

AN IMPORTANT TASK FOR COUPLES: WHAT NEEDS WORK?

Middle Ground Activity

Take an inventory of what has gone right and what's gone wrong. A balanced assessment will help you to zero in on what is most needed. Allow yourself the freedom to identify and rank what you like most and what bothers you most about time spent together. Encourage your partner to join you in this activity, comparing notes can be more than informative—it can help you take a first step into the middle ground. To assist you in preparing the inventory I've provided (A) a checklist to help you think through and identify problem areas, and also (B) a summary assessment form to help you organize your results.

(A) The most pressing problems in our relationship are:

- The way we talk to each other
- We spend too little time together
- We spend too much time together
- We do not have enough relaxation time together
- We aren't romantic enough with each other
- We don't plan or cooperate around money well
- We do not make decisions together
- We socialize too frequently. We rarely have alone time together
- We socialize too infrequently. I feel we are an isolated couple
- My partner doesn't compliment me enough
- My partner is moody

- My partner stonewalls me
- I stonewall my partner
- I feel taken for granted
- My partner feels taken for granted
- My partner is too critical
- My partner talks down to me
- My partner says hurtful things to me.
- I lose my temper too easily and/or too quickly
- My partner loses their temper too easily and/or too quickly
- My partner needs to know me better
- I need to know my partner better
- My partner's standards for neatness and/or cleanliness differ greatly from my own
- My partner does not stimulate me intellectually
- We haven't developed recreational activities that we enjoy together
- Our sexual appetites differ significantly
- We are not affectionate enough with each other
- Even when we are together, I often feel alone and lonely
- We can talk about problems but nothing changes
- We do not celebrate the good things that happen in our lives
- We do not savor each other's accomplishments
- We don't talk about our feelings together enough
- We don't talk much about anything
- Our sexual relationship is less than satisfying

- We do not share equitably in household chores
- I do most of the social planning
- I am more outgoing than my partner
- My partner is more outgoing than I am
- My partner and I aren't good vacation companions
- _____
- _____

For couples with a child or children:

- I feel like I do a disproportionate amount of work around the house
- My partner is a good parent but I feel like my contributions are unappreciated
- My partner and I disagree about many child-rearing issues
- My partner and I disagree about religious issues related to our child's (or children's) upbringing
- My partner doesn't do their share with the children
- My partner is controlling around the child and makes my help feel unnecessary
- My partner has a hard time collaborating in general
- My partner says hurtful things to me around the kids
- I say hurtful things to my partner around the kids
- My partner is too rough with the kids
- I am too rough with the kids
- As parents we are a much stronger couple than we are when the kids aren't involved

- As parents, we are a much less well-coordinated couple than we are in areas where the children aren't involved.
- _____
- _____

And now let's think about strengths in the relationship (check all that apply):

- We are considerate of each other's feelings
- We have common interests
- We have common values
- We are committed to each other
- We have activities we enjoy together
- Overall, sex is satisfying
- The level of affection in our relationship feels good to me.
- I feel loved
- I feel appreciated
- My partner feels loved
- My partner feels appreciated
- We savor each other's accomplishments
- We support each other emotionally
- We support each other's career (or job-related) goals
- We talk to each other about important issues
- We are able to resolve conflicts by talking things out
- Overall, we are compatible

- _____
- _____

For couples with a child or children:

- We handle chores related to the kid(s) equitably
- We respect each other as parents
- As a parenting team, we work well
- We are on the same page in terms of family planning issues
- _____
- _____

(B) Fill in the blank lines below:

The three areas that need the most work in my relationship with my partner are:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

The three areas in my relationship I feel best about are:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

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