

THE COUPLES CURE

Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink

Shared Relationship Vision Exercise

1. General questions

These questions are to get the wheels turning and just start noticing what matters most to you. You can add additional questions that occur to you as you take notes. Answer each question on a separate sheet of paper.

- What do you like about our marriage?
- What is unique and special about our relationship?
- What other marriage do you really respect and why?
- What is most important to the future of our marriage?
- What had you found most helpful so far: Which tools, strategy, concepts, mindset shifts, etc.?
- What role does faith or spiritual development play in our marriage?
- What do we want our relationships with others to be like as a couple, with family, community, work, acts of service, etc.?

2. Guiding Values

What values do you want to be guiding your relationship? What are the MOST important? Here are some examples:

- Love
- Communication
- Fun
- Integrity
- Wealth and Financial Freedom
- Compassion and Caring
- Compatibility
- Trust/honesty/truth
- Travel
- Respect
- Commitment and Loyalty
- Passion, sexuality, and Sensuality
- Personal Growth and Development
- Gratitude

3. Conflict Styles

One of the biggest predictors of success for marriage is compatibility or at least a shared understanding of your conflict-resolution style. This is about the process through which you resolve or work through issues. It's not about the content of these issues, just the WAY in which you discuss things. It's best if you can agree on which style to use and know the rules.

Here are some categories of these styles, and how they can differ. See if you can agree on which end of the spectrum for each category you'd prefer and shake on it.

- Togetherness versus separateness. How much do you do or decide together?
- Romance and companionship. If you value keeping your relationship dynamic and romantic, you may like a volatile style. Validating is most concerned about being good companions and friends. How much romance vs companionship?
- Honesty. Do you want to be bald and not hiding anything, or do you want to be more selective about when you share things?
- Persuasion. Do you need active engagements and discussion, or can you be fine with a "yeah go ahead" and you don't need buy-in?
- Expression emotion. How often how much, how intense?
- Traditional roles. How do you divide things up? Who is in charge of what and how do you decide?
- Philosophy and beliefs. Which beliefs do you need to share, which ones are less important for example if you are different of faiths?

4. Brainstorm and exchange your ideals

What do you want the most? Most of what you desire will fall into one of these three categories: Feelings, dynamics, and values. How do you want to FEEL, how do you want to RELATE, and how/why do you want to LIVE a certain way?

Do a BRAINSTORM, just dump out what comes up for you by asking these questions:

- What are the feelings I want to have?
- What are the Relationship Dynamics I desire?
- And what do I want our guiding values to be?

Examples:

- Feelings: I want to feel loved and safe.
- Relational Dynamics: We problem solve quickly after hearing each other out.
- Guiding values: Examples: I want our family to come first before work. We should always be a united front. Full transparency is of utmost importance. We model mutual respect for the kids. Emotions are ok as long as we don't hurt others. God before everything else.

5. List your description

Come up with some present-tense statements that describe your relationship. Each of you will do this on your own sheet of paper.

You must use these guidelines:

1. Use short sentences, starting with the word "We."
2. Statements should use simple, present tense.
3. Use positive language (phrased in terms of what you "do," rather than what you "don't do.")

Examples:

- We respect each other.
- We listen to and really hear each other.
- We make each other laugh.
- We have fun together.
- We help each other well with our problems.
- We are there for each other when one of us is upset.
- We cherish each other.
- We look out for each other's best interest.
- We make each other better and strive for more.
- We attend to each other and stay emotionally connected.
- We watch out for each other.

6. Rank and Review your vision items

1. Exchange your sheets so you are looking at what your spouse wrote. Rate the importance of each individual item on a 1 to 10 scale (1 = not important; 10 = extremely important).
2. Circle the most important item.
3. Put a checkmark (✓) next to the item that's most difficult to achieve.
4. Put a star by the ones that you also had (even if the words are different) Then swap again so you have yours back. Rank again.
5. Rate the importance of each individual item on the same 1 to 10 scale. There will now be two numbers next to each item, in different colors.
6. Circle the item you regard as most important. It may or may not be the same one your partner circled.
7. Put a checkmark (✓) next to the most difficult item. It may or may not be the same one your partner checked.

Now you can see which items ranked the highest. Which ones did you agree were most important?

Take all the items and put them into a new document, placing the ones that ranked highest first. The circled items should be in the top 5.

7. Create Your Shared Vision Plan

Here you will take your vision and break it down into actionable items, like a roadmap that you can follow.

Take the top 5 items on your shared Relationship vision.

Each of you puts 3 actions that would help you have this vision. You will describe actions that your spouse can take to help you have each item.

Example: We feel loved

Three actions: What are the actions that will help me feel loved:

1. Touch me affectionally (Even more specific: Hold my hand when walking down the street, put your arm around me, snuggle when we watch tv, touch my back at a party and stand next to me sometimes.)
2. Make a date to spend time with me.
3. Small favors (bring me coffee, offer to bring food back)

Another example: We are each other's best friend.

Three actions:

1. Take my side in an argument,
2. invite me to do things with you,
3. agree to see the movie I want to see sometimes.

Another Example: We have a passionate romantic connection.

Three actions:

1. Initiate a dinner date and plan it without me.
2. Offer affection or a back rub when stressed.
3. Flirt with me or compliment me when I look good.

Go through this process till you have covered every item on your list and then have your partner do the same.

Now combine both of your vision items and corresponding actions into a word document and print it out. This is like your map to the marriage of your dreams.

8. Capture, Elevate, and Commit

Now write up a brief marriage mission statement based on your detailed vision. This should be used like a mantra, and something you can connect with each morning.

Here's an example:

"We have a long and happy life together, where we unconditionally support each other in making one another's plans and dreams come true. We have a joyful, loving, and passionate relationship with the freedom and means to do what we want. We have the success, financial freedom, and great health to be able to travel the world and do whatever we choose."

Now you have BOTH a detailed vision (a map with the actions that will get you there) and a broad mission statement to guide you forward.

Put them into frames, attach them to the poster board, or create beautiful certificates. Place them somewhere visible, and then create a ceremony to anchor in this vision together. Bring it to your "graduation" call so we can celebrate you in the group!