

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions by rating how much of a problem or issue each of these is in your relationship at this time.

HOW MUCH OF A PROBLEM	0 NOT AT ALL	1 SOMEWHAT PROBLEMATIC	2 VERY PROBLEMATIC	3 EXTREMELY PROBLEMATIC
Finance				
Sex				
Demonstrations of affection				
Family				
Child rearing				
Friends				
Leisure pursuits				
Time together				
Arguments				
Values/goals				
Religion				
Household tasks				
Work or career				
Decision-making				
Communication				

PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Rate each communication issue from 0-5 (0 = no problem, 5 = major problem).

COMMUNICATION ISSUE	YOUR PARTNER	WHAT YOUR PARTNER MIGHT SAY ABOUT YOU
Doesn't listen		
Talks too much/never gets to the point		
Avoids conflict		
Interrupts		
Nags		
Insists on being right		
Has to have last word		
Doesn't indicate agreement/ doesn't show interest		
Finds fault/criticizes frequently		
Gives advice too soon rather than listening		

FREQUENCY OF POSITIVE BEHAVIORS QUESTIONNAIRE

How often do the following occur?

	NEVER	RARELY	OFTEN
Confiding in each other			
Physical affection, touching, kissing (non-sexual)			
Physical affection (sexual)			
Engaging in outside interests together			
Laughing together			
Working on a project together			
Going on a date			
Socializing with friends together			
Using terms of endearment			
Demonstrations of caring			
Missing partner when away			
Being careful to not say hurtful or critical things			

TREATMENT GOALS CHECKLIST

Think about your goals for therapy. It's different for everyone, so please check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce a fear. <input type="checkbox"/> Have more pleasurable activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Improve communications with my:
(circle) <i>Spouse / Children / Friends /</i>
<i>Coworkers / Others</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Express myself more assertively. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to relax. <input type="checkbox"/> Better manage my health. <input type="checkbox"/> Better tolerate my mistakes. <input type="checkbox"/> Better tolerate others' mistakes. <input type="checkbox"/> Feel less guilt. <input type="checkbox"/> Feel less depressed. <input type="checkbox"/> Better accepting a loss/death. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase my conversational skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn how I come across to others. <input type="checkbox"/> Not take disappointments so hard. <input type="checkbox"/> Doubt myself less. <input type="checkbox"/> Think more positively. <input type="checkbox"/> Improve my sexual relationship. <input type="checkbox"/> Control my eating or weight. <input type="checkbox"/> Control my alcohol use. <input type="checkbox"/> Change a habit. <input type="checkbox"/> Control my drug use. <input type="checkbox"/> Better manage my pain. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to improve friendships. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce uncomfortable thoughts. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn more effective parenting skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve my sleep. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce my sensitivity to possible criticism. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk out a pending decision. <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving/decision-making techniques. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce panic attacks. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase self-esteem. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce family difficulties. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce job difficulties. <input type="checkbox"/> Better manage my temper. <input type="checkbox"/> Take initiative more often. <input type="checkbox"/> Receive medication help. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease procrastination. <input type="checkbox"/> Better time management. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease trying to be perfect. <input type="checkbox"/> Not reacting so emotionally. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow myself to express my feelings more. <input type="checkbox"/> Feel more self-confident. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss my thoughts of harming myself. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss my thoughts of harming others. <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust better to a recent change/incident. <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust better to a past incident. <input type="checkbox"/> Become more optimistic. <input type="checkbox"/> Improve my self-awareness. <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt a healthier attitude. <input type="checkbox"/> Worry less. |
|--|---|

☐ Other (Specify) _____

Now please review your list and decide which three goals you would first want to discuss/change.

First _____

Second _____

Third _____

CROSS-SECTIONAL CONCEPTUALIZATION

Problem 1:					
	Situation	Emotions	Physical Feelings	Thoughts	Behaviors
Client A					
Client B					

BELIEFS IMPACTING CHANGE

Please indicate how much you believe any of the statements below. Please be honest about how you feel.

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	A LOT
My partner is incapable of change.				
I cannot change.				
Our relationship has been bad for too long to change it now.				
I won't change until he/she does.				
I won't make an effort if she/he won't.				
My partner is not interested in changing/doesn't care enough about me or us.				
If we talk about our relationship, it will get worse not better, as it will open up stuff best forgotten or ignored.				
It won't matter if he/she changes behaviors, it is the feelings and attitude that won't change.				
I don't feel any of it is my fault; he/she needs to change.				
My partner has serious problems that are responsible for our issues.				
This only postpones the inevitable, which is us splitting up.				
Since he/she hurt me, he/she deserves to be punished or suffer.				

ATTITUDE ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Think about your relationship. How much do you believe each of these statements?

BELIEF	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	A LOT
Quarrels should not happen.				
My partner being critical means he/she doesn't love me.				
He/she should know what I need without me saying.				
If he/she cared, they would always do what I want.				
Hurting my feelings or upsetting me is always deliberate.				
A good relationship has no problems.				
My partner is incapable of change.				

SAMPLE TREATMENT PLAN

BILLY AND FRIEDA

IDENTIFIED PROBLEM	GOAL	SPECIFIC STEPS TO ACHIEVE GOAL
Arguing	Resolve conflict in a healthy way	Validation of the other's feelings. Assertion without raising voice. Good listening skills.
Not spending time together	Increase time spent together without other focus (kids, phone)	Schedule 1 date night per week. Put aside 2 hours on weekends for "hanging out".
In-law conflict	Acceptance of Billy's family	Plan out together when family will visit and how to spend time. Frieda to reduce critical comments about her in-laws.
Inequality re: child-rearing responsibilities	Develop more reciprocity or sharing of duties	Billy to help out with kids' activities on weekends. Make plan each week for who will put kids to bed or supervise homework each day.

TREATMENT PLAN

Names:

IDENTIFIED PROBLEM	GOAL	SPECIFIC STEPS TO ACHIEVE GOAL

NEED FOR CHANGE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please indicate **honestly** which of the statements below best describes your attitude toward, or feeling about, making this change in your life at this time.

- ☐ I don't need to make changes. Nothing is wrong.
- ☐ Maybe I need to make changes but I am uncertain.
- ☐ I need to make changes and am considering how to.
- ☐ I have started making some changes.
- ☐ I am keeping the changes I have made going.

If you have any comments or wish to elaborate on what you answered above, please use the space below.

FEELINGS ABOUT CHANGE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions.

How committed am I to change (0-10)? _____

How committed do I believe my partner is to change (0-10)? _____

Explain the ratings above, if necessary: _____

How ready am I to be active in doing specific things to create change (0-10)? _____

How ready do I believe my partner is to be active in doing specific things to create change (0-10)? _____

Explain the ratings above, if necessary: _____

How much confidence do I have that I, my partner or our relationship can change (0-10)?

How much confidence do I believe my partner has that he/she, I or our relationship can change (0-10)?

Explain the ratings above, if necessary: _____

NO CHANGE/CONTINUING AS WE ARE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP

BENEFITS What is good or will be good about this?	COSTS What is or will be bad about this?

Once completed go back over the items on each side and indicate with an * or other symbol those which are especially important to you.

CHANGING OUR RELATIONSHIP IN WAYS DISCUSSED WITH THE THERAPIST

BENEFITS What do I /we stand to gain? What would be the advantages or upside?	COSTS What would be hard? What would be the disadvantages or downside?

Once completed go back over the items on each side and indicate with an * or other symbol those which are especially important to you.

GROUND RULES FOR THERAPY

- The relationship is the focus, not the individual.
- The couple agree with the concept of shared responsibility for problems experienced.
- The focus will be on building up positive behavior and on translating complaints to requests.
- Individuals are encouraged to refrain from scapegoating/blaming or being derogatory or hostile to the partner.
- The therapist will not "take sides."
- There will not be collateral contacts with individuals in between sessions unless there is an emergency.
- There will be a respect for each individual's privacy where homework is to be done separately.
- In the event of serious conflict, rage or anger occurring within the session, the following steps will be taken:

- In the event of violence or abuse, the following steps will be taken:

A GUIDE TO COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is a form of short-term, problem-focused therapy which has been successfully used with several psychological and emotional problems, including depression, anxiety and addictive behaviors, over the last 20-30 years. In recent years, CBT has also been applied to relationship issues with research showing its effectiveness.

CBT aims to help clients identify and change thinking and behavior patterns which cause distress.

The CBT approach suggests that:

- Thoughts play a major role in the emotional and behavioral problems experienced by individuals. While situations (a friend not returning a telephone call) can elicit some feelings (irritation or anxiety), the way we think about this situation ("Something is wrong" or "This person doesn't care") can make the emotional reaction more severe or intense.
- Behaviors can also be part of the problem. For example, if the individual, who is feeling bad waiting for a call from a friend, calls repeatedly leaving angry messages for the other person, it is likely the situation will be made worse.
- Exploring the connection between situations, thoughts, feelings and behavior will be helpful in revealing maladaptive thinking or behavioral patterns which can then be changed leading to less emotional distress.

CBT therapy sessions tend to be:

- Structured (there is a clear plan for each session)
- Focused largely on present problems which are causing distress
- Collaborative (client and therapist work together to find solutions)
- Skill-building (clients learn skills which can help to deal better with problem situations and practice these both within and between sessions)
- Emphasize thinking and behavior patterns which may be more effective than those in operation currently

CBT applied to couples:

- Identifies thinking styles behind couples' perceptions of each other
- Looks at underlying beliefs about the relationship and each other
- Examines the interactional patterns which cause distress
- Focuses on practical ways to change all the above

CBT will look at areas of dissatisfaction within the relationship from each partner's perspective and look at factors that contribute to this lack of satisfaction (partner's behavior, unrealistic expectations, external stressors) and attempt to modify these.

Some goals of CBT may be to alter unrealistic expectations of each other ("He should know what I need without me asking," "She should want intimacy whenever I do"), correct wrong attributions for each other's behaviors ("He/she meant to hurt me by saying something negative about my parents") and end destructive exchanges (the use of sarcasm, contempt, withdrawal during conflict). There may also be an emphasis on increasing positive behaviors (acts of affection or caring) and expressions of gratitude.

Techniques which may be used include:

- Evidence review (Is there a good reason to believe what is assumed?)
- Generating alternatives (Is there another way one could look at this?)
- Reviewing the usefulness of thoughts (Does it help to think this way?)
- Decatastrophizing (How likely is it that something bad will happen and what could be done if it did?)
- Action plan (What can be done to check things out or to improve the situation?)

These strategies will be explained in greater detail and practiced during CBT sessions, which generally will be with the couple together. In the early assessment phase the couples may see the therapist on their own to give information but otherwise all sessions will be together.

During each session, similar to individual CBT, there will be a plan or agenda when one or two problems will be focused on, discussion and identification of the problem related to the current issues will proceed systematically, possible solutions will be considered and then selected, and the therapist, in collaboration with the couple, may assign homework for the partners to work on in the intervening period until the next session. Feedback regarding the session, and the therapy in general, will also be sought in a systematic way and any issues arising will be discussed.

The aim is for the couple to ultimately become their own therapist using the improved relationship skills on their own in between sessions and after CBT, which is usually short term, ends.

IDENTIFYING THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

When you experience strong emotions or are experiencing a problem related to your relationship try to write down, as soon as you can, each of the components of your conflict on this form.

The form consists of two identical sets of five speech bubble-shaped boxes arranged in a circular pattern. Each set includes a dashed circle for a name and four larger bubbles for Situation, Thought, Feeling, and Behavior. Each bubble contains horizontal lines for writing.

Top Set:

- Name:** _____
- Situation:** _____

- Thought:** _____

- Feeling:** _____

- Behavior:** _____

Bottom Set:

- Name:** _____
- Situation:** _____

- Thought:** _____

- Feeling:** _____

- Behavior:** _____

Identified thought/belief: _____

Degree of belief (0-100%): _____

(How does it help me?)

[illegible]

(How does it hinder me?)

[illegible]

LEARNING ABOUT COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS (11 WAYS TO MAKE YOURSELF MISERABLE)

Cognitive distortions are inaccuracies in our thinking. We can think of our thoughts as representations of reality, sort of like a photograph. If we have a smudge on the lens of the camera, then the photo will show a picture that does not accurately represent what was in front of the camera. Even if the lens is clear but we take a picture of only part of an object, then the picture will not accurately portray the whole object.

It is safe to assume that everyone engages in cognitive distortions at times, especially during times of distress. It can be very helpful to be able to identify distortions in your thinking, because once you have discovered a distortion, you will know how to correct it and feel better. Identifying your cognitive distortions is like diagnosing a thought problem. A good diagnosis usually points to a helpful remedy. Below is a list of 11 common distortions with examples of how they might occur. See if you can identify one or more distorted thoughts of your own.

All or Nothing/Black or White: Seeing things as though there were only two possible categories.

Example: If a situation turns out imperfectly, you see it as a total failure. Your partner forgets to compliment you on an achievement and you think, "Well, he thinks nothing of anything I do."

Your example:

Over-Generalizing: A negative event is seen as part of a never-ending pattern of defeat.

Example: When your partner is late you think, "She never thinks of me and my feelings."

Your example:

Mental Filter: Seeing only negative aspects of a situation while screening out the positive aspects.

Example: You focus on a critical comment your partner made while ignoring all the positive feedback you received.

Your example:

Jumping to Conclusions: Predicting things will go a certain way before you have the facts.

Example: Your partner looks at another man/woman in a restaurant and you assume he/she is looking for another partner and will leave you.

Your example:

Mind-Reading: Assuming that you know exactly what someone is thinking.

Example: A friend or your partner seems irritated or not as pleasant as usual and you think, "He must be angry with me."

Your example:

Fortune-Telling: Predicting that things will turn out badly and that you won't be able to cope.

Example: After an argument with your partner you imagine you both divorcing and you being alone and miserable.

Your example:

Magnifying or Minimizing: Overvaluing or minimizing the importance of a situation or certain information.

Example: Even though you may be enjoying a nice time with your partner, you are upset by one or more things he/she said during the evening and you write off the whole evening.

Your example:

Emotional Reasoning: Assuming that how you feel is an accurate reflection of how things are.

Example: If you are feeling unloved at a particular time, you conclude that your partner does not love you or has stopped loving you.

Your example:

Shoulds: You tell yourself things "should" or "shouldn't" be a certain way. We do this with ourselves, with other people, and with situations.

Example: "She/he should know what I want without me having to ask."

Your example:

Labeling: This is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking which can be damaging to our self-esteem and our relationships.

Example: Instead of simply acknowledging a mistake, we say, "I'm such a screw-up" (substitute "loser," "idiot;"). Applying labels to ourselves or others ("that SOB") will tend to blind us to other qualities which we or others have.

Your example:

Personalizing (Blaming): This distortion occurs when we hold ourselves entirely responsible for something that isn't or wasn't entirely under our control. When this process is reversed, we blame someone else entirely for a situation we have had a part in creating.

Example: "It's all my fault/all my partner's fault that we are not getting along."

Your example:

HOW TO RECOGNIZE DISTORTIONS IN YOUR THINKING

The next time you become upset or have a negative emotional reaction, see if you can identify both what you were thinking and any distortions in the thoughts on this worksheet.

Feelings

What was I feeling (angry, anxious, sad, etc)?

How bad was the feeling (0-100)?

Situation

Where was I? What was going on?

<u>Thoughts</u> What went through my mind? What thoughts did I have?	<u>Distortions</u> Identify the distortion for each thought

REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE FOR YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHT(S)

Write down the identified thought(s):

Rate your degree of belief (0-100%): _____

List the evidence for and against your thought(s) in the boxes below:

Evidence Against	Evidence For

Now, rate your degree of belief in your original thought (0-100%): _____

Restate your original thought(s):

GENERATING ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF LOOKING AT THINGS

Write down the identified thought/interpretation:

Rate your degree of belief (0-100%) _____:

List all other possible viewpoints or explanations. What is the evidence for each?

What are Other Explanations?	What is the Evidence?

Rate your degree of belief in the original thought now (0-100%): _____

Restated thought:

Is more information needed to decide which of the above is more likely or logical?

Yes _____ No _____

If so, how could this be obtained? Action plan:

DECATASTROPHIZING WHEN THINKING THE WORST

My worst fear	How likely is it (0-100%)?	What would I do if it happens?	What is the most likely outcome?

EFFECTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

What is the specific problem we are trying to solve? _____

What is our goal? _____

What are all the possible solutions or options? _____

What is good and bad about each?

Possible solution	Pros	Cons

Which is the best of these and how will we put this into action?

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Speak attentively, maintain eye contact, check for responses
- Be brief, get to the point, don't over-speak or dominate the conversation
- Ask meaningful questions to assist the exchange of ideas, not questions that have "yes" or "no" answers
- Accept silence
- Avoid cross-examination or finishing sentences for the other
- Be diplomatic and respectful
- Listen attentively and actively through the entire message from the speaker
- Give signals to indicate that active listening is taking place (maintaining eye contact, nodding head)
- Repeat back/summarize what has been heard ("You are feeling...")
- Look for the specifics of what was said rather than what it means or how it fits in with previous issues or your history ("This irritated you because...." rather than "This is your personality or background")
- Ask questions for clarification, if necessary ("Which was most upsetting to you?")
- Find points of agreement, if possible, or something that the listener can see as valid ("I can see how that would have been irritating")
- After some of the above occurs, slowly and carefully indicate a reaction to what is communicated or give an explanation of intentions, if appropriate ("I thought it might help you if I but I see that it didn't")
- Apologize, if necessary, or take some responsibility for what occurred ("I am sure that raising my voice was unhelpful and I am sorry that I did that") without a sting in the tail ("I am sorry for.... but you gave me no option")
- Even when not willing to take all the blame, express regret that your partner is hurt, sad or anxious
- When there is a continuing disagreement, the partners should ask themselves, "How important is it to confront this issue or my partner right now?" or "Which is most important, my ego/pride or our relationship?" (If perceived as not that important, you or your partner may decide to let it go.)

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Desirable speaker behaviors

- Be brief
- Be specific
- State things as positively as possible
- Use "I" statements
- Make it clear what would be helpful
- Avoid global "You" statements
- No insults, blaming or accusations
- No labels or absolutes
- Check out inferences about partner's behavior or intentions

Desirable listener behaviors

- Listen attentively, don't interrupt until speaker is finished
- Give signals to indicate you are listening
- Try to get to the kernel of what partner is saying or feeling
- Summarize what you think was said
- Ask for extra information or corrections to your summary
- Don't be defensive or counterattack
- If appropriate, clarify reasons for behavior without excusing it
- Do not analyze partner's motives beyond wanting to express self
- Find points of agreement in addition to any disagreement
- Apologize if your behavior contributed to partner's upset or express regret that he/she is distressed
- Inquire what will help now

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH ANGER IN YOURSELF

- Recognize early warning signals of anger, the “yellow zone” (usually characteristic bodily feelings) before it gets to the “red zone,” when it is intense.
- Use coping strategies to deal with these early warning signals such as breathing, relaxation, mindfulness or taking a brief “time out” where you get involved in a distracting or soothing activity away from the anger-eliciting situation.
- Think about any other sources of your anger beyond the current provocation (the fact you can’t go golfing because of the weather or kids acting up earlier) in addition to what someone is saying to you right now.
- When you have identified the situation triggering the anger ask yourself:
 - What does it mean to you that this occurred?
 - What were your expectations in this situation?
 - Were these realistic?
 - What do you feel you are entitled to in this situation?
 - Is this realistic?
 - If you have the idea something was unfair, was it unfair from the other person’s perspective?
 - Was there any intention to treat you badly?
 - Are you responding to some other person or situation from your past?
 - How important is this in the big picture?
- What do you hope to achieve with your anger? What are the costs and benefits of feeling or acting angrily? Can you achieve what you need in another way?
- If your feelings of anger are justified:
 - Give yourself permission to feel angry/accept the feeling while coming up with a plan to deal with it.
 - Assert yourself in a controlled way.
 - Avoid being passive (and subsequently annoyed with yourself) or explosive (with negative consequences for the relationship).
 - State how you feel in a controlled tone using “I” statements and what you would like to happen (requests not demands).
 - Ensure your body language supports your assertive message.
- Take responsibility for feelings of anger, accept them and find a solution which should not involve insisting that the other person changes/apologizes.

DEALING WITH ANGER IN A PARTNER/OTHER PERSON

- Recognize early signs of anger in the other person.
- Inquire about these feelings in a non-critical way once you have observed them.
- Allow some ventilation; don't interrupt, become defensive, or try to problem-solve immediately.
- Display listening signals and reflect back how the other person appears to be feeling. Ask for clarification or confirmation.
- Don't invalidate the other person's feelings.
- Realize that anger is often displaced or cumulative. Ask if there are other sources of frustration without denying the present message.
- Disarm the anger by finding any points of agreement and, if appropriate, acknowledge your role in the anger episode.
- If the emotional level is too high for a problem-solving discussion, suggest a deferment with an agreed time to follow up.
- Check out what expectations the angry individual had for you (or others) and how they wanted to be treated.
- If the complaints are justified even in part, apologize for your part. Express regret that this occurred rather than taking 100% responsibility.
- State your own position non-defensively and calmly. Clarify your motives but don't punish or counterattack. Listen carefully, be supportive, but assert yourself respectfully and in a controlled way.

MINDFUL BREATHING

Mindful breathing is a great start to mindfulness in general and can be done in quite a short time. It can be very enjoyable and beneficial. It is important to understand that you are not trying to perfect this; just to benefit from it in regards to feeling some calm renewal.

Find a relaxing position. The back should be straight, not bent, with the back of the neck aligned to the spine and feet resting flat on the floor. Focus your attention on breathing, noticing each breath as it is taken in and let out.

When your attention settles on the breath, letting it be itself and not forcing it to go any particular way, breathing calms, and the mind reaches a place of more tranquility and peace. Mindful breathing sends the brain a message that everything is OK and there is no need to worry or fret.

"First, let your awareness drop down to your abdomen, away from all thinking and the cares of your day. Simply let your body breathe in and out exactly as it wants to. Just notice the flow of air in as you inhale and out as you exhale. Notice the rise and fall of your abdomen as you breathe. Notice the inflection point just before you begin to exhale and the pause before your body begins another cycle. Focus on what is interesting or pleasant about these sensations and concentrate as best you can on only that. When your mind pulls you away on to some other thoughts or focus of attention, notice this happening and gently come back to the breath without any recrimination for the wandering of your mind.

The goal of this exercise is not to obtain perfect concentration on the breathing. Rather it is to notice in a kindly way when your mind is wandering and return gently to the breath. By not struggling against the mind's natural tendency to wander, but simply observing it, we can develop heightened awareness which in itself is good practice.

Cultivate the sense that, with each breath, you are nourishing the cells in your body and building a calm mind and spirit. Continue as long as is comfortable for you, mindfully breathing in and out, noticing what it feels like, bringing your mind gently back to the breath when it wanders and enjoying what is happening right now without thought or judgment."

SITTING MEDITATION

"In this exercise, choose a quiet place. Sit in a way that allows you to be both alert and relaxed. Allow a little time for transitioning from what you had been doing to the meditative state. Have an unhurried attitude towards this. Take a moment to become aware of the environment around you ... the sights, sounds, whatever is present there. Note the sensations in your body as you sit there. Feel the air on your skin. Notice any sensations emanating from how you are sitting or where your feet touch the floor or your back touches the chair.

Gently allow your awareness to settle in your abdomen or alternatively the point where air enters your nostrils. Notice as before the body breathing in and breathing out, letting the breath unfold of its own accord. Attend clearly to the pleasantness of this. If you notice, as you may, that your mind has wandered from your breath, briefly notice what you were thinking about or just say to yourself "thinking, thinking." Similarly, if you feel something, perhaps a physical feeling or an emotion such as anxiety, just notice it or say to yourself "feeling, feeling." Then gently return your attention to your breathing. The most important thing to realize is that such wandering is completely natural and to be expected. So do not engage in accusations against yourself for this. The aim is mere recognition or observation, not evaluation or judgment. The essence of this practice is to simply notice and return, notice and return as many times as is required without involvement in the content of what you are thinking or feeling.

Repeat this process for a comfortable period of time. Proceed slowly and only continue as long as is comfortable for you. As time goes on, your capacity to sit with yourself will gradually increase. Whatever you can manage, do it for that period of time every day if possible, gradually lengthening your meditation periods to at least 30-40 minutes. You may want to use a recording or written instructions to get you started and then follow the format described here on your own when you are ready. This allows you to complete a mindfulness practice anywhere anytime.

When you finish your meditation, take your time coming out and see if you can bring the same attitude of clear accepting awareness into your daily life. During the day and evening, return to your meditation by practicing a few mindful breaths. Opportunities may present themselves during the day to practice, such as when waiting in a bank or store, waiting for someone to pick up the phone, waiting in your car for traffic to start moving. These are good opportunities to practice with obvious benefits to you."

SELF-VALIDATION EXERCISE

The next time you are upset, ask yourself:

What happened? _____

What exactly am I feeling (not why or what it means)? _____

Then consider that is perfectly OK to feel as you do. Consider how you can get yourself through this feeling.

List actions (self-soothing and other) that might help: _____

PARTNER VALIDATION EXERCISE

When you are upset with your partner or the relationship, ask yourself: _____

What happened? _____

What feelings do I have? _____

How can I accept these and understand them? _____

How can I show compassion to myself (what might I say to an upset friend)? What can I do to self-validate or self-soothe? _____

What is my partner feeling now? Why is this so upsetting for him/her? _____

What do I notice in his/her actions/expressions? _____

What can I say to myself that is compassionate, not judgmental, about what he/she is feeling?

What is the big picture? What is my overall feeling towards this person versus what I feel right now? What are my hopes for our relationship?

How can I create and show acceptance to him/her even if the actions are upsetting?

What actions can I engage in that will show acceptance? _____

EXERCISES FOR REPAIR IF INVALIDATION OCCURRED

What invalidating actions did I engage in (rather than what the other person did)?

What would have been more validating?

While forgiving myself for my actions then, what actions could I take now that would help repair our connection or relationship?

What can I tell my partner that is more validating now?

DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL DISTRESS EXERCISE

Go through the following exercise when you experience high emotion.

Notice as early as you can the warning signs of beginning to get upset, then ask yourself:

What thoughts am I having that are leading to my distress?

Are these valid or accurate? _____

If I am predicting something, how likely is it to actually turn out that way? _____

Are these thoughts helpful to me and the relationship? _____

What can I say to myself that involves acceptance and mindfulness of the emotion?

What activities could I involve myself in now that might help?

What things would be soothing to me given how I feel? Anything physically self-soothing (relaxation, yoga, breathing)? List below:

Anything mentally self-soothing (distraction, visualization, compassionate self-talk, phrases I could say to myself, things to remind myself of)? List below:

Anything soothing involving the senses (scented candles, music, warm bath, taste of something I like)? List below:

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

- Recognize what is being experienced.
- Give yourself permission to feel this.
- Examine underlying thoughts.
- Plan and engage in:
 - Activities that refocus attention away from feelings and are likely to produce some sense of accomplishment.
 - Activities that are pleasurable and may lead to mood improvement.
- Accept the feelings while being aware of the impermanence of this level of distress and determine to carry on with activities despite the feelings.
- Don't add to negative feelings with secondary emotional reactions (frustration or anxiety because of the initial feeling).
- Watch out for exacerbating thoughts such as "It's not fair," "Why me?" "It will never change," "It's my fault," or "It's his/her fault."
- Develop self-soothing strategies:
 - Peaceful imagery
 - Relaxation/meditation
 - Pleasurable, distracting activities
 - Sensory experiences
 - Distracting thoughts
 - Connecting with/contributing to others

METTA MEDITATION

Metta meditation refers to developing loving kindness towards ourselves and others. This has many benefits in terms of compassion and empathy, which have the power to positively change brain function and also benefit us in many other ways. All forms of meditation are in themselves an act of kindness to oneself and to other people, but it may be helpful to make this more explicit as you will in this practice.

Start by sitting with yourself; enjoy and focus on your breathing. As you continue to breathe in and out, and when you are ready, dwell gently with phrases such as:

May I be happy.

May I have peace and well-being.

May I be free from negative emotions.

May I be safe.

Take your time saying each one. Do not rush the process.

When ready and when you have begun perhaps to feel the benefits from this step, widen the circle to someone else, beginning with a person who is closest to you. Continue to breathe in and out in a relaxed, unforced way and dwell with the same phrases, this time putting in the name of the person.

May . . . be happy.

May . . . have peace and well-being.

May . . . be free from negative emotions.

May . . . be safe.

Then the practice can be extended in the same way to a friend, a neutral person (someone you don't know well) and eventually, with practice, to someone you have issues with or find it hard to think about without distress.

Finally, you may want to express the same intentions towards all living things.

SELF-COMPASSION SAMPLE

Self-judgment		Self-kindness
When I see something in myself which I don't like, I am self-critical.	Replace with	I am tolerant of my flaws.
Isolation		Common Humanity
When I feel down I think most people are happier than me.	Replace with	When I feel inadequate I remind myself that many people feel this way sometimes.
Over-identification		Mindfulness
When I feel down I obsess and fixate on how I feel.	Replace with	When I am upset I try to approach my feelings with openness and curiosity.

SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICE

<i>Self-judgment</i>		<i>Self-kindness</i>
	<i>Replace with</i>	
<i>Isolation</i>		<i>Common Humanity</i>
	<i>Replace with</i>	
<i>Over-identification</i>		<i>Mindfulness</i>
	<i>Replace with</i>	

COMPASSION TO OTHER SAMPLE

Other judgment		Other kindness
When I see something in my partner which I don't like, I am critical.	Replace with	I am tolerant of his/her flaws.
Isolation		Common Humanity
When our relationship is not so good I think most people are happier than us.	Replace with	When I feel this I remind myself that many couples probably feel this way sometimes.
Over-identification		Mindfulness
When I feel down about us, I obsess and fixate on how I feel and what needs to be done.	Replace with	When I am upset about what is going on with us, I try to approach my feelings with openness and curiosity.

COMPASSION TO OTHER PRACTICE

<i>Other judgment</i>	<i>Replace with</i>	<i>Other kindness</i>
<i>Isolation</i>		<i>Common Humanity</i>
	<i>Replace with</i>	
<i>Over-identification</i>		<i>Mindfulness</i>
	<i>Replace with</i>	

STEPS TO SELF-COMPASSION

Soften into your body:

- Care for yourself physically
- Relax, don't tense
- Soothe the body

Allow your thoughts:

- Care for yourself mentally
- Cut out judgment and self-criticism, allow thoughts to come and go
- Visualize your thoughts moving like a stream or waves on an ocean
- Develop compassion for your own thoughts and for your brain

Befriend your feelings:

- Stop fighting feelings
- Accept what is
- Show empathy and compassion to the person having the feelings
- Practice loving-kindness or metta meditation
- Engage in self-forgiveness, as necessary
- Engage in relaxing or pleasurable activities

Relate to others:

- Connect with others to prevent isolation
- Show kindness, compassion and gratitude to others

Nourish your spirit:

- Cultivate closeness to a transcendent being
- Create intimate contact with the miracle of everyday life
- Develop appreciation of everyday miracles with a corresponding decrease in "selfing" or self-enlargement

WARM-UP GRATITUDE EXERCISE

What are you grateful for in your partner? What are some of the things you appreciate about him/her?

[illegible]

DAILY PARTNERSHIP GRATITUDE LIST

- For every day of this week, make a list of at least five qualities you are grateful for in your partner.
- As this gratitude exercise becomes a habit, your awareness of what you're grateful for will increase.
- If you have trouble coming up with things you appreciate about your partner, remember to be mindful, which you can do by trying to visualize and/or experience what you are grateful for.
- After this initial week, it is helpful to continue reminding yourself what you are grateful for in your partner once a week.
- You may even start a gratitude journal for your relationship, where you can document your gratitude exercises.

Monday: In my partner, I am grateful for. . .

Tuesday: In my partner, I am grateful for. . .

Wednesday: In my partner, I am grateful for. . .

Thursday: In my partner, I am grateful for. . .

Friday: In my partner, I am grateful for. . .

Saturday: In my partner, I am grateful for. . .

Sunday: In my partner, I am grateful for. . .

WEEKLY PARTNERSHIP GRATITUDE LIST:

This week, I am grateful for this in my partner:

STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are your five main strengths?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are your partner's five main strengths?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Which five main strengths do you think your partner would say you possess?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are your five main strengths as a couple?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How can you work on improving both your individual strengths and the strengths you possess as a couple?

Improvement of Individual Strengths

Improvement of Mutual Relationship Strengths

FORGIVENESS EXERCISE

Think of a time recently when you became upset with your partner based on some action or behavior of his/hers.

What occurred (what was said or done)?

What impact did it have on your feelings?

Why might this have occurred (what was going on for your partner)?

Can you accept or forgive your partner for this?

What can you say verbally to indicate forgiveness or acceptance?

What response might you get from your partner if you do this?

What will be the overall consequence for your relationship if you forgive your partner?

INDIVIDUAL CHART FOR RECORDING MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

Individual weekly activities and evaluation of their meaning and satisfaction					
	Activity done individually (working, cleaning, exercising, reading, etc.)	Amount of time spent on activity (approximate)	Desire to spend more/less/same amount of time on this activity (=, +, ++, -, or --)	Satisfaction derived from this activity (scale from 1 to 5)	Ideas on how to increase satisfactory activities/decrease undesirable activities
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

COUPLES CHART FOR RECORDING MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

Weekly couple activities and evaluation of their meaning and satisfaction					
	Activity done as a couple (going out, eating together, sexual activities, etc.)	Amount of time spent on activity (approximate)	Desire to spend more/less/same amount of time on this activity (=, +, ++, -, or --)	Satisfaction derived from this activity (scale from 1 to 5)	Ideas on how to increase satisfactory activities/decrease undesirable activities
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

[illegible]

EXERCISE IN DEVELOPING POSITIVE HABITS AND RITUALS

Develop two new rituals as a couple that you think would make your relationship a better one. What are they and how can you implement them in your relationship?

New ritual 1:

New ritual 2:

Carry out these rituals for a month and then explore how they have changed your relationship. Do you see improvement? If so, in which areas of your relationship?

BENEVOLENCE EXERCISE

Try to recall a time when you were helpful towards your partner and felt appreciated for that gesture. Think about how your partner responded to it and how you felt as a result of that. Try to experience those emotions again. Ponder your general outlook on giving to your partner and also receiving from him/her. How does that make you feel?

Act of benevolence/generosity towards your partner:

Situation:

Partner's response:

Your emotions:

Impact on relationship:

Try to imagine a future situation with your partner in which you are helpful, benevolent, and caring. Think of the emotional response attached to this act and try to experience it in your mind and body.

Take time to think about acts of benevolence and generosity on a regular basis, and to re-experience the emotions elicited by those acts.

What other helpful and generous acts towards your partner could you partake in?

Possible future acts of benevolence/generosity:

TRANSFORMING NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES IN THE RELATIONSHIP INTO MORE POSITIVE ONES

Describe a negative/stressful experience in the relationship:

What are the negative emotions arising from this situation?

What are the positive emotions arising from this situation?

Develop meaning derived from this experience:

Describe how a similar situation could be approached in the future in a more positive way:
