for you, because you've got such a big stake in your position, and you probably think your partner's position is indefensible. But, the issue isn't more important than your marriage, and your position may not be as rock solid as it has always seemed to you.

3. Learn to laugh at yourself or the situation.

Many lucky couples celebrate long and successful marriages, by learning to laugh at the situation and themselves whenever their conflict issue pops up. Laugh at yourself (never at your partner): "Don't worry; in another ten years I'll have it down pat."

Handling ticklish issues with grace and humor will bring you closer together, rather than continuing hurtful and damaging fights that lead to anger in a relationship.

4. Practice a quick repair or deflection.

Create and practice a quick repair if you slip and criticize your partner about an irresolvable issue.

A repair for when you mess up, might be, "Oops, There I go again," or "Sorry, I know you hate it when I do that."

Practice a quick deflection you can use when your partner slips and is critical of you about an irresolvable issue.

When your partner errs, you might say: "Let's start over. That sounds like one of our irresolvables," or "Can we talk about something else?"

So, breathe deeply, wish that it weren't so, and then decide not to fight about it again.

To continue with the next article in the series read: "Secrets to Positive Marriage Conflict"

Secrets of Positive Marriage Conflict

Positive marriage conflict sounds impossible. Conflict suggests battles, fights, disputes, and differences of opinion. How can you have conflict that's positive?

The Gottman research tells us how. Here is the secret: Start and end any 'issue' discussion on a positive note. When you do that, you have positive marriage conflict.

You only fight about *resolvable* issues. You achieve positive marriage conflict by eliminating irresolvable issues, and only fighting about resolvable ones.

When you begin an 'issue' discussion on a positive and respectful note, you can hardly call it a 'fight.' It's a discussion between people who love each other. You listen to each other. You look for compromises. You look for win-win solutions to the issue.

You can't imagine the difference it makes when those unresolvable issues generate humor and grace, rather than anger, frustration, and hurtful accusations. Then the resolvable issues can be resolved. There is no bitterness, anger or vengeance.

Begin Issue Discussions Positively

To achieve positive marriage conflict, Dan and Susan agreed to begin all issue discussions positively, and even agreed on a "script" to use. When one of them had an issue to discuss, he or she would say, "Sweetheart, I want to have a few minutes of your time to discuss _____. I want us both to be in a positive and loving mood. Would you like to do it now, or wait until you feel more receptive?"

The important parts are:

1. "I want to have a discussion about (some resolvable issue)."
2. "We'll have a better outcome if both of us are in a positive and loving mood."
3. "I feel ready now, do you? If not, when can we schedule it?"

If you and your partner are working together on creating a happy marriage that lasts, you can work out a process that works for both of you, to achieve positive marriage conflict.

Use positives and avoid negatives during the discussion

This is the hard part for lots of people. It's difficult for anyone to accept anything that feels like criticism, and even if you use "I" messages instead of "You" messages, some people only hear implied criticism.

For example:

"I'm feeling frustrated because the garbage wasn't put out for pick up, and now we'll have to wait until next week's pickup and the can is full. What can we do together to assure the garbage always gets put out on schedule?"

That's a whole lot better than using "You" messages: *"You forgot to put the garbage out again. You said you would take care of the garbage, and you haven't."* The "You" messages tend to be more accusatory, and more like criticism. It's hard not to go on the defensive, and get angry.

(Side Note: I've spent many years trying to find ways to teach "Active Listening" to adults, and few of them really learned to use Active Listening effectively. Also, I'm no longer sure it works, even if used effectively. The studies show decidedly mixed results. Still, the "I" messages are a lot less likely to give rise to anger and defensiveness than "You" messages.)

I now believe the positive start, the effort to be positive, and an "abort" agreement is the safest process for everyone.

What's an "Abort" Agreement?

If either person feels angry feelings rising, or their heartbeat races, or they feel upset, or hurt, or unloving or negative, they can ask to abort the discussion for 30 minutes or longer, and use some calming technique that will bring them back down to a calm and positive mode.

With couples working together, each will understand what is happening, and how the Abort is really a loving attempt to avoid any transactions that may be damaging to the relationship.

End Issue Discussions Positively

To assure positive marriage conflict discussions, it's helpful to learn and practice some good positive endings. Examples:

"Thank you for sharing your thoughts and feelings with me on this issue."

"I'm happy that we could find a win-win solution to the issue."

"I love you and I appreciate your being willing to work through these discussions in a positive and loving way."

Alternatives for Item 2

"We didn't find a solution that will work for both of us yet, but I think we will find one eventually."

"We made a lot of progress, and each of us is willing to make concessions. We'll get back to it again."

What do You do if You or Your Partner Just Can't do it?

One couple found they were not able to do it. They tried again and again, but always ended up feeling angry or having some other bad feeling.

Finally, they decided to hold 'issue' discussions by email. Whenever one of them wanted to start an issue discussion that might lead to a fight, he or she would go to the computer and compose an email to the other.

They agreed that the person who wanted the discussion would start the email with something loving, warm, and respectful, such as:

"Dearest Sweetbuns. Love of my life, friend and co-parent of two lovely children: I have a request to make of you. Please, next Tuesday, think of something you can do to remind yourself to take the garbage out. The can is full, and we must now wait a week until the next pickup. If there is anything I can do to help you remember — without seeming to nag — I'd be happy to do it. Just ask. I appreciate so much that you've agreed to handle the garbage, and everything else you do to make our lives and marriage happier. You're a joy to be married to."

Every email would start in a positive and respectful place, and end with appreciation and a loving note.

Both of them reported that the act of typing a positive, loving beginning seemed to make their anger, hurt, or other bad feeling disappear. The fellow said he even got a laugh out of writing outrageously "over the top" sentiments at the beginning and end, and he could never stay angry about whatever the issue was.

Using email may seem like an extreme step, but both people felt it made "a world of difference" in how they felt about each other. They had found a way to completely stop potentially dangerous fighting. They proved that you really can achieve positive marriage conflict discussions, even if you can't talk face to face, without fighting.

Introduction: **Soul Mate Definition**

If you'd like your partner to become your soul mate, you can do some things to make that happen.

Definition of Soul Mate

The place to start is to understand what a soul mate is. In the first article we'll define soul mate.

The Soul Mate Quiz

After you read that article, take the quiz. Are you and your partner soul mates already? Do you have anything further to learn, or do you already have everything you need to have a happy marriage that lasts?

The soul mate quiz answers will provide some clues.

What the Scores Indicate

After you've taken the soul mate quiz, read on to find out how close you and your partner already are to being soul mates. See if there is anything you might want to learn that will assure you one of those top 10% marriages that are happy and last.

Having an Optimistic Partner

You and your partner need to be optimistic, if you are to meet the soul mate definition. What if you're not? What if both of you are pessimists?

According to the experts, at least one of you has to learn to become an optimistic partner.

Having a Positive Partner

If you and your partner are both positive, you will see the best in each other, and be able to start and end 'issue' discussions on a positive note.

What if you aren't positive? According to the marriage experts, each of you needs to work together to become a more positive partner.

Having an Appreciative Partner

You and your partner both need to be appreciative. An appreciative partner sees the other in the most positive light and is appreciative of the partner's positive traits and contributions to the marriage.

If you aren't already both be truly appreciative partners, you both can work together to become more appreciative of each other.

One of You Needs to be Laid Back

If one of you is laid back and slow to anger, that partner can calm the waters when discussions get heated. It takes two to fight the kind of marital fights you want to avoid. So, one laid back person can turn a fight into something positive, by using humor and grace.

If neither of you is slow to anger, you need to take special precautions to maintain the positivity.

It's Good to Have Happy Memories

Finding a partner with happy memories brings you closer to being or becoming soul mates.

What if you or your partner are troubled with unhappy memories? What do you do? Learn how unhappy memories can be turned into happy memories.

Soul Mate Test

After you read all that, check out to see what you've learned about being soul mates: take the soul mate test. It's a true/false test that reinforces what you've learned about making your partner and you into true soul mates.

The happiest 10% of all long term marriages think of themselves as soul mates. In the prior pages you've learned how to create one of those top 10% marriages. The soul mate test confirms that you've learned how to do it.

To begin this section, read the next article: How do You Define Soul Mate.

How Do You Define Soul Mate?

Here are four different definitions of Soul Mate.

Mystics Define Soul Mate

Those using a mystical framework define soul mate using the concept of the twin flame or twin soul — thought to be the ultimate soulmate — the one and only other half of one's soul, for which all souls are driven to find and join.

The mystical definition of soul mate has pointed many people to conclude that there is one and only one soul mate for you or anyone else.

If you define soul mate in this manner, you make the search for this single mystical person very difficult (especially since no one has ever suggested a reliable test that you could use to say, "This one person is my soul mate.")

If you define soul mate this way, it is best if you first fall in love, then assure that this is the right person for you, and then, and only then, decide that person is your soul mate.

Hollywood also Tries to Define Soul Mate

Books, TV, and Movies sometimes define soul mate as that one perfect partner out there for each of us. This romanticized view also confuses us by suggesting that each of us has one perfect match and it's our job to try to find that person.

If you define soul mate as being the one perfect person for you, you're adopting the romanticized view, and without knowing how to really know someone is your soul mate, it's easy to be frustrated, confused, and make mistakes in the pairing process.

Define Soul Mate according to Wikipedia

You could define soul mate like this: "Soulmate (or soul mate) is a term sometimes used to designate someone with whom one has a feeling of deep affinity, friendship, love, strong intimacy, sexuality, or compatibility."

This definition of soul mate is much more useful because it doesn't suggest that there is just one person in the world who is perfect for you.

When you define soul mate this way, you realize that there could be thousands of soul mates out there for you to choose from.

Dating Sites also Define Soul Mate

Dating sites define soul mate as being someone who matches you on many different traits, interests, education, goals, etc.

Each site has different methods of matching, and they each claim to have the "magic" formula, however it's clear that there can't be one and only one perfect method of matching people, because they all have successes.

Marriage Experts Define Soul Mate

We've combined the views of marriage researchers and marriage experts into a simple formula that they might all agree with.

We define soul mate to be: *someone who has the traits of an ideal marriage partner.*

The ideal marriage partner would be someone who is, positive, optimistic, appreciative, slow to anger, and who has happy memories.

If you are positive, optimistic, appreciative, slow to anger, with happy memories, and you find someone with those same traits, you will have found your "Soul Mate."

We'll spend the next few pages explaining why those traits make someone an ideal marriage partner, and suggest what you might do if either you or your partner doesn't have one or more of these traits. We think you create your own soul mate, and you become your partner's soul mate.

Diane Sollee from "Smart Marriages" said:

"People think they have to find their soulmate to have a good marriage. You're not going to 'find' your soulmate. Anyone you meet already has soulmates. Their mother. Their father. Their lifelong friends. You get married, and after 20 years of loving, bearing and raising children, meeting challenges — then you'll have 'created' your soulmate."

Read the pages that will help you become a perfect soul mate for someone with your same traits.

Go on with the next page in the series about soul mates: Find a pencil and take the Soul Mate Quiz.

The Soul Mate Quiz

Note: To understand the soul mate quiz, you'll need to have read the page "How do you Define Soul Mate." If you haven't already, read that article first.

You know now that we define a Soul Mate as someone with some or all the traits that make an ideal marriage partner. The Soul Mate Quiz will help you evaluate you and your partner's strengths on those traits. If both of you have all of these traits, you will truly be "soul mates." If you or your partner is not strong on one of these traits, we'll show you what you can do to practice that trait. If you both practice these traits, you will not only have a happy marriage that lasts, but you will become true Soul Mates.

Be careful not to use this quiz to find out if you married the right person, or if you're engaged to an ideal marriage partner. Very few people will have all of these traits, and it's likely that you won't either. Instead, use the quiz as a guide to see how you and your partner might work to add traits that have proven powerful in making happy marriages that last.

Use the small grid below to guess your score and your partner's (use a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is low and 10 is high). Then complete the detailed questions in the following pages. Last, compare those scores to your guesses. (There is another copy of this grid at the end of the article to record your actual answers.)

If you are reading on-screen, print this article so that you can write your answers. If you don't have access to a printer, sketch the grids and use them for your answers.

Before you Start: Guesses

| Question: | Mine | Partner's | Composite |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|
| Question #1: Average Optimism Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #2: Average Positivity Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #3: Average Appreciation Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #4: Average Quick to Anger Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #5: Average Happy Memories Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |

How Optimistic are You and Your Partner?

Optimists have positive views of the future. They think everything will work out in the end. They are not prone to worry about bad things that haven't happened and probably never will.

Question #1:

On a scale of 1 to 10 score yourself and your partner on how optimistic you each are, naturally, about the following categories. (1 would be a total pessimistic view. 10 would be Pollyanna, always confident that things will work out fine.)

| | You | Your partner |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. When facing a test of any kind, how confident are you that you can handle it? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. When your favorite team is competing, how sure are you that your team will win? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. If you have children, how sure are you that they will thrive and prosper? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. How much confidence do you have that your marriage will be happy and last? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. How sure are you that you'll achieve your goals in life? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. How resilient are you when something bad happens to you (do you bounce right back, or do you worry that you'll never recover)? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Add up each of your scores. Your optimism scores are: | _____ | _____ |
| Divide each of the scores by six. Your average score is: | /6 _____ | /6 _____ |
| Add both scores together then divide by two. Your composite score is: | _____ | /2 _____ |

How Positive are You and Your Partner?

Positive people seem to always find something good about anything, or anyone. Negative people seem to always find the flaws, and find some wrong with almost everything or anyone.

Question #2

On a scale of 1 to 10 score yourself and your partner on how positive or negative you each tend to be, in a variety of situations. (1 would be a totally negative view. 10 would be the most positive.)

Question #2

| | You | Your partner |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. You watch a movie. Would you be more likely to talk about what was good about it, or what was not so good? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. You meet a new person. Would you be more likely to notice the things that are good about that person, or the defects? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. You have meal in a restaurant. Would you more likely to notice the things that were good about the experience, or what was not so good about the experience? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. How satisfying, pleasant and fulfilling do you find your job or your work? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. How much control do you feel you have over your life? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Add up each of your scores. Your scores are: | _____ | _____ |
| Divide each of the scores by 5. Average score is: | /5 _____ | /5 _____ |
| Add both scores together then divide by two. Your composite score is: | _____ | /2 _____ |

How Appreciative Are You and Your Partner?

Appreciative people appreciate other people for what those people add to their lives. Not only do they feel appreciative, but they freely express their appreciation to those people.

Question # 3

On a scale of 1 to 10 score yourself and your partner on how often you feel appreciative of something that someone did for you, or how someone helped you. A score of 1 would indicate that you never feel appreciative of others, and never express that appreciation. A score of 10 would indicate that you frequently feel appreciative of the efforts, gifts, or traits of others, and you almost always say something to express your appreciation.

There are two parts to each question. You should have 2 scores for each question for you, and 2 scores for each question for your partner.

| | You | Your partner |
|--|---|---|
| <p>1. A teacher of yours inspired you when you were young, and made a big difference in your life. How much do you appreciate that teacher now?</p> <p>How likely would you be, if you met that teacher at a reunion to express your appreciation?</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> |
| <p>2. A coworker made you feel very welcome when you got a job, and taught you to do the job well. How likely would you be to feel appreciative of the coworker's support?</p> <p>How likely would you be to express that appreciation?</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> |
| <p>3. How appreciative do you feel about what your parents, siblings, and other family members have done for you?</p> <p>How clearly have you expressed to those people how much you appreciate what they have done?</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> |
| <p>4. How appreciative do you feel for the love and many nice things that your partner has brought you?</p> <p>How clearly have you expressed that appreciation?</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> |
| <p>5. A stranger goes out of his way to open a door for you when your arms are full. Score how appreciative you would be.</p> <p>How likely would you be to express your appreciation?</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> |
| Add up each of your scores. Appreciation scores are: | _____ | _____ |
| Divide each of the scores by 10. Average score is: | /5 _____ | /5 _____ |
| Add both scores together then divide by two. Your composite score for being appreciative is: | _____ | /2 _____ |

How Quick To Anger Are You and Your Partner?

Some people are very slow to anger, and some people are explosive and quick to anger. Some people hardly ever get angry. Others are angry a lot, and about a lot things.

Question # 4

On a scale of 1 to 10 score yourself and your partner on how explosive and quick to anger you are. Score 1 if you are explosive and quick to anger. Give yourself a 10 if almost nothing ever makes you angry, and you are very slow to anger.

| | You | Your partner |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Score you and your partner about how quick to anger you are: | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Add both scores together then divide by two. Your composite score is: | _____ | /2 _____ |

How Happy Are Your Memories?

We all have memories. We all have had good things happen to us, and bad things. The Soul Mate Quiz questions relate to different times and stages in your life.

Question # 5

On a scale of 1 to 10: For any given times or stages or events, if your memories are almost all unhappy, even miserable, give yourself a 1. If your memories are almost all happy, give yourself a 10. If you have equal amounts of both happy and unhappy memories, score a 5.

| | You | Your partner |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Remember your pre-school years, How happy were your memories from that time? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. Recall your years from kindergarten through 6th grade. How happy were your memories of that time?? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. Recall your years from 7th grade through the end of your high school. How happy were your memories? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. Recall your memories from your first job, or first several. How happy are those memories? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. Recall the relationships you've had prior to your present one. How happy are those memories? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Add up each of your scores. Your positivity scores are: | _____ | _____ |
| Divide each of the scores by 5. Your average score is: | /5 _____ | /5 _____ |
| Add both scores together then divide by two. Your composite score is: | _____ | /2 _____ |

Please write your final scores below, and go to *Scoring The Soul Mate Quiz*.

Final Scores

| Question: | Mine | Partner's | Composite |
|---|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Question #1: Average Optimism Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #2: Average Positivity Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #3: Average Appreciation Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #4: Average Quick to Anger Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Question #5: Average Happy Memories Score | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Soul Mate Quiz Scoring

Note: If you did not reach this page from the previous article (Soul Mate Quiz), please read that first.

Contrary to the romantic or mystical view, marriage experts say that you and your partner become soul mates over time. The scores you've listed are your scores today.

Each of the traits can be changed. They are all habits of thought. Optimism can be learned. Positivity can be learned. Being appreciative can be learned, and expressing appreciation can be practiced. Explosive tempers can be tamed, and even made slow to anger. Happy memories can be formed to replace unhappy memories.

If you are willing to learn new habits, you can become an ideal marriage partner — a true soul mate.

If your partner is willing to learn new habits, your partner can become an ideal marriage partner — your soul mate.

So, regardless of where your scores are today, if you want to be married to your sole mate, you can be.

If, your scores are high today — across all 5 attributes — you're already an ideal marriage partner — a true soul mate.

If your partner's scores are high today, your partner is already an ideal marriage partner — your soul mate.

#1: Why is Optimism Important?

The leading expert in the world on optimism, Dr. Martin Seligman, says: "Every marriage needs at least one optimist." He also says it's better if you have two optimists.

Dr. Seligman wrote the book: "Learned Optimism" which proves that optimism is a habit of thought. It can be taught. Pessimists can become optimists. They just have to want to. Being pessimists, they probably doubt that they could become optimistic, but they can. If they'll practice being optimistic.

To be soul mates, I think you'd want an Optimism composite score at or above 5. Higher would mean you would be even happier.

#2: Why is Positivity Important?

Positivity is critical to a happy marriage that lasts. Marriages are destroyed by hurtful fights filled with angry exchanges, hurtful words, displays of disgust and contempt. Another way to destroy a marriage is to turn away from each other, stonewall your partner, and tune out any communication.

Critical to a happy marriage that lasts are three points about marital interactions:

1. 70 to 90 Percent of all fights can be avoided if couples simply identify those issues that cannot and will not be resolved, no matter how often, or how loudly they fight.
2. Of those issues that can be resolved, discussions will only be productive if the couple starts and ends the discussion on a positive note.
3. Happy marriages that last depend on having a positivity ratio of 5 to 1. It is difficult for a negative, critical person to maintain that high a ratio of positive communications to their partner.

If one or both of the individuals are positive people, it will be easy to start and end discussions positively. Also, stone-walling and turning away are not tactics used by people who are positive.

To be good soul mates, you'd want a Positivity composite score at 7 or above. One really positive person can make sure that 'issue' discussions start and end positively, and keep them from spiraling into a hurtful, angry exchange. But, one positive person isn't enough to maintain a high positivity ratio. So the happiness of the marriage might be compromised.

#3: Why is Being Appreciative Important?

Marriage requires give and take. Two people bring their strengths together to form a happy marriage that lasts. If one person gives and the other person takes, that weakens the core of the union.

An appreciative person is aware of other people, and recognizes them for their contributions. People who never feel or express appreciation are focused on themselves, and scarcely recognize other people except for what they person can give them.

Soul mates are couples who both give and take willingly, and appreciate their partner's gifts and contributions to the success of the marriage.

To be good soul mates, you'd want an appreciation composite score at or above 5.

#4: Why is it Important to be Slow to Anger?

As we've seen, marriages are destroyed by angry exchanges of hurtful words. A person who is slow to anger can avoid getting caught up in these angry exchanges.

A person who is slow to anger can actually help an explosive partner calm down and do less damage.

So, on this point, you can be soul mates if one of you is slow to anger. If you are both hot heads, at least one of you will need to learn to tame the anger.

To be soul mates, you'd want a slow-to-anger composite score at 6 or above.

#5: Why are Happy Memories Important?

Happy people — those who are positive, optimistic and appreciative — collect happy memories.

Unhappy people, who are negative and pessimistic collect unhappy memories.

To be soul mates, you both want your happy memories to outweigh your unhappy memories.

A Composite score above 6, with both of you having individual scores above 6 is a powerful indication of how your marriage will thrive. If you both score 7's or higher, you can become true soul mates.

If you are a 10, with very happy memories, you'll often find people who have been victimized by life attracted to you (people with a happy memories score below 5).

You might think that you can rescue them from an unhappy life, because you're positive and optimistic. Odds are good that a relationship between an 8 and a 2 will end up being just another relationship that went bad for the person with a 2.

What does this all mean?

To someone with a romanticized view, or mystical view, or hollywood's view of soul mates, this may mean little.

To someone who wants a view that virtually every marriage expert would agree with, this quiz is more meaningful.

Remember, however, the scores you gave on the quiz are today's scores (and they are only your best guesses). Every one of the attributes you've scored can be raised by adopting a new habit of thought, and a few minutes practice each day until the new habit of thought replaces the old habit.

Even memories can be changed from negative to positive.

So, if you are already married to your partner, and both of you want to become true soul mates, you can do so.

A little commitment. A little practice. A little coping. Being willing to be imperfect, and a lot of laughing, and you'll be the true soul mates you want to be.

In the following pages, we'll examine each attribute more carefully.

To go on to the next page in the series, read: *Optimistic Partner*.

Optimistic Partner

Note: If you did not reach this page from the "How do You Define Soul Mate" page, please read that first.

Ideally, your soul mate will be an optimist. Optimists are attracted to other optimists. If you think you are somewhat pessimistic or an outright pessimist, it's time to change.

You become more optimistic by deciding to do it. This page will outline the process, and point you to resources you can use.

Every marriage Needs At Least One Optimist

Each marriage needs at least one optimistic partner to avoid "spiraling out" when faced with adversity. For reasons described below, two pessimists can turn worry and fear into paralysis which keeps them from handling an adversity, such as losing a job, or the death of a loved one.

If you firmly commit to become an optimistic partner , and are willing to work at it, you are ready to make the change from pessimism to optimism.

What are the Benefits Of Optimism?

Being an optimistic partner will make you and your partner happier.

Dr. Martin Seligman, in his book, "Learned Optimism," points to the research that proves that optimists live longer, healthier, and happier lives than pessimists, and they are more likely to have happy marriages that last.

Statistics show that optimists live on average eight to nine years longer than pessimists. Part of the reason for that is the constant negative view of the future creates stress and worry, which is hard on the body, the mind, and your partner.

How Do You Become A More Optimistic Partner?

The most important thing is to be willing to persist in your committment to become a more optimistic partner. Make the committment, and persist.

Then change your thinking in order to become more optimistic: Recognize that optimism and pessimism are both habits (habitual patterns of thought). Old habits may not be easy to break, but new habits are easy to acquire.

So, don't try to break the old pessimism habit, but build a strong habit of optimism. In situations where you choose optimism, you are pushing the old pessimistic habits to the back.

Is Pessimism ever Appropriate?

Optimists tend to be less realistic than pessimists. Pessimists tend to be more realistic than optimists.

Optimists think anything is possible, and pessimists know better.

So, if you convert to optimism, you have to know when to shift back.

There are times when pessimism is appropriate. For example, if you are inspecting parachutes, it pays to use your pessimistic habit. If you are planning a space launch, it pays to use your pessimism to imagine every possible thing that could go wrong, so you can prepare for it.

How can I recognize Pessimistic Thoughts?

The pessimistic negative thoughts will follow the pessimistic formula:

1. Something bad will happen "TO ME" in the future.
2. It will last a long time, maybe for the rest of my life.
3. It will affect my whole life.

So, If a friend's marriage is breaking up, you might think:

- I'll probably end up divorced, too.
- Odds are I'll never get married again.
- It'll ruin my life. I'll be poor and alone.

How Does An Optimistic Partner think?

The optimist's formula is more positive:

1. Bad things don't happen to me. They happen to others.
2. If I did have a problem, I'd quickly get it fixed, and I'd be fine.
3. Nothing can stop me from enjoying my life, my wife, my kids, my work, friends, etc.

Do you wonder that optimists live longer? They don't worry. Everything will be fine.

If you're somewhat pessimistic, you might have doubts about your ability to change your thoughts. You have lived with negative visions of the future for so long they seem normal to you.

You're right that it's hard to change your thoughts. So, we don't suggest you even try. You simply add a new, overly-positive set of thoughts that you will use to counter the normal, natural negative thoughts that your DNA may have set you up to have.

We say "overly positive" thoughts because that is the way they'll seem to you at first.

How Can I Get The Exercises To Make Me An Optimistic Partner?

The exercises that you practice for five minutes a day to become an optimistic partner are in the book "How To Make A Marriage Last" that comes with the membership, the other e-books, and the forum. When you've read enough to decide you want to join the team of people working to create happy marriages that last, go to <http://www.make-marriage-last.com/join-the-team>.

If you want to go on to the next page in the series, read: Positive Partner.

Positive Partner

Note: If you did not reach this page from the previous article — Optimistic Partner — please read that first.

Ideally, your soul mate will be a very positive person. Positive people love being around other positive people. If you've been a somewhat negative person, or have bouts of negativity, it's time to change.

You become more positive by deciding that's what you want for yourself, your partner and your marriage. This page will outline how to become more positive.

Learn to be a positive partner

Learning to be a positive partner can be done alone or as a team with your partner. Agree on a phrase that each of you is comfortable with (getting the agreement is important). For example, you might agree on using this phrase: "Can you find something you like about it?"

Then, if you say, "This soup is terrible," your partner might say "Can you find something you like about it?" and you'll respond with something positive, like, "I like the beans; they're really tasty."

If your partner says, "That guy is a jerk." You might say, "Is there anything you like about him?" and your partner might respond, "He's a really great family man."

The goal is to learn to recognize negative, critical or judging statements, and immediately turn positive by finding something good to say about the topic. My Mother went by the motto, "If you can't find something good to say, don't say anything at all."

What If My Partner Is Already A Positive Partner?

If your spouse is already a very positive partner, you may be doing this practice by yourself, while your partner works to become more appreciative, or to have happy memories.

That just means you'll be working on being more positive without someone else to cue you. So, you cue yourself. At first, you spend 5 minutes a day looking back on the past 24 hours, thinking of things you said that were negative.

As you remember moments of negativity, replay each one in your mind, and after each display of negativity, ask yourself, "Was there anything I

liked about it?" This will cause you to examine the thing, person or event that triggered your negative statement.

In your early practice, you'll be pairing a positive statement with each negative statement you can remember saying.

Then, all of a sudden, you'll find yourself catching yourself making a negative comment, and you'll quickly follow it with something positive. When that happens, you're halfway to becoming a positive partner.

You are a fully positive partner when you can catch a negative thought before you say something, and turn it into a positive statement. Voila! With practices of 5 minutes a day, you can turn a lifetime habit of negativity into being the positive partner your soul mate wants. And, you'll be a much more agreeable partner in a happy marriage that lasts.

The Power Of Positive Thinking

Some benefits of being a positive partner are clearly stated in this excerpt from information provided by the www.MayoClinic.com web site.

Be Positive: Live Longer, Live Healthier

Self-talk is the endless stream of thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist.

Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information. Researchers continue to explore the effects of optimism on health. The health benefits optimism may provide are:

- Decreased stress
- Greater resistance to catching the common cold
- A sense of well-being and improved health
- Reduced risk of coronary artery disease
- Breathing easier if you have chronic obstructive lung disease, such as emphysema
- Improved coping ability for women with high-risk pregnancies
- Living longer
- Better coping skills

It's unclear why optimists experience these health benefits. But one theory is that having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the effects of stress on your body.

A Positive Partner Will Be Passionate About Something Special

Agnes can name 10 things she "really hates." But, Agnes isn't passionate about those things. She is, however, really passionate about many things ... especially cooking.

Agnes can talk about cooking for hours. She collects recipes. She watching the cooking channel. She "loves" cooking.

The more passionate you become about one thing, the more passionate you'll be about many things.

When you are a positive partner, who can find something good in almost everything, you'll like many, many things, and dislike very few.

A Positive Partner Will Be Surrounded By Positive People

If you've been a somewhat negative person, it's likely you're surrounded by people who are negative. You have negative friends, coworkers, and even family members.

When you decide to become a positive partner, you'll find the people around you become more positive as well. Some of the people in your life will be more positive when they are around you.

Positive people lift the spirits of those around them

Your truly negative friends and coworkers will fade into the background, and you'll find they'll be replaced by positive people who are attracted to your positivity.

Positivity and Optimism work Together

You may have noticed the link between positivity and optimism. They are the same thing, in different time frames:

- Optimism is positivity expressed through thoughts about the future.
- Positivity is being positive about something in the present or near past.

When we get to happy memories, you'll notice that happy memories are positivity in the past.

Being a Positive Partner is the basis of A Happy Marriage That Lasts

Everything we're about on this web site is defining what it takes to have a happy marriage that lasts. There is no other trait that is more important than becoming a positive partner.

You can still be negative at work, if you want. You can still be negative about your golf game, or when your team loses. But, if you want to be married to your soul mate, and have a happy marriage that lasts, you must learn and practice being a positive partner.

The next attribute of an ideal soul mate is Being Appreciative.

Appreciative Partner

Note: If you did not reach this page from the "How do you Define Soul Mate" article, please read that first.

You need to become an appreciative partner because, ideally, your soul mate will be a very appreciative person. Appreciative people are attracted to other appreciative people. If you haven't mastered being appreciative (and how many of us has?), it's time to become more appreciative.

It's an easy skill to master. If you put aside 5 minutes a day to practice being appreciative, you'll become that appreciative partner that your soul mate deserves.

Learn to be an appreciative partner

An appreciative partner is one who has learned two parts to appreciation: feeling, and expressing.

The first part is *feeling* appreciative. This is done entirely inside your head. It's actually a great exercise because it takes your focus off of yourself and puts it on other people.

Our recommendations are to take 5 minutes a day (just until it becomes an automatic habit), and ask yourself the question, "What do I most appreciate about my partner (or my parents, or my siblings, or my coworker, or my friend)?"

You could make yourself a list of all the people in your life that add to the quality of your life. Then, go down your list one person each day and focus your appreciation on that person for the day.

The second part is *expressing* that appreciation. Here's how you can practice appreciation.

Feeling and expressing appreciation

Simply write down Three things on a post-it note:

1. The thing you appreciate so much about the person.
2. An example of a specific thing that person did that exemplifies what you appreciate.
3. The words you'll use to tell the person what it meant to you.

Example:

1. What I appreciate: I'm feeling appreciative today about my cousin because of her willingness to help out in family crises.
2. The example: What she did to help Barbara handle the move was above and beyond what we'd expect. Say: "Ruth, I really appreciate how you are so ready to help anytime we need it."
3. Statement of what it meant to me: "I felt so relieved that you were willing to take that burden off my shoulders."

Example:

1. What I appreciate: I'm feeling appreciative today about my coworker because of the way she works with others.
2. The example: She worked really hard with others to get proposal out on time. Say: "Diane, I really appreciate your teamwork and the smooth way you work with everybody."
3. Statement of what it means: " I sleep better at nights knowing you're here and ready to tackle whatever the team needs."

If the list of people you appreciate is very long, put your partner on it at least every week or ten days. That's how you are going to demonstrate that you're an appreciative partner.

How To Express Your Appreciation

You can express your three-part message of appreciation in many ways:

- Face to face: tell the person your message. This is great for your role as an appreciative partner. It gives you the opportunity to add hugs, kisses, and touches to a great message.
- With a coworker you could say your message, and for added oomph, you could do it front of other coworkers.
- You can use email to write out your message of appreciation, and for added oomph, you could cc other people, so others can see what you appreciate about this person.
- You could write small notes. Ex-President George Herbert Walker Bush was famous for his constant stream of appreciative notes he sent to everybody he worked with. Some have attributed his success in politics to his frequent meaningful notes of appreciation to people he came into contact with. When he became president, these notes were framed and put up on office walls everywhere. (This tells you how much the notes were valued; people saved them.)
- You can telephone, use computer chat, or instant messages. The medium is not important. What is important is that you choose simple, natural ways to express your appreciation. By keeping it simple, quick and natural for you, you're more likely to make appreciation into a habit that will last for the rest of your life.

Schedule your appreciative messages until they've become a habit

How can you be sure to keep being an appreciative partner? If you keep a day planner or calendar, take a few minutes to schedule the messages you intend to express.

If you should choose to join the team, we offer reminder emails at whatever frequency you choose to remind you to appreciate somebody. This helps until you build the lifetime habit of expressing appreciation.

It's amazing that by only devoting 5 minutes a day, you can become an appreciative partner that truly deserves to marry your soul mate.

The next habit you want to build is the ability to be a little more laid back. Read the next article: *Laid Back Partner*.

Laid Back Partner

Note: If you did not reach this page from the "How to Define Soul Mate" article, please read that first.

By laid back, we mean slow to anger. Here's why it's important. Explosive anger can kill marriages. It kills them by beginning 'issue' discussions in an angry and negative way. The problem doesn't get resolved, and the love bundle is damaged by harsh words and hurtful statements.

It's ideal if you both are laid back and slow to anger. But, you can still be soul mates with a happy marriage that lasts, if only one of you is slow to anger.

The laid back person can calm the one with the explosive anger and make sure that no harsh words are exchanged.

How Can Being Laid Back Assure no Damage is Done?

Once you both understand the potential damage from an explosive temper, you can agree to disengage whenever a temper explosion occurs. If you've both agreed never to have 'issue' discussions while angry, the angry partner can accept the laid back partner's refusal to get caught up in an angry discussion.

The laid back partner can disengage in many different ways.

- Leave the joint space temporarily. "Be back when we're both feeling more positive."
- Abort the discussion, temporarily. "Let's not have an angry exchange. Let's talk when we're feeling loving."
- Calm and soothe the explosive one. "Oh, You Poor Dear. You're having one of those attacks again. I so sorry."
- Calm and soothe: "Let me hold you until the anger leaves."

Treat Explosive Anger as a Cultural Disorder

The laid back partner can help immensely by 'reframing' the angry outburst from an attack on the laid back partner to a 'cultural disorder.' For example, people frequently talk about the "Irish temper," or the "Italian temper." Some families like loud and vigorous interchanges, so the children learn how to do that as well. Rather than feeling bad about an attack, you can blame it on your partner's "heritage."

What's the Benefit of That?

The laid back partner can accept the angry outbursts as something the explosive partner learned to do, isn't really aware of, and maybe really can't help, rather than as a revelation of the explosive partner's "real feelings."

Don, a laid back person, was greatly relieved to learn about the reframe. He'd been deeply confused by his explosive partner's consistent displays of love, interrupted by intermittent explosive outbursts with hurtful attacks.

For a long time Don thought that the outbursts must be revealing his partner's true feelings. Now he understands that it's something she can't help, and doesn't really reveal anything about her feelings toward him or their relationship.

If a married person, who is troubled by explosive outbursts of anger, simply understands that the outbursts are not expressions of true feelings, but rather symptoms of an anger disorder of some sort, they can become prepared to repair any damage the outburst may have done, when the explosion is over.

If the outbursts lead to truly dangerous behaviors such as physical attacks, or recklessness (for example, road rage, or alcohol or drug abuse), then we recommend treatment. As long as the outbursts are just angry words, we think the efforts to change are better directed toward becoming an ideal soul mate. Developing habits of Positivity, Optimism, Appreciation, and Happy Memories will go a long way toward mitigating the temper explosions.

The point here is that a couple can have a wonderfully happy marriage that lasts, even if both partners aren't slow to anger, and even in spite of one partner being somewhat explosive. As long as the explosive partner has a soul mate who is laid back, slow to anger, and who can accept, forgive and forget, the relationship has a chance.

"Ideal" Soul Mates are *Both* Laid Back and Slow to Anger

As you'll see in the next article (Happy Memories), to be ideal soul mates:

- Both partners need to be as positive as they can be.
- Only one partner needs to be an optimist, although adversity is better handled by two optimists.
- Both partners need to be as appreciative as they can be.
- Only one partner absolutely needs to be laid back and slow to anger. Although it's better if both are.
- Both partners need the pleasure and support that come from happy memories.

Next read: *Happy Memories*.

Happy Memories

Note: If you did not reach this page from the "How to Define Soul Mate" article, please read that first.

We advise people searching for partners to look for a person with happy memories, especially memories of past relationships. The reason we do that is if Harold, or Agnes has had 4 relationships, and they all ended disastrously, you might just be number 5.

You already have a partner, and you want to make your partner your soul mate, so you can have a happy marriage that lasts. If your partner doesn't have happy memories, then it's good to know that it is possible to transform unhappy memories into happy memories.

Or, if your partner has happy memories — and you don't — you'll be delighted to discover you can convert those memories into happy ones.

We're back to that positivity thing again. It takes positivity to turn bad memories into good ones, and you can't get too much practice being positive.

How Do You Turn a Bad Memory Into a Good One?

For medium bad memories (not those really horrible ones), we suggest you use the four questions and a map that are such powerful tools for coping. These are taught in the Coping programs that are part of the membership website (<http://www.relationship-insurance.com>). You learn to practice Acting, Asking, Accepting, and Forgiving. By moving from emotion to reason any time one of those memories is evoked, the sting goes out of them.

Also, your four questions will give you the answer to how you'll handle that memory when it is evoked again. That means that anytime the bad memory comes back, it will have a second, rational and reasoned thought paired with it.

What About Really Horrible Memories?

For really horrible memories, we suggest you go one step further than the four questions. Rationality and reason are not enough defense against traumatic memories.

We suggest you struggle to find the good in whatever happened that was so traumatic. When you find the good in it, you pair that thought with the horrible memory so that when it returns, both memories come back, paired together.

When the two thoughts come into your mind, along with the feelings, you'll have the original bad feeling along with the accompanying good feeling.

You can then practice the skills you've learned about "marking" good memories. You purposefully mark the good feeling you get from the positive paired memory, and you allow the bad memory to fade with marking it.

Eventually, the bad memory will get weaker and weaker and the positive aspect that you've found in it gets stronger and stronger.

Examples of Bad Memories Turned into Happy Memories

Notice that in some of these examples, the people have had to purposefully distort the memory to find some good in it.

- "Yes, my father was a sadist who beat me, but as a result I am the strong, self-reliant person I am today. *And, I'm sure he thought he was helping me build character.*"
- "The rapist tortured me for hours, and I still have nightmares about it. I've forgiven him because I know that's what I need to do for me to be free of the pain. I am the person I am today, in part, because of that event, and I like who I am today. Besides, *I feel sure that he is more tortured today by his crime and his vile life than I was.*"
- "I was thrown out of three schools because of my drug use. The moral strength and persistence I have today came from learning how to escape addiction. I've forgiven myself because that was the only way I could ever be free of the guilt. *The pain and shame I caused my family brought them all closer together than they would have been.*"

Call it rationalizing. Call it distorting reality. If you can't change the past — and it only serves to make your life painful — it is wise to accept the past and move forward in a positive, healthful way. Any mental gymnastics that serve to reduce your painful memories are powerful tools for you in learning to be happier for the future.

Do We Recommend Purposeful Distortion?

Yes, but only in a few, carefully selected situations. In the case of traumatic memories, it may be necessary to distort reality to find the good in it (as illustrated in the italicized portions of the examples above.)

There are two other situations where we think distorting reality produces a very positive result:

The first situation:

We think it is wise to be “crazy in love” and be blind to your lover's defects. We suggest that you will be happier in your love life if you look past your partner's weaknesses, and see almost exclusively your partner's good points. That's readjusting reality for love. It may not make you the most realistic person in the world, but it'll make you a great, loving partner and your partner's true soul mate.

The second situation:

One more time when purposeful distortion is useful is when you see or interact with your child. Your child “is” the most appealing, lovable, remarkable, child that anyone has ever had.

To summarize this section on finding your soul mate, or creating your soul mate, continue with the *Soul Mate Test*.

The Soul Mate Test

The soul mate test is a true/false test that answers questions such as: Is he my soul mate? Is she my soul mate? What is the meaning of soul mate? Do we have soul mate compatibility? All of the questions come from the prior pages in this soul mate section of the web site. If you've read all of those pages, this test will confirm that you learned everything about creating your soul mate.

If you happened on the soul mate test without having read the preceding pages, you can take the test to learn your present knowledge, and then read the pages. Or, you can go back to the beginning, and come to the soul mate test at the end of the series. If you want to start at the beginning, return to Define Soul Mate.

Soul Mate Test Questions

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Soul Mate Test #1: The Definition of Soul Mate | | |
| a. Definition of soul mate: someone with the traits of an ideal marriage partner. | T | F |
| b. The ideal marriage partner would be someone who is Positive, Optimistic, Appreciative, Slow to Anger, and has Happy Memories. | T | F |
| c. If you are positive, optimistic, appreciative, slow to anger, with happy memories, and you find someone with those same traits, you will have found your "Soul Mate." | T | F |
| Soul Mate Test #2: Becoming Friends with your Partner | | |
| a. Research shows that marital conflicts that start out positively, generally end positively and the issue gets resolved, or at least they don't damage the relationship. | T | F |
| b. The same research shows that conflicts (fights and arguments) that start out negatively, generally get more and more negative ... and generally the issue doesn't get resolved. | T | F |
| c. The good news, is that conflicts that begin positively, are likely to end with the issue resolved, which builds another positive bond between the partners. | T | F |
| d. Prior to puberty, boys and girls don't want to have much to do with each other. Boys and girls don't respect gender differences. Boys laugh at girls doing "girlish" things, and girls laugh at boys doing "stupid boy" things. | T | F |
| e. Men and women are very different. They want and need different things from their friends, and they may have little experience being friends with each other. | T | F |
| f. Friends can laugh together about their differences. Friends give each other space to be different. Couples that make an effort to become friends generally find themselves lifelong friends. | T | F |
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Soul Mate Test #3: How to Reduce Anger in a Relationship

a. Anger in a relationship stems most frequently from irresolvable issues. Issues that can be resolved seldom create nearly as much anger in a relationship.

T F

b. The marital researchers at the Gottman Institute in Seattle, studied hundreds of newlywed couples for up to six years. They discovered that about 70% of the conflict issues that couples had when they were newlyweds, remained 6 years later. In other words, most of the things couples fight about don't get resolved.

T F

c. To minimize anger, we suggest that you simply accept that you and your lover have an issue that cannot and will not be resolved. We suggest that you breathe deep, wish that it weren't so, and then decide not to fight about it again.

T F

Soul Mate Test #4: Positive Marriage Conflict

a. We recommend that you only fight about resolvable issues.

T F

b. It's wise to begin 'issue discussions' positively, with a resolvable issue..

T F

c. Use positives and avoid negatives during the discussion.

T F

Soul Mate Test #5: Positivity

a. To have a happy marriage that lasts, you need to give one another 5 positives for every negative. This is called having a positivity ratio of 5 to 1 or more.

T F

b. Positivity is so important that if you keep your ratio at 5 to 1 or more, your marriage is almost divorce proof. A positivity ratio of 5 to 1 is one of the keys to a marriage that gets happier and happier throughout your marriage.

T F

c. Two of the most powerful positive relationship signs: fondness and admiration.

T F

Soul Mate Test #6: Optimism

a. Marriages need one optimistic partner, to avoid "spiraling out" when faced with adversity. Two pessimists can turn worry and fear into paralysis, keeping them from handling an adversity such as a job loss, or the death of a loved one.

T F

b. Statistics show optimists live on average 8-9 years longer than pessimists.

T F

c. We say: don't try to break the pessimism habit, but build a strong habit of optimism and carry them both forward in order to use the one that is most appropriate.

T F

Soul Mate Test #7: Appreciation

a. Appreciation an easy skill to master. If you put aside 5 minutes a day to practice being appreciative, you'll become that appreciative partner that your soul mate deserves.

T F

b. An appreciative partner is one who has learned the two parts: *being* appreciative and *expressing* appreciation.

T F

c. Make yourself a list of all the people in your life that add to the quality of your life. Then, go down your list one person each day and focus your appreciation on that person for the day.

T F

| Soul Mate Test #8: Laid Back and Slow To Anger | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| a. It's ideal if you both are laid back and slow to anger. But, you can still be soul mates with a happy marriage that lasts, if one of you is slow to anger. | T | F | |
| b. The laid back partner can accept angry outbursts as something the explosive partner couldn't help, rather than as a revelation of the explosive partner's "real feelings." | T | F | |
| c. Developing habits of Positivity, Optimism, Appreciation, and Happy Memories will go a long way toward mitigating temper explosions. | T | F | |
| Soul Mate Test #9: Happy Memories | | | |
| a. We advise people searching for partners to look for a person with happy memories, especially memories of past relationships. The reason we do that is if Harold or Agnes has had 4 relationships, and they all ended disastrously, you might just be number 5. | T | F | |
| b. You already have a partner, and you want to make your partner your soul mate, so you can have a happy marriage that lasts. If your partner doesn't have happy memories, then it's good to know that it is possible to transform unhappy memories into happy memories. | T | F | |
| c. If your partner has happy memories, and you don't, you'll be delighted to discover you can convert those memories into happy ones. | T | F | |
| d. We think it is wise to be "crazy in love" and be blind to your lover's defects. We suggest that you will be happier in your love life if you look past your partner's weaknesses, and see almost exclusively your partner's good points. That's readjusting reality for love. It may not make you the most realistic person in the world, but it'll make you a great, loving partner and your partner's true soul mate. | T | F | |

Scoring The Soul Mate Test

To make scoring easy, you'll find that every answer is True. If you marked any of them false, you can go back to reread the section in which you erred. In order to select the page(s) that you want to read, go back to Soul Mate Definition.

You have our very best wishes on creating your soul mate as you and your partner proceed on the way to a happy marriage that lasts.

All of the skills necessary for becoming soul mates is taught to members at the <http://sss.relationship-insurance.com> website. Join the team.

Introduction to: **Happy Marriage Tips**

The articles in this section are a mind-blowing array of happy marriage tips, signs of marriage trouble, and happy marriage advice.

Ken Johnston, one of the nation's most prolific writers on the subject of relationships brings you these articles ranging from happy marriage tips, to signs of marriage trouble, and happy marriage advice. These articles and stories arose from questions asked by couples learning how to create happy marriages that last.

Positivity: "Get Off Your Lazy Fat Ass"

That's what a guy said to his wife. Right away you can tell it isn't positive.

Research shows: a happy marriage that lasts needs partners who will each have a positivity ratio of 5 to 1. That means you give your partner 5 positive messages for every negative message (messages of equal weight).

A young woman e-mailed a question asking how positive would her husband have to be to make up for one angry tirade? To read the story, don't miss the article called *Get off your Lazy Fat Ass*.

How Great Loves Can Become Disasters

It hardly seems possible. You and your partner are in love and can't get enough of each other. Then, you get married. Now, you have that little knot in the pit of your stomach that says, "Maybe this was a mistake."

Have you ever found yourself asking, "What's going wrong? How could it be so different now? We even lived together to make sure we were going to get along. And, now it feels like our marriage is slipping away." Find out how great loves can become disasters, read: *How Great Loves Can Become Disasters*.

Help Me Get Over an Unwanted Infatuation

Sometimes people find themselves totally "taken" by an individual outside the committed relationship. If you experience an infatuation — but don't want it because you know it will affect you, your current partner, and your family in a negative way — you'll need some strategies to make it go away.

Get Off Your Lazy Fat Ass

The couple had just found our web site and had read that to create a happy marriage that lasts, the partners will each have a positivity ratio of 5 to 1.

That means you give your partner 5 positive messages for every negative message (messages of equal weight).

She emailed me asking how much positivity would he need to show her to make up for his angry, insulting words.

The Irresolvable Issue

They had an irresolvable issue about her return to work after they had a baby. Before the baby came they both had planned that she would quickly return to work and help maintain their comfortable lifestyle.

After she had the baby, she read a great deal about babies whose mothers worked, versus babies whose mothers stayed home with them.

Whether right or wrong, she formed a strongly held opinion that it would be much better for the baby's health and well being if they cut back on their lifestyle and she became a 'stay at home' mom.

This 'issue' quickly became irresolvable. Right or wrong, neither of them were going to change their views. He blamed her for going back on her commitment to him, and she blamed him for not agreeing that it was the best thing they could do for their child.

Never fight about irresolvable issues

They failed to recognize that this had become an irresolvable issue, and continued to fight about it.

One evening, when he came home from work, the house had the normal amount of mess that toddler's homes often have, and, due to a doctor's appointment, she was late in preparing dinner.

The husband exploded with anger and said to her, "I'm sick and tired of coming home to a pigsty. If you're too lazy to get off your fat ass and go back to work, you could at least keep a decent house and have dinner ready on time."

In her email to me, She wanted to know how many negative points did his tirade count for, and how many positive interactions would he have to have to end up with a 5 to 1 positivity ratio?

Positivity and the Point Scale

In my answer, I included the ratings used by Dr. John Gottman et al, in their effort to produce a mathematical model to predict marriage stability and divorce probability in a couple after observing 15 minutes of discussion on some issue that they often disagreed about (from the book "Mathmatics of Marriage").

Here is the point list for: Weighing Positive Vs. Negative Interactions

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Surprise/Joy | +4 |
| Humor | +4 |
| Affection | +4 |
| Validation | +4 |
| Tension/humor | +2 |
| Interest | +2 |
| Neutral | +0.1 |
| Tension | -0- |
| Whining | -1 |
| Sadness | -1 |
| Domineering | -1 |
| Anger | -1 |
| Defensiveness | -2 |
| Stonewalling | -2 |
| Criticism | -2 |
| Belligerence | -2 |
| Disgust | -3 |
| Contempt | -4 |

In his tirade the husband expressed disgust, anger, contempt, and multiple criticisms of her person ("laziness," "fat ass"), and of her job performance (housekeeping and cooking). Just using the simplest, single-counting bookkeeping, he easily has exceeded 13 points of negativity toward his wife.

Since you need a positivity ratio of 5 to 1, this single tirade might require at least 65 points (5 X 13) of positive interaction to make up for the damage he did with his angry outburst.

You Have To Cope With Marriage Problems

Single counting points on a scale is the simplest way to look at the interaction. In addition, she spent several days repeating what he said to her, in her mind.

She heard his tirade again and again in her head for several days. She repeated it one more time when she wrote me the e-mail.

Now, that was her fault. She wasn't using any coping skills to accept, forgive, and stop reliving his tirade.

It also shows the extreme risks involved whenever one uses contempt, disgust, anger, domineering, or belligerence.

In my reply I suggested instead of counting points, she focus on using her coping skills to minimize the damage.

My "Happy Marriage Tip" was for her to consider what he said as a single data point in a huge bank of more positive communications. Another tip was to ask him if they could agree to consider the subject of her working to be an irresolvable issue, and instead of fighting about it, treat it with acceptance, grace and humor.

You'll notice on the chart that humor is a very positive way to express yourself to your partner. Humor is even positive as a tension reducer when you are having a small marital tiff.

Repair the Damage After Negativity

I tried to write something that this husband could say that might produce 65 points of positive interaction, and I realized that he would have to take quite a while making enough positive interactions to make up for his one angry tirade. Somehow, while it doesn't show up easily in the point count, I expect that the most valuable tip I could give him would be to communicate to his wife some or all of the following:

- A deeply felt apology.
- Admission that he was wrong to say what he said, and affirmation that he didn't mean it.
- Commitment to do his best never to use insults, disgust, or contempt again ... if it were within his power to do so.
- Agreement that this issue may be irresolvable, and he would attempt to treat it with grace and humor in the future.
- Acceptance of her right to change her mind about returning to work.
- Appreciation that she was doing what she thought was best for their child, and agreeing that it almost certainly was.
- Acceptance of the need to make whatever adjustments in their life style were necessitated by her decision, without rancor.
- Affirmation of how much he loved her, appreciated her, and wanted their marriage to last forever.
- A humorous offer of token chores he would do to prove how sorry he was e.g. 10 diaper changes, 2 breakfasts in bed, 1 load of wash (whites only), etc.

As you can see, the positivity cost of a single thoughtless tirade is very high. My best tip to you is to learn and do daily practices that help you become more positive, so you don't run the risk of high cost mis-adventures.

To continue with this series read: [How Great Loves Can Become Disasters](#).

How Great Loves Can Become Disasters

It hardly seems possible. You and your partner were in love and couldn't get enough of each other.

Then, you got married. Now, you have that little knot in the pit of your stomach that says, "Maybe this was a mistake."

This article show some of the ways that great loves can turn into unhappy and painful marriages.

The Couple Had Low Positivity Ratios

Have you read the discussion about the magic positivity ratio? It simply means that a successful marriage requires a 5 to 1 ratio of positive to negative interactions.

If your marriage is starting into dangerous grounds, your ratio of positives to negatives has fallen below 5 to 1. More negativity has slipped into your relationship.

Let's see how that happens.

You Stopped Being Friends, Or Never Were

The wonderful people at the Gottman Institute, along with other researchers into marriage and relationships, say that one key to a great marriage is a great friendship.

Friends like being together. You're friends when your partner wants to be with you. How satisfying do you make it for your partner to spend time with you? You need to be friends with your partner.

Think a moment about you and your best friend, and how you are together. Do you listen to one another? Do you pay attention to what your friend says? Do you have a sense of what your friend is feeling? Does your friend listen, pay attention, and have a sense of what you are feeling and thinking? That's what friends do for each other.

When your best friend screws up, do you blame or criticize? No, you empathize. When you're not getting what you want from your friend, do you whine and complain? Not if you want to keep your friend.

Are You Now, Or Have You Ever Been Friends With Your Partner?

Think about how you are with your partner. Do you treat your partner the way you would treat your best friend? And, if not, why not?

You give your best friend respect and admiration. If you didn't, you wouldn't have that friend. That's the least that friends do for each other.

Most people say things like, "I wouldn't be happy if my partner wasn't more than a friend. I married my lover." Or, "You don't have sex with your friend. A lover is different than a friend."

Of course, your marital partner is different from your friend. But, there's no reason you can't also be friends with your partner. And, you'll spend a whole lot more time being with your partner than you ever will with your friend. So, you want to be friends as well as lovers.

We're talking about how marriages go sour, and the number one reason is that you've stopped being friends with your lover, or you never were friends.

If that fits you, then decide to make friends with your partner. See the article on how you and your spouse can be better friends.

If you want to read that article now, go to the page: *Become Friends with Your Partner*. (page 61)

Another Reason Great Loves Go Sour: Unrealistic Expectations

Maybe you were one of those innocents who put up with your partner's flaws while dating or even living together, with the unspoken thought, "I'll change that once we're married." Good luck!

When you were dating you may have found it easy to resolve conflicts. Maybe you didn't have any. Maybe your partner avoided conflicts by giving you your way all the time. Or, maybe you avoided conflicts by always giving in to your partner.

But now, you've discovered that things change once you've settled down for a while. If either of you were avoiding conflicts by giving way to your partner, you've now discovered that you don't want to do that for the rest of your life.

Unrealistic Expectations About Conflicts

So, conflicts begin to arise. Some of them you'd seen coming. Some of them are pure and total shocks.

"Whoa!," you think. "My partner, my lover, has changed! This isn't the way things used to be." So, you decide to make it clear that surprises aren't okay with you. You'll put your foot down and make things go back to the way they used to be. Good luck with that.

Everybody told you. Your parents warned you. Your friends warned you. Late night comics warned you. They told you that marriage wasn't easy. This is what they meant.

Conflicts will keep happening for the rest of your married life

Research into marriages shows us that about 70% of the conflict issues in your marriage will never get resolved. You'll have those issues for as long as you two are married. If you learn to recognize those irresolvable issues, you can avoid 70% of your fights, and learn to accept them instead.

So, if you've got fights that never get anywhere, and conflicts that aren't resolved, you're wasting your time and energy and hurting your marriage. You need to learn to identify those issues that will be part of your marriage forever, and start learning to laugh more and fight less about those differences. See the article on how to stop fighting over irresolvable issues.

The Incredibly Important "First Three Minutes"

This will "blow your mind:" The most dangerous risk to marriages — and the single most identifiable sign of a marriage headed for divorce — is the first three minutes of a conflict discussion.

It is poisonous to begin a conflict discussion negatively

Marital researchers have proven that a conflict discussion that starts negatively is likely to end negatively. Conflict discussions that begin on a positive note are likely to end positively.

Don't you wish you'd learned that in school? It's not too late.

If you see conflict coming, take a deep breath, think good thoughts about your partner, and say something positive — even if your partner began with a negative.

A strong positive can turn things around, and get things going positively. If you start with a negative, or respond to your partners negative with a negative, then the conflict can spiral into mutual hurting.

Conflict spirals into mutual hurting

We're all born with the ability to fight or flee. I kick you, you're equipped by nature with the natural reaction to kick me back, or run away. If you decide to fight back, your heart pumps, your arteries constrict, your pupils constrict, and your ability to think and reason is overwhelmed by the reactions of your autonomic nervous system.

That means: just when you need your reasoning ability the most, you don't have it.

When you're locked in a battle with your lover, your partner, your friend, you have less capacity to think.

So, you fight back. If your lover hurts you this much, you'll hurt back that much. So, your partner hurts you more, and you'll hurt back more, and so it goes.

You battle the way that nature equipped you to battle

Nature was equipping you to survive in the jungle. You have to be careful that you don't let nature carry you away when you're are in conflict with someone you treasure, and have promised to love, honor, and cherish.

Four corrosive steps

If you get locked into a spiral of mutual hurting, you can be tempted to use those four negative tactics Dr. John Gottman's research proves are poisonous to marriage:

- Criticism
- Defensiveness
- Contempt, or
- Stonewalling

These four corrosive steps tend to happen in that order.

If one partner begins the conflict discussion with a criticism, the other partner has the opportunity to repair the damage by responding with a positive that takes the transaction in a productive direction. Research proves that one partner can turn the other one around.

If instead of a positive, the partner responds with defensiveness, it escalates the conflict. The attacks get more corrosive, and the defensiveness increases.

The worst and most dangerous of the four major negatives is contempt. Contempt — all by itself — is a leading indicator of a marriage en route to divorce. Contempt belittles the partner and is the absolute opposite of the admiration and respect we owe our partners. Contempt doesn't have to be expressed in words; it can be non-verbal, for example, an "eye roll."

The fourth step, stonewalling, occurs when one party, usually the one being attacked and treated contemptuously, exits the transaction by either leaving or going "inside" and failing to respond any further to the transaction.

When the slippery slope of conflict begins with criticism, the problem doesn't get solved, and the relationship is damaged.

How Long Will it Take to Destroy the Great Love?

Gottman and Levonson found 2 high risk points in the life of a marriage. The first is in the first 7 years (average 5.2) years, and the second high-risk point is later (averaging 16.2 years). Let's call these "volatile" and "unfriendly" marriages.

The early divorces came to "volatile" marriages, marked by conflicts where the lovers used the negative start and got caught up in the criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling cycle.

So, don't do that, or you're dooming you and your marriage to an early demise.

The "unfriendly" marriages lasted longer, but were marked by a lack of positivity. So, if you won't or can't be friends with your lover, and you don't give your lover the respect and admiration that you owe your partner (but reserve for your friends), you might only last around sixteen years.

Failing to be friends, and hurtful fighting mark the slow and fast paths to divorce.

You, with your new relationship or new marriage, can avoid the traps that have ensnared many couples before you. Become friends, and stop hurtful fighting. If you don't know how, read more of the articles on this web site.

If you're curious about what to do with an unwanted infatuation read Appendix B: Get Over Infatuation.

If you're interested in learning more about making a marriage that lasts, join the team of couples committed to that goal at:

<http://www.relationship-insurance.com>

Appendix A: Sample Couple's Pledge

- We each understand that the other may, from time to time be attracted to someone else. We each accept that this is natural, and it is not something one can control.
- We each understand that the other may respond to those feelings of attraction with mild flirting.
- We each commit that any flirting will be balanced by an accompanying communication relating to our commitment to our relationship. In this way we can freely express our feelings of attraction for another, without in any way leading the attractive person to think there is any chance for anything more.
- We each commit that any such feelings of attraction will be used as a stimulus to refresh and reaffirm our feelings of commitment to each other.

You may or may not feel comfortable with this sort of agreement. If you do feel comfortable with it, you'll discover that it covers the major concerns and risks that each person in a relationship faces.

Attraction is built in to us by nature, and cannot be avoided. Flirting is also natural, and most people find it to be fun, and find they get good feelings from it. This pledge recognizes those realities. It also recognizes the very important commitment that each person has to the primary relationship, and every experience of attraction is used as a trigger to cause a renewed commitment to the relationship.

Appendix B: Help Me — Please!

How to Get Over Infatuation When You're Married, Committed, or Too Young

Sometimes people are desperate to get over infatuation that they don't want, or would ruin their marriage. Here's an email I got recently:

Ken,

I read through a fair amount of the site. It helped.

I have been married for ** years. I have 2 sons. I am turning ** in a month.

Recently, I have met a woman at work (** years old) whom (after reading your site) I realize I have a strong attraction to that is leading into infatuation. She does not know I feel this way by the way. However, the infatuation is just as you defined it on the site to a T. It's madness and uncontrollable.

I struggle to eat, can't sleep, trying to talk to my wife about it (but the subject is hurtful so I am careful with my words). This is such a nightmare. I feel like a foolish schoolboy.

I feel lost. I don't want to ruin my family or marriage but I cannot seem to unhook the infatuation. Maybe I just need to weather it.

I want to protect my marriage. I'm scared.

Please advise,

Signed *****

As you can see, this poor fellow is desperate to get over infatuation, and is scared.

How Did It Turn Out?

I don't know. I sent him the suggestions I've included here, and I never heard from him again. He didn't respond to my follow up emails. Maybe he was able to get over infatuation, or maybe he didn't really want to.

You could tell he was terribly torn. Infatuation is such a powerful drug some people just can't give it up. Even if you show them how, they won't take the medicine because the infatuation feels so wonderful. And, also, the most powerful medicine you can use to get over infatuation is bitter and disgusting.

The Fastest Way To Get Over Infatuation

Here's the email I sent in response to his request:

Hi,*****,

You did the right thing, reaching out for help.

You are wise enough to know that this infatuation could ruin your family and marriage. To get over infatuation, you can use positive and negative strategies. The most powerful are called "aversive" or negative strategies. But, they are ugly and bitter tasting medicines.

I don't know anything about you, so I'm going to give you a shotgun blast of possibilities. I've helped others through this, and sometimes it has worked so quickly they were able to get over infatuation in one day.

Your goal is to get over infatuation, and you have to do it fast, cleanly, and quickly. The madness of the infatuation will fight you, but you can do it, and one or several of these possibilities will work for you.

Infatuation takes over your reasoning powers and limits your ability to think. The mechanism it uses is your imagination. You begin imagining you with her. You imagine all kinds of wonderful things.

Your most powerful fire-fighting tool is your ability to change what you are imagining. You get over infatuation by taking back control over of your imagination that's endangering you, your wife, your marriage, your sons, and your extended family.

The creative part is choosing how you will distort what you are imagining.

What worked for one guy was to find the most disgusting thing he'd ever heard of, and imagine the girl he was infatuated with doing that. Every time she came into his mind (via his imagination) he interrupted what he was imagining by imagining her doing that thing that he found so disgusting.

Very quickly, every time he thought of her, he had two paired thoughts: one a positive image brought on by the infatuation, and another disgusting thought brought up on purpose to counter the first thought. He almost took it too far, because the infatuation quickly melted away, and then, in order to be able to continue as her coworker, he had to stop imagining her doing that which disgusted him so much.

One fellow was very religious, and believed in the devil. He chose to see the woman he was infatuated with as the devil inside the body of the attractive woman. Every time he thought of her, he imagined that he could see the devil at work. He used his strong religious beliefs and his imagination in defense of his wife, kids, family and friends.

One man couldn't find anything that disgusted him enough. What worked for him was imagining himself at age 70 bagging groceries because he had lost all his retirement savings through a divorce. So, every time he found himself thinking of her, he paired it with the image of him being old and bagging groceries, and the infatuation left him quickly.

In summary, things that have helped others:

1. Imagining something disgusting you can pair with any positive imaginings.
2. Imagining something you fear or are worried about, like poverty in retirement.
3. Imagining something you desire for yourself:
 - Integrity: the pride you will feel when you successfully honor the vows you took when you wed.
 - Successful parenting: the joy you'll feel when you've finished raising your boys and they go forward with you as their role model.
 - A marriage that lasts: imagine yourself and your wife in your old age, having weathered the storms and temptations of life, holding each others gnarled hand, still in love and an inspiration to others.

Now, I need some feedback. Did any of these ideas ring a bell with you? If so, which are you going to try? If not, I'll need to know several things about you:

- What is your greatest strength? We can use that to fight this fire (if you don't know what your greatest strength is, I'll point you to a free test you can take to find out.)
 - What things scare you?
 - What is your biggest worry?
 - What are you most proud of about yourself?

I'm glad you chose me to reach out to. I've helped others get over infatuation. We'll get this thing licked.

One more helpful thought. It will be easier to get over infatuation if you can start imagining you and your wife working together to build a truly extraordinary marriage. One that is very loving and will last till death parts you.

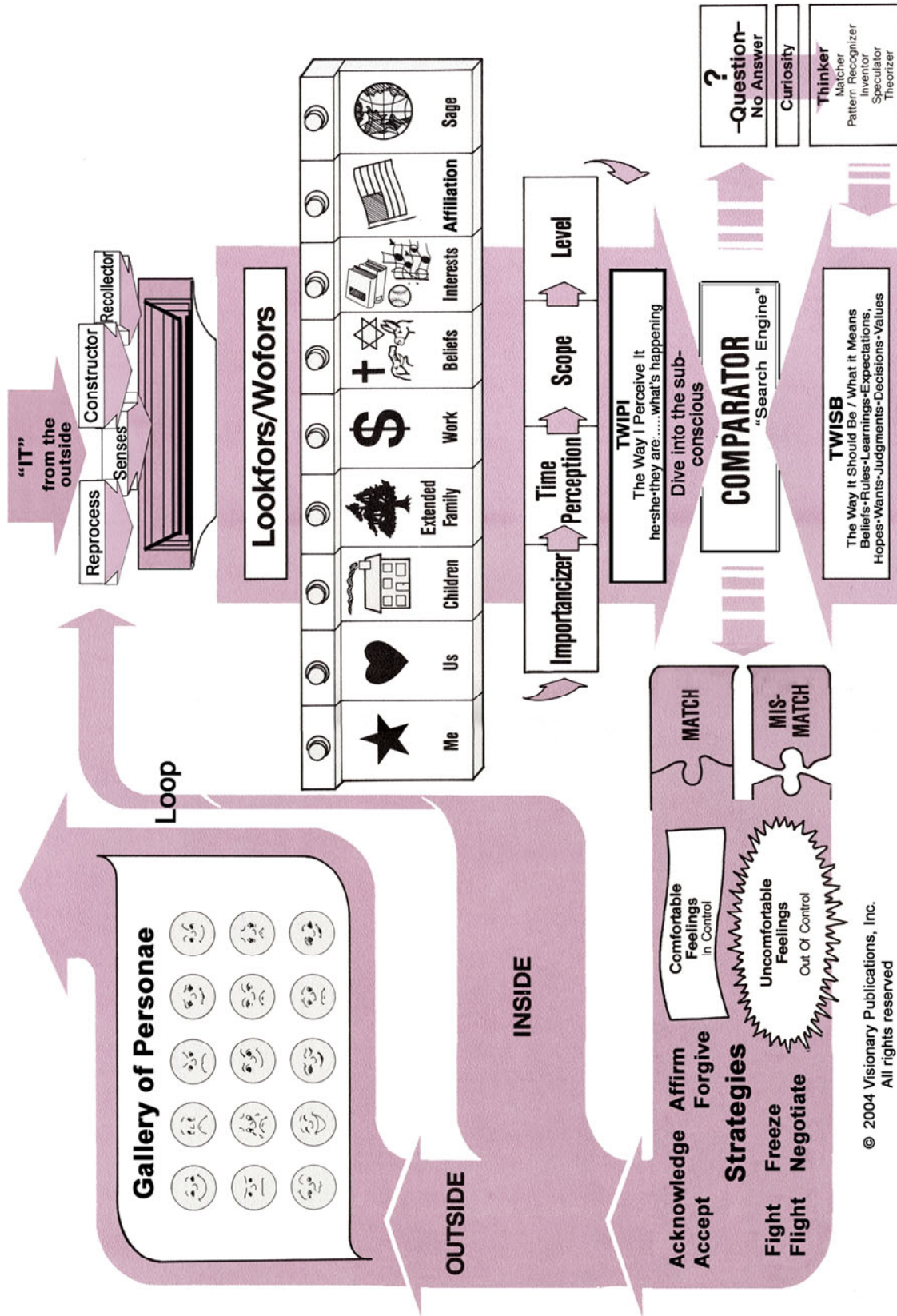
In other words, you aren't asking yourself to give up this incredibly desirable seeming temptation to continue on with the seemingly less exciting same old, same old, marriage you've been having.

Use your imagination to see the possibilities of re-igniting some of the fire in your marriage. That's the purpose of the "Make Marriage Last" website we are building and we'd be delighted to have you and your wife join.

My best to you,

Ken Johnston

<http://www.make-marriage-last.com/join-the-team.html>



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