

PRINCIPLE 1: ENHANCE YOUR LOVE MAPS

Love Maps Questionnaire

By giving honest answers to the following questions, you will get a sense of the quality of your current love maps. For the most accurate reading of how your marriage is doing on this first principle, both of you should complete the following.

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. I can name my partner’s best friends. T F
2. I can tell you what stresses my partner is currently facing. T F
3. I know the names of some of the people who have been irritating my partner lately. T F
4. I can tell you some of my partner’s life dreams. T F
5. I am very familiar with my partner’s religious beliefs and ideas. T F
6. I can tell you about my partner’s basic philosophy of life. T F
7. I can list the relatives my partner likes the least. T F
8. I know my partner’s favorite music. T F
9. I can list my partner’s three favorite movies. T F
10. My spouse is familiar with my current stresses. T F
11. I know the three most special times in my partner’s life. T F
12. I can tell you the most stressful thing that happened to my partner as a child. T F
13. I can list my partner’s major aspirations and hopes in life. T F
14. I know my partner’s major current worries. T F
15. My spouse knows who my friends are. T F
16. I know what my partner would want to do if he or she suddenly won the lottery. T F
17. I can tell you in detail my first impressions of my partner. T F
18. Periodically I ask my partner about his or her world right now. T F
19. I feel that my partner know me pretty well. T F
20. My spouse is familiar with my hopes and aspirations. T F

Scoring: Give yourself one point for each “true” answer.

10 or above: This is an area of strength for your marriage. You have a fairly detailed map of your spouse’s everyday life, hopes, fears, and dreams. You know what makes your spouse “tick.” Based on your score you’ll probably find the love map exercises that follow easy and gratifying. They will serve as a reminder of how connected you and your partner are. Try not to take for granted this knowledge and understanding of each other. Keeping in touch in this way ensures you’ll be well equipped to handle any problem areas that crop up in your relationship.

Below 10: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Perhaps you never had the time or the tools to really get to know each other. Or perhaps your love maps have become outdated as your lives have changed over the years. In either case, by taking the time to learn more about your spouse now, you’ll find your relationship becomes stronger.

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The Love Map 20 Questions Game

Play this game together in the spirit of laughter and gentle fun. The more you play, the more you'll learn about the love maps concept and how to apply it to your own relationship.

STEP 1. Each of you should take a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Together, randomly decide on twenty numbers between 1 and 60. Write the numbers down in a column on the left-hand side of your paper.

STEP 2. Below is a list of numbered questions. Beginning with the top of your column, match the numbers you chose with the corresponding question. Each of you should ask your partner this question. If your spouse answers correctly (you be the judge), he or she receives the number of points indicated for that question, and you receive one point. If your spouse answers incorrectly, neither of you receives any points. The same rules apply when you answer. The winner is the person with the higher score after you've both answered all twenty questions.

1. Name my two closest friends. (2)
2. What is my favorite musical group, compose, or instrument? (2)
3. What was I wearing when we first met? (2)
4. Name one of my hobbies. (3)
5. Where was I born? (1)
6. What stresses am I facing right now? (4)
7. Describe in detail what I did today, or yesterday. (4)
8. When is my birthday? (1)
9. What is the date of our anniversary? (1)
10. Who is my favorite relative? (2)
11. What is my fondest unrealized dream? (5)
12. What is my favorite flower? (2)
13. What is one of my greatest fears or disaster scenarios? (3)
14. What is my favorite time of day for lovemaking? (3)
15. What makes me feel most competent? (4)
16. What turns me on sexually? (3)
17. What is my favorite meal? (2)
18. What is my favorite way to spend an evening? (2)
19. What is my favorite color? (1)
20. What personal improvements do I want to make in my life? (4)
21. What kind of present would I like best? (2)
22. What was one of my best childhood experiences? (2)
23. What was my favorite vacation? (2)
24. What is one of my favorite ways to be soothed? (4)
25. Who is my greatest source of support (other than you)? (3)
26. What is my favorite sport? (2)
27. What do I most like to do with time off? (2)
28. What is one of my favorite weekend activities? (2)
29. What is my favorite getaway place? (3)
30. What is my favorite movie? (2)
31. What are some of the important events coming up in my life? How do I feel about them? (4)

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32. What are some of my favorite ways to work out? (2)
33. Who was my best friend in childhood? (3)
34. What is one of my favorite magazines? (2)
35. Name one of my major rivals or “enemies.” (3)
36. What would I consider my ideal job? (4)
37. What do I fear the most? (4)
38. Who is my least favorite relative? (3)
39. What is my favorite holiday? (2)
40. What kinds of books do I most like to read? (3)
41. What is my favorite TV show? (2)
42. Which side of the bed do I prefer? (2)
43. What am I most sad about? (4)
44. Name one of my concerns or worries. (4)
45. What medical problems do I worry about? (2)
46. What was my most embarrassing moment? (3)
47. What was my worst childhood experience? (3)
48. Name two of the people I most admire. (4)
49. Name my major rival or enemy. (3)
50. Of all the people we both know, who do I like the least? (3)
51. What is one of my favorite desserts? (2)
52. What is my social security number? (2)
53. Name one of my favorite novels. (2)
54. What is my favorite restaurant? (2)
55. What are two of my aspirations, hopes, wishes? (4)
56. Do I have a secret ambition? What is it? (4)
57. What foods do I hate? (2)
58. What is my favorite animal? (2)
59. What is my favorite song? (2)
60. Which sports team is my favorite? (2)

Play this game as frequently as you'd like. The more you play, the more you'll come to understand the concept of a love map and the kind of information yours should include about your spouse.

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Make Your Own Love Maps

Even though your love maps are “all in your head,” it helps to write down some of the basics in order to focus more seriously on your love maps for each other’s everyday lives. Spend extra time on this exercise if you (or your spouse) believe that your current love map is inadequate or, as is often the case, has fallen out of date. Use the following form to interview each other as if you were reporters. (If your spouse is unavailable, you can fill out this form without his or her input, but obviously the major benefits of this exercise come from sharing information.) Take turns as listener and speaker, and write out the answers to these forms. (It’s best to use a separate piece of paper, or better yet a notebook or journal that you can use for all of the exercises in this book.) Don’t pass judgment on what your spouse tells you or try to give each other advice. Remember that you are simply on a fact-finding mission. Your goal is to listen and learn about your mate.

The cast of characters in my partner’s life

Friends:

Potential friends:

Rivals, competitors, “enemies”:

Recent important events in my partner’s life

Upcoming events

(What is my partner looking forward to? Dreading?)

My partner’s current stresses

My partner’s current worries

My partner’s hopes and aspirations (For self? For others?)

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Who Am I?

The more you know about each other's inner world, the more profound and rewarding your relationship will be. This questionnaire is designed both to guide you through some self-exploration and to help you share this exploration with your partner. Work on this exercise even if you and your spouse consider yourselves open books. There's always more to know about each other. Life changes us, so neither of you may be the same person who spoke those wedding vows five, then, or fifty years ago.

Many of the questions in this exercise are powerful. Please make sure you have enough time and privacy to do them justice. In fact, it may be best to reserve this exercise for an uninterrupted stretch when you do not have work to do, deadlines to meet, phone calls to answer, or children (or anybody else) to look after. Most likely you won't be able to complete this questionnaire in one sitting, nor should you try. Instead, break it up by section and do it slowly, over time together.

Answer the questions in each section as candidly as you can. You don't have to answer every aspect of each question—just respond to the parts that are relevant to your life. Write your answers in your private journal or notebook. If writing so much is hard, you can do it in outline form—but the process of writing this down is important to the success of the exercise. When you're ready, exchange notebooks and share with each other what you have written. Discuss each other's entries and what this added knowledge implies for your marriage and the deepening of your friendship.

My Triumphs and Strivings

1. What has happened in your life that you are particularly proud of? Write about your psychological triumphs, times when things went even better than you expected, periods when you came through trials and tribulations even better off. Include periods of stress and duress that you survived and mastered, small events that may still be of great importance to you, events from your childhood or the recent past, self-created challenges you met, periods when you felt powerful, glories and victories, wonderful friendships you maintained, and so on.
2. How have these successes shaped your life? How have they affected the way you think of yourself and your capabilities? How have they affected your goals and the things you strive for?
3. What role has pride (that is, feeling proud, being praised, expressing praise for others) played in your life? Did your parents show you that they were proud of you when you were a child? How? How have other people responded to your accomplishments?
4. Did your parents show you that they loved you? How? Was affection readily expressed in your family? If not, what are the effects and implications of this for your marriage?
5. What role does pride in your accomplishments play in your marriage? What role do your own strivings have in your marriage? What do you want your partner to know and understand about these aspects of yourself, your past, present, and plans for the future? How do you show pride in one another?

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My Injuries and Healings

1. What difficult events or periods have you gone through? Write about any significant psychological insults and injuries you have sustained—your losses, disappointments, trials, and tribulations. Include periods of stress and duress, as well as any quieter periods of despair, hopelessness, and loneliness. Also include any deep trauma you have undergone as a child or adult. For example, harmful relationships, humiliating events, even molestation, abuse, rape, or torture.
2. How have you survived these traumas? What are their lasting effects on you?
3. How did you strengthen and heal yourself? How did you redress your grievances? How did you revive and restore yourself?
4. How did you shield and protect yourself against this ever happening again?
5. How do these injuries and the ways you protect and heal yourself affect your marriage today? What do you want your partner to know and understand about these aspects of yourself?

My Emotional World

1. How did your family express the following when you were a child:
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Affection
 - Interest in one another
2. During your childhood, did your family have to cope with a particular emotional problem, such as aggression between parents, a depressed parent, or a parent who was somewhat emotionally wounded? What implications does this have for your marriage and your other close relationships (friendships, relationships with your parents, siblings, your children)?
3. What is your own philosophy about expressing feelings, particularly sadness, anger, fear, pride, and love? Are any of these difficult for you to express or to see expressed by your spouse? What is the basis of your perspective on this?
4. What differences exist between you and your spouse in the area of expressing emotion? What is behind these differences? What are the implications of these differences for you?

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My Mission and Legacy

1. Imagine that you are standing in a graveyard looking at your own tombstone. Now write the epitaph you would like to see there. Begin with the words: “Here lies . . .”
2. Write your own obituary. (It does not have to be brief.) How do you want people to think of your life, to remember you?
3. Now you’re ready to write a mission statement for your own life. What is the purpose of your life? What is its meaning? What are you trying to accomplish? What is your larger struggle?
4. What legacy would you like to leave when you die?
5. What significant goals have you yet to realize? This can be creating something, or having a particular experience. Minor examples are learning to play the banjo, climbing a mountain, and so on.

Who I Want to Become

Take a moment now to reflect on what you have just written. We are all involved in becoming the person we most want to be. In that struggle we all have demons to fight and overcome.

1. Describe the person you want to become.
2. How can you best help yourself become that person?
3. What struggles have you already faced in trying to become that person?
4. What demons in yourself have you had to fight? Or still have to fight?
5. What would you most like to change about yourself?
6. What dreams have you denied yourself or failed to develop?
7. What do you want your life to be like in five years?
8. What is the story of the kind of person you would like to be?

THE NEXT STEP

All of the above exercises and questions will help you develop greater personal insight and a more detailed map of each other’s life and world. Getting to know your spouse better and sharing your inner self with your partner is an ongoing process. In fact, it’s a lifelong process. So expect to return to these pages from time to time to update your knowledge about yourselves and each other. Think about questions to ask your partner, like, “If you could add an addition to our home what would it be?” or “How are you feeling about your job these days?” One therapist I know has taken to wearing a Bugs Bunny pin and advising couples that the key to sustaining a happy marriage is to ask periodically, “What’s up, doc?”

But love maps are only a first step. Happily married couples don’t “just” know each other. They build on and enhance this knowledge in many important ways. For starters, they use their love maps to express not only their understanding of each other but their fondness and admiration as well, the basis of my second principle.