



How Do I Make It Better? Relationship Appraisal



Helping Women Create the
Relationship They Desire.





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Before you can work on your relationship, it's important to identify exactly how you'd like it to be different. Couples often get caught in circular patterns of behavior, doing the same thing over and over but expecting to get a different result.

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In order to change your relationship for the better, take a look at what you already have, identify the areas of strength and weakness, then focus on those that could be improved. Maybe your relationship is good but just needs a tune up. Or maybe there are some important areas that need to be worked on before further decisions are made, such as marriage, separation or divorce.

Explore the key aspects of a relationship below to help identify your areas of strength and weakness.

Communication and Intimacy:

Communication and intimacy are critical aspects of a romantic relationship. It goes beyond deciding who's going to do pick up and drop off for the kids' soccer practices or when and where your mom's birthday party will be. Communication and intimacy involve sharing and respecting each other's personal thoughts and feelings.

Which of the following best describes your communication?

- ♥ We can and do talk openly about our thoughts and feelings. Although we have disagreements or differences of opinion, we feel comfortable expressing them openly with one another. When we need someone to talk to, we talk to one another.
- ♥ We do not talk about our thoughts and feelings. We keep our feelings to ourselves or discuss them with others outside our relationship. We don't actually know how the other person feels or we make assumptions about what the other person is thinking or feeling.

Commitment and Security:

In order to create a strong relationship, both partners need to be committed and feel secure. Commitment means that both will do what it takes to keep the relationship on track. And both do what they must in order to make their partner feel secure about the continuation of a healthy relationship.

Evaluate your level of commitment and security.

- ♥ We are both committed to our relationship and the work it takes to keep it healthy. We know, beyond a reasonable doubt and for better or worse, that our partner will always be there for us. When issues arise, we feel secure that they'll be resolved and won't threaten the relationship as a whole.
- ♥ One or both of us is/are not committed to the relationship. When asked to work on improving the relationship, the request is ignored or denied. The work needed to keep the relationship healthy is not a priority. There are feelings of insecurity and worry due to the lack of commitment and what that may lead to.

Respect:

Respect is a way of treating or thinking about someone. If you respect your partner, you appreciate and possibly admire their traits and abilities. In addition, if you have respect for your partner, you treat them well. Respect is a critical aspect of any strong relationship. When a couple respects one another, it enhances each partner's positive sense of themselves. When respect is lacking, there can be a sense of disappointment and anger.

Do you respect one another?

- ♡ We appreciate and express our partner's traits and abilities. We reinforce their contribution to the couple. We are kind to one another and treat each other with respect.
- ♡ We have difficulty seeing the positive traits and abilities each of us brings to the relationship. We may be critical of or even condescending to one another regarding each other's traits and abilities. We do not speak positively to or about one another.

Trust and Honesty:

Trust and honesty go hand in hand because both provide us with peace of mind. Even if we don't always like what we hear, we can at least trust that our partner is not lying to us. Trust and honesty provide both partners with the freedom to live life without second-guessing what could be happening without our knowledge. The more trust and honesty there is in a relationship, the less vulnerable both partners will feel.

Do you trust one another and are you honest with one another?

- ♡ We trust one another and speak honestly to each other. We both have the ability to be honest with each other even in difficult situations. We not only trust that we are being told the truth, we feel secure that our partner would not do anything to jeopardize our level of trust and honesty.
- ♡ There are secrets between us, and our trust has been broken. One or both of us has been lied to or in some way hurt, and we no longer trust that it won't happen again. We quite often second-guess each other's intentions, behaviors and commitment. There could be some jealousy, which causes conflict between us.

Support and Nurturing:

As life goes on, we each have opportunities for change or a need for support. Maybe a new passion you want to pursue becomes important to you or a parent is diagnosed with a terminal illness. In either situation, good or bad, it's important that partners support and nurture one another. Partners must encourage each other to be the best they can and not feel threatened by it. In addition, partners need to nurture one another through the tough times by being helpful and empathetic.

Are each of you getting the support and nurturing you need?

- ♥ We help one another to feel good about ourselves and support one another's pursuits and feelings. When we have opportunities to change or improve any part of our life, we encourage one another to do so even if it means a few sacrifices on our part. When one of us is going through a tough time, we are there to provide love and support. That may mean an aspirin and a glass of water when one of us is feeling under the weather or a shoulder to cry on when we're in emotional pain.
- ♥ We say and do things that make one another feel badly about wanting to make changes or improvements to ourselves. We feel threatened by the personal growth or achievements of the other person. We demean or ignore each other's need for emotional support.

Conflict Resolution:

Nobody likes conflict, but it's actually a natural part of every healthy relationship. The difference between conflict that is good versus bad for the relationship is determined by how the couple resolves that conflict. If the conflict is resolved appropriately, the couple can feel closer when it's over. If conflict isn't appropriately resolved, the couple may hold resentments, escalate the argument or shut down and not attempt to resolve it in the future.

Are you resolving conflict appropriately?

- ♥ We can resolve conflicts peacefully and calmly. Although we may raise our voices, neither of us feels threatened or fearful. If necessary, we can walk away from one another to calm down, but we always come back to talk and resolve the issue, even if that means "We agree to disagree." We are able to see each other's perspective and respect it.

- ♥ We fight in unfair ways (verbal or physical aggression), and/or our conflicts are usually left unresolved. There can be name-calling, accusations and threats. After awhile, we calm down, but we do not revisit the fight to resolve the issue and feel better about it. Resentment builds for one or both of us after each fight. We tend to fight over the same unresolved issues.

Financial Stability:

Many couples experience financial challenges at some point in time. While financial issues can increase a couple's stress, there are some couples who can work together to reduce the stress and resolve the issues. Others, however, have difficulty working together. The increased stress causes further relationship issues.

Do you work together toward financial stability?

- ♥ We work well together regarding financial issues. If there are challenges, we both participate in developing and implementing a solution. There are no secrets between us, and we are both aware of our financial position.
- ♥ We disagree on how to handle money. One of us takes responsibility for all financial issues, and the other doesn't adhere to any suggestion or limits that need to be implemented to keep us financially secure. One of us feels the stress of financial challenges, and the other appears to not care.

Emotional Stability:

The more stress any person has, the more heightened their emotions can become. In addition, we all have emotional strengths and weaknesses due to our past, our jobs, our health, etc. When two people can sustain an acceptable level of emotional stability, their relationship can remain somewhat calm and peaceful. But when one or both become emotionally unstable, the relationship can become chaotic and toxic.

Are you both emotionally stable?

- ♥ We both tend to handle our emotions in an appropriate way. We support one another's occasional difficulties and help each other through difficult times. We have resolved past issues that could affect our relationship now. If one of us is mentally ill (depression, anxiety, bipolar, etc.), we are open to getting appropriate treatment.
- ♥ One or both of us has/have unresolved emotional problems or issues. We have not sought treatment for any emotional issues or illnesses we have. We do not support one another in getting help to correct emotional instability. We persecute our partner for their emotional instability rather than supporting them through it. One or both of us denies our own emotional issues.

Enrichment:

Couples don't decide to get together to keep their lives the same as they've always been -- couples choose to develop a relationship in order to enrich their lives. They can do this by sharing responsibilities, creating a family, having someone to talk to, supporting one another and having a life-long companion.

Does your relationship enrich your life?

- ♥ Our relationship enhances our lives. We feel good knowing we're there when we need one another. We work well together as a team. We're proud of the life we have created for ourselves and feel that the relationship itself has made both our lives better.
- ♥ We are married singles. We don't contribute anything to the other that makes our partner's life happier or better. Our relationship is either insignificant to who we are or it creates chaos and difficulty in our lives. We have difficulty identifying what each of us brings to the relationship or to each other that is positive.

Affection and Sex:

Affection and sex are both an expression of positive feelings. For some, affection may better enhance the feelings we have for our partner than sex does. For others, sex may make them feel better about and closer to their partner than affection. For still others, both affection and sex equally meet their physical and emotional needs. Couples who both feel their needs for physical closeness are being met are happier and have a stronger relationship. However, if one or both partners doesn't feel their needs are being met, the partners may not feel as close.

Are both of your affection and sexual needs being met?

- ♥ Our physical relationship is fulfilling to both of us. Although there may be ups and downs due to the stresses in our lives, we continue to feel close physically. All touch is done in a positive and loving manner with the full consent of one another.
- ♥ Our physical relationship is not fulfilling to one or both of us. There is resentment and disappointment and maybe even anger due to our needs not being met. Touch between us can feel demeaning, disrespectful and unwanted. One of us may feel coerced to engage in physical activity.

Individuality:

Many people believe that to have a healthy relationship, a couple should spend all or most of their time together. This is not true, and doing so can sometimes be detrimental to the relationship. The fact is, no one person can fulfill all our needs. In addition, expecting one person to fulfill all our needs can create an atmosphere where one or both partners are dependent on the other to make them happy. Our lives are enriched if we can function as both part of a couple and as an individual.

Are your lives fulfilling both within and outside of your relationship?

- ♥ We both have appropriate relationships and interests outside our marriage. We encourage each other to pursue friendships, hobbies, sports, etc. outside of our relationship. We are not dependent on one another to fulfill all our needs.
- ♥ We are each other's only friend. We do everything together or are rarely apart. At times, one or both of us feels smothered or frustrated. If something were to happen to one of us, the other would be at a total loss.

Friendship:

Friendship is an important part of a loving relationship. Although your partner shouldn't be your only friend, you should feel as if your partner is your friend. You should enjoy spending time together having fun or connecting on a positive level. There should be time invested in spending time alone together to reconnect.

Are we friends?

- ♥ We are friends and enjoy spending time together. We make it a priority to take time out from our busy schedules to spend quality time enjoying activities we both enjoy. We talk to one another at a personal level and can honestly say we like one another.
- ♥ We would not call one another "friends." In fact, we really don't like each other. We don't make plans to spend time together, and we don't want to. We would not turn to one another if we needed help with a problem.

Commonality:

While having interests in common, such as a favorite sports team or TV show, is good for a couple, these are not the things that are critical to the health of a relationship. The most important things to have in common are your values and morals. If basic morals and values are vastly different, it can create serious friction between the partners. Values and morals include, but are not limited to, fidelity, the value of family, religion, honesty, a lack of criminal activity and dependability.

Do we have common values and morals?

- ♥ We share common morals and values. We both agree on such values and morals as the difference between right and wrong, fidelity, religion, honesty, dependability and so on. There are no great differences that cause us to fight or hide our behavior.
- ♥ We have different moral and values. We have conflict or keep secrets about our differences and how we act on them. We disagree about the importance of such values and morals as religion, respect, honesty and criminality.

..... *How Do I Make It Better? Relationship Appraisal*

This evaluation has been designed to help you recognize areas where your relationship thrives and areas that might need some work. Although some couples can work together -- alone -- to improve their relationship, others need professional help.

If you need assistance, seek treatment from a licensed professional who specializes in relationship issues. I am in the Huntington Beach, California, area and would love to help you, individually or as a couple, create the relationship you desire.

Leanne Hart is a professional therapist, speaker and educator with more than 20 years of experience helping women create the fulfilling relationship they desire. She has helped move hundreds of women from relationship confusion and frustration to clarity and understanding. Leanne works actively with her clients, using her expertise in relationship behavior and dynamics, to help women get what they're looking for in all their relationships. Leanne spends much of her time helping women work toward their goals of feeling connected, supported, understood and loved. Through her personal and professional experience, Leanne has developed a true passion for helping women understand their relationship needs and develop strategies to achieve them.

Use Leanne's Free '*9 Key Strategies to Creating a Great Relationship*' to get that loving feeling back in your life.

Stop struggling with your questions about divorce. Get Leanne's free insightful article which can help you decide '*Should I Stay or Should I Go?*'



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