

john gottman 7 principles for making marriage work

john gottman 7 principles for making marriage work have become foundational in understanding how couples can build and maintain a healthy, lasting relationship. Developed by renowned psychologist John Gottman, these principles are backed by decades of research and clinical observation. They provide practical, actionable strategies that help couples nurture friendship, manage conflict, and deepen intimacy. This article explores each of the seven principles in detail, explaining how they contribute to a thriving marriage. Additionally, it highlights key concepts such as emotional connection, communication techniques, and mutual respect that are vital components of Gottman's approach. Whether a newlywed or in a long-term relationship, understanding these principles can significantly improve marital satisfaction and stability. The following sections will break down the principles and their applications comprehensively.

- Build Love Maps
- Share Fondness and Admiration
- Turn Towards Each Other
- Accept Influence
- Resolve Solvable Problems
- Overcome Gridlock
- Create Shared Meaning

Build Love Maps

Building love maps is the foundational principle in the john gottman 7 principles for making marriage work. Love maps refer to the detailed knowledge partners have about each other's world. This includes understanding each other's likes, dislikes, hopes, fears, and experiences. A strong love map enables couples to stay connected and respond effectively to one another's needs over time.

Understanding Your Partner's Inner World

Creating and maintaining an accurate love map involves regularly updating

your knowledge about your partner's life. This can include their current stresses, dreams, and changes in preferences. When couples are attuned to these details, they can offer better emotional support and empathy, which strengthens the relationship's foundation.

Practical Ways to Build Love Maps

Couples can build love maps through frequent conversations, sincere curiosity, and shared experiences. Asking open-ended questions and actively listening are essential techniques in this process. For example, discussing a partner's childhood memories or future aspirations can deepen understanding and emotional intimacy.

Share Fondness and Admiration

Expressing fondness and admiration is the second principle and plays a critical role in maintaining positive feelings between spouses. Regularly acknowledging what one appreciates about the other fosters goodwill and reinforces the emotional bond. This principle counters negativity and helps create a culture of respect and affection in the marriage.

The Importance of Positive Affirmations

Positive affirmations, compliments, and expressions of gratitude are powerful tools in nurturing fondness and admiration. These expressions encourage partners to feel valued and loved, which enhances relationship satisfaction. Gottman's research shows that couples who maintain a high ratio of positive to negative interactions are more likely to have successful marriages.

Examples of Sharing Fondness

- Thanking your partner for daily contributions
- Complimenting personality traits or achievements
- Recalling and celebrating shared joyful memories

Turn Towards Each Other

The third principle emphasizes the importance of turning towards bids for connection rather than away. In the context of marriage, bids are attempts by one partner to gain attention, affection, or support. Responding positively

to these bids strengthens the emotional bank account and builds trust.

Recognizing and Responding to Bids

Turning towards involves noticing your partner's attempts at connection, whether verbal or nonverbal, and responding in a way that acknowledges their needs. Ignoring or turning away from these bids can lead to emotional distancing and dissatisfaction. Couples who consistently turn towards each other create a resilient and supportive relationship dynamic.

Building Emotional Connection

By actively engaging in small moments of connection, couples reinforce their bond and foster intimacy. Simple actions like making eye contact, offering a smile, or engaging in brief conversations contribute significantly to marital happiness.

Accept Influence

Accepting influence is the fourth principle and involves being open to your partner's opinions and feelings, especially during conflicts or decision-making processes. This principle challenges traditional gender roles and power dynamics, encouraging mutual respect and cooperation.

The Role of Influence in Partnerships

Couples who accept influence recognize that both partners contribute valuable perspectives that can improve the relationship. This approach promotes compromise and reduces power struggles, leading to more harmonious interactions and shared decision-making.

Practicing Acceptance

Accepting influence can be practiced by actively listening, validating feelings, and being willing to adjust one's stance. It requires humility and a commitment to valuing the partner's viewpoint, even when it differs from one's own.

Resolve Solvable Problems

The fifth principle focuses on effectively managing and resolving solvable problems that arise in a marriage. Not all conflicts are avoidable, but couples can learn strategies to handle disagreements constructively. This

principle distinguishes between solvable problems and perpetual issues, which require different approaches.

Techniques for Conflict Resolution

Gottman recommends specific communication techniques such as using “I” statements, avoiding criticism, and taking breaks when emotions escalate. These strategies help reduce defensiveness and promote understanding during conflicts.

Steps to Resolving Problems

1. Identify the problem clearly and calmly
2. Express feelings without blame
3. Listen actively to your partner’s perspective
4. Brainstorm possible solutions together
5. Agree on a compromise or action plan
6. Follow up to ensure the solution is working

Overcome Gridlock

Overcoming gridlock is the sixth principle and refers to addressing perpetual conflicts that stem from fundamental differences in personality or values. These issues often lead to stalemates where neither partner feels heard or understood. Instead of trying to “win,” couples learn to soften their stance and explore underlying dreams and needs.

Understanding Perpetual Problems

Perpetual problems often involve deeply held beliefs and desires that cannot be easily changed. Recognizing this helps couples shift their focus from problem-solving to managing and understanding each other’s perspectives.

Strategies to Move Beyond Gridlock

Couples can overcome gridlock by:

- Sharing personal dreams and values behind the conflict
- Expressing empathy and validating each other's feelings
- Finding ways to honor both partners' needs
- Agreeing to disagree respectfully when necessary

Create Shared Meaning

The seventh and final principle involves creating shared meaning and building a sense of purpose in the marriage. This principle encourages couples to develop rituals, goals, and narratives that reflect their unique culture and values as a unit. Shared meaning deepens connection and provides a framework for navigating life together.

Building a Marriage Culture

Creating shared meaning includes establishing traditions, roles, and symbols that hold significance for both partners. This might involve family rituals, shared hobbies, or mutual aspirations. Such elements foster a sense of belonging and identity within the marriage.

Examples of Shared Meaning

- Celebrating anniversaries with personalized traditions
- Setting joint financial or parenting goals
- Supporting each other's individual dreams within the marriage context
- Developing shared values around spirituality or community involvement

Frequently Asked Questions

What are John Gottman's 7 Principles for Making Marriage Work?

John Gottman's 7 Principles for Making Marriage Work include: 1) Enhance your love maps, 2) Nurture your fondness and admiration, 3) Turn toward each other

instead of away, 4) Let your partner influence you, 5) Solve your solvable problems, 6) Overcome gridlock, and 7) Create shared meaning.

Who is John Gottman and why are his principles important for marriage?

John Gottman is a renowned psychologist and relationship researcher known for his work on marital stability and divorce prediction. His principles are important because they are based on extensive scientific research and offer practical strategies to strengthen marriages and improve communication.

How can couples enhance their love maps according to Gottman's principles?

Enhancing love maps involves knowing your partner's world deeply—understanding their worries, hopes, goals, and history. Couples can enhance love maps by regularly asking open-ended questions and staying curious about each other's lives.

What does 'nurturing fondness and admiration' mean in a marriage?

Nurturing fondness and admiration means maintaining a positive view of your partner by expressing appreciation, respect, and affection. It helps build a strong emotional connection and counters negativity in the relationship.

Why is 'turning toward each other instead of away' critical in relationships?

'Turning toward each other' means responding to your partner's bids for attention, affection, or support, which builds trust and closeness over time. Ignoring these bids can lead to emotional disconnection.

How can couples effectively solve solvable problems using Gottman's principles?

Couples can solve solvable problems by using soft startups in discussions, listening actively, compromising, and managing conflict with respect. It's important to distinguish solvable issues from perpetual problems and approach them with teamwork.

What is meant by 'overcoming gridlock' in a marriage?

'Overcoming gridlock' refers to dealing with perpetual conflicts that stem from deeply held dreams or values. Gottman advises couples to understand each other's underlying needs and find ways to dialogue about these issues without

escalating conflict.

How does creating shared meaning contribute to a successful marriage?

Creating shared meaning involves building a life together with shared goals, rituals, values, and symbols. It helps couples develop a sense of purpose and connection beyond daily routines, strengthening their bond and resilience.

Additional Resources

1. The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by John Gottman

This foundational book by John Gottman outlines the core principles that help couples build and maintain a successful marriage. Drawing from decades of research, Gottman provides practical advice backed by scientific studies. The book includes exercises and real-life examples to help couples strengthen their relationships through communication, conflict resolution, and emotional connection.

2. What Makes Love Last? How to Build Trust and Avoid Betrayal by John Gottman

In this book, Gottman explores the critical role of trust and betrayal in relationships. He offers strategies to rebuild trust after it has been broken and to prevent behaviors that can undermine intimacy. The book emphasizes emotional intelligence and effective communication as keys to lasting love.

3. The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide to Strengthening Your Marriage, Family, and Friendships by John Gottman and Joan DeClaire

This guide focuses on improving emotional communication in all relationships, including marriage. Gottman and DeClaire present a five-step program to recognize and respond to emotional bids from partners, fostering connection and understanding. It's a practical manual for enhancing empathy and preventing relationship breakdowns.

4. Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting by John Gottman

Although centered on parenting, this book offers valuable insights into emotional intelligence that are applicable to marriage as well. Gottman explains how understanding and managing emotions can improve relationships within the family unit. The principles can help couples support each other's emotional growth and create a nurturing environment.

5. Eight Dates: Essential Conversations for a Lifetime of Love by John Gottman and Julie Schwartz Gottman

This book provides couples with eight meaningful conversations designed to deepen their connection. Each date focuses on a key aspect of a relationship, such as trust, sex, or money, encouraging open dialogue and mutual understanding. It serves as a practical tool to strengthen the marriage bond.

6. *The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples* by John Gottman
Gottman delves into the neuroscience behind trust and emotional attunement in this book. He explains how couples can create a secure emotional environment through responsiveness and empathy. The book is rich with research findings that inform actionable advice for maintaining intimacy.

7. *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: And How You Can Make Yours Last* by John Gottman

This classic work by Gottman analyzes the behaviors and patterns that predict marital success or failure. He identifies key factors such as managing conflict, showing fondness, and avoiding contempt. The book offers guidance to help couples steer their relationships toward longevity.

8. *Building a Love That Lasts: The Seven Principles for Deepening Marriage* by John Gottman (Adapted Workbook)

This workbook adaptation of Gottman's principles provides interactive exercises and reflections to help couples actively apply the concepts in their daily lives. It encourages partners to engage in meaningful discussions and practice skills that promote emotional connection. Ideal for couples seeking a hands-on approach to relationship growth.

9. *The Gottman Institute Guide to a Happy Marriage* by John Gottman and Julie Schwartz Gottman

This comprehensive guide combines Gottman's research with practical tools to foster a healthy and joyful marriage. It covers topics such as managing conflict, building friendship, and creating shared meaning. The book is designed to help couples navigate challenges and cultivate a resilient partnership.

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