

There are many special rewards to being in a rewarding relationship. Studies indicate the individuals live longer and are more happy in fulfilling relationships. Having the friendship, support, and understanding of a significant other is very important for most people. Building a good life together is a continuous and sometimes challenging process. Couple dissolution could impact on physical health, mental health, on children, work, and school.

This brochure covers areas that research has identified as problem signs in a relationship and steps couples can take to repair relationships.

### **Signs of a relationship in trouble**

Most relationships face some challenges at different times. When negative interactions are more prevalent than positive ones (research indicates a 5 to 1 positive to negative ratio is important to have), this usually indicates a problem relationship.

One problem area relationships experience is *criticism*. This is where one person attacks the character of the other, usually with blame. Couples make “you” statements. For example, instead of a specific statement, they make global statement (ie. you always....) Or instead of a statement specific to the situation, they make personal attacks (ie: you did this...).

*Defensiveness* or making excuses is another problem area. Examples would include, assuming the worst, disagreeing with negative mind reading, cross complaining, and denying responsibility,

*Contempt* or name calling. Making crude, subtle or hostile jokes, or mockery. Body language also plays a factor as does tone of voice. The goal tends to be elevating oneself at the expense of one’s partner.

*Withdrawing* or Stonewalling is when one listener withdraws from interaction(ie: one spouse leaves, looking away from talker). Men usually stonewall more then woman.

### **Children and Relationships**

Having children is often a wonderful and rewarding experience. However, romantic ideals are more difficult to hold onto when children are introduced. Finding a consistent parenting approach and time demands are challenges couples face. Communication skills are also put to the test in these situations.

### **Differences Between How Men and Women Interact**

Men and women usually have different approaches to communications. Men have a tendency to withdraw more when in conflictual situations or when they feel rejected or hurt. Women tend to pursue

discussions more in these situations. In the face of perceived danger men are more likely to have trouble going back to a relaxed state then women.

### **Fair Fighting**

Even the most compatible couples tend to have disagreements. It is not if you disagree or fight but how you do it. Name calling, bringing up past hurts and unresolved issues, physical and verbal intimidation, poor listening, discounting significant other, sarcasm, and trying to mind read (assuming you know what your partner is saying without clarifying it) are all indications of a couple who does not fight fairly.

### **Effective Communication\Fighting**

All the above problem indicators may happen in some degree in all relationships. We must realize that not all problems have solutions. It is not if we fight but how we fight.

- 1.If we disagree, it is important to still feel respected and listened to.
2. Enjoying verbal intimacy... feeling listened to.
3. Using I statements instead of you.
4. Listening without giving advice.

These are all important components of good communication. When we are withdrawn we become poor receivers of nonverbal cues that may help us come to agreements. At this point any type of communication is ineffective.

### **Quality Time Together**

Spending quality time together is helpful. Quality time together must be a priority for the relationship to be satisfying. Developing routines and rituals together and focusing attention on each other are important to marriages.

### **Compromise**

Couples should realize not all problems have solutions. Even the most compatible couples can not agree on all things at all times. When we disagree it is not what you say but how you say it. Your partner should feel listened to and respected.

### **Relationship Building**

Relationships could be compared to bank accounts. If we keep making withdrawals, the account will run out. Don't dwell on conflicts and pick your spots for disagreements. Deposits, such as humor, appreciation, consideration, fun, and affection, are what keeps relationships going.

\* Keeping things in perspective. How important is the issue you are disagreeing over.

\* Listen to what your partner is trying to say. One task you can try in an argument is switch sides.. Argue from your partner's point of view. This will test your listening skills.

\* Negativity encourages negativity, being positive is contagious. Nurture fondness and admiration, let your partner influence you, create shared meaning and show your appreciation for your spouse. In happy marriages negativity is generally seen as fleeting and situational. In unhappy marriages it is viewed as stable.

By focusing on repairing problems or conflicts, being supportive of each other, and expressing appreciation to each other you find the keys to happy relationships.

# Couple Relationship Guide

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