

john gottman the seven principles for making marriage work

john gottman the seven principles for making marriage work is a foundational guide developed by renowned psychologist Dr. John Gottman, aimed at helping couples build and maintain strong, lasting relationships. This framework is based on extensive research and clinical practice, highlighting key behaviors and attitudes that foster marital satisfaction and stability. The principles focus on nurturing friendship, managing conflict, and creating shared meaning, all essential components for a thriving marriage. In this article, the seven principles will be explored in detail, providing insights into how couples can apply these concepts to improve their relationship dynamics. Additionally, practical advice and examples will illustrate the transformative power of Gottman's work in real-life partnerships.

- Understanding the Foundation: Building Love Maps
- Fostering Fondness and Admiration
- Turning Toward Each Other Instead of Away
- Accepting Influence from Your Partner
- Solving Solvable Problems
- Overcoming Gridlock in Conflicts
- Creating Shared Meaning and Purpose

Understanding the Foundation: Building Love Maps

The first principle in john gottman the seven principles for making marriage work emphasizes the importance of creating detailed "love maps." Love maps refer to the intimate knowledge partners have about each other's world, including their preferences, dreams, values, and history. This deep understanding fosters emotional connection and empathy, which are critical for relationship resilience. Couples who actively maintain and update their love maps tend to navigate challenges more effectively because they feel more emotionally connected and understood.

The Role of Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness is central to building love maps. It involves recognizing and remembering important information about a partner's inner life, such as stressors, joys, and fears. This principle encourages couples to ask questions, listen attentively, and engage in meaningful conversations to keep their knowledge current and relevant.

Practical Ways to Build Love Maps

- Regularly discussing daily experiences and feelings
- Sharing hopes and concerns about the future
- Revisiting past memories and significant life events together
- Using open-ended questions to deepen understanding

Fostering Fondness and Admiration

John Gottman the seven principles for making marriage work highlight the necessity of nurturing fondness and admiration as a buffer against negativity. Fondness and admiration represent the positive feelings and respect partners hold for each other, which build a strong emotional bank account. This principle encourages couples to focus on each other's positive qualities and express appreciation regularly.

Importance of Positive Sentiment Override

Positive sentiment override occurs when the positive feelings in a relationship outweigh the negative ones. By fostering fondness and admiration, couples can create an environment where criticism and contempt are minimized, allowing conflicts to be addressed constructively rather than destructively.

Techniques to Cultivate Fondness and Admiration

- Expressing gratitude for everyday actions
- Highlighting a partner's strengths and achievements
- Sharing compliments and affectionate statements often
- Recollecting and celebrating positive memories together

Turning Toward Each Other Instead of Away

This principle underscores the significance of emotional bids—small attempts partners make to connect emotionally—and the importance of responding positively to these bids. Turning toward each other rather than away strengthens the relationship's emotional bank account and builds trust. Couples who consistently acknowledge and engage with each other's bids experience greater marital satisfaction and intimacy.

Recognizing Emotional Bids

Emotional bids can take many forms, including verbal requests for attention, gestures, or expressions of vulnerability. Recognizing these bids requires attentiveness and a willingness to engage, rather than dismiss or ignore the partner's attempts at connection.

Impact of Turning Toward on Relationship Health

Responding to emotional bids fosters feelings of validation and closeness. Conversely, turning away or against bids can lead to emotional distance and dissatisfaction. Couples who make a habit of turning toward each other reinforce their bond and create a positive feedback loop of connection.

Accepting Influence from Your Partner

Acceptance of influence is another key principle in John Gottman's seven principles for making marriage work. This involves being open to your partner's opinions, feelings, and ideas, and allowing them to shape decisions and behaviors within the relationship. Mutual influence promotes equality and respect, which are essential for long-term harmony.

The Role of Flexibility in Marriage

Flexibility is crucial when accepting influence. It requires partners to set aside rigid stances and engage in collaborative problem-solving. This openness helps avoid power struggles and fosters a sense of partnership where both individuals feel valued.

Strategies to Encourage Mutual Influence

- Listening actively without interrupting or dismissing
- Validating partner's perspectives even when disagreeing
- Negotiating compromises that respect both partners' needs
- Expressing willingness to change behaviors for the relationship's benefit

Solving Solvable Problems

John Gottman's seven principles for making marriage work distinguish between solvable and perpetual problems. This principle focuses on effectively managing conflicts that have clear solutions through communication and compromise. Couples who apply problem-solving skills to resolvable issues reduce stress and build cooperative habits.

Effective Conflict Resolution Techniques

Successful problem-solving involves calm discussion, avoiding blame, and seeking mutually acceptable solutions. Gottman recommends the use of "soft startups," which begin conversations gently rather than with criticism or contempt, to prevent escalation.

Steps to Solve Solvable Problems

1. Identify the specific problem clearly
2. Express feelings and needs without accusation
3. Brainstorm possible solutions together
4. Agree on a course of action and follow up

Overcoming Gridlock in Conflicts

Gridlocked conflicts are recurring, unsolvable issues that can create frustration and emotional disengagement. This principle addresses how couples can move beyond deadlock by understanding underlying dreams and values behind persistent disagreements. John Gottman the seven principles for making marriage work suggest that exploring these deeper meanings can transform gridlock into dialogue.

Identifying the Meaning Behind the Conflict

Often, gridlocked conflicts mask unfulfilled dreams or fundamental needs. Partners must share their personal narratives and listen empathetically to uncover these hidden layers, which may not be immediately apparent.

Approaches to Managing Gridlock

- Creating a safe space for honest conversation
- Validating each other's feelings and aspirations
- Finding ways to support each other's dreams even if they differ
- Agreeing on compromises or partial solutions that honor both partners

Creating Shared Meaning and Purpose

The final principle in John Gottman's seven principles for making marriage work involves building a shared sense of purpose, values, and rituals that define the couple's unique culture. Creating shared meaning strengthens emotional bonds and provides a foundation for enduring commitment beyond daily challenges.

The Importance of Rituals and Symbols

Rituals, such as weekly date nights, family traditions, or shared hobbies, contribute to a couple's identity and sense of togetherness. Symbols like shared goals or mutual values further reinforce this collective meaning, fostering unity and support.

Ways to Develop Shared Meaning

- Discussing and aligning on long-term goals and dreams
- Establishing meaningful rituals and traditions
- Supporting each other's personal growth within the relationship
- Celebrating milestones and achievements together

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by John Gottman?

John Gottman's Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work are: 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.

How does John Gottman define 'Love Maps' in his principles?

In John Gottman's framework, 'Love Maps' refer to the part of your brain where you store all the relevant information about your partner's life, preferences, worries, and dreams. Enhancing your love maps means truly knowing your partner on a deep level.

Why is nurturing fondness and admiration important

according to Gottman's principles?

Nurturing fondness and admiration helps build a positive perspective on your partner and relationship, which acts as a buffer against negativity and conflict. It fosters respect and appreciation, strengthening marital satisfaction.

What does 'turning toward each other instead of away' mean in a marriage?

This principle emphasizes responding to your partner's bids for attention, affection, and support. Turning toward each other means engaging positively with your partner's attempts to connect, which builds emotional closeness and trust.

How can couples apply the principle of 'Letting Your Partner Influence You'?

This principle encourages spouses, especially men, to be open to their partner's opinions and feelings, sharing power and decision-making. It promotes mutual respect and reduces conflict by valuing each other's perspectives.

What strategies does Gottman suggest for overcoming gridlock in marriage?

To overcome gridlock, Gottman advises couples to understand the underlying dreams and values behind their perpetual conflicts, practice empathy, and work towards compromise or acceptance. This helps transform deadlocked problems into opportunities for deeper connection.

Additional Resources

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

This foundational book by John Gottman outlines the core principles that can help couples build and maintain a healthy, lasting marriage. Drawing on extensive research and real-life case studies, Gottman provides practical exercises and insights into communication, conflict resolution, and emotional connection. It is widely regarded as a classic in relationship psychology and a valuable resource for couples and therapists alike.

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

In this book, Gottman expands beyond marriage to explore how to improve all interpersonal relationships through emotional communication. The authors present a five-step program to help readers recognize and respond to emotional bids, which are crucial for building intimacy and trust. It's filled with practical advice for anyone looking to deepen their connections.

3. *What Makes Love Last?: How to Build Trust and Avoid Betrayal* by John Gottman and Nan Silver

This book delves into the critical issue of trust in relationships and how to prevent betrayal. Gottman and Silver share research findings and real stories about couples who have overcome infidelity and other trust issues. The book offers strategies for rebuilding trust and creating a resilient, loving

partnership.

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

Though focused on parenting, this book by Gottman ties closely to his relationship principles by emphasizing emotional intelligence within the family. It provides guidance for parents on how to nurture their children's emotional health, which in turn can strengthen the marital relationship. The book includes practical tools for managing emotions and fostering empathy in children.

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

This book offers couples a structured approach to deepening their relationship through eight meaningful conversations. Each date focuses on a specific topic, such as trust, conflict, or dreams, providing questions and activities to foster connection. Co-authored with his wife Julie, it blends research with practical application.

6. *The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples* by John Gottman

In this work, Gottman explores the neuroscience behind trust and emotional attunement in relationships. The book explains how couples can develop deeper understanding and empathy through attuned communication. It is a valuable resource for those interested in the scientific basis of relationship success.

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

This earlier work by Gottman lays the groundwork for his later principles by analyzing the behaviors that predict marital success or failure. The book identifies key patterns and habits that couples should cultivate or avoid. It serves as a practical guide for couples seeking to improve their relationship stability.

8. *John Gottman's Marriage Workshop: A Couple's Guide to Building a Strong and Lasting Relationship* by John Gottman

Based on his famous workshops, this book offers couples a hands-on approach to improving their marriage. It includes exercises and strategies drawn from Gottman's research to enhance communication, manage conflict, and increase intimacy. The workshop format makes it accessible for couples to work through together.

9. *The Marriage Clinic: A Scientifically Based Marital Therapy* by John Gottman

This book is geared toward therapists and couples interested in a clinical approach to relationship therapy. Gottman presents his research-based methodology for assessing and treating marital problems. It combines theory, case studies, and practical interventions to help couples rebuild their relationship foundation.

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