

DAY ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP

● ● ● 8:30–10 a.m.

Introductions and Presentations

Welcome

This is an experiential, psycho-educational workshop for couples, and is not therapy. During this workshop you will be given an overview of the Gottman theory of how relationships work and be taught a variety of basic skills and approaches for improving your relationship.

Overview

Most of the information on improving your relationship that you might stumble across at any nearby bookstore comes from people who claim to be experts on relationships. Their ideas and information comes primarily from their own experiences, their relationships, their clinical experience and/or their own ideas or theories about how relationships should work. What John Gottman and Bob Levenson did that was unique was to study real couples.

All of the ideas in this course are grounded in sound basic research and experimental, randomized clinical trials on what actually works in relationships that are happy and stable.

The ideas presented here are not based on someone's wisdom, good ideas, or on any philosophical point of view.

The Research

John Gottman began doing basic research on relationships in 1972, and in collaboration with Robert Levenson, he has observed more than 3,000 couples. Some couples have been followed for up to twenty years. When he began his research, approximately 2,000 studies had been completed on divorce, but only six studies had attempted to understand which couples would stay together and which ones would divorce. Those six studies used self-reporting (questionnaires) as their method and were very poor at prediction.

Some of the questions John Gottman explored in his research over the past thirty-five years have been:

- What predicts divorce?
- Can we predict who will get divorced?
- What predicts people's adaptation to major life transitions, e.g., becoming parents?
- What makes relationships work well?
- What helps people have access to their sense of humor when fighting?

His research was multi-dimensional and extensive. Not only were couples interviewed at length about the history of their relationship, their philosophy about relationship, and how they view their parents' relationships, but they were also videotaped while talking to one another about joyful topics as well as discussing areas of continuing disagreement. While being videotaped, their heart rate, blood flow velocity, and sweat output were recorded moment by moment. Endocrine and immune function measures were also obtained in some studies.

Tapes were played back to the couple and they were asked for an insider's perspective of what they had been thinking or feeling when their heart rate or blood pressure had suddenly surged during a discussion with their partner.

John Gottman built an apartment lab at the University of Washington where couples could live for twenty-four hours doing exactly what they might do hanging out at their own home, reading the paper, watching TV, eating, cleaning up, and so on—except that there were three cameras tracking their movements and Holter monitors tracking their electro-cardio activity and every time they urinated a sample was taken to ascertain stress hormones such as adrenaline.

His thorough methods paid off: Gottman's research is able to predict on average in seven studies with over 90% accuracy which couples will divorce and which will stay married, and among those who do stay married, which couples will be happy and which will be unhappy.

In the process, John Gottman observed what he came to call the Masters and the Disasters of Relationship. He defines **Masters of Relationship** as two people who stay together, who report high relational satisfaction and who like and enjoy one another. These relationships are suffused with a much higher percentage of positive interaction, even when discussing a conflict, than a couple in distress.

*The results of these studies are what form the basis
of the seven principles for making relationships work.
This is what this workshop teaches.*

Utilizing their numerous years of observation, the researchers at the Gottman and Levenson labs eventually gleaned which behaviors predict divorce, but they were also able to decipher what strengthens relationships; that is, what keeps a relationship stable and vibrant in our busy, stressful times. They learned that the couples who stay happily married have everyday interactions with one another that are very positive. Secondly, the couples who are happily married are far less negative and more gentle in the ways they handle conflict. Through intervention studies, they learned that these were not just the *effect* of happy relationships, but also the *causes*.

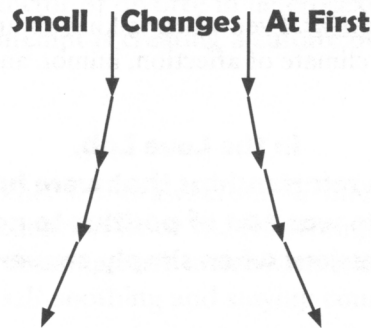
At this workshop we will be encouraging you to change three things:

- The first is to become better friends and increase your positive feelings for one another. This will be the focus of today, the first day of the workshop.
- The second is you have to change the way you handle conflict. This will be our focus tomorrow.
- The third is to build a sense of shared meaning between you regarding your values and way to connect.

Our Goal

We would like you to view this workshop as the *beginning of a journey*. We know that two days of lecture and experiential exercises cannot solve all the problem issues in every relationship. Our goal, hope, and intention is to institute a small and gentle change in the trajectory of your relationship. Research has shown that over time, small changes—if maintained on an everyday basis—create big change over time.

Improving the Quality of Your Relationship



Can Create Big Changes Over Time

**If this workshop is completely successful, you will be saying,
“This is easy. Is this all there is to it? I can do this.”**

You will be learning things that will only have a big impact on your relationship if you do them often—every day—and really change the way the two of you move through time together.

Remember, slight changes in trajectory over time can result in huge changes in the long run. In small moments lies the profound. The principle to remember is to do the things recommended daily and frequently.

***Our Motto is:
Small Things Often***

***It's the small positive things done often
that make the difference.***

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

What Predicts Divorce?

The research showed that *for the couples who would eventually divorce*, when they talked about an area of disagreement, there was only slightly more negativity than positivity as compared to those couples who would stay together. (1.25 times more negative than positive.)

But for the couples who were in a stable, happy relationship—couples who reported liking one other—they had a ratio of positive to negative interactions of 5:1 (positivity was expressed five times more than negativity) *when discussing an area of disagreement*. Even when talking about an area of continuing disagreement, their relationships demonstrated a rich climate of affection, humor, and interest in one another.

**In the Love Lab,
in the relationships that were happy,
the ratio was 20:1 of positive to negative
expressions when simply conversing.**

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Are all negative things equally corrosive in relationships? There are four ways of interacting that are the best predictors of divorce. John Gottman calls them the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

- Criticism
- Defensiveness
- Contempt
- Stonewalling

Criticism

Criticism—in the way we are using it here—is describing a problem as a flaw in your partner's personality, for example, "You are so lazy." Statements that begin with "You always" or "You never" imply criticism, too. A criticism implies that there is something wrong with our partner's character.

Women exceed men in delivering criticism. This is not intended to blame women; criticism often results from complaints or irritability a woman may feel that has been long ignored by her partner. With a lack of response by her partner, her complaints may then escalate to criticism. Nevertheless, criticism is still destructive. **The antidote to criticizing is to use a gentle start-up.**

Defensiveness

Defensiveness is an attempt to protect oneself, to defend one's innocence, to ward off a perceived attack. Sometimes this is done by counter-attacking, or by whining (innocent victim stance). **The antidote to defensiveness is to accept responsibility for at least a small part of the problem.**

Contempt

To be contemptuous is to put someone down, to take a higher plane - for instance, taking a higher moral ground. Contempt is any critical statement you make when you feel superior to your partner. It's a position of "I'm better/smarter/kinder/etc. than you are." It may be accompanied by belligerence. There is a mindset which underlies contempt: it is a negative habit of mind where the person scans the environment for people's mistakes rather than what is positive or what to appreciate.

There is a cross-culturally universal facial expression of contempt: a lateral pull of the left-lip corner to the side by a muscle called the buccinator, creating a dimple.

A husband's contempt predicts a wife's number of infectious illnesses in the next four years. Contempt is our single best predictor of divorce in heterosexual couples or break up in same-sex couples. **The antidote to contempt is creating a culture of appreciation, and using a gentle start-up.**

Stonewalling

To stonewall means that the listener withdraws from the interaction while staying in the room. Basically this means not giving cues that he or she is listening, for instance by looking to the side, not maintaining eye contact, or crossing one's arms. Men exceed women in this area.

The antidote to stonewalling is self-soothing and staying connected in the interaction.

Another way to understand the Four Horsemen is to think of them as different strategies on handling an uncomfortable or emotionally threatening situation. In this light, Criticism and Contempt can be viewed as Fighting; Defensiveness as Flight; and Stonewalling as Freezing.

Women are more likely to criticize than men, and men are more likely to stonewall than women. This is the Female-Demand / Male-Withdrawal pattern.

Anger

There is a misconception that anger is harmful to relationships. Some writers have called anger a dangerous and destructive emotion, linking it to aggression. But what John Gottman and Bob Levenson discovered in their research is that anger by *itself* does not predict anything negative in a relationship.

Anger Does Not Predict Divorce.

But neither does it predict anything positive. Rather it is just a fact of life, not to be banished, any more than any emotion should be banned. All emotions are a part of life, including irritability, disappointment, sadness, and worry. The Gottmans' research recently discovered that in every relationship people retaliate with anger when met with anger, even in happy stable relationships.

In relationships that are working well, anger is taken as if the message were put in *italics*. Their anger is, in essence, saying, "*Please pay attention! This is important to me!*"

Anger Blended With The Four Horsemen Is A Different Matter

When anger is blended with any of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, it's a different story. It is what John and Julie Gottman refer to as the "Escalation of Negativity." For example, meeting your partner's anger with a more intense negative response—in particular, *belligerence*, *defensiveness*, and *contempt*—is corrosive to a relationship and predicts divorce. These patterns of negativity—disrespect or demeaning of one's partner—are destructive in general and are certainly destructive for children's development.

Distance And Isolation Cascade

Negative Emotions/Flooding →

Dismissed by partner →

Four Horsemen →

Emotional Disengagement & Loneliness →

Parallel Lives →

Dissolution

So whatever your complaint and desperation, one fundamental rule is to not insult your partner's character, nor to use abusive language.

Anger is Okay but Abuse is Not

Psychological abuse—such as public humiliation and mocking—is essentially contempt; and contempt is sulfuric acid for love.

What Do The Masters Of Relationships Do? THEY REPAIR.

No one is perfect, and there will always be times when everyone reverts to one of the Four Horsemen. We all mess up. The difference is that—after this workshop -when you fall into one of the Four Horsemen, you will know that you need to repair the relationship and you will have an understanding of how to do so. John Gottman's research has shown that a very important dimension of relating well is the notion of *repair attempts*.

Repair during and after a fight is the key to *Relationship Success*

What predicts whether or not a Repair will be effective and received well by one's partner?

A flourishing Emotional Bank Account.

Emotional Bank Account

An *Emotional Bank Account* is the level of goodwill built up between you and your partner. View it as a 'bank account', with deposits and debits or withdrawals. We all do things that are thoughtless or insensitive—or sometimes worse—to people we care about. When there is a reservoir of goodwill or emotional 'savings' in the account, the relationship is more able to recover from the momentary irritability, regrettable comments or temporary emotional distance. It is like a savings account.

Our First Principle: Process is Everything

What this means is, *HOW* you talk about an issue is what matters: *how* you speak to one another; how you treat one another. This is also true with how you relate to your children.

Process is everything; OR, What goes around comes around.

In the following role-play, the couple is talking about sensitivity and empathy but they are not demonstrating it in the way they treat one another, so their pleas for more empathy and sensitivity fall on deaf ears.

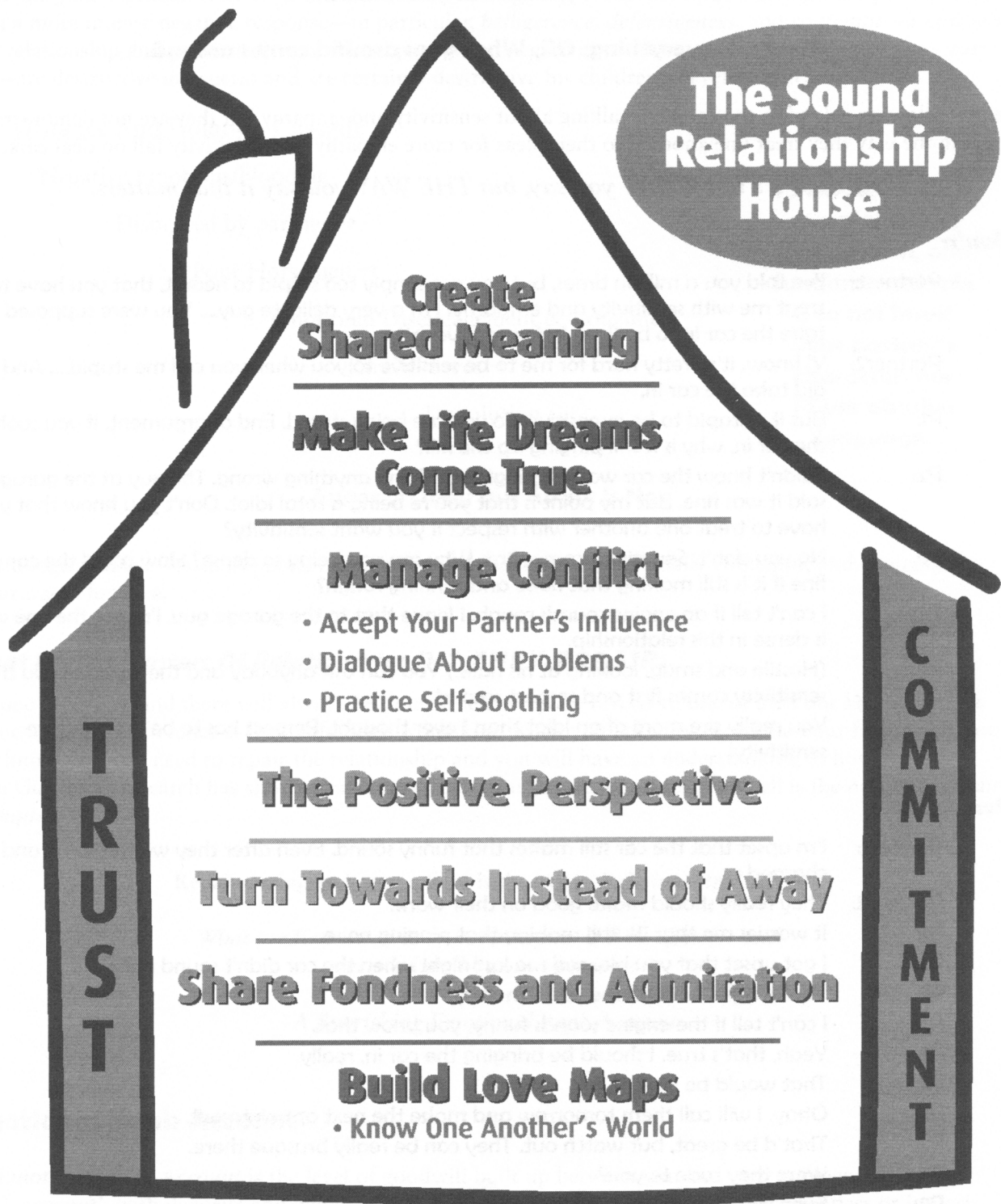
Because it's not WHAT you say, but THE WAY you say it that matters.

Don't:

- Partner1: I've told you a million times, but you are simply too stupid to hear it, that you have to treat me with sensitivity and empathy. I'm a very delicate guy.... You were supposed to take the car in to be fixed before our vacation.
- Partner2: Y' know, it's pretty hard for me to be sensitive to you when you call me stupid.... And I did take the car in.
- P1: But it *is* stupid to be insensitive. So you are being stupid. End of argument. If you took the car in, why is it still pingping up the hill?
- P2: I didn't know the car was still pingping or doing anything wrong. The guy at the garage said it was fine. But my point is that you're being a total idiot. Don't you know that you have to treat one another with respect if you want sensitivity?
- P1: No you don't. Sensitivity comes first. Why are you being so dense? How could the car be fine if it is still making that noise and running rough?
- P2: I can't tell if an engine sounds rough. I leave that to the garage guy. I'm not the one who is dense in this relationship.
- P1: (Hostile and smug, looking at his nails.) You can ask anybody and they will tell you that sensitivity comes first and respect second.
- P2: You really are more of an idiot than I ever thought. Respect has to be there before sensitivity!

Do:

- Partner1: I'm upset that the car still makes that funny sound. Even after they worked on it and charged us.
- Partner2: They really should make good on their work.
- P1: It worries me that it's still making that pingping noise.
- P2: I got upset that you blamed me last night when the car didn't sound right.
- P1: You're right. I did blame you. I'm sorry.
- P2: I can't tell if the engine sounds funny, you know that.
- P1: Yeah, that's true. I should be bringing the car in, really.
- P2: That would be nice.
- P1: Okay. I will call them tomorrow and make the next appointment.
- P2: That'd be great, but watch out. They can be really brusque there.
- P1: Were they rude to you?
- P2: Even the manager can be rude there.
- P1: That guy is what's wrong with that place. The mechanics are fine. I'm sorry you had such a crummy experience. Let me deal with them.
- P2: That would be a huge relief! Thank you.



The Sound Relationship House

The Gottman Theory For Making Relationships Work

I. **Build Love Maps**

The first three levels of the Sound Relationship House (SRH) constitute the friendship quadrant, the foundation of a strong relationship. The first level of the house is Build Love Maps. This entails how well you know one another—how well you know your partner's inner psychological world, his or her worries, stresses, joys, and dreams.

To strengthen
Love Maps →
Ask open ended
questions

II. **Share Fondness and Admiration**

The second level of the house is **Share Fondness and Admiration**, which is the antidote for contempt. This level focuses on the amount of affection and respect within a relationship.

To strengthen
Fondness and
Admiration →
Express appreciation
and respect

III. **Turn Towards**

The third level is **Turn Towards** in everyday moments. The small moments of everyday life are actually the building blocks of relationship. A partner has the opportunity to either turn toward, turn away or turn against a bid their partner makes. A bid is a gesture—verbal or nonverbal—for some sort of positive connection: conversation, humor, affection, or support.

To strengthen Turn
Towards →
State your needs and
be aware of bids and
turn towards them

The quality of the Turning Towards and the vitality of the Emotional Bank Account in a relationship determine whether you have a positive or a negative perspective on your relationship.

The very small everyday moments in a relationship are opportunities—opportunities for Turning Towards one another, opportunities that can build up the Emotional Bank Account.

IV. **The Positive Perspective**

The lower three levels of the SRH determine whether this level is positive or negative. This level is what it feels like in the relationship. Whether it is positive or negative determines a lot of things, including the presence of positive emotions in problem-solving discussions and the success of repair attempts during conflict.

If you find yourself with
a Negative Perspective,
you will know that the
first three stories of the
Sound Relationship
House need work

How do you build Romance and Intimacy in a relationship?

The surprising news is the first three levels of the Sound Relationship House are the basis for Romance, Passion and Good Sex in the relationship. We did not expect that result.

*What builds romance are those everyday,
positive small moments in one's relationship.*

V. Manage Conflict

We use the term “manage” conflict rather than “resolve” conflict because relationship conflict is natural and it has functional, positive aspects. For example, it helps us learn how to better love and understand our partners, deal with change, and renew courtship over time. We try to manage but not eliminate conflict.

A. Perpetual Problems

John Gottman's research revealed that 69% of the time when couples were asked to talk about an area of continuing disagreement, what they discussed was a perpetual issue. These are problems that have to do with fundamental differences between a couple, differences in personality or needs that are fundamental to their core definitions of self. These are issues without resolution that the couple has often been dealing with for many years. They continue to talk about the same issues, occasionally making some progress, or at least the situation might get somewhat better for a short time, but then, after a while, the problem reemerges. In each case, the discussion is an attempt to establish a dialogue with the problem, which, admittedly, will never go away nor be fully resolved.

Most Relational Conflict Is Not Resolvable.

Dan Wile wrote in a book called *After the Honeymoon* in 1988 that “choosing a partner is choosing a set of problems” (p.12). He noted that problems would be a part of any relationship, and that a particular person would have some set of problems no matter who that person married.

Paul married Alice and Alice gets loud at parties and Paul, who is shy, hates that. But if Paul had married Susan, he and Susan would have gotten into a fight before they even got to the party. That's because Paul is always late and Susan hates to be kept waiting. She would feel taken for granted, which she is very sensitive about. Paul would see her complaining about this as her attempt to dominate him, which he is very sensitive about. If Paul had married Gail, they wouldn't have even gone to the party because they would still be upset about an argument they had the day before about Paul's not helping with the housework. To Gail, when Paul does not help she feels abandoned, which she is sensitive about, and to Paul, Gail's complaining is an attempt at domination, which he is sensitive about. The same is true about Alice. If she had married Steve, she would have the opposite problem, because Steve gets drunk at parties and she would get so angry at his drinking that they would get into a fight about it. If she had married Lou, she and Lou would have enjoyed the party but then when they got home the trouble would begin when Lou wanted sex because he always wants sex when he wants to feel closer, but sex is something Alice only wants when she already feels close.

Wile also wrote:

“...there is value, when choosing a long-term partner, in realizing that you will inevitably be choosing a particular set of unsolvable problems that you’ll be grappling with for the next ten, twenty, or fifty years.” (p.13)

John Gottman maintains that:

Relationships will work to the extent that you have wound up with a set of perpetual problems you can learn to live with.

When a problem is a perpetual problem, instead of solving it, a couple needs to learn how to dialogue well about their different subjective realities. The Masters of Relationship seem to be able to come to some acceptance of their problem. They are able to simultaneously communicate acceptance of the partner and the desire to improve this problem, often with amusement, respect, and affection.

However, if they cannot establish such a dialogue, the conflict may become gridlocked, and gridlocked conflict eventually leads to emotional disengagement.

*The Masters Of Relationship Know How To
Move From Gridlock To Dialogue On Their Perpetual Problems.
They are able to express a fundamental acceptance
to their partners as they ask him or her to change.*

The Gottmans’ research revealed that there is a very good reason most people cannot yield on gridlocked problems. Behind each person’s position lies something deep and meaningful—something core to that person’s belief system or personality. It might be a strongly held value or perhaps a dream not yet lived. But when a relationship is safe enough and one partner clearly communicates that he or she wants to know what’s underlying their partner’s position, their partner can open up and talk about their feelings, dreams, and needs.

**What we are suggesting is:
Within the worst relational conflicts lie the
greatest opportunities for growth and intimacy.**

B. Solvable Problems

When the couples in the Gottmans’ research were asked to talk about an area of continuing disagreement, 69% of the time they discussed an issue that turned out to be a perpetual issue. The rest of the time (31%) the problems discussed were solvable problems. This was determined by observing couples again, four years later, and seeing which problems kept arising and which had been solved, and also noting the “hidden agendas” within the conflict.

There are six skills for managing conflict. These include using Gentle Start-up, Repair and De-escalation, Physiological Self-Soothing (self and partner), Accepting What You Cannot Change (Understand Your Partner’s Way of Thinking), Accepting Influence, and Compromise.

VI. ***Make Life Dreams Come True***

A crucial aspect of any relationship is to create an atmosphere that encourages each person to talk honestly about his or her dreams, values, convictions and aspirations.

VII. ***Create Shared Meaning***

Here, we come to the attic where our important **dreams, narrative, myths, and metaphors about our relationship, and family find a home**. This is what you tell yourself about your relationship, your internal thoughts, metaphors, myths, and stories. Everyone is a philosopher trying to make some sense out of this brief journey through life. Even four year olds are asking, "Will I die?" and then, "Why?" "Then why was I born?" This level of the Sound Relationship House is about creating shared meaning in the relationship. People create shared meaning intentionally by talking about:

1. Rituals of Connection (formal and informal),
2. Shared goals,
3. Supporting each other's life roles, and
4. Agreeing about basic symbols such as what a home means.

We believe that every committed relationship is a cross-cultural experience in which we blend together each partner's legacy, culture, values, and beliefs to create an entirely new culture. As a species, we are all meaning-makers and story-tellers.

Finally, the latest additions to our Sound Relationship House theory about what makes relationships work are the two walls of the house, Trust and Commitment. Both trust and commitment are necessary for love and romance to last in a life-long romantic relationship.

VIII. ***Trust***

Trust is the state that occurs when a person knows that his or her partner acts and thinks to maximize that person's interests, and maximize that person's benefits, not just the partner's own interests and benefits. In other words, this means, "my partner has my back and is there for me."

IX. ***Commitment***

Commitment means believing (and acting on the belief) that this relationship with this person is completely one's lifelong journey, for better or for worse (meaning that if it gets worse we will both work to improve it). It implies cherishing one's partner's positive qualities and nurturing gratitude about what one has with this person by comparing one's partner favorably with real or imagined others, rather than trashing one's partner by magnifying one's partner's negative qualities, and nurturing resentment by comparing one's partner unfavorably with real or imagined others.

● ● ● 10:00–10:15 a.m. **Break**

BUILD LOVE MAPS

● ● ● 10:20–11:05 a.m. Instructions, Exercise 1A, and Exercise 1B

John Gottman's research revealed that a very powerful predictor of relationship stability is whether couples, particularly husbands, allocate "Cognitive Room" for their relationship and for the *world* of their partner. It is as if the Masters of Relationship have developed a map of the world of their partners, a cognitive map of their relationship and its history, and of their partner's history, concerns, preferences, and the current world of their partner. Love Maps are created by asking open-ended questions. An open-ended question is a question that can't be answered by a simple "yes" or "no." It is a question like "How would you like our life to change in the next 5 years?"

In this workshop, we introduce a concept then attempt to assist you in learning how to apply it to everyday life.

**Our goal is to change the way you move through time together.
We want you to make it a habit to ask each other
open-ended questions and to remember the answers.**

► EXERCISE 1A

The Gottman Love Map Exercise—Love Map and Opportunity Cards (25 minutes)

This is not competitive. Be gentle when correcting your partner's answers.

Instructions for Love Map Cards: Sit facing each other, with one of you holding the Love Map Card Deck, with the title facing up. One of you pick a card, read the back of it out loud, and answer it in terms of your partner's world. Then the partner can say, "Yes, that's right," or "No, good try. Here's the right answer....." Then trade roles. It's the second partner's turn to pick up the next card, read the question on the back and answer it in terms of the first partner's inner world. Keep alternating, taking turns. This is a great way to get to know more about your partner. Be gentle with each other and have fun.

Instructions for Opportunity Cards: Sometime during the 25 minutes you have for *Exercise 1A*, each of you also pick one card from the Opportunity Card Deck and read it out loud to your partner. If you both like what each other's card suggests, each of you commit to doing what your card suggested. But if either of you dislikes the suggestion, feel free to pick another card until you each have one agreed upon suggestion from the Opportunity Deck to do for your partner.

Commit to doing your activity from the Opportunity Card Deck and write the description here:

► EXERCISE 1B

Creating Love Maps In Your Everyday Life Together (15 minutes)

Instructions: Take turns answering out loud each item in the following list in terms of your partner's world. For example, for "Who are your partner's potential friends?", name those people who you think are your partner's friends. If the answer is right, write down the answers on your sheet. If your partner corrects your answer, then write down the corrected answer instead. Take turns answering each item back and forth, item by item, offering corrections and writing answers regarding your partner's world on your sheet. If you don't finish all the items during the allotted time, try completing this exercise at home. No advice giving, please.

Build a Map of Your Partner's Everyday Life

Instructions: Ask questions and fill in the form below for your partner. Answer the questions below out loud, then check your answer with your partner. Write down the correct answer.

The Cast of Characters in your partner's life:

Who are your partner's friends?

Who are your partner's potential friends?

Who are your partner's rivals, competitors, difficult people they struggle with?

What are some recent events that are important to your partner?

What are some upcoming events that your partner is looking forward to?

What are some current stresses in your partner's life right now?

What is your partner worried about in his/her future?

What are your partner's hopes and aspirations for the future?

BUILD LOVE MAPS

ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

• • • 11:10–11:35 a.m.

Instructions and Exercise 2

The next step in knowing your partner is to ask questions that deepen your understanding of them. “Did you call the plumber today?” is not a question that tells you much about your partner’s internal world. Try asking, “If you had all the money in the world, what would your dream house be like?” You’d find out something entirely different. Open-ended questions have stories for answers—and layers of meaning that can help you understand the heart of who your partner is.

In this workshop, we introduce a concept then attempt to assist you in learning how to apply it to everyday life.

► EXERCISE 2

Asking Open-Ended Questions (20 minutes)

Instructions: Take the Open-Ended Questions deck of cards. Divide it in half. Each of you look through your half of the cards, then pick a card from your half of the deck, so that each of you will then have one open-ended question to ask your partner. Take turns asking your partner the question you selected and listen to your partner’s answer to that question. If your partner doesn’t want to answer that question, please pick another card (and question) to ask your partner. Do not be judgmental or critical as you listen to your partner’s answer. Instead, be supportive and empathetic. Alternate roles as speaker and listener. You will each have 10 minutes to answer each other’s questions.

SHARE FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION

● ● ● 11:40–11:55 a.m. Presentation and Exercise 3

► EXERCISE 3

“I Appreciate...” Adjective Checklist (10 minutes)

Instructions: It is very important to acknowledge the positive aspects of your partner's personality. Many times when people are upset with one another they lose sight of the positive aspects of their partner and of the relationship. Take a few moments and think about selected aspects of your partner's personality. Circle three to five items that you think are characteristic of your partner at times, even slightly. For each item you circle, briefly think of an actual incident that illustrates this characteristic of your partner. Jot down a note about this incident next to the item. Then share the circled adjective and this incident with your partner. Enjoy!

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Loving | 19. Funny | 37. Committed | 55. Witty |
| 2. Sensitive | 20. Considerate | 38. Involved | 56. Relaxed |
| 3. Brave | 21. Affectionate | 39. Expressive | 57. Beautiful |
| 4. Intelligent | 22. Organized | 40. Active | 58. Handsome |
| 5. Thoughtful | 23. Resourceful | 41. Careful | 59. Silly |
| 6. Generous | 24. Athletic | 42. Reserved | 60. Calm |
| 7. Loyal | 25. Cheerful | 43. Adventurous | 61. Lively |
| 8. Truthful | 26. Coordinated | 44. Receptive | 62. A great partner |
| 9. Strong | 27. Graceful | 45. Reliable | 63. A great parent |
| 10. Energetic | 28. Elegant | 46. Responsible | 64. Assertive |
| 11. Sexy | 29. Gracious | 47. Dependable | 65. Protective |
| 12. Decisive | 30. Playful | 48. Nurturing | 66. Sweet |
| 13. Creative | 31. Caring | 49. Warm | 67. Tender |
| 14. Imaginative | 32. A great friend | 50. Virile | 68. Powerful |
| 15. Fun | 33. Exciting | 51. Kind | 69. Flexible |
| 16. Attractive | 34. Thrifty | 52. Gentle | 70. Understanding |
| 17. Interesting | 35. Shy | 53. Practical | 71. (Others; Your Ideas) |
| 18. Supportive | 36. Vulnerable | 54. Lusty | |

TURN TOWARDS THE EMOTIONAL BANK ACCOUNT

● ● ● 11:55–12:20 p.m. Presentation and Exercise 4

Turn Towards

Turn Towards refers to how you respond to your partner's bids for attention or connection. The majority of bids usually occur in the 'small' moments of our lives. Your partner might make a bid for attention by simply calling your name, initiating a conversation, expressing a need, giving an unexpected smile, or simply touching you. When our partner makes a bid for our attention—a bid can be verbal or nonverbal—we have three choices: we can Turn Towards, Turn Away or Turn Against that bid. Turning Towards implies a positive response, like a friendly, "yes?" when your name is called. Another way to Turn Towards your partner is by doing something you know he or she would appreciate, for instance, suggesting a movie he or she would enjoy, helping him or her with a household chore, or by bringing home his or her favorite flowers. In Turning Away, you might not respond at all, ignoring your partner. In Turning Against, you might respond with an angry, "What do you want this time?"

As with the previous two levels of the Sound Relationship House, this level—Turn Towards versus Turning Away—was created by watching the Masters of Marriage. What was observed in the Gottmans' research was that Master Couples turn towards their spouses approximately twenty times more than couples in distress during everyday, non-conflict discussions. In a newlywed study, newlyweds who were still married six years after their wedding had turned towards each other while in the lab, 86% of the time. Those who were divorced six years later had only turned towards each other 33% of the time.

The Emotional Bank Account

There are dozens of everyday moments where we can be fairly mindless, but which are opportunities for either Turning Towards, Turning Away, or Turning Against your partner. We call these moments, "Bids." Bids are often neutral emotionally, and we don't even do very much thinking about them. They flow by unnoticed, and we call them 'mindless' moments. Other times *bids* involve positive emotion. They involve our expressing interest, or excitement, or affection. It is very important that expressions of positive emotions be requited, that is, that they receive the reasonable response of Turning Towards.

Every time we turn towards our partner's *bids*, we are making a deposit in our relationship's Emotional Bank Account. These positive moments bolster the overall positive feelings we have for one another. And they add up. It's like saving quarters. Deposit enough of these in our bank account and we can be well-off someday. Moments when we turn towards each other's *bids* are like that. Have enough of them stored up and we can have a terrific relationship. In addition, if a disaster comes our way (like a big fight), we'll have enough positive feelings in our emotional bank account to withstand the negative storms we encounter.

Therefore, with *bids* and turning towards, we're really talking about mindfulness and being aware of one another's *bids*. Again, it's *small things often*. It's really a change of awareness, being aware of your partner's *bids* and responding to them, leading to a change in how you move through time together. Turning towards creates greater emotional connection. Incidentally, we found that there is a connection between Turning Towards and great passion, romance and sex in relationships.

"Sliding door moments" are choice points and opportunities to build intimacy. Gwyneth Paltrow's movie, "Sliding Doors," is a metaphor for these choice points and their consequences.

A strong relationship involves earning relationship points, moving from, "Me-ness" to "We-ness." Points get deposited in an "Emotional Bank Account," where the ratio of positive to negative must be very high. If they are only equal, the relationship is in trouble.

We all have the same twenty-four hours a day. How we connect or fail to connect with our partner is a matter of priorities. If you miss one another's *bids*, there may be negative consequences. The following examples of possible dialogue illustrate the simplicity of Turning Towards versus turning away or against.

Don't:

Partner1: Isn't that a beautiful boat?

Partner2: (No response. He keeps reading the newspaper).

Do:

P1: Isn't that a beautiful boat?

P2: (Putting down the newspaper) Yeah. It looks like one of those old schooners.

Don't:

P1: That jerk at work, Fred, didn't show up until really late and I missed my bus home. I'm sorry I'm late.

P2: Why are you bringing Fred up again? I'm so tired of hearing about your problems at work all of the time! Who cares about Fred? You're late and you're trying to blame it on Fred now that our dinner is ruined.

Do:

P1: That jerk at work, Fred, didn't show up until really late and I missed my bus home. I'm sorry I'm late.

P2: That's a drag! Boy, I'd like to wring his neck.

P1: Me, too.

P2: I am upset that you didn't call me and our dinner is now cold.

P1: You're right. I should have called. I'm sorry.

P2: We talked about this before.

P1: I know. I guess I was so darn absorbed with him not showing up, I completely forgot about calling. I really am sorry about that. How about if I make it up to you by taking you to Gaspere's tonight?

P2: Wow, that'd be great. Your treat?

P1: My treat.

You are in a hurry in the morning and you're brushing your teeth.

Don't:

Your partner comes into the bathroom saying: *I just had a disturbing dream.*

You: *I don't have time for this right now.*

Do:

Your partner comes into the bathroom saying: *I just had a disturbing dream.*

You: *I wish I could hear it right now but unfortunately, I'm already running late.
Could you remember it and we can talk about it later this evening?*

***Turning Towards leads to more Turning Towards.
So you don't have to have high standards.
Start anywhere.***

Sometimes these moments have positive affect. They involved your partner expressing interest, or excitement, or affection. It is very important that expressions of positive emotions receive a reasonable response. We are guessing here but we think that there needs to be at least a 5 to 1 ratio of responding to not responding.

*By being mindful you can notice whether you are turning towards,
away or against at every bid your partner makes.
Strive to not be mindless about these moments.*

**REMEMBER the basic principle:
*Turning Towards leads to more Turning Towards.***

It is a positive feedback mechanism.

Responding positively to our partner's bids for our attention is a major way to bring romance back into your relationship. Because of this basic principle of 'Turning Towards', you don't have to have very high standards.

Don't give your partner a hard time for not having 'Turned Towards' you before.

► EXERCISE 4

Turning Towards During Everyday Events Checklist (10 minutes)

Instructions: This is an exercise that was modified by Senior Certified Gottman Therapist, Mirabai Wahbe. Each of you individually, look over the list below, and select three of the items in which your partner has turned towards you in the past. Think of the details of HOW your partner did so, and jot down notes about it next to the items selected. Then share with your partner which items you remembered and the stories to go with them. Be Appreciative!

1. Checked in with one another at the end of the day and talked over the events of the day.
2. Stayed in touch with kin, e.g., called parents (mom, dad, grandmas) or siblings and in-laws.
3. Shopped for groceries.
4. Cooked dinner, baked together.
5. Shopped together for presents for a friend (e.g., friend's wedding).
6. Went out to breakfast Saturday or Sunday.
7. Read morning paper together.
8. Planned a dinner party together.
9. Had a dinner party.
10. Called your partner during the workday.
11. Thought about your partner during the workday.
12. Went out on a date with your partner (no kids).
13. Went on an overnight with your partner at a romantic place.
14. Shared morning breakfast together during work week.
15. Went to a church, mosque, or synagogue together.
16. Did yard work together.
17. Shared physical workouts together.
18. Went on a weekend outing together (e.g., picnic, drives).
19. Spent time together with kids—bedtimes, baths, homework, etc.
20. Traveled together (plane, bus, train, car).
21. Took a long drive together.
22. Rented a video and watched it together.
23. Ordered dinner in or take out.
24. Watched TV together.
25. Double dated with another couple or friends.
26. Watched sports events on TV together.
27. Shared a favorite activity together (e.g., bowling, going to the zoo, amusement park, bicycling, hiking, horseback riding, camping, canoeing, sailing, boating, water skiing, swimming).
28. Built a fire at home. Sat in front of the fire and talked or read together.
29. Listened to music.

Continued on next page

30. Went to a concert.
31. Went dancing.
32. Went to a nightclub or jazz club.
33. Went to the theater.
34. Went out to eat.
35. Organized a child's birthday party together.
36. Took kid(s) to lessons together.
37. Attended child's sporting event(s) together.
38. Went to a kid performance (recital, play, etc.) together.
39. Wrote letters or cards together.
40. Went to a community event (e.g., church auction) together.
41. Went to a party.
42. Drove to or from work together and talked.
43. Planned a vacation together.
44. Took a vacation together.
45. Made plans, dreamed together.
46. Walked the dog together.
47. Read out loud to one another.
48. Played a board game or a card game together.
49. Shared a hobby together: e.g., painting, sculpting, making music.
50. Talked while drinking (alcohol, coffee or tea).
51. Went out to your favorite bar or haunt.
52. Took time to just talk together without interruptions.
53. Shared a regular time when you knew your partner really listened to you.
54. Played together.
55. Philosophized together.
56. Gossiped (talking about other people) together.
57. Shared phone calls together, catching up with people you know.
58. Visited a sick friend together.
59. Did something together that helped other people.
60. Took time to just talk and cuddle.
61. Shared time to caress romantically.
62. Shared time together to make love.
63. Took time for some real affection between us.
64. Add your own ideas here...

● ● ● **12:15–12:20 p.m.** **Process Exercise**

● ● ● **12:20–1:35 p.m.** **Lunch**

TURNING TOWARDS MANAGING EXTERNAL STRESS IS CRITICAL

• • • 1:40–2:45 p.m.

Presentation and Exercise 5

We will discuss Neil Jacobson's study of a 2-year follow up of therapy couples, what differentiated "Maintainers" of change from "Relapsers," as well as Guy Bodenmann's work. The management of the spill-over of stress was what the researcher Neil Jacobson found discriminated couples who maintained gains in couples therapy from those who relapsed two years after therapy. By managing stress, we mean management of daily external stress from sources outside the relationship, like occupational stressors or stresses from neighbors. Of all the factors he examined, effective stress-management was the only one that mattered; in other words, it was this factor alone that aided those couples who had made progress in their relationship to maintain the positive changes and habits they had developed. As a result, we highly recommend that you have a stress-reducing conversation for at least 20 minutes every day. This conversation gives you a great opportunity to turn towards each other, thereby increasing your "Emotional Bank Account."

The concept of the "Emotional Bank Account" is something we can directly apply here. In fact, included below are suggestions for "deposits" or *ways of earning points for your emotional bank account*.

► EXERCISE 5

The Stress-Reducing Conversation (30 minutes)

Listening without giving advice and just giving empathy is hard for most of us, especially for men. But just "being there" avoids leaving our partner feeling alone with the stress. As listeners, we should try to perform Mr. Spock's "Vulcan Mind Meld" on Star Trek.

Instructions: The purpose of this process is to assist you in the management of daily external stress, stress that comes from OUTSIDE the relationship, like job stress.

*How you manage stress turns out to be very critical.
Research has shown that the couples who buffered
their relationships from external stresses were able to
maintain their positive changes over time.*

In this exercise you will discuss a recent or upcoming stress in each of your lives like an upcoming job deadline, or a future event (outside of your relationship) that may prove stressful. Each of you will have 15 minutes to be a speaker (about your own stress) while your partner listens. After 15 minutes, you'll trade roles.

Both male and female styles of communicating need to be honored. The motto, "Understanding First, then Advice," means that emotional connection should be honored before moving to problem-solving. Empathy with emotions and problem solving are like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle: they fit together, and each is invaluable.

Speaker: Talk about your stress with as much detail and depth as possible.

Listener: Offer support to your partner using the methods listed below. Be sure to avoid problem solving unless your partner wants your help doing so. Just do your best to listen and understand your partner's thoughts and feelings. Remember....

Understanding First, Then Advice

Giving Support Means:

- **SHOW GENUINE INTEREST:** Maintain eye contact. Ask questions.
- **BE AN ALLY FOR YOUR PARTNER:** Show empathy.
- **COMMUNICATE UNDERSTANDING:** What a bummer! I'd be stressed out too.
- **'WE' AGAINST 'OTHERS'. DON'T SIDE WITH THE 'OTHER':** Even if you agree with the enemy, empathize with your partner's emotions. Focus on what your partner is feeling, not what your partner is perceiving.
- **SOLIDARITY:** This is our problem and we'll face it together.
- **PROVIDE AFFECTION AND COMFORT:** Come here and let me hold you. I am totally on your side.

Share Emotions:

- **INTEREST:** Tell me more about that. Ask questions.
- **EXCITEMENT:** Wow! This is really hot stuff! Let's do it!
- **SADNESS:** That's so sad.
- **FEAR:** That is something that would have me worried too.
- **IRRITATION and ANGER:** I can see why you'd be annoyed here.
- **DON'T:** Stonewall; Ignore your partner; Fail to respond; Get Defensive, Criticize.

Don't side with the enemy.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PARTNER:

First, ask your partner, "Do you feel understood yet?"

If she or he answers "No," then ask questions to help increase your understanding:

- a. What is most upsetting to you about this?
- b. What is it that you don't like about this situation?
- c. What is the worst thing that could happen in this situation?
- d. What is this like for you?
- e. Is there anything I can do to support you in this?
- f. What do you need?

It would be great if you could commit to having a conversation like this one for about twenty minutes at the end of each day.

If she or he answers “Yes” and does feel understood, then ask “Are you interested in receiving advice or problem solving?” If the answer is “Yes,” then move onto advice and/or problem solving suggestions. See if your partner has ideas before suggesting some ideas of your own.

REMEMBER

**there is no such thing as
an “over reaction” emotionally.**

Try not to judge your partner’s emotions.

Write here how you and your partner have agreed to build the Stress-Reducing Conversation into your daily schedule.

● ● ● 2:35–2:45 p.m.

Process Exercise

TURN TOWARDS BUILD RITUALS OF CONNECTION

● ● ● 2:45–3:55 p.m. Presentation and Exercise 6

Bill Doherty, in his work on couples, discusses rituals of connection as an important tool for successful relationships in his book, “The Intentional Family.” A Ritual of Connection is a method of Turning Towards one another that is reliable and can be counted on. For example, in the movie, “The Story of Us,” the couple played by Michelle Pfeiffer and Bruce Willis, together with their children, discuss the highs and lows of their day every evening at dinner. This is a Ritual of Connection that they can count on daily.

A Ritual of Connection needs to be thought out and planned. When will it happen? How often? Where? Who will initiate it? How will it unfold? How will it end?

Another example of a Ritual of Connection is greeting each other at the end of the day. Will there be a hug? A kiss? Questions like, “What were your highs?” “Your lows?” You can decide which ritual you’d like to include in your lives together using the following exercise.

● ● ● 3:10–3:25 p.m. Break

► EXERCISE 6

Build Rituals of Connection (30 minutes)

Instructions: Use the “Build Rituals of Connection” card deck. Split the deck in half, and each of you look through your half of the cards. From them, choose one ritual of connection that you’d like you and your partner to work on. Share your choices with one another, then of those two rituals, pick one to work on now. Use the following questions to discuss the details of how you’d like to do this ritual together, including getting very specific about the details of your ritual.

Questions

- a. What is meaningful about this for you?
- b. When will this be done?
- c. How often will it be done?
- d. How long should it last each time?
- e. Who will initiate it?
- f. Who will do what in this ritual?
- g. What will happen next?
- h. How will it end?
- i. How can we integrate this into our lives so we can count on it?

TURN TOWARDS SEX, ROMANCE, AND PASSION

● ● ● 4:00–4:50 p.m. Presentation and Exercise 7

When you walk into a bookstore to find books on sex and communication, you'll often find a book about each one in different sections of the store. In this exercise, we are trying to bring together those two sections of the bookstore, one on sex and another on communication. We want to strengthen your sex and love-making life. A wonderful way to 'turn towards' one another is sexually. Ironically, it's the one area many of us struggle with talking about openly. We need to learn ways of not only talking about sex, but also ways of courting one another and knowing each other's love needs. Here are some important points to remember:

1. **Continue Your Courtship:** Pay each other compliments, tell your partner how they are special, give surprise gifts, find out what soothes him/her. Make your partner feel special.
2. **Develop Rituals or Comfortable, Routine Ways to Talk About Sex:** For instance, consider how to signal whether or not you're in the mood for sex, or how to communicate what you'd prefer as foreplay or sexual positions, etc. What do you like that you've done together before?
3. **Make Sex a Priority:** For example, schedule date nights or get-away weekends. What are your preferred times and frequency for having sex? The GottSex book and videos are one way you can continue to build this vital area of Turning Toward in your relationship after the workshop.

Here's an exercise to help you begin these discussions.

► EXERCISE 7

Salsa Cards (20 minutes)

Instructions: The Salsa Card Deck is divided into three sections: Mild (*1 pepper*), Medium (*2 peppers*) and Hot (*3 peppers*). Each section gives suggestions for spicing up your romantic love life. The 'Mild' deck is for couples who would prefer romantic, but non-sexual suggestions. The 'Medium' card deck is for couples who are comfortable with sexual intimacy. The 'Hot' deck is for couples who want to explore more wild sexual fantasies. Pick a deck to work with that both you and your partner are comfortable with. If you have a difference of opinion, pick the more mild choice.

Split the card deck you have chosen in half. Read through your half of the deck and select a suggestion you'd like to share with your partner. Read it aloud. If you both like the suggestion, plan how you can integrate it into your relationship. If one of you doesn't like the suggestion, pick another card that you both agree is desirable, and make a plan for including it. Each of you should have at least one suggestion that you both like. More than one each is okay, too. We encourage you to use the questions on page 27 of this manual (Building Rituals of Connection) to help talk about sex with a little more structure if this is a difficult topic for you or your partner.

Remember, there can be no judgment, blame or harshness during this exercise. Romance, passion and good sex thrive only when there's an atmosphere of safety and warmth.

● ● ● 4:40–4:50 p.m. Process Exercise

THE POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE

● ● ● 4:50–5:00 p.m. Presentation and Summary of Day One

When the first three levels of The Sound Relationship House (SRH) are working well, you get to have, for free, the 4th level of the SRH, called, “The Positive Perspective.” When your relationship contains the Positive Perspective, you’re more likely to give your partner the benefit of the doubt, and to not take your partner’s grumpy moods personally. You react more with, “He must have had a hard day at work....,” rather than “He’s attacking me again.” With the first three levels of the SRH intact, you feel like your partner is your friend, not your enemy. In contrast, when those levels are weak, you may develop, “The Negative Perspective,” in which, even when your partner blinks at you, it feels like a personal attack. When those negative feelings persist, strengthen the first three levels of the SRH to transform the Negative Perspective into the Positive Perspective.

**If you find yourself with a Negative Perspective,
you will know that the first three levels
of the Sound Relationship House need work.**

● ● ● 4:55–5:00 p.m. Day One Evaluation

